

Volume 4: Sermons 601-800

800  
Sermons

C. H. Spurgeon

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THE SERMONS OF  
CHARLES  
SPURGEON

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IN FOUR Volumes





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# The Sermons of Charles Spurgeon

## Vol. 4, 601-810

by Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

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## Reform

Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all. - 2 Chronicles 31:1

It is a pleasant sight to behold the thousands assembled together for the worship of God, but it is lamentable to reflect, how often the reverence which is exhibited in the sanctuary is lost when the thresh-hold is passed. How frequently the most earnest address of the preacher is forgotten, and becomes as "the morning cloud, and as the early dew." We very often go up to the house of God, and imagine that we have done our duty when we have gone through the round of the service: self-satisfied, we return each man to his home. Oh that we would remember that the preaching of the gospel is but the sowing! afterward the reaping must come. To-day we do, as it were, lay the first stone of an edifice; and henceforward that edifice must be built, stone by stone, through your daily practice, until at last the top-stone is brought forth with shoutings of joy and gladness. Well said the Scotch woman, when her husband asked her, on her return from the house of God sooner than usual, "Wife, is the sermon all done?" "Nay, Donald," said she; "it is all *said*; but it is nae begun to be *done*." There was wisdom in her pithy saying, a wisdom which we too frequently forget. Praying is the end of preaching. Reformation, conversion, regeneration - these are the ends of the ministry, and a holy life should be the result of your devout worship. We have read in your hearing the story of the great Passover, which was held in the days of Hezekiah. One almost envies the men of that, time; we might almost wish that we could be carried back some thousands of years, that we might have been there to see the solemn sacrifices, to behold the priests, as with joyous countenances they sang the praises of God, and to have mingled in that countless throng, which stood at one hour to listen to the Levite, at another hour gathered round

the priest; again, at another season clapped their hands for joy at the sound of the golden trumpets, and then outvied the trumpets by the magnificent sound of their vocal praise. But, beloved, when that scene had vanished, and the multitude had gone to their homes, Hezekiah might have sat down and wept if there had not been a fitting effect from so great a gathering. Isaiah the prophet, I doubt not, was one of the gladdest in all the crowd. Oh, how his noble heart beat for joy, and how eloquent was his seraphic tongue when he preached among the people, and cried, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." But sad indeed would his heart have been, notwithstanding all the delightful excitement of the day, if he had not seen some glorious consequences result from the ministrations and from the great gatherings of the people. In our text we are informed, that the Passover did not end with the seven days twice-told of its extraordinary celebration. The Passover, it is true, might end, but not its blessed effects.

Now there are three effects which ought always to follow our solemn assembly upon the Lord's day, especially when we gather in such a number as the present, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving. We should go home and first *break our false gods*; next, *cut down the very groves in which we have been wont to delight*, and after that *break the altars which though dedicated to the God of Israel, are not according to Scripture*, and therefore ought to be broken down, albeit, they be even dedicated to the true God.

I. To begin then, the true result of all our gatherings should be, in the first place, to **BREAK TO PIECES ALL OUR IMAGES**. "Thou shalt have none other gods before me." Every place is before God. Every thing is before his face and open to him. Therefore by this command we understand that we are in no way, and in no sense to have another god, but the Lord our God. What! do you ask, are we a nation of idolaters? Can this text pertain to us? Would not this be a proper rebuke to address the Hindostanee, or to speak to the benighted inhabitants of the center of Africa? Might we not exhort them to serve Jehovah and to dash the gods of their fathers in pieces? Assuredly we might. But imagine not that idolatry is confined to

nations of a swarthy hue. It is not in Africa alone that false gods are worshipped; idols are worshipped in this land also, and by many of you. Yea, all of us, until renewed by divine grace, worship gods which our own hands have made, and we do not fear, and love, and obey the living God with our entire and exclusive homage. Once however, let grace be received into the heart, let the soul be renewed by the Holy Spirit, once drink in the free life of Jesus, and these false gods must be broken in pieces at once.

The first god who is worshipped among us is one called *self-righteousness*. The Pharisees were the high priests of this god; they burnt incense every morning and every evening before him, but he has ten thousand times ten thousand worshippers still left. Among your respectable classes of society he is the received divinity. If a man be respectable, he thinks it all-sufficient. Among your moralists, this is the great god before which they bow down and worship. Nay, among sinners themselves, men whose character is not moral, there is, nevertheless, found an altar to this god within their hearts. I have known a drunkard self-righteous, for he has declared that he did not swear; and I have known a swearer self-righteous, for he trusted he should be saved because he did not steal. Until we are brought to know our own lost and ruined condition, self-righteousness is the god before which every one of us will prostrate ourselves. Oh, my dear friends, if we have worshipped God in this house to-day, let us go home determined to aim a blow, by the help of God, at self-righteousness; let us go home and prostrate ourselves before God, and cry -  
"Vile and full of sin I am."

"Lord, I confess before thee, that I have no good works in which to trust, no self-righteousness on which I can rely. I cast my boastings away; I come to thee as a poor, guilty, helpless sinner; 'Lord, save, or I perish.'" That is the way to dash down this god. Paul once worshipped this mighty one, and worshipped him so well, that, after the "most straitest sect of his religion, he lived a Pharisee." Never, in his opinion, so good a man as himself. He served this god with all his mind, and soul, and strength. But, once upon a time, as he was going to Damascus to sacrifice to this god with the blood of believers in Christ, the Lord Jesus looked upon him out

of heaven, and said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Prostrate tell Saul, and down went his self-righteousness too. Afterwards, you might hear him say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." May we all go home thus, and pull down our self-righteousness. Stop a moment, I am not quite sure that we can do this all at once. *My* self-righteousness I feel in my own heart, as something like those colossal statues of Egypt, and when I try to break it in pieces, I can but disfigure it; I manage to break a chip off here and a chip off there, but still there stands the statue, not in all its former symmetry, but still there. At any rate, if you and I cannot wholly get rid of our self-righteousness, let us never lay down the axe and the hammer until we have destroyed it. Let us go home to-day and have another blow at this old foe; let us go home to have another dash at the colossal god, and let us take up the chisel and the hammer, and once more try to disfigure him. This is the proper result of the ministrations of God's Word, to destroy and cut in pieces, and utterly break down our self-righteousness.

There are other gods still worshipped in this world, to be execrated with unrelenting indignation. There is one which is certain to be broken, so sure as ever a man becomes a Christian: I mean *Bacchus*, that jolly god whom so many adored in days of yore with mad revelry, and who is still worshipped by tens of thousands of Englishmen. Perhaps he is the great god of Britain. I am certain he has many temples, for there is scarcely a corner of any street in which we do not behold his image, or see his votaries pouring out libations before him. He is a god that is worshipped with reeling to and fro, and staggering. Men become drunken in his presence, and so do him homage. Now, ye that are drunkards, if ye become Christians, that will turn your cup bottom upwards once and for ever. There will be no more inebriety for you now. By the grace of God you will say, "They that be drunken are drunken in the night, but let us who are of the day be sober. I renounce this practice of drunkenness, I can have nothing more to do with it." Bless God there are many here present who have gone out of this hall to demolish this god. Oh! if it were right to relate the cases that have been told privately to us, we could tell you this very day, not of one, or two, or twenty but of hundreds, who, as we believe, once made their homes a hell, who treated their wives with

brutality and their children with neglect; whose homes were empty, because every article they had was sold for accursed drink. They have heard the gospel not in word only, but also in power, and now their home is a paradise, their house is made glad with prayer, their children are brought up in the fear of the Lord. We have seen the wife's tear of gladness when she said, "The Lord be blessed for ever, and blessed be the name of the gospel, for a wretched woman has been made happy, and she who was but a drudge and a slave to one who was like a fiend, has now become the companion of one whom she reckons to be little short of an angel." Ay, may this be the effect with some of *you*, for there are some such here to-day, I doubt not, who still worship this all-degrading deity, the deity of drunkenness.

Let me tell you of another god, which is to be pulled down as certainly by any man who worships Jehovah aright, and that is the god of *lust*; Oh! this world is not so good as it seems to be. You scarcely hear the minister in these days talk of whoremongers, adulterers, and such like: but they are not all dead. There are such to be found, such in every congregation, I fear. Our streets have not yet become such as Chastity might pace at midnight, nor are the chief places of the earth become clean and purified. There is much hidden pollution to be dragged forth, and cast into Kishon. Even in high places, sin is tolerated, men are respectable who have sent their fellow-creatures to hell, and are going there themselves; but once let grace come into the heart, and away with these: the most darling lust is given up, and that which was thought to be the greatest pleasure, is now looked upon with abhorrence and detestation. If thou, my hearer, livest in lust, and yet dost make profession of religion, away with thy profession, for it is an awful lie. Away with that profession, for it is an empty vanity! away with it! It will but add to thy destruction, and cannot save thee from the dreadful doom of the man that goeth on in his iniquity. A happy thing it is for a man when he goes from the house of God, with the resolve that lust shall be abandoned, and every sinful pleasure cast away.

There are, too, the gods of *business*, but I must not touch upon them, of course. The minister has nothing to do with business, he is told. Keep your counting-house door bolted always, let not the minister inside. But the minister knows why he is shut out. Is it not because there are secrets



of your prisonhouse which you would not have revealed? There are things done which pass for honest among tradesmen, that if put in the balance of the sanctuary are found very wanting. I would that the result of our preaching upon our hearers should be such that their actions should be more upright and their conduct more Christ-like in their daily business. I have heard of a woman who once went to hear a minister, and when he called to see her on the Monday, he asked her what the text was. She replied, "It was a blessed sermon to me, sir, but I forget the text." "Well, what was the subject, my good woman." "Oh! I do not know; I forget now." "Well," said he, "it cannot have done you any good then." "Yes it did," said she, "for though I forgot the sermon, I did not forget to burn my bushel when I got home." The fact was, she had a bushel that gave false measure to her customers, and although she forgot what the sermon was about, she did not forget to burn her false measure. If any of you are in business and have false measures, though you may forget what I say, do not forget to break your yard measure, and to have your weights set right, and to remodel your business, and "to do unto others as ye would they should do unto you." Break the gods of your business in pieces, if so be ye have not followed with your whole heart the statutes of the God of Israel. If you cannot serve God in your daily business, then give such business up, or alter it so that you can.

Say now, who is there among us who has not some image to break? I have thought sometimes that I had broken all mine at one season, for I have had the will to do it; but lo! I have walked through the temple of my heart, and I have seen in some dark corner an idol still standing. Let it be cast down, I have said; and I have used the sledge-hammer upon it. But when I thought I had cleared all away, there was still one gigantic figure standing there; for you may be sure that there is one idol of which we can never thoroughly cleanse our hearts though we try and though by God's strength we give him a blow every day. It is the god of *pride*. He changes his shape continually; sometimes he calls himself humility, and we begin to bow before him, till we find we are getting proud of our humility. At another time he assumes the fashion of conscientiousness, and we begin to carp at this and cavil at the other, and all the while we are tampering with our own professed sanctity, and are bowing before the shrine of religious pride. We think sometimes we are praising God when we are

praising ourselves, and we pray at times that God may prosper us in doing good, and our greatest desire is to be honored, not that his name should be glorified. This idol must be cast down; but it is of such a form and such a shape, that I suppose it will fare like Dagon. When the ark was brought into the house, it is said Dagon fell upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord, and his head and the palms of his hands were cut off, nevertheless the stump of Dagon remained. So will it be with us, I fear the stump of Dagon will still remain, do what we may. Then let us each to day go home to our closet and begin to open the door of the chambers of our hearts, and walk through them all, and say "What have I to break, what have I to knock down, what have I to destroy;" and let us be very careful that we do destroy all that we can get near. Oh my hearers! how I wish we were more watchful of the effects produced in ourselves by preaching.

II. Let us now go a step further, and consider what it is to CUT DOWN THE GROVES. Groves are the places where those images have been set up. There was nothing, mark you, positively sinful in the grove. There could not be anything wrong in a cluster of trees. They were very beautiful - they were the work of God, but they had been used for an idolatrous purpose, and, therefore down they must come. Had some of the lax professors of this age been present, they would have said, "Break the god," - that is right enough. Hammer away at him, dash him to pieces, but don't cut down the trees. You may use them for very proper purposes. Why, you may even go there to pray. There you may sit and refresh yourself, and beneath their grateful shade you may even worship the true God. "Nay," say these reformers. "We will cut down the trees and all, because the images have been harboured under their covert," Now, I am going to lift the axe to clear away some of the trees, where some of you at least have defiled yourselves with the false gods of this world's idolatry. The first grove of trees, at which I must strike, is the *theater*. I am told by some, that in the theater there is much that might do good. There are plays, they inform me, that might be profitably heard, and I believe there are. I am told, again, that there is something so pleasant, so agreeable, so interesting in them that one might be instructed there: and that especially do the plays of Shakespeare contain such noble sentiments, that a man must feel his soul elevated and his heart expanded while witnessing their

performance. Nevertheless I will have this grove down, every bit of it. It is all very well for you to eulogize it; I will not argue with you; but false gods have been worshipped in these places, and are being worshipped still; so hew down every tree of them. Oh! you would have them spared, would you? Why, which tree in the whole grove is undefiled by a harlot? Which theater in the world is not the very den and nest of abominable iniquity, obscenity, and lust? Is it possible for any man to enter and come out of one of them without defilement? If it be possible, I suppose it is only so with men who are so bad that they cannot be made worse than they are, and therefore cannot be defiled. To the Christian mind, there is something hideous in the whole matter. He may believe that there were times when the theater might have been profitable. He looks back to the days of the Greeks and Romans, and feels that then it might have been the lever of civilization. But since those old times, he finds that the devil has become the god of the theater, and the god that is diligently worshipped there is none other than Beelzebub. And therefore he says, "No, if I be a Christian, by the grace of God, I will never tread that floor again. Let others go there if they please. If they can find an interest under the shadow of its trees, let them sit there; but I remember, in the days when I went there, I worshipped Bacchus, I worshipped iniquities of every shape. For me to go there, would be to put myself into temptations way. Therefore I will down with the tree, I abhor it; I pass by on the other side, rather than come in contact even with its shadow."

Now, men may make what apologies they please, but the thing is clear to me, that no man can be a true child of God and yet attend those haunts of vice. I care not though I may be thought too severe. We had better use severity than allow souls to perish unwarned God himself has annexed to the theater the warning of your own destruction; for, staring you in the face, there is a hand with these words written - "To the pit;" and, true enough, it is the short cut to hell, and to the pit that is bottomless. But there are other groves that must come down too; There is the *tavern*, - like the grove, a very excellent thing in itself; the tavern is needed in some places for the refreshment of travelers, and the inn is a great advantage of civilization; but, nevertheless, the Christian man remembers, that in the tavern, false gods are worshipped; he recollects that the company of the taproom is not the fellowship of the saints, nor the general assembly and

church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. The Christian may have to go into the tavern, his business may sometimes take him there; but he will be like a man going through a shower of rain; he will carry an umbrella, while he is going through it, and he will get out of it as soon as he can. So will the Christian do, he will try and guard himself against evil while he is there, but not one moment longer will he stay than imperative necessity demands. The tavern, I have said, was originally an institute of civilization, and it is at this day a thing that cannot be given up, but, notwithstanding this, let no Christian, nor any pretender to Christianity, resort habitually to such places, nor let him sit down with the profane who generally assemble there. I believe there are Christian men who are often tempted into bad company by the benefit clubs and societies which are held in such places, if there are no benefit societies but those which are held in public-houses, trust to God, and have nothing to do with societies at all. But there *are* others; and you are under no necessity whatever, to injure and contaminate your character by connecting yourself with those who meet in such places and lead you into sin. "Well," says one, "but I can do it and yet I am not hurt." I dare say *you* can, *I* could not. If the coals did not burn me, yet they would blacken me; and, therefore, I would have nothing to do with them. There are some professors, however, who are like the old lady's coachman. She advertised for a coachman, and three waited on her. To one she said, "How near could *you* drive to danger?" "Madam," he replied, "I could drive, I dare say, within six inches, and yet be safe." "Then you will not suit me at all," said she. She asked the next, "How near can you drive me to danger?" "I would drive within a hair's breadth." "Then you will not suit me." The third was asked, "How near can you drive to danger?" "Madam," said he, "that is a thing I never tried; for I always drive as far off danger as ever I can." She said, "Then you will suit me." That is my advice to every professor of religion.

I must make the very same remark with regard to the pastimes, the puerile pastimes and enjoyments of the rich, and of those who meet for purposes, not of sin, but of what they call *recreation*. Dancing - the ball-room - is there anything sinful there? I say, No! no more than there was in the trees that surrounded the image. But nevertheless, I will cut the trees down, because of their association with the images. I must have

done with every amusement of such a kind that I could not appear before my God whilst in the act. The Christian is to recollect, that "in such an hour as he thinks not the Son of Man cometh." Would he like his Master to come and find him in the society of the frivolous; engaged in the dizzy mazes of the dance? I trow not. Perhaps one of the last places he would like to be found in would be there. Dancing! while hell is filling and sinners are perishing! What! are Christian men to be the saviours of the world, and yet waste their time so? Are there no poor to be relieved, no sick to be visited? Are there no dens of this great metropolis that need to be pried into by the servants of Christ? Are there no children to be taught, are there no aged men who need leading to Jesus; is there nothing to be done in this great vineyard - this great field of the Lord, so that a Christian could afford to waste his time so? Let the worldling do it if he likes, we have no right to talk to him about it. But amusements that are right for him are not right for us. Let him do as he pleases, but we are the servants of God. We protest that all we have and all we are is given up to Christ, and can that be consistent with the waste of time that is involved in the frivolous amusements in which so many are content to indulge? I do not condemn the thing itself, any more than I condemn the grove of trees. I condemn it for its associations with many things that are to be avoided by the Christian; jesting, lascivious and foolish talking, and many unholy thoughts, that must necessarily arise. Down with the trees altogether, because there have false gods been worshipped. You are too hard, a great deal, some will reply; well, I dare say I am, but I am not harder than God's Word. If I am, whatever is not according to God's Word, reject; but you will not find me beginning to temporize just yet I assure you. While I know a thing to be true, I am not the man to stammer in speaking it. What I would not do myself I would not have others do who are Christian men, and who are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I must lift up the axe against another evil - *books*. There are many books that are to be so esteemed by the Christian man, that they must be cut down like the groves of trees, not because they are bad in themselves, mark, but because there false gods are worshiped. Novel-reading is the rage of the present day. I go to a railway bookstall, and I cannot see a book that I can read. I get one, and it is all trash. I search to find something that would be really valuable but I am told, "It would not sell

here." The fact is, nothing will sell but that which is light, and frothy, and frivolous; so every traveler is compelled to consume such food as that, unless he carry something better with him. Do I, therefore, say, that the Christian man must condemn all reading of fiction and novels? No, I do not, but I do say, that the mass of popular books published under the name of Light Literature is to be eschewed and cut down, for the simple reason that the moral of it is not that of piety and goodness; the tendency of the reading is not to bring the Christian towards heaven, but rather to retard and impede him in his good course. I lift up my axe against many a work that I cannot condemn, if I look at it abstractedly in itself, but which must come down, because I recollect how much of my own precious time I wasted in such vapid reading, and how many years in which I might have had fellowship with Christ have been cast away, whilst I have been foolishly indulging a vicious taste for the romantic and the frivolous. No, there are many things which are not wrong in themselves, but which nevertheless must be given up by the true Christian, because they have had, and do have association with things positively wrong. Just as these groves must be cut down - not because there can be a sin in trees, but because the trees have been associated with the worship of idols. You remember John Knox's memorable saying, when he turned the Romanists out, he went straight away to pull down their chapels. He gathered the mob together, and began to overhaul the whole of their places of worship. Why should John Knox meddle with them? "I'll pull the nests down," said he, "then I shall be sure that the birds will never come back." So I would today. I would not only drive away the birds - the sin, the evil; but I would pull down the nest, so that there will be no temptation to you to come back again to the sin. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a father unto you." Come out from the world, ye children of Christ. Have naught to do with their enjoyments, nor with their devices. Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Go not a whoring after these iniquities, but drink thou waters out of thine own cistern, and be thou always ravished with his love who is thy Lord, thy husband, thy hope, thy joy, thine all.

III. Moreover, they not only broke the images, and cut down the groves, but they **THREW DOWN THE HIGH PLACES, AND THE ALTARS OUT**

OF ALL JUDAH AND BENJAMIN. This was, perhaps, the least necessary work, but it showed the thoroughness of their desire to serve the Lord. These altars were built for the service of the true God, but they were built against his express command. God had said that he would have but one altar, namely, at Jerusalem. These people, to avoid inconvenience and trouble, thought they would build altars, wherever they lived, and there celebrate their worship. I can conceive that they worshipped Jehovah with all their hearts, and that He might graciously accept even such worship as that through Christ Jesus, overlooking their ignorance and casting their sin behind his backs. But now as their zeal was kindled, their consciences became scrupulous, so they resolved not only to avoid, the things that are positively sinful but they would have nothing to do with anything that is not positively right. So they began to cast down the altars of God, because they were not built according to God's law. This then is a third reformation, which ought to result from the ministry, and the assembling of the people together when we have times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. There should be a casting down of everything in connection with the true worship, that is not according to the law of God and the word of God. As it was with the worship of Israel of old, so it is now with that of the Christian church. The pure becomes alloyed with the base, that which is genuine with that which is spurious, divine revelation with human tradition, and the inspired decrees of heaven with the inventions and devices of the children of men. Some fallacies are perpetuated from generation to generation, until the deep hue of antiquity tinges them over, makes them look venerable and speciously invites a reverence and regard to which they never had any legitimate claim. We have in this country, seven or eight different forms of the Christian religion. Some of these are at complete variance and contradiction with others. Some indeed, I verily think, are contradictory in themselves. We are all, I do trust, building on a sure foundation for eternity, if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and abide by the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, notwithstanding our many grievous discrepancies, which must involve error. Evangelical Christians are to be found in every sect and denomination, bearing the name of our one common Lord; yea, there are some who as yet have never taken upon them his name by public profession, who devoutly follow him in secret. But, mark ye this, if the grace of God be once more restored to the church

in all its fullness and the Spirit of God be poured out from on high, in all his sanctifying energy there will come such a shaking as has never been seen in our days. We want such an one as Martin Luther to rise from his tomb. If Martin Luther, were now to visit our so-called reformed churches, he would say with all his holy boldness "I was not half a reformer when I was alive before, now I will make thorough work of it." How he would adjure you to cast away your superstitions, to abolish all the rites and forms and ceremonies that are not of divine appointment, and once more in the integrity of simple faith, to worship the Lord God alone, in that way alone, which the Lord God himself has ordained. Let all these, like those altars of Judaism, be cast down to the ground and utterly put away. I desire not only to be a Christian, but to be fully a Christian, walking in all the ways of my blessed Master, with a perfect heart, and I desire for all my brethren and sisters in Christ here, not only that they may have grace enough to save their souls, but grace enough to purify them from all the devices of men, from every false doctrine, from every false practice, and every evil thing. Speak you now of doctrine? Are there not two kinds of doctrines professed among Christians, the one Arminian, and the other Calvinistic? We cannot be both right; it is impossible. The Arminian says, "God loves all men alike." "Not so," says the Calvinist. "He has proved to many of us by his free and distinguishing grace that he has given us more than others, not for the merit of our deservings, but according to the riches of his mercy, and the counsel of his own will." The Arminian supposes, that Christ hath bought all men with his blood, and yet that multitudes of these redeemed ones perish. The Calvinist holds, that none can perish for whom Jesus died - that his blood was never shed in vain and that of all those whom he hath redeemed, none shall ever perish. The Arminian teaches that though a man should be regenerated and become a child of God to-day, he may to-morrow be cast out of the covenant, and be as much a child of the devil as if no spiritual change had been wrought in him. "Not so," says the Calvinist, "Salvation is of God alone, and where once he begins he never leaves off, until he has finished the good work." How obvious it is that we cannot both be right in matters about which we so widely differ. I exhort you, therefore, my brothers and sisters, after you have broken your images and cut down your groves, go a step further, and break down the false altars. I can only say for myself, "If I be wrong, I desire to be set right," and for you I am solemnly concerned,



"If you be wrong, may God help you to a right judgment, and bring you to see the truth, embrace it, and earnestly and valiantly maintain it. I like you to be charitable to others; but do not be too charitable to yourselves. Let others follow out their own conscientious convictions, but do you recollect, it is not your conscience that is to be your guide, but God's Word; and if your conscience is wrong, you are to bring it to God's Word that it may be reprov'd and "transformed by the renewing of your mind." It is for you to do *what* God tells you, *as* God tells you, *when* God tells you, and *how* God tells you.

Pardon me for a moment, if I should risk the displeasure of some I love by referring to an ordinance of the church about which we are likely to disagree. The sacred rite of baptism is administered in a great number of churches to little infants upon the sponsorship of their guardians or friends, while many of us consider that Holy Scripture teaches that believers only (without respect to their age at all) are the proper subjects of baptism, and that upon a personal profession of their faith in Christ. I see a man take up an unconscious infant in his arms, and he says he baptizes it. When I turn to my Bible, I can see nothing whatever of this sort there. It is true I find the Lord Jesus saying, "Suffer little children to come unto me," but that affords no precedent for carrying a little child to the minister, that could not come, that was too young to walk, much less to think and understand the meaning of these things. Yet more, when Jesus said "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven" - they did come to him; but I do not find that he baptized or sprinkled them at all, he gave them his blessing and they went away. I am sure he did not baptize them, for it is expressly said, "Jesus Christ baptized not, but his disciples." So, then, that passage does not favor the Paedo-baptist, it is quite clear. I am informed however, that the reason why children are baptized is, that we are told in the Bible that Abraham's children were circumcised. This puzzles me. I cannot see any likeness at all between the two things. But who were the persons circumcised? They were Israelites. Why were they circumcised? Because they were Israelites. That is the reason; and I say I would not hesitate to baptize any Christian, though he be a babe in Christ, as soon as he knows the Lord Jesus Christ, were he only eight days old in the faith, if he proves that he is an Israelite in the spirit himself, I will baptize him. I have

nothing to do with his father or his mother in religion. Religion is a personal act all the way through; another man cannot believe for me, cannot repent for me; and another person cannot give for me the answer of a good conscience toward God in baptism and have it done in my name. We must act on our own individual responsibility in religion by the grace of God, or else the thing is virtually not done at all. Now I believe many godly people do sincerely worship God at this altar of infant baptism; but I am equally clear that it is my duty to do my utmost to break it down, for it is not God's altar; God's altar is believers' baptism. What said Philip to the Eunuch? "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." "Lo! here is water," said the Eunuch. Yes, but that was not all; there must be faith, as well as water, before there could be legitimate baptism; and every baptism that is administered to any man, except he asketh it himself, on profession of his faith in Christ, is an altar at which I could not worship, for I do not believe it to be the altar of God, but an altar originally built at Rome, the pattern of which has been adopted here, to the marring of the union of the church, and to the great injury of souls. Now, all I ask from those who differ from me in opinion is, simply to look at the matter honestly and calmly. If they can find infant baptism in the Bible, then let them practice it and worship there; if they cannot, let them be honest, and come and worship at the altar of Jerusalem, and there alone. An old woman was once promised a Bible, if she could find a text that sanctioned infant baptism. She could only find one, and that was, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake." The minister gave her the Bible for her ingenuity, admitting, that it was an ordinance of man, and no mistake. I quote this instance of infant baptism, as only one out of many corruptions that have crept into our churches. It is quite clear that all sects cannot be right. They may be right as to the main points essential to salvation, though in their discrepancies with one another they betray errors. I do not want you to believe that I am right. rather turn to Scripture, and see what is right. The day must come when Episcopacy, Independency, Wesleyanism, and every other system, must be read by the Word of God, and every form given up that is not approved before the Most High. I hope I shall always be able to lift up my voice against that charity growing up in our midst, which is not only a charity towards persons, but a charity towards doctrines. I here fervent charity towards every brother in Christ who differs from me. I love him

for Christ's sake, and hold fellowship with him for the truth's sake: but I can have no charity for his errors, nor do I wish him to have any for mine. I tell him straight to his face, "If your sentiments contradict mine, either I am right and you are wrong, or you are right and I am wrong; and it is time we should meet together and search the Word of God, to see what is right." Talk of your Evangelical Alliances, and such like: they will never endure; they may effect many blessed purposes, but they are not the remedy that is wanted for our divisions. What is wanted is, for all of us to come to the model of the Word of God, and when we have come to that, we must come together. Let us all come "to the law and to the testimony." Let the Baptist, let the Independent, let the Churchman, lay aside his old thoughts, his old prejudices, and his old traditions, and let each man search for himself, as in the sight of Almighty God, and some of the altars must go down, for they cannot all be after the divine type, when their dissimilarity is so palpable. May the Spirit of God be poured out in this land, and there will come a three-fold reformation, such as I have described; broken images, groves cut down, and fallen altars scattered to the winds. And yet, my dear hearers, I do not ask you to attend to this last thing first. It is unimportant, compared with the first. The images are first to be burned, then sinful customs are to be given up, and after that let the church be reformed. Each of these in its proper place and due order is important, and all must be attended to. Yet once more, my hearer, before I send thee away let me put one pertinent and pressing question to thee. What hast thou got by all thy hearing of God's Word? Some of you have heard sermons beyond count; you can hardly reckon the number of gospel ministers to whom you have listened. What good have you obtained as the result of them all? Have you been led to repentance? Have you been brought to faith? Are you made "a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." If not, I solemnly remind thee that all thy church goings and chapel goings are increasing thy condemnation. Unless thou repentest, these privileges shall rise up in judgment against thee to condemn thee. Woe unto thee, London, woe unto thee, for if the words which have been preached in thy streets had been proclaimed in Sodom and Gomorrah, they had repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Woe unto you, ye sons and daughters of pious parents, children trained in the Sunday-school, hearers of God's Word; for "except ye repent, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of

judgment than for you." "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say," and may God guide you aright.

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## Regeneration

Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God. - John 3:3

In daily life our thoughts are most occupied with things that are most necessary for our existence. No one murmured that the subject of the price of bread was frequently on the lips of men at a time of scarcity, because they felt that the subject was one of vital importance to the mass of the population? and therefore they murmured not, though they listened to continual declamatory speeches, and read perpetual articles in the newspapers concerning it. I must offer the same excuse, then, for bringing before you this morning the subject of regeneration. It is one of absolute and vital importance; it is the hinge of the gospel; it is the point upon which most Christians are agreed, yea, all who are Christians in sincerity and truth. It is a subject which lies at the very basis of salvation. It is the very groundwork of our hopes for heaven; and as we ought to be very careful of the basement of our structure, so should we be very diligent to take heed that we are really born again, and that we have made sure work of it for eternity. There are many who fancy they are born again who are not. It well becomes us, then, frequently to examine ourselves; and it is the minister's duty to bring forward those subjects which lead to self-examination, and have a tendency to search the heart and try the reins of the children of men.

To proceed at once, I shall first make some remarks upon *the new birth*; secondly, I shall note *what is meant by not being able to see the kingdom of God if we are not born again*; then I shall go further on to note *why it is that "except we are born again we can not see the kingdom of God;"*

and then *expostulate with men* as God's ambassador before I close.

1. First, then, THE MATTER OF REGENERATION. In endeavoring to explain it, I must have you notice, first of all, *the figure that is employed*. It is said a man must be born again. I can not illustrate this better than by supposing a case. Suppose that in England there should be a law passed, that admission to royal courts, preference in office, and any privileges that might belong to the nation, could only be given to persons who were born in England - suppose that birth in this land was made a *sine qua non*, and it was definitely declared that whatever men might do or be, unless they were native born subjects of England they could not enter into her majesty's presence, and could enjoy none of the emoluments or offices of the state, nor any of the privileges of citizens. I think if you suppose such a case I shall be able to illustrate the difference between any changes and reforms that men make in themselves and the real work of being born again. We will suppose, then, that some man - a red Indian, for instance - should come to this country, and should endeavor to obtain the privileges of citizenship, well knowing that the rule is absolute and can not be altered, that a man must be a born subject, or else he can not enjoy them. Suppose he says, "*I will change my name*, I will take up the name of an Englishman; I have been called by my high-sounding title among the Sioux; I have been called the son of the Great West Wind, or some such name; but I will take an English name, I will be called a Christian man, an English subject." Will that admit him? You see him coming to the palace gates and asking for admission. He says, "I have taken an English name." "But are you an Englishman born and bred?" "I am not," says he. "Then the gates must be shut against you, for the law is absolute; and though you may have the name of even the royal family itself upon you, yet because you have not been born here you must be shut out." That illustration will apply to all of us who are here present. At least, nearly the whole of us bear the professing Christian name; living in England, you would think it a disgrace to you if you were not called Christian. You are not heathen, you are not infidel; you are neither Mohammedans nor Jews; you think that the name, Christian, is a creditable one to you, and you have taken it. Be ye quite assured that the name of a Christian is not the nature of a Christian, and that your being born in a Christian land, and being recognized as professing the Christian

religion is of no avail whatever, unless there be something more added to it - the being born again as a subject of Jesus Christ.

"But," says this red Indian, "I am prepared to *renounce my dress*, and to become an Englishman in fashion; in fact, I will go to the very top of the fashion; you shall not see me in any thing differing from the accepted style of the present day. May I not, when I am arrayed in court dress, and have decorated myself as etiquette demands, come in before her majesty? See, I'll doff this plume, I will not shake this tomahawk, I renounce these garments. The moccasin I cast away for ever; I am an Englishman in dress, as well as name." He comes to the gate, dressed out like one of our own countrymen; but the gates are still shut in his face, because the law required that he must be born in the country; and without that, whatever his dress might be, he could not enter the palace. So how many there are of you, who do not barely take the Christian name upon you, but have adopted Christian manners; you go to your churches, and your chapels, you attend the house of God, you take care that there is some form of religion observed in your family; your children are not left without hearing the name of Jesus! So far so good; God forbid that I should say a word against it! But remember, it is bad because you do not go further. All this is of no avail whatever for admitting you into the kingdom of heaven, unless this also is complied with - the being born again. O! dress yourselves never so grandly with the habiliments of godliness; put the chaplet of benevolence upon your brow, and gird your loins with integrity; put on your feet the shoes of perseverance, and walk through the earth an honest and upright man; yet, remember, unless you are born again, "that which is of the flesh is flesh," and you, not having the operations of the Spirit in you, still have heaven's gates shut against you, because you are not born again.

"Well," but says the Indian, "I will not only adopt the dress, but I will *learn the language*; I will put away my brogue and my language that I once spoke, in the wild prairie or in the woods, far away from my lips. I shall not talk of the Shu-Shuh-gah, and of the strange names wherewith I have called my wild fowl and my deer, but I will speak as you speak, and act as you act; I will not only have your dress, but precisely your manners, I will talk just in the same fashion, I will adopt your brogue, I will take

care that it shall be grammatically correct; will you not then admit me? I have become thoroughly Anglicized; may I not then be received?" "No," says the keeper of the door," there is no admittance, for except a man be born in this country, he can not be admitted." So with some of you; you talk just like Christians. Perhaps you have a little too much cant about you; you have begun so strictly to imitate what you think to be a godly man, that you go a little beyond the mark, and you gloss it so much that we are able to detect the counterfeit. Still you pass current among most men as being a right down sort of Christian man. You have studied biographies, and sometimes you tell long yarns about divine experience; you have borrowed them from the biographies of good men; you have been with Christians, and know how to talk as they do; you have caught a puritanical twang, perhaps; you go through the world just like professors; and if you were to be observed, no one would detect you. You are a member of the church; you have been baptized; you take the Lord's Supper; perhaps you are a deacon, or an elder; you pass the sacramental cup round; you are just all that a Christian can be, except that you are without a Christian heart. You are whitewashed sepulchres, still full of rottenness within, though garnished fairly on the outside. Well, take heed, take heed! It is an astonishing thing, how near the painter can go to the expression of life, and yet the canvas is dead and motionless; and it is equally astonishing how near a man may go to a Christian, and yet, through not being born again, the absolute rule shuts him out of heaven, and with all his profession, with all the trappings of his professed godliness, and with all the gorgeous plumes of experience, yet must he be borne away from heaven's gates.

You are uncharitable Mr. Spurgeon. I do not care what you say about that, I never wish to be more charitable than Christ. I did not say this; Christ said it. If you have any quarrel with him, settle it there ; I am not the maker of this truth, but simply the speaker of it. I find it written, "Except a man be born. again, he can not see the kingdom of God." If your footman should go to the door, and deliver your message correctly, the man at the door might abuse him never so much, but the footman would say, "Sir, do not abuse me, I can not help it; I can only tell you what my master told me. I am not the originator of it." So if you think me uncharitable, remember you do not accuse me, you accuse Christ; you are

not finding fault with the messenger, you are finding fault with the message; Christ has said it - "Except a man be born again." I can not dispute with you, and shall not try. That is simply God's Word. Reject it at your peril. Believe it and receive it, I entreat you, because it comes from the lips of the Most High.

But now note *the manner in which this regeneration is obtained*. I think I have none here so profoundly stupid as to be Puseyites I can scarcely believe that I have been the means of attracting one person here, so utterly devoid of every remnant of brain, as to believe the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Yet I must just hint at it. There be some who teach that by a few drops of water sprinkled on an infant's brow the infant becomes regenerate. Well, granted. And now I will find out your regenerate ones twenty years afterward. The champion of the prize ring is a regenerated man. O! yes, he was regenerated, because in infancy he was baptized; and, therefore, if all infants in baptism are regenerated, the prize-fighter is a regenerated man. Take hold of him and receive him as your brother in the Lord. Do you hear that man swearing and blaspheming God? He is regenerate; believe me, he is regenerate; the priest put a few drops of water on his brow, and he is a regenerated man. Do you see the drunkard reeling down the street, the pest of the neighborhood, fighting every body, and beating his wife, worse than the brute. Well, he is regenerate, he is one of those Puseyite's regenerates - O! goodly regenerate! Mark you the crowd assembled in the streets! The gallows is erected, Palmer is about to be executed; the man whose name should be execrated through all eternity for his villainy! Here is one of the Puseyite's regenerates. Yes, he is regenerate because he was baptized in infancy; regenerate, while he mixes his strychnine; regenerate while he administers his poison slowly, that he may cause death, and infinite pain, all the while he is causing it. Regenerate, forsooth! If that be regeneration, such regeneration is not worth having; if that be the thing that makes us free of the kingdom of heaven, verily, the gospel is indeed a licentious gospel; we can say nothing about it. If that be the gospel, that all such men are regenerate and will be saved, we can only say, that it would be the duty of every man in the world to move that gospel right away, because it is so inconsistent with the commonest principles of morality, that it could not possibly be of God, but of the devil.



But some say all are regenerate when they are baptized. Well, if you think so, stick to your own thoughts; I can not help it. Simon Magus was certainly one exception; he was baptized on a profession of his faith; but so far from being regenerated by his baptism, we find Paul saying, "I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." And yet he was one of those regenerates, because he had been baptized. Ah! that doctrine only needs to be stated to sensible men, and they will at once reject it. Gentlemen that are fond of a filigree religion, and like ornament and show; gentlemen of the high Beau Brummel school will very likely prefer this religion, because they have cultivated their taste at the expense of their brain, and have forgotten that what is consistent with the sound judgment of a man can not be consistent with the Word of God. So much for the first point.

Neither is a man regenerated, we say, in the next place, *by his own exertions*. A man may reform himself very much, and that is well and good; let all do that. A man may cast away many vices, forsake many lusts in which he indulged, and conquer evil habits; but no man in the world can make himself to be born in God; though he should struggle never so much, he could never accomplish what is beyond his power. And, mark you, if he could make himself to be born again still he would not enter heaven, because there is another point in the condition which he would have violated - "unless a man be born of the *Spirit*, he can not see the kingdom of God." So that the best exertions of the flesh do not reach this high point, the being born again of the Spirit of God.

And now we must say, that regeneration consists in this. God the Holy Spirit, in a supernatural manner - mark, by the word supernatural I mean just what it strictly means; supernatural, more than natural - works upon the hearts of men, and they by the operations of the divine Spirit become regenerate men; but without the Spirit they never can be regenerated. And unless God the Holy Spirit, who "worketh in us to will and to do," should operate upon the will and the conscience, regeneration is an absolute impossibility, and therefore so is salvation. "What!" says one, "do you mean to say that God absolutely interposes in the salvation of every man to make him regenerate?" I do indeed; in the salvation of every

person there is an actual putting forth of the divine power, whereby the dead sinner is quickened, the unwilling sinner is made willing, the desperately hard sinner has his conscience made tender; and he who rejected God and despised Christ, is brought to cast himself down at the feet of Jesus. This is called fanatical doctrine, mayhap; that we can not help; it is scriptural doctrine, that is enough for us. "Except a man be born of the Spirit he can not see the kingdom of God; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." If you like it not, quarrel with my Master, not with me; I do but simply declare his own revelation, that there must be in your heart something more than you can ever work there. There must be a divine operation; call it a miraculous operation, if you please; it is in some sense so. There must be a divine interposition, a divine working, a divine influence, or else, do what you may, without that you perish, and are undone; "for except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." The change is radical; it gives us new natures, makes us love what we hated and hate what we loved, sets us in a new road; makes our habits different, our thoughts different, makes us different in private, and different in public. So that being in Christ it is fulfilled: "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."

II. And, now I must come to the second point. I trust I have explained regeneration, so that all may see what it is. Now, WHAT DOES THE EXPRESSION, "SEEING THE KINGDOM OF GOD," MEAN? It means two things. To see the kingdom of God on earth is to be a member of the mystical church - it is to enjoy the liberty and privileges of the child of God. To see the kingdom of heaven means to have power in prayer, to have communion with Christ, to have fellowship with the Holy Ghost; and to bring forth and produce all those joyous and blessed fruits which are the effect of regeneration. In a higher sense, "to see the kingdom of God," means to be admitted into heaven. Except a man be born again, he can not know about heavenly things on earth, and he can not enjoy heavenly blessings for ever - "he can not see the kingdom of God."

III. I think I may just pass over the second point without remark, and proceed to notice, in the third place, WHY IT IS THAT "UNLESS A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CAN NOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD." And I

will confine my remarks to the kingdom of God in the world to come.

Why, he cannot see the kingdom of God, because *he would be out of place in heaven*. A man that is not born again could not enjoy heaven. There is an actual impossibility in his nature, which prevents him from enjoying any of the bliss of Paradise. You think, mayhap, that heaven consists in those walls of jewels, in those pearly gates, and gates of gold; not so, that is the habitation of heaven. Heaven dwells there, but that is not heaven. Heaven is a state that is made here, that is made in the heart; made by God's Spirit within us, and unless God the Spirit has renewed us, and caused us to be born again, we can not enjoy the things of heaven. Why, it is a physical impossibility that ever a swine should deliver a lecture on astronomy; every man will clearly perceive that it must be impossible that a snail should build a city; and there is just as much impossibility that a sinner unmended, should enjoy heaven. Why, there would be nothing there for him to enjoy; if he could be put into the place where heaven is, he would be miserable; he would cry, "Let me away, let me away; let me away from this miserable place!" I appeal to yourselves; a sermon is too long for you very often; the singing of God's praises is dull, dry work; you think that going up to God's house is very tedious. What will you do where they praise God day without night? If just a short discourse here is very wearying, what will you think of the eternal talkings of the redeemed through all ages of the wonders of redeeming love? If the company of the righteous is very irksome to you, what will be their company throughout eternity? I think many of you are free to confess that psalm singing is not a bit to your taste, that you care naught about any spiritual things; give you your bottle of wine, and set you down at your ease, that is heaven for you! Well, there is no such a heaven yet made; and therefore there is no heaven for you. The only heaven there is, is the heaven of spiritual men, the heaven of praise, the heaven of delight in God, the heaven of acceptance in the beloved, the heaven of communion with Christ. Now, you do not understand any thing about this; you could not enjoy it if you were to have it; you have not the capabilities for doing so. You, yourselves, from the very fact of your not being born again, are your own barrier to heaven, and if God were to open the gate wide, and say, "Come in," you could not enjoy heaven, if you were admitted; for unless a man be born again, there is an impossibility, a moral impossibility, of his seeing

the kingdom of God. Suppose there are some persons here who are entirely deaf, who have never heard sounds; well, I say they can not hear singing. Do I when I say it, say a cruel thing ? It is their own disability that prevents them. So when God says you can not see the kingdom of heaven, he means that it is your own disability for the enjoyment of heaven, that will prevent you ever entering there.

But there are some other reasons; there are reasons why

"Those holy gates for ever bar  
Pollution, sin, and shame."

There are reasons, besides those in yourselves, why you can not see the kingdom of God, unless you are born again. *Ask yon spirits* before the throne: "Angels, principalities and powers, would ye be willing that men who love not God, who believe not in Christ, who have not been born again, should dwell here?" I see them, as they look down upon us, and hear them answering, "No! Once we fought the dragon and expelled him because he tempted us to sin; we must not and we will not, have the wicked here. These alabaster walls must not be soiled with black and lustful fingers; the white pavement of heaven must not be stained and rendered filthy by the unholy feet of ungodly men. No!" I see a thousand spears bristling, and the fiery faces of a myriad seraphs thrust over the walls of Paradise. "No, while these arms have strength, and these wings have power, no sin shall ever enter here." I address myself moreover to the saints in heaven, redeemed by sovereign grace: "Children of God, are ye willing that the wicked should enter heaven as they are, without being born again? Ye love men, say, say, say, are ye willing that they should be admitted as they are?" I see Lot rise up, and he cries, "Admit them into heaven! No! What! must I be vexed with the conversation of Sodomites again, as once I was?" I see Abraham; and he comes forward, and he says, "No; I can not have them here. I had enough of them while I was with them on earth - their jests and jeers, their silly talkings, their vain conversation, vexed and grieved us. We want them not here." And, heavenly though they be, and loving as their spirits are, yet there is not a saint in heaven who would not resent with the utmost indignation the approach of any one of you to the gates of paradise, if you are still unholy,

and have not been born again.

But all that were nothing. We might perhaps scale the ramparts of heaven, if they were only protected by angels, and burst the gates of paradise open, if only the saints defended them. But there is another reason than that - *God has said it himself* - "Except a man be born again, he not see the kingdom of God." What sinner, wilt thou scale the battlements of paradise when God is ready to thrust thee down to hell? Wilt thou with impudent face brazen him out? God has said it, God hath said it, with a voice of thunder, "Ye shall not see the kingdom of heaven." Can ye wrestle with the Almighty? Can ye overthrow Omnipotence? Can ye grapple with the Most High? Worm of the dust! canst thou overcome thy Maker? Trembling insect of an hour, shaken by the lightnings when far overhead they flash far athwart the sky, wilt thou dare the hand of? Wilt thou venture to defy him to his face? Ah! he would laugh at thee. As the snow melteth before the sun, as wax runneth at the fierceness of the fire, so wouldst thou, if his fury should once lay hold of thee. Think not that thou canst overcome him. He has sealed the gate of Paradise against thee, and there is no entrance. The God of justice says, "I will not reward the wicked with the righteous; I will not suffer my goodly, godly Paradise to be stained by wicked ungodly men. If they turn I will have mercy upon them; but if they turn not, as I live, I will rend them in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver." Now, sinner, canst thou brazen it out against him! Wilt thou rush upon the thick bosses of Jehovah's bucklers? Wilt thou try to scale his heaven when his arrow is stringed upon the bow to reach thine heart? What! when the glittering sword is at thy neck and ready to slay thee? Wilt thou endeavor to strive against thy Maker? No potsherd, no; contend with thy fellow potsherd. Go, crawling grasshopper; go, fight with thy brothers; strive with them, but come not against the Almighty. He hath said it, and you never shall, you never shall enter heaven, unless you are born again. Again, I say, quarrel not with me; I have but delivered my Master's message. Take it, disbelieve it if you dare; but if you disbelieve it, rail not at me, for it is God's message, and I speak in love to your soul lest, lacking it, you should perish in the dark, and walk blindfold to your everlasting perdition.

IV. Now, my friends, A LITTLE EXPOSTULATION WITH YOU, and then

farewell. I hear one man say, "Well, well, well, I see it. *I will hope that I shall be born again after I am dead.*" O, sir, believe me, you will be a miserable fool for your pains. When men die their state is fixed.

"Fixed as their everlasting state,  
Could they repent, 'tis now too late."

Our life is like that wax melting in the flame; death puts its stamp on it, and then it cools, and the impress never can be changed. You to-day are like the burning metal running forth from the cauldron in the mold; death cools you in your mold, and you are cast in that shape throughout eternity. The voice of doom crieth over the dead, "He that is holy let him be holy still; he that is unjust let him be unjust still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." The damned are lost forever; they can not be born again; they go on cursing, ever being cursed ; ever fighting against God, and ever being trampled beneath his feet; they go on ever mocking, ever being laughed at for their mockery; ever rebelling and ever being tortured with the whips of conscience, because they are ever sinning. They can not be regenerated because they are dead.

"Well", says another, "*I will take care that I am regenerated first before I die.*" Sir, I repeat again, thou art a fool in talking thus; how knowest thou that thou shalt live ? Hast thou taken a lease of thy life, as thou bast of thy house? Canst thou insure the breath within thy nostrils? Canst thou say in certainty that another ray of light shall ever reach thine eye? Canst thou be sure that, as thine heart is beating a funeral march to the grave, thou wilt not soon beat the last note; and so thou shalt die where thou standest or sittest now? O, man! if thy bones were iron, and thy sinews brass, and thy lungs steel, then mightest thou say, "I shall live." But thou art made of dust; thou art like the flower of the field; thou mayest die now. Lo! I see death standing yonder, moving to and fro the stone of time upon his scythe, to sharpen it; to-day, to-day, for some of you he grasps the scythe - and away, away, he mows the fields, and you fall one by one. You must not. and you can not live. God carries us away as a flood, like a ship in a Whirlpool; like the log in a current, dashed onward to the cataract. There is no stopping any one of us; we are all dying now! and yet you say you will be regenerated ere you die! Ay sirs, but are you

regenerated now? For if not, it may be too late to hope for to-morrow. To-morrow you may be in hell, sealed up for ever by adamantine destiny, which never can be moved.

"Well," cries another, *"I do not care much about it; for I see very little in being shut out of Paradise."* Ah, sir, it is because thou dost not understand it. Thou smilest at it now; but there will be a day when thy conscience will be tender, when thy memory will be strong, when thy judgment will be enlightened, and when thou wilt think very differently from what thou dost now. Sinners in hell are not the fools they are on earth ; in hell they do not laugh at everlasting burnings; in the pit they do not despise the words "eternal fire." The worm that never dieth, when it is gnawing, gnaws out all joke and laughter; you may despise God now, and despise me now, for what I say, but death will change your note. O, my hearers, if that were all, I would be willing. You may despise me, yes, you may; but O! I beseech you, do not despise yourselves; O! be not so fool-hardy as to go whistling to hell, and laughing to the pit; for when you are there, sirs, you will find it a different thing from what you dream it to be now. When you see the gates of Paradise shut against you, you will find it to be a more important matter than you judge of now. You came to hear me preach to-day, as you would have gone to the opera or playhouse; you thought I should amuse you. Ah! that is not my aim, God is my witness, I came here solemnly in earnest, to wash my hands of your blood. If you are damned, any one of you, it shall not be because I did not warn you. Men and women, if ye perish, my hands are washed in innocency; I have told you of your doom. I again cry, repent, repent, repent, for "unless ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." I came here determined this morning, if I must use rough words, to use them; to speak right on against men, and for men too; for the things we say against you now are really for your good. We do but warn you, lest you perish. But ah! I hear one of you saying, "I do not understand this mystery; pray explain it to me." Fool, fool, that thou art; do you see that fire ? We are startled up from our beds, the light is at the window; we rush down stairs; people are hurrying to and fro; the street is trampled thick with crowds: they are rushing toward the house, which is in a burst of flame. The firemen are at their work; a stream of water is pouring upon the house; but hark ye! hark ye! there is a man up stairs; there is a man in the top room; there is just time for him

to escape, and barely. A shout is raised - "Aho! fire! fire! fire! aho!" - but the man does not make his appearance at the window. See, the ladder is placed against the walls; it is up to the window sill - a strong hand dashes in the casement! What is the man after, all the while? What! is he tied down in his bed? Is he a cripple? Has some fiend got hold of him, and nailed him to the floor? No, no, no; he feels the boards getting hot beneath his feet, the smoke is stifling him, the flame is burning all around, he knows there is but one way of escape, by that ladder! What is he doing? He is sitting down - no, you can not believe me - he is sitting down and saying, "The origin of this fire is very mysterious; I wonder how it is to be discovered; how shall we understand it?" Why, you laugh at him! You are laughing at yourselves. You are seeking to have this question and that question answered, when your soul is in peril of eternal life! O! when you are saved, it will be time then to ask questions; but while you are now in the burning house, and in danger of destruction, it is not your time to be puzzling yourselves about free will, fixed fate, predestination absolute. All these questions are good and well enough afterward for those that are saved. Let the man on shore try to find out the cause of the storm; your only business now is to ask, "What must I do to be saved? And how can I escape from the great damnation that awaiteth me?"

But ah! my friends, I can not speak as I wish. I think I feel, this morning, something like Dante, when he wrote his *"Il Inferno."* Men said of him that he had been in hell; he looked like it. He had thought of it so long, that they said, "He has been in hell," he spoke with such an awful earnestness. Ah! I if I could, I would speak like that too. It is only a few days more, and I shall meet you face to face; I can look over the lapse of a few years, when you and I shall stand face to face before God's bar. "Watchman, watchman," saith a voice, "didst thou warn them? didst thou warn them?" Will any of you then say I did not? No, even the most abandoned of you will, at that day, say, "We laughed, we scoffed at it, we cared not for it; but, O Lord, we are obliged to speak the truth; the man was in earnest about it; he told us of our doom, and he is clear." Will you say so? I know you will.

But yet this one remark - to be cast out of heaven is an awful thing. Some



of you have parents there; you have dear friends there; they grasped your hand in death, and said, "Farewell until we meet you." But if you never see the kingdom of God, you can never see them again. "My mother," says one, "sleeps in the graveyard; I often go to the tomb and put some flowers upon it, in remembrance of her who nursed me; but must I never see her again?" No, never again; no, never, unless you are born again. Mothers, you have had infants that have gone to heaven; you would like to see your family all around the throne; but you will never see your children more, unless you are born again. Will you bid adieu this day to the immortal? Will you say farewell this hour to your glorified friends in Paradise? You must say so, or else be converted. You must fly to Christ, and trust in him, and his Spirit must renew you, or else you must look up to heaven, and say, "Choir of the blest! I shall never hear you sing; parents of my youth, guardians of my infancy, I love you, but between you and myself there is a great gulf fixed; I am cast away, and you are saved." O, I beseech you, think on these matters; and when you go away, let it not be to forget what I have said. If you are at all impressed this morning, put not away the impression; it may be your last warning; it will be a sorrowful thing to be lost with the notes of the gospel in your ears, and to perish under the ministry of truth.

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## The Relationship Of Marriage

Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you. -  
Jeremiah 3:14

These be dainty words - a grateful anodyne for a troubled conscience. Such singular comfort is fitted to cheer up the soul, and put the brightest hue on all her prospects. The person to whom it is addressed hath an eminently happy position. Satan will be very busy with you, believer in Christ, to-night. He will say, "What right have you to believe that God is married to you?" He will remind you of your imperfections, and of the coldness of your love, and perhaps of the backsliding state of your heart. He will say, "What, with all this about you, can you be presumptuous enough to claim union with the Son of God? Can you venture to hope that there will be any marriage between you and the holy One." He will tell you as though he were an advocate for holiness, that it is not possible that such a one as you feel yourself to be, can really be a partaker of so choice and special a privilege as being married unto the Lord. Let this suffice for an answer to all such suggestions: the text is found addressed, not to Christians in a flourishing state of heart, not to believers upon Mount Tabor, transfigured with Christ, not to a spouse all chaste and fair, and sitting under the banner of love, feasting with her lord; but it is addressed to those who are called "backsliding children." God speaks to his church in her lowest and most abject estate, and though he does not fail to rebuke her sin, to lament it, and to make her lament it too, yet still in such an estate he says to her, "I am married unto you." Oh! it is grace that he should be married to any of us, but it is grace at its highest pitch, it is the ocean of grace at its flood-tide, that he should speak thus of "backsliding children." That he should speak in notes of love of any of the fallen race of Adam is "passing strange—'tis wonderful;" but that he should select those who have behaved treacherously to him, who have turned their backs to him and not their faces, who have played him false, although, nevertheless, his own, and say unto them, "I am married unto You;" this is loving-kindness beyond aught we could want or ween. Hear,

O heaven, and admire, O earth, let every understanding heart break forth into singing, yea, let every humble mind bless and praise the condescension of the Most High! Cheer up poor drooping hearts. Here is sweet encouragement for some of you who are depressed, and disconsolate, and sit alone, to draw living waters out of this well. Do not let the noise of the archers keep you back from the place of the drawing of water. Be not afraid lest you should be cursed whilst you are anticipating the blessing. If you do but trust in Jesus, if you have but a vital interest in the once humbled, now exalted Lord, come with holy boldness to the text, and whatever comfort there be here, receive it and rejoice therein.

To this end let us attentively consider the relationship, which is here spoken of, and diligently enquire how far we are experimentally acquainted with it.

I. IN CONSIDERING THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH IS HERE SPOKEN OF, you will observe that the affinity of marriage, though exceedingly near kin, is not one of birth.

Marriage is not a relationship of original consanguinity. It is contracted between two persons who may, during the early part of their lives, have been entire strangers to one another; they may scarcely have looked each other in the face, excepting during the few months that precede their nuptials. The families may have had no previous acquaintance, they may have lived afar off as the very antipodes. One may have been opulent, and in possession of vast domains, and the other may have been indigent, and reduced to straitened circumstances. Genealogies do not regulate it: disparities do not hinder it. The connection is not of natural birth but of voluntary contract or covenant. Such is the relationship, which exists between the believer and his God. Whatever relation there was originally between God and man, it was stamped out and extinguished by the fall. We were aliens, strangers, and foreigners, far off from God by wicked works. We had henceforth no relation to the Most High; we were banished from his presence as traitors to his throne, as condemned criminals who had revolted against his power. Between our souls and God there could be no communion. He is light and we are dark. He is holiness and we are sin. He is heaven, and we are far more akin to hell. In him

there is consummate greatness, and we are puny insignificance. He filleth all worlds with his strength, and as for us, we are the creatures of a day, who know nothing, and who are crushed before the moth. The gulf between God and a sinner is something terrible to contemplate. There is a vast difference between God and the creature even when the creature is pure, but between God and the fallen creature—oh! where is the he that shall measure the infinite leagues of distance? Where was there a means of ever bridging so terrible a chasm except the Lord Jesus had found it in his own person, and in his own passion? How could we have ever perceived the infinite design, unless it had been revealed to us as an accomplished fact, by which he has reconciled us and brought us into communion with himself, that we should be married unto him? Now, Christian, just contemplate what you were, and the degraded family to which you belonged, that you may magnify the riches of his grace who espoused you in your low estate, and hath so bound himself with all the pledges of a husband that he saith, "I am married unto you." What were you? That is a black catalogue of foul transgressors which the apostle gives in the first epistle to the Corinthians (6:9, 11), I forbear a recital of the filthy vices—at the end of which he says, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified." In those crimes he enumerates, many of us had a share, nay, all of us! What was our father, and what our father's house? What was our aim? What was our practice? What were our desires? What were our tendencies? They were earthly, downward, hell-ward. We were at a distance from God, and we loved that distance well. But the Lord Jesus took upon himself our nature: upon him the Lord did lay the iniquity of all his people. And why? Not merely to save us from the wrath to come, but that we, being lifted up out of our degradation by virtue of his atonement, and being sanctified and made meet by the power of the Spirit, should have a relationship established between us and God which was not formed by nature, but which has been achieved and consummated by astounding grace. Unto the Lord let us give thanks this night, as we recollect the hole of the pit whence we were digged, and call to mind the fact that now we are united to him in ties of blood and bonds of love.

Marriage-union is the result of choice. Any exceptions to this rule that might be pleaded, are void in reason, because they arise from folly and

transgression: there ought to be no exception. It is scarcely a true marriage at all where there has not been a choice on each side. But certainly if the Lord our God is married unto us, and we are married unto God, the choice is mutual. The first choice is with God. That choice was made, we believe, before the foundation of the world

"Long ere the sun's refulgent ray  
Primeval shades of darkness drove,  
They on his sacred bosom lay,  
Lov'd with an everlasting love."

God never began to love his people. It were impossible for the spiritual mind to entertain so unworthy a thought. He saw them in the glass of his decrees; he foresaw them, with his eye of prescience, in the mass of creatureship, all fallen and ruined; but yet he beheld them, and pitied and loved them, elected them and set them apart. "They shall be mine," saith the Lord. Here we are all agreed; and we ought to be all agreed upon the second point, namely, that we also have chosen our God. Brethren, no man is saved against his will. If any man should say that he were saved against his will, it would be a proof that he was not saved at all; for reluctancy or indifference betrays an entire alienation of all the affections of the heart. If the will is still set against God, then the whole man is proven to be at enmity with him. By nature we did not choose God': by nature we kicked against his law, and turned aside from his dominion. But is it not written, "My people shall be willing in the day of my power"? Do you not understand how, without any violation of your free agency, God has used proper arguments and motives so as to influence your understanding? Through our understanding our will is convinced, and our souls are spontaneously drawn. Then we throw down the weapons of our rebellion, and humble ourselves at the footstool of the Most High; and now we do freely choose that which we once wickedly abhorred. Do not you, Christian, at this very hour, choose Christ with all your heart to be your Lord and Savior? If it could be put to you over again to make an election whether you should love the world or love Christ, would you not say, "Oh! my Beloved is better to me than ten thousand worlds! He fixes all my love, engrosses all my passion: I give myself up to him most freely; he bought me with a great price; he won me with his great love; he

enraptured me with his unspeakable charms, so I give myself up to him"? Here is a mutual choice. I wish that some of our friends would forbear to make such a stand against the doctrine of God's choosing us. If they will but read Scripture with an unprejudiced mind, I am quite sure they will find it there. It always seems inexplicable to me that those who claim free will so very boldly for man, should not also allow some free will to God. I suppose, my brethren would not like to have to be married to somebody whom they had not chosen, and why should Jesus Christ not have the right to choose his own bride? Why should he not set his love where he will, and have the right to exercise, according to his own sovereign mind, that bestowment of his heart and hand which none could by any means deserve? This know, that he will have his own choice whether we impugn the doctrine or not; for he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. At the same time, I wish that those friends who believe this truth, would receive the other, which is quite as true. We do choose Christ in return, and that without any violation of our free agency. Some people cannot see two truths at one time; they cannot understand that God has made all truth to be double. Truth is many sided. While divine predestination is true, human responsibility is also true; while it is true that Christ chooses us, it is also true that the unrenewed mind will not choose him: "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." This is the sin and the condemnation of man, that "light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Settle it, however, in your minds, that when God says, "I am married unto you," it implies that there is a blessed choice on both sides; and so it is a true marriage.

3. Our third reflection is, that marriage is cemented by mutual love. Where there is not this mutual affection, it deserves not the name of marriage. The dark shadow of a blessing they cannot realize must be a heavy load for either heart to bear; but where there is true and genuine love, it is the sweetest and happiest mode of living. It is one of the blessings of paradise, which has been preserved to us after the fall. Without love, wedded life must be a very purgatory above ground. In the solemn contract, which has brought our souls this night to God, the marriage is sustained, cemented, strengthened, and made delightful by

mutual love. Need I talk to you of the love of God? It is a theme we are scarcely competent to talk of. You need to sit down and weep about it for very joy, joy which fills the heart, and makes the eyes overflow, but well nigh chains the tongue, for it is a deep, profound, and inexpressible. "He loved me, and gave himself for me." "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." "As the Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you. Oh, the love of God—it would surpass the powers of an angel to set it forth. Sure, sure, it shall be the blest employment of eternity's long ages for us to comprehend it; and, perhaps, when myriad's of ages have rolled over our happy souls, we shall still be as much struck with wonder with it as we were at first. The marvel doth not diminish on inspection: familiarity cannot make it common. The nearer we approach, the deeper our awe. It will be as great a surprise that God should love such cold, such faithless, such unworthy beings as ourselves, at the end of ten thousand years as it was at first, perhaps more so. The more thoroughly we shall know ourselves, the more fully we shall understand the good of the Lord; thus will our wonder grow and swell. Even in heaven, we shall be lost in surprise and admiration at the love of God to us. The rapture will augment the reverence we feel. Well, but, brethren beloved, I trust we also love him in return! Do you never feel one soft affection rising after another as you muse on the Christ of God? When you sometimes listen to a sermon in which the Savior's dear affection to you is set forth, do you not feel that the unbidden tear wets your cheek? Does not your heart swell sometimes, as if it were unable to hold your emotions? Is there not a "joy unspeakable and full of glory" that comes over you? Can you not say—

"Jesus, I love thy charming name,  
'Tis music to mine ear;  
Fain would I sound it out so loud  
That earth and heaven should hear"?

I hope you do not need to sing to-night—

"'Tis a point I long to know."

but, I trust, that in the solemn silence of your souls you can say, "Thou

knowest that I love thee;" grieved that the question should be asked, but still ready to answer, with Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Now, it is impossible for you to love God without the strong conclusive evidence that God loves you. I once knew a good woman who was the subject of many doubts, and when I got to the bottom of her doubt, it was this: she knew she loved Christ, but she was afraid he did not love her. "Oh!" I said, "that is a doubt that will never trouble me; never, by any possibility, because I am sure of this, that the heart is so corrupt, naturally, that love to God never did get there without God's putting it there." You may rest quite certain, that if you love God, it is a fruit, and not a root. It is the fruit of God's love to you, and did not get there by the force of any goodness in you. You may conclude, with absolute certainty, that God loves you if you love God. There never was any difficulty on his part. It always was on your part, and now that the difficulty is gone from you, none whatever remains. O let our hearts rejoice and be filled with great delight, because the Savior has loved us and given himself for us. So let us realize the truth of the text, "I am married unto you."

4. My fourth observation is, that this marriage necessitates certain mutual relations. I cannot say "duties," for the word seems out of place on either side. How can I speak of the great God making pledges of faithfulness? and yet with reverence, let me word it so, for in any vocabulary I have hardly words to set it forth. When God becomes a husband, he undertakes to do a husband's part. When he says, "Thy Maker is thy husband," you may rest assured that he does not take the relationship without assuming (well, I must say it) all the responsibilities which belong to that condition. It is the part of God to nourish, to cherish, to shield, to protect, to bless those with whom he condescends, in infinite mercy, to enter into union. When the Lord Jesus Christ became the husband of his church, he felt that he was under an engagement to us, and inasmuch as there were debts incurred, he paid them.

"Yes, said the Son, with her I'll go,  
Through all the depths of sin and woe;  
And on the cross will even dare  
The bitter pains of death to bear."



He never shrunk from the doing of any of those loving works which belong to the husband of his chosen spouse. He exalted the word "husband," and made it to be more full of meaning than it had ever been before, so that the apostle could see it glittering in a new light, and could say, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Oh, yes! dear friends, there is a responsibility arising out of this relationship, but he of whom we speak has not departed from it; you know he has not. And now, what upon our side? The wife has to reverence her husband, and to be subject unto him in all things. That is precisely our position towards him who has married us. Let his will be our will. Let his wish be our law. Let us not need to be flogged to service, but let us say—

"'Tis love that makes our willing feet  
In swift obedience move."

O Christian, if the Master condescends to say, "I am married unto you," you will not any longer ask, "What is my duty?" but you will say, "What can I do for him?" The loving wife does not say, "What is my duty?" and stand coldly questioning how far she should go, and how little she may do, but all that she can do for him who is her husband she will do, and everything that she can think of, every thing she can devote herself to, in striving to please him in all things she will most certainly do and perform. And you and I will do the same if we have realized our union with Christ. O beloved, do not grow sentimental and waste your energies in driveling fancies as some have done. Speak ye of a wife?—where the family is large, the work is heavy, and the responsibility great. I could fain remind you here, did time permit, of the words of King Lemuel, and the prophecy that his mother taught him. Bear with me at least while I admonish you to such a one, that the heart of thy husband may safely trust in thee. Let it be thy care to give meat to thy household. Lay thy hands to the spindle; suffer not thine industry to fail; eat not the bread of idleness. Stretch out thine hand to the poor, and reach forth both thine hands to the needy. Open thy mouth with wisdom, and in thy tongue be the law of kindness. Yea, and consider this with thyself, that in thy regard for all the duties of thy station, thou art fulfilling thy bounden obligations to thy Lord. Short

words, but mighty, matchless deeds have told how Jesus loved us. Be it ours to carve our song of love to him on the hearts of some tender nurslings who are cast in our way, and committed to our care. O that the life I now live in the flesh, by faith in the Son of God, might become a poem, and a grateful response to him that loved me, and gave himself for me. I hope we do know, then, that when God says, "I am married unto you," it necessitates mutual relations.

5. Fifthly, it also involves mutual confidences. How shall we call that a marriage where the husband and wife are still two persons, maintaining individuality as if it were a scrupulous condition of the contract? That is utterly foreign to the divine idea. In a true marriage, the husband and wife become one. Henceforth their joys and their cares, their hopes and their labors, their sorrows and their pleasures, rise and blend together in one stream. Brethren, the Lord our God has said it, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant." "Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" There was the secret, because there is a union between Christ and his people, which there is not between Christ and the world. How joyously do the words sound—they have a silvery ring in them—"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Christ keeps nothing back from you. Remember another word of his: "If it were not so, I would have told you." Oh, how delightful! He says, "I go to prepare a place for you." He tells them that he is going to prepare a place for them, and then he says, "If it were not so, I would have told you—I keep no secrets back from you; you are near me, my flesh and my bones. I left my Father's house in glory, that I might become one with you, and manifest myself to you, and I keep back nothing from you, but reveal my very heart and my very soul to you." Now, Christian, just see: you stand in the relation of a spouse, and you must tell your very heart out to Christ. No, do not go and tell it to your neighbors, nor your friends, for, somehow or other, the most sympathizing heart cannot enter into all our grief's. There is a grief, which the stranger cannot intermeddle with; but there never was a pang into which Christ could not enter. Make a confidant of the Lord Jesus—tell him all. You are married unto him: play

the part of a wife who keeps no secrets back, no trials back, no joys back; tell them all to him. I was in a house yesterday where there was a little child, and it was said to me, "He is such a funny child." I asked in what way, and the mother said, "Well, if he tumbles down and hurts himself in the kitchen, he will always go up stairs crying and tell somebody, and then he comes down and says, "I told somebody;" and if he is upstairs he goes down and tells somebody, and when he comes back it is always, "I told somebody," and he does not cry any more, Ah! well, I thought, we must tell somebody: it is human nature to want to have sympathy, but if we would always go to Jesus, and tell him all, and there leave it, we might often dismiss the burden, and be refreshed with a grateful song. Let us do so, and go with all our joys and all our troubles unto him, who says, "I am married unto you." I know the devil will say, "Why, you must not tell the Lord your present trouble: it is too little, and besides, you know you did wrong, and brought it upon yourself." Well, but you would tell your husband, would you not? and will you not tell your Lord? You could not tell a master, but you can tell a husband. Oh! do not go back into the old legal state of calling Christ Baali, but call him Ishi, "My man, my husband," and put that confidence in him which it is expected that the wife should place in a husband who dearly loves her.

6. We must go on to a sixth point. This marriage implies fellowship in all its relations. Whatsoever a husband possesses becomes his wife's. She cannot be poor if he be rich; and what little she has, whatever it may be, comes to him. If she be in debt, her debts become his. When Jesus Christ took his people, he gave them all he had. There is nothing which Christ has which he has not given to us. It is noteworthy that he has given his church his own name! "Where?" say you. Well, there are two passages in Jeremiah that most remarkably illustrate this (chap. 23:6, and chap. 23:16). In the one it says, "This is the name whereby he shall be called," and in the other, "This is the name wherewith she shall be called." In both, the name is identical. "Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness." What "She shall be called"? Yes, as though he said, "She shall take my name, and with the name, of course, the entire open acknowledgment of his interest in her and her interest in him. As such she is partaker of all his glory: if he be a king, she is a queen; if he be in heaven, "He hath raised us up together, and made us to sit in heavenly

places with him;" if he be heavenly, she also shall bear the image of the heavenly; if he be immortal, so shall she be; and if he be at the right hand of the Father, so shall she be also highly exalted with him. Now, it is saying but very little when I add, that, therefore, whatever we have, belongs to him—oh! it is so little, so very little, but one wishes it were more. "O that Christ were not so glorious as he is"—I have sometimes thought. It was half a wicked wish, but I meant it well, that I might help to glorify him. O that he were still poor, that one might ask him to a feast! O that he were still in this world, that one could break the alabaster box of ointment and pour it on his head! But thou art so great, most blessed Master, that we can do nothing to increase thee! Thou art so high, we cannot exalt thee! Thou art so happy, that we cannot bless thee! Yet, what am I saying? It is all a mistake! He is here still. He calls every one of his people "Members of his body;" and if you wish to enrich him, help the poor; if you want to feed him, feed the hungry. They that bind garments about the naked, put vestures upon the Lord himself. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." I hope we can sing without falsehood that verse of Dr. Watts's:

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"And if I might make some reserve,  
And duty did not call,  
I love my God with zeal so great,  
That I could give him all."

7. A seventh observation, and then I shall refrain from dwelling longer on this point. The very crown of marriage is mutual delight and complacency. The wife of a Persian nobleman, having gone to a feast, which was given by the great Darius, was asked by her husband whether she did not think that Darius was the finest man in the world. No, she said, she did not think so; she never saw any one in the world who was comparable to her husband. And doubtless that is just the opinion which a husband forms of his wife and a wife of her husband where the marriage is such as it should be. Now, certainly Christ sets a very high store upon us. I recollect turning over that passage in Solomon's Songs, looking at it and wondering how it could be true—believing it, and yet not

being able to comprehend it—where Christ says, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee!" Oh, what eyes he must have! We say that love is blind; but that cannot be true in Christ's case, for he seeth all things. Why, this is how it is: he sees himself in us. He does not see us as we are, but in his infinite grace he sees us as we are to be, as Kent sings:—

"Not as she stood in Adam's fall,  
When sin and ruin covered all;  
But as she'll stand another day,  
Brighter than sun's meridian ray."

The sculptor says he can see a bust in a block of marble, and that all he has to do is to chip away the extra marble, and let the bust appear. So Christ can see a perfect being in every one of us, if we are his people; and what he is about with us day by day is taking off the excrescence's, making us to be like himself. He can see us as we shall one day be before the throne of God in heaven, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Ah! beloved, he sets great store by us. His delights are with the sons of men. He loves to hear our praise, and to listen to our prayer. The songs of his people are his sweet perfume, and communion with his people is like the beds of spices, the beds of lilies, where he feedeth. And as for us, who are his people, I am sure we can say that there is no delight, which can equal communion with Christ. We have tried other delights—shame upon us!—we have tried some of them, but after having done so, we find that there is nothing like our Lord, "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity, saith the preacher;" but when we come to Christ, we find no vanity there, but can say:—

"Where can such sweetness be  
As I have tasted in thy love,  
As I have found in thee?"

The Christian's heart is like Noah's dove: it flies over the wide waste, and cannot rest the sole of its foot until it comes back to Christ. He is the true Noah, who puts out his hand and takes in the weary, buttering dove, and gives it rest. There is no peace the whole world over but with Christ.

"There's no such thing as pleasure here,  
My Jesus is my all;  
As thou dost shine or disappear,  
My pleasures rise or fall."

Thus much, then, by way, as it were, of skimming the surface of this delightful word, "I am married unto you."

II. Two or three sentences only upon the second point. HOW FAR DO YOU AND I EXPERIMENTALLY UNDERSTAND THIS?

I am afraid some of you think me half crazy to-night. You are saying, "Well, I do not comprehend this; whatever is the man talking about? God married to us! Christ married to us! I do not comprehend it!" God have mercy upon thee, my poor hearer, and bring thee to know it! But let me tell thee, if thou didst but know it, there is a secret here that would make thee a thousand times more happy than all the joys of the world can ever make thee. Thou remindest me of the cock in the fable, who found a diamond on the dunghill, and as he turned it over, he said, "I would rather have found a grain of barley." That was according to his nature. And so with you. This precious pearl of union to God will seem to be nothing to you: a little worldly pleasure will be more to your taste. One could weep to think there should be such ignorance of true joy and true delight I Oh! blind eyes, that cannot see beauty in the Savior! Oh! stone-cold hearts, that can see no loveliness in him! Jesus! they are besotted, they are mad, who cannot love thee! It is a strange infatuation of the sons of men to think that they can do without thee, that they can see any light apart from thee, thou Sun of Righteousness, or anything like beauty in all the gardens of the world apart from thee, thou Rose of Sharon, thou Lily of the Valley! O that they knew thee!

"A thousand sorrows pierce my soul,  
To think that all are not thine own."

Do I address any to-night, who, while they pretend to be religious people,

hold loosely by their allegiance to the Lord? There are many such, and we occasionally meet with them here. They cannot appease their conscience without some show of profession, so they join with us as hearers and spectators in the solemn assembly; but they never unite with the church, because they have not devoutly yielded up their hearts to Christ. Ask them the reason, and their answer sounds modest, and yet the reserve it implies is anything but chaste. Do you tell us that you are afraid you should not walk consistently? Would it not be more true to admit that your relationship with the world, your service of mammon, your ordinary pastimes, and your occasional revels, harmless as you try to persuade yourselves they are now, if viewed in the light of espousals to Christ, most be accounted a very shame? So far as the principles of Christianity are concerned, you endorse them with your private creed, and you are "Protestant" enough to prefer the most evangelical doctrines; but the reserve in your conduct is a clear index to a most fatal reserve in your character. You might admit God to be the supreme, but not the exclusive Lord of your heart. You would give the Lord's altar more honor than any other altar, but still you would not remove the high places which desecrate the land. Your opinion is that there is no god in all the earth but the God of Israel, yet your practice is to bow down in the house of Rimmon. You wish to have all the promises of God vouchsafed to you, but you decidedly object to make any vows in his sanctuary. It is to such as you that these delicate appeals are most distasteful, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you." Nothing in your experience responds to this. You stand aloof as if you were aggrieved. I must warn you, therefore, that God can be your God only in these bonds of covenant union. But, Christian, I speak to you. Surely you know something about this, that God is married to you? If you do, can you not say with me, "Yes, and he has been a very faithful husband to me"? Now, there is no one of you who can demur to that! Thus far he has been very faithful to you, and what have you been to him? How kind and tender has he been; how faithful, how generous, how sympathizing! In your every affliction he has been afflicted, and the angel of his presence has saved you. Just in your extremity he has come to your help. He has carried you through every difficulty, even until now. Oh! you can speak well of him, can you not? And as for his love, Christian, as for his love, what do you think of that? Is it not heaven on earth to you? Do you not reckon it to be

—  
"Heaven above  
To see his face, to taste his love"?

Well, then, speak well of him, speak well of him! Make this world hear his praise! Ring that silver bell in the deaf ears of this generation! Make them know that your Beloved is the fairest of the fair and compel them to enquire, "O thou fairest among women, what is thy Beloved more than another beloved?"

As for you who do not know him, I should like to ask you this question, and do you answer it for yourselves. Do you want to be married to Christ? Do you wish to have him? Oh! then, there will be no difficulties in the way of the match. If thy heart goes after Christ, he will have thee. If, when thou gettest home to thy bedside, thou sayest to him, "Dear Savior, here is my heart, take it, wash it, save me," he will hear thee. Whoever thou mayst be, he will not refuse thee. Oh he seeks thee, he seeks thee! And when thou seekest him, that is a sure sign that he has found thee. Though thou mayst not have found him, yet he has found thee already. The wedding-ring is ready. Faith is the golden ring, which is the token of the marriage bond. Trust the Savior! Trust him! Have done with trusting to thy good works. Have done with depending upon thy merits. Take his works, his merits, and rest alone upon him, for now doth he say unto thee, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord." So may he do unto every one of you, and may Christ's name be glorified forever. Amen.

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## **Religion - A Reality**



For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life. - Deuteronomy 32:47

It appears from this closing remark of Moses, that there were men in his time who thought religion to be vain, although, under the system which then existed, there were many plain proofs of its usefulness: for they who served God in those days prospered, and national advantages always followed nation obedience to God. Under the theocratic government of the Israelites in the wilderness, and in their early history when established in Canaan, their offences against God's law brought upon them famine, plague, or the scourge of marauding hosts; while repentance and a return to allegiance always brought them a deliverer, and a restoration of peace and plenty. They had visibly before their eyes proofs that God did reward virtue; and yet, notwithstanding this, there were some so besotted against God, that they said, "It is a vain thing to serve the Lord." Do you wonder, therefore, that there should be many such under the gospel? It would, indeed, be marvellous if there were not many more, for the gospel is a far more spiritual system than the Jewish dispensation, and its blessings are not of a carnal order. No blessing apparent to carnal eyes rests upon the godly, but sometimes the case appears to be reversed: we see the wicked prosper, and the righteous are trodden under foot. The Christian dispensation is one which requires much faith to receive it. We walk not by sight, but by faith alone; and it is little marvel that when ungodly men see the righteous afflicted, and discover that their comfort lies in matters which only faith can apprehend, they should cry out, "It is a vain thing," and should turn aside from the ordinances of God. Besides, to confess the truth, there have been so many counterfeits of true religion, that it is not remarkable that unconverted men should consider even the genuine article to be but a vain thing. Men have made pretences of wondrous sanctity, whilst inwardly full of rottenness; and sinners have learned to argue with terrible logic: "They are none of them good; they are all deceivers; the best of them are hypocrites, and religion itself is a vain thing." However false may be the conclusion here—and we believe it to be utterly so—yet we do not wonder that men, desiring to believe religion to be a falsehood, have found some support for their unbelief in the hypocrisy of professors.

Now we will grant you this morning that much of the religion which is abroad in the world is a vain thing. The religion of ceremonies is vain. If a man shall trust in the gorgeous pomp of uncommanded mysteries, if he shall consider that there resides some mystic efficacy in a priest, and that by uttering certain words a blessing is infallibly received, we tell him that his religion is a vain thing. You might as well go to the Witch of Endor for grace as to a priest; and if you rely upon words, the "Abracadabra" of a magician will as certainly raise you to heaven, or rather sink you to hell, as the performances of the best ordained minister under heaven. Ceremonies in themselves are vain, futile, empty. There are but two of God's ordaining, they are most simple, and neither of them pretend to have any efficacy in themselves. They only set forth an inward and spiritual grace, not necessarily tied to them, but only given to those who by faith perceive their teachings. All ceremonial religion, no matter how sincere, if it consist in relying upon forms and observances, is a vain thing. So with creed-religion—by which I mean not to speak against creeds, for I love "the form of sound words," but that religion which lies in believing with the intellect a set of dogmas, without partaking of the life of God; all this is a vain thing. Again, that religion which only lies in making a profession of what one does not possess, in wearing the Christian name, and observing the ritual of the Church, but which does not so affect the character as to make a man holy, nor so touch the heart as to make a man God's true servant—such a religion is vain throughout. O my dear hearers, how much worthless religion may you see everywhere! So long as men get the name, they seem content without the substance. Everywhere, it matters not to what Church you turn your eye, you see a vast host of hypocrites, numerous as flies about a dead carcase. On all sides there are deceivers, and deceived; who write "Heaven" upon their brows, but have hell in their hearts; who hang out the sign of an angel over their doors, but have the devil for a host within. Take heed to yourselves; be not deceived, for he who tries the heart and searches the reins of the children of men is not mocked, and he will surely discern between him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not.

But with all these allowances, we still this morning assert most positively that the religion of Christ Jesus, that which has been revealed to us of the Holy Ghost by the apostles and prophets, and specially by the Messiah

himself, when truly received into the heart, is no vain thing. We shall handle the text four ways, taking the word "vain" in different shades of meaning. It is no fiction it is no trifle; it is no folly; it is no speculation. In each case we will prove our assertion by the second sentence—"Because it is your life."

I. First, then, the true religion of Christ, which consists in a vital faith in his person, his blood, and his righteousness, and which produces obedience to his commands, and a love to God, IS NOT A FICTION.

I am not going to argue this morning. I was never sent to argue, but to teach and speak dogmatically. I assert in the name of all those who have tried it, that true religion is not a fiction to us. It is to us the grandest of all realities, and we hope that our testimony and witness, if we be honest men, may prevail with others who may be sceptical upon this point. We say, then, that the objects of true religion are, to those who believe in Jesus, no fiction. God the Father to whom we look with the spirit of adoption, is no fiction to us. I know that to some men the Divine Being is a mere abstraction. As to communing with him, as to speaking to him, they think such wonders may have occurred to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, but to them such things are impossible. Now we do solemnly assure you, as men who would not lie in this matter, that God the Father is to us as real a person as the man from whose loins we sprang, and that we have as surely talked unto him, and he has as truly spoken to our hearts as ever we have spoken with our friend, and have been answered by him. We tell you that to us the being of God is a fact which influences our whole life, checks us when we would sin, forbids our weaker passions to rebel, and nerves our nobler powers to do or suffer. Our consciousness, our experience, our emotions, and our whole being, tell us that there is a God. We have had personal dealings with him; he has been with us in our chamber; we have seen his face in the sanctuary; we have cast our cares upon him; and therefore to us the Eternal and indwelling Father is no fiction. So is it with Christ Jesus. To mere professors Christ Jesus is never anything but a myth. They believe there was such a man, but he is only an historical personage to them. To true believers in Christ, however, he is a real person, now existing, and now dwelling in the hearts of his people. And oh! I bear my witness that if there be anything which has ever been

certified to my consciousness it is the existence of Jesus, the man, the Son of God. Oh friends, have we not, when our soul has been in a rapture, thrust our finger into the prints of the nails? Have we not been so drawn away from the outward world, that in spiritual communings we could say, He was to us as our brother that sucked the breasts of our mother, and when we found him without we did embrace him, and we would not let him go? His left hand has been under our head, and his right hand has embraced us. I know this will sound like a legend even to men who profess to be Christ's followers, but I question the reality of your piety if Christ be not one for whom you live, and in whom you dwell; with whom you walk, and in whom you hope soon to sleep that you may wake up in his likeness. A real Christ and a real God—no man has real religion till he knows these. So again the Holy Spirit, who is, with the Father and the Son, the one God of Israel; the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, indivisibly One and yet everlastingly Three—the Holy Spirit is also real, for

"He, in our hearts of sin and woe  
Makes living streams of grace arise,  
Which into boundless glory flow."

Tell us there is no Spirit? Why, about this we can speak positively. A fool may say that there is no magnetic influence, and that no electric streams can flow along the wires, but they who have once been touched by that mysterious power know it; and the Holy Spirit's influence on men is quite as much within the sphere of our recognition, if we have ever felt it, as is the influence of galvanism or magnetism. Those who have once felt the spiritual life know when it is flowing in; when its strength is withdrawn, and when it returns anew. They know that at times they can do all things; their heaviest trial is a joy, and their weightiest burden a delight; and that at other times they can do nothing, being bowed down to the very dust with weakness. They know that at times they enjoy peace with God through Jesus Christ, and that at other times they are disturbed in spirit. They have discovered, too, that these changes do not depend upon the weather, nor upon circumstances, nor upon any relation of one thought to another, but upon certain secret, mystic, and divine impulses which come forth from the Spirit of God, which make a man more than man, for

he is filled with Deity from head to foot, and whose withdrawal makes him feel himself less than man, for he is filled with sin and drenched with iniquity, till he loatheth his own being. Tell us there is no Holy Spirit! We have seen his goings in the sanctuary, but as we shall have to mention these by-and-bye, we pass on, and only now affirm that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are to true Christians no fiction, no dream, no fancy, but as real and as true as persons whom we can see, things which we can handle, or viands which we can taste.

But further, we can also say that the experience which true religion brings is no fiction. Believe me, sirs, it is no fiction to repent; for there is a bitterness in it which makes it all too real. Oh, the agony of sin lying on an awakened conscience! If you have ever felt it, it will seem to you as the ravings of a madman when any shall tell you that religion is not real! When the great hammer of the law broke our hearts in pieces, it was a stern reality. These eyes have sometimes, before I knew the Saviour, been ready to start from my head with horror, and my soul has often been bowed down with a grief far too terrible ever to be told to my fellow-man, when I felt that I was guilty before God, that my Maker was angry with me, that he must punish me, and that I deserved and must suffer his eternal wrath. I do assure you there was no fiction there! And when the Spirit of God comes into the heart and takes all our grief away, and gives us joy and peace in believing in Christ, there is no fiction then. Of course, to other men this is no evidence, except they will believe our honesty; but to us it is the very best of evidence. We were bidden to believe on Christ; it was all we were to do: to look to his cross, to believe him to be the propitiation for sin, and to trust in him to save us; we did so, and oh, the joy of that moment! In one instant we leaped from the depths of hell to the very heights of heaven in experience; dragged up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, our feet were set upon a rock, and we could sing for very joy. Oh, the mirth! oh, the bliss! oh, the ecstasy of the soul that can say—

"Happy, happy, happy day,  
When Jesus washed my sins away,  
Happy, happy, happy day."

That was no fiction, surely. If it be so, I will continue to cry, "Blessed fiction! blessed dream! may I contrive to believe thee; may I always be so deluded if this is to be deluded and misled!" Since then, look at the believer's experience. He has had as many troubles as other men have, but oh, what comforts he has had! He lost his wife, and as he stood there and thought his heart would break, he could still say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Child after child sickened before his loving gaze, and as they went one after the other to the tomb where he often wished he could have slept instead of them—while he mourned and wept as Jesus did, yet still he could say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him." When the house was burned—when the property vanished—when trade ran ill—when character was slandered—when the soul was desponding and all but despairing, yet there came in that one ray of light, "Christ is all, and all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose." I can tell you, that Christians have often had their brightest days when other people thought they were in their darkest nights; and they have often had the best of dainties when there was a famine abroad. Is this a fiction? O sirs, we challenge you to find so blessed a fiction as this elsewhere! I saw last Friday a sight, enough to make one weep indeed: there in the back-room of the house, lay a fine youth, a member of this Church, sickening and near to death of consumption, and he talked to me joyously of his prospect of entering into the rest which remaineth for the people of God; there in the front-room, on the same floor, lay his sister, I suppose but some two years younger, withering under the same disease; and there sat the tender mother with her two children, thinking to lose them both within a few days, and though she said, it was natural to weep, yet she could say even under this sharp trial, "The Lord's name be magnified in it all." I say there was no fiction there. If you who think there is a fiction in such things could live among Christians—if you could see the poor cheerfully suffering —if you could mark the sick and how joyously they bear their pains—if you could see the dying and hear their shouts of triumph, you would say, "There is a reality here; there is something in true religion; let me die the death of the righteous; let my last end be like his!"

But yet further; as we are sure there is a reality in the objects and in the

experience of true godliness, so are we quite clear that there is a reality in its privileges. One of the privileges of the Christian is prayer. It is the believer's privilege, to go to God and ask for what he wants, and have it. Now, sirs, I am absolutely certain that prayer is a reality. I shall not tell here my own experience. One reads not his love-letters in the streets, one tells not his own personal dealings with God in public; but if there be a fact that can be proved by ten thousand instances, and which therefore no reasonable man has any right to doubt —if there be anything that is true under heaven, it is true that God hears prayer when it cometh not out of feigned lips, and is offered through Jesus Christ. I know when we tell the story out, men smile and say, "Ah, these were singular coincidences!" Why, I have seen in my life, answers to prayer so remarkable, that if God had rent the curtain of the heavens and thrust out his arm to work a deliverance, it could not have been more decidedly and distinctly a divine interposition than when he listened to my feeble cry for help. I speak not of myself as though I were different from other men in this, for it is so with all who have real godliness. They know that God hears them; they prove it to-day; they intend to prove it at this very hour.

Communion with Christ is another reality. The shadow of his cross is too refreshing to be a dream, and the sunlight of his face is too bright to be a delusion. Precious Jesus! thou art a storehouse of substantial delights and solid joy. Then, the privileges of Christian Love towards one another are real. I know they are not with some men. Why, look you at some of your fashionable Churches; if the poor people were to speak to the richer ones, what would the rich ones think of them? Why, snap their heads half off, and send them about their business! But where there is true Christianity, we feel that the only place in the world where there can ever be liberty, equality, and fraternity, is in the Church of Christ. To attempt this politically, is but to attempt an impossibility; but to foster it in the Church of God, where we are all allied to God, is but to nourish the very spirit of the gospel. I say there is a reality in Christian love, for I have seen it among my flock; and though some do not show it as they should, yet my heart rejoices that there is so much hearty brotherly love among you, and thus your religion is not a vain thing.

Once more upon this point, for I am spending all my time here while I

need it for other points. The religion of Christ is evidently not a vain thing if you look at its effects. We will not take you abroad now to tell you of the effects of the gospel of Christ in the South Sea. We need not remind you of what it has done for the heathen, but let me tell you what it has done for men here. Ah! brethren, you will not mind my telling out some of the secrets, secrets that bring the tears to my eyes as I reflect upon them. When I speak of the thief, the harlot, the drunkard, the sabbath-breaker, the swearer, I may say "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye rejoice in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." How many a man has been going by the door there, and has said "I'll go in and hear Old Spurgeon." He came in to make merriment of the preacher, and very little that troubles him. But the man has stood there until the Word has gone home to him, and he who was wont to beat his wife, and to make his home a hell, has before long been to see me, and given me a grip of the hand and said, "God Almighty bless you, sir; there is something in true religion!" "Well, let us hear your tale," We have heard it, and delightful it has been in hundreds of instances. "Very well, send your wife, and let us hear what she says about you." The woman has come, and we have said "Well, what think you of your husband now, ma'am?" "Oh, sir, such a change I never saw in my life! He is so kind to us; he is like an angel now, and he seemed like a fiend before; Oh! that cursed drink, sir! everything went to the public-house; and then if I went up to the house of God, he did nothing but abuse me. Oh! to think that now he comes with me on Sunday; and the shop is shut up, sir; and the children who used to be running about without a bit of shoe or stocking, he takes them on his knee, and prays with them so sweetly. Oh! there is such a change!" Surly people say "Will it last? Will it last?" Well, I have seen it last the eight years of my pastorate, in many cases, and I know it will last for ever, for I am persuaded that it is God's work. We will put it to all the Social Science Societies; we will put it to all the different religions under heaven, whether they know the art of turning sinners into saints; whether they can make lions into lambs, and ravens into doves. Why I know a man who was as stingy a soul as could be, once, and now he is as generous a man as walks God's earth. There is another, he was not immoral, but he was passionate, and now he is as quiet as a lamb. It is grace that has altered these characters, and yet you tell me that this is a fiction! I have not patience to answer you. A fiction! If religion does not prove itself to be



true by these facts, then do not believe it; if it does not, when it comes into a neighborhood, turn it upside down, sweep the cobwebs out of its sky, clean the houses, take the men out of the public-houses; if it does not make swearers pray, and hard-hearted men tender and compassionate, then it is not worth a button. But our religion does do all this, and therefore we boldly say, it is not a vain thing.

Besides, to the man who really possesses it, it is his life. He is not a man and a Christian, but he is all a Christian. He is not as some are, men and Members of Parliament, who have many things to attend to, and attend Parliament also; but the man who is thoroughly a Christian is a Christian every bit of him. He lives Christianity; he eats it; he drinks it; he sleeps it; he walks it. Wherever you see him, he has his religion. His religion is not like a man's regimentals which he can take off and go in undress; it is inside of him; it is woven right through and through him. When the shuttle of his religion was thrown, it went right through the core of his heart, and you must kill that man to get his religion out of him. Racks may tear his nerves and sinews, but they cannot tear away his hope, for it is essentially and vitally part and parcel of himself. Ah! my ladies and gentlemen, you who think religion is no more real than the life of a butterfly, it is you who are unreal in your fancies, and your follies; religion is the substance, and your life is only the shadow! Oh! you workingmen, who think that to be godly is but to indulge a dream, you know not what you say. All else is fiction but this; all else is but a moon-beam phantom, but this is sun-lit reality. God give you grace to get it, and then you will feel we have not spoken too strongly, but rather have spoken too little of that which is essentially and really true.

II. Secondly, "It is not a vain thing"—that is, IT IS NO TRIFLE.

If religion be false, it is the basest imposition under heaven; but if the religion of Christ be true, it is the most solemn truth that ever was known! It is not a thing that a man dares to trifle with if it be true, for it is at his soul's peril to make a jest of it. If it be not true it is detestable, but if it be true it deserves all a man's faculties to consider it, and all his powers to obey it. It is not a trifle. Briefly consider why it is not. It deals with your soul. If it dealt with your body it were no trifle, for it is well to have the

limbs of the body sound, but it has to do with your soul. As much as a man is better than the garments that he wears, so much is the soul better than the body. It is your immortal soul it deals with. Your soul has to live for ever, and the religion of Christ deals with its destiny. Can you laugh at such words as heaven and hell, at glory and at damnation? If you can, if you think these trifles, then is the faith of Christ to be trifled with. Consider also with whom it connects you—with God; before whom angels bow themselves and veil their faces. Is HE to be trifled with? Trifle with your monarch if you will, but not with the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Recollect that those who have ever known anything of it tell you it is no child's play. The saints will tell you it is no trifle to be converted. They will never forget the pangs of conviction, nor the joys of faith. They tell you it is no trifle to have religion, for it carries them through all their conflicts, bears them up under all distresses, cheers them under every gloom, and sustains them in all labour. They find it no mockery. The Christian life to them is something so solemn, that when they think of it they fall down before God, and say, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe." And sinners, too, when they are in their senses, find it no trifle. When they come to die they find it no little thing to die without Christ. When conscience gets the grip of them, and shakes them, they find it no small thing to be without a hope of pardon—with guilt upon the conscience, and no means of getting rid of it. And, sirs, true ministers of God feel it to be no trifle. I do myself feel it to be such an awful thing to preach God's gospel, that if it were not "Woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel," I would resign my charge this moment. I would not for the proudest consideration under heaven know the agony of mind I felt but this one morning before I ventured upon this platform! Nothing but the hope of winning souls from death and hell, and a stern conviction that we have to deal with the grandest of all realities, would bring me here.

A pastor's office is no sinecure. A man that has the destinies of a kingdom under his control, may well feel his responsibility; but he who has the destiny of souls laid instrumentally at his door, must travail in birth, and know a mother's pangs; he must strive with God, and know an agony and yet a joy which no other man can meddle with. It is no trifle to us, we do assure you; oh! make it no trifle to yourselves. I know I speak to some triflers this morning, and perhaps to some trifling professors. Oh!

professors, do not live so as to make worldlings think that your religion is a trifling thing! Be cheerful, but oh! be holy! Be happy, for that is your privilege; but oh! be heavenly-minded, for that is your duty. Let men see that you are not flirting with Christ, but that you are married to him. Let them see that you are not dabbling in this as in a little speculation, but that it is the business of your life, the stern business of all your powers to live to Christ, Christ also living in you.

III. But next, and very briefly, for time will fly; the religion of Christ is no vain thing—that is, IT IS NO FOLLY.

Thinking men! Yes, by the way, we have had thinking men who have been able to think in so circuitous a manner that they have thought it consistent with their consciences to profess to hold the doctrines of the Church of England, and to be Romanists or infidels! God deliver us from ever being able to think in their way! I always dislike the presence of man who carries a gun with him which will discharge shot in a circle. Surely he is a very ill companion, and if he should turn your enemy how are you to escape from him? Give me a straightforward, downright man, who says what he means, and means what he says, and I would sooner have the grossest reprobate who will speak plainly what he means, than I would have the most dandy of gentlemen who would not hurt your feelings, but who will profess to believe as you do, while in his heart he rejects every sentiment, and abhors every thought which you entertain. I trust I do not speak to any persons here who can think so circuitously as this. Still, you say, "Well, but the religion of Christ, why, you see, it is the poor that receive it." Bless God it is! "Well, but not many thinking people receive it." Now that is not true, but at the same time, if they did not we would not particularly mind, because all thinking people do not think aright, and very many of them think very wrongly indeed; but such a man as Newton could think and yet receive the gospel, and master-minds, whom it is not mine just now to mention, have bowed down before the sublimity of the simple revelation of Christ, and have felt it to be their honour to lay their wealth of intellect at the feet of Christ. But, sirs, where is the folly of true religion! Is it a folly to be providing for the world to come? "Oh, no." Is it altogether a folly to believe that there is such a thing as justice? I trow not. And that if there be such a thing as justice it involves

punishment? There is no great folly there. Well, then, is it any folly to perceive that there is no way of escaping from the effects of our offences except justice be satisfied? Is that folly? And if it be the fact that Christ has satisfied justice for all who trust in him, is it folly to trust him? If it be a folly to escape from the flames of hell, then let us be fools. If it be folly to lay hold of him who giveth us eternal life—oh, blessed folly! let us be more foolish still. Let us take deep dives into the depths of this foolishness. God forbid that we should do anything else but glory in being such fools as this for Christ's sake! What, sirs, is your wisdom? your wisdom dwells in denying what your eyes can see—a God; in denying what your consciences tell you—that you are guilty; in denying what should be your best hope, what your spirit really craves after—redemption in Christ Jesus. Your folly lies in following a perverted nature, instead of obeying the dictates of one who points you to the right path. You are wise and you drink poison; we are fools and we take the antidote. You are wise and you hunt the shadow; we are fools and we grasp the substance. You are wise, and you labour and put your money into a bag which is full of holes, and spend it for that which is not bread, and which never gives you satisfaction; and we are fools enough to be satisfied, to be happy, to be perfectly content with heaven and God—

"I would not change my bless'd estate  
For all the world calls good or great;  
And while my faith can keep her hold,  
I envy not the sinner's gold."

Blessed folly! Oh, blessed folly! But it is not a foolish thing; for it is your life. Ah, sirs, if you would have philosophy it is in Christ. If you would accomplish the proudest feat of human intellect, it is to attain to the knowledge of Christ crucified. Here the man whose mind makes him elephantine, may find depths in which he may swim. Here the most recondite learning shall find itself exhausted. Here the most brilliant imagination shall find its highest flights exceeded. Here the critic shall have enough to criticise throughout eternity; here the reviewer may review, and review again, and never cease. Here the man who understands history may crown his knowledge by the history of God in the world; here men who would know the secret, the greatest secret which

heaven, and earth, and hell can tell, may find it out, for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant. All the learning of man is doubtless folly to the angels, but the foolishness of God in the gospel is wisdom to cherubim and seraphim, and by the Church shall be made known to them in ages to come the manifold wisdom of God.

IV. And now for the last point, hurriedly again: "It is not a vain thing,"—that is, **IT IS NO SPECULATION**, no hap-hazard.

People sometimes ask us what we think about the heathen, whether they will be saved or not. Well, sirs, there is room for difference of opinion there; but I should like to know what you think about yourselves—will you be saved or not?—for after all that is a question of a deal more importance to you. Now the religion of Christ is not a thing that puts a man into a salvable state, but it saves him. It is not a religion which offers him something which perhaps may save him; no it saves him out and out, on the spot. It is not a thing which says to a man "Now I have set you agoing, you must keep on yourself." No, it goes the whole way through, and saves him from beginning to end. He that says "Alpha" never stops till he can say "Omega" over every soul. I say the religion of Christ: I know there are certain shadows of it which do not carry such a reality as this with them, but I say that the religion of the Bible, the religion of Jesus Christ, is an absolute certainty. "Whosoever believeth on him hath eternal life, and he shall never perish, neither shall he come into condemnation." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Well," says one, "I should like to know what this very sure religion is." Well, it is this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Trust Christ with all that you have and you shall be saved. "Well," says one, "but when?" Why, now, here, this morning, on the spot: you shall be saved now. It is not a vain thing; it is not a speculation, for it is true to you now. The word is nigh thee; on thy lip and in thy heart. If thou wilt with thy heart believe on the Lord Jesus Christ thou shalt be saved, and saved now. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are Christ Jesus." This is a great and glorious truth, and it is true to-day

—"Whosoever believeth in him hath everlasting life." "But is it true to me?" saith one. My text says "It is not a vain thing for you." "Oh, it will suit other people; it will not do for me." It will suit you, sir—"It is not a vain thing for you because it is your life." If you have come up from the country, it is no vain thing for you, my dear friends; if you reside in town, amidst its noise and occupations, it is not a vain thing for you, my dear hearers. It is not a vain thing for any; if you do but lay hold of it, and it lays hold of you—if you receive the reality and vitality of it into your soul, be you who you may, it will not be a vain thing to you; not a "perhaps" and an "if," a "but" and a "peradventure," but a "shall" and a "will," a divine, an eternal, an everlasting and immutable certainty. Whosoever believeth in Christ—let the earth shake; let the mountains rock; let the sun grow old with age, and the moon quench her light—shall be saved. Unless God can change his mind—and that is impossible; unless God can break his word—and to say so is blasphemy; unless Christ's blood can lose its efficacy—and that can never be; unless the Spirit can be anything but Eternal and Omnipotent—and to suppose so were ridiculous—he that believeth on Christ, must at last, before the eternal throne, sing hallelujah to God and the Lamb. "Well," says one. "'tis a vain thing, I'm sure, to me, for I'm only a poor working-man; religion no doubt, is a very fine thing for gentlefolk, but it doesn't do for a man as has to work hard, for he's something else to think on." Well, you are just the man that I should think it would do for. Why, it is little enough you have here, my dear friend, and that is the very reason why you should have eternal joys hereafter. If there be one man that religion can bless more than another—and I do not know that there is—it is the poor man in his humble cot. Why, this will put sweets into your cup; this will make your little into enough, and sometimes into more than enough; you shall be rich while you are poor, and happy when others think you are miserable. "Well," says the rich man, "It is nothing to me; I do not see that it will suit me." Why, it is the very thing for you, sir; in fact, you are the man who ought to have it, because, see what you have to lose when you die, unless you have religion to make up for it! What a loss it will be for you when you have to lose all your grandeur and substance! What a loss it will be for you to go from the table of Dives to the hell of Dives! Surely it is not a vain thing for you. "Well," says another, "but I am a moral and upright person; indeed, I do not think anybody can pull my character to pieces." I hope nobody

wants to; but this is not a vain thing for you, because, let me tell you, that fine righteousness of yours is only fine in your own esteem. If you could only see it as God sees it, you would see it to be as full of holes as ever beggars' rags were when at last they were consigned to the dust-heap. I say your fine righteousness, my lady, and yours, Sir Squire from the country, no matter though you have given to the poor, and fed the hungry, and done a thousand good things; if you are relying on them, you are relying on rotten rags, in which God can no more accept you than he can accept the thief in his dishonesties. "All our righteousness are as filthy rags, and we are all as an unclean thing." It is not a vain thing for you, then. "Oh, but I am a young man just in my teens, and growing up to manhood; I think I ought to have a little pleasure." So I think, friend, and if you want a great deal of it, be a Christian. "Oh, but I think young people should enjoy themselves." So do I. I never was an advocate for making sheep without their first being lambs, and I would let the lambs skip as much as they like; but if you want to lead a happy and a joyous life, give you young days to Jesus. Who says that a Christian is miserable? Sir, you lie; I tell you to your teeth that you know not what Christianity is, or else you would know that the Christians are the most joyous people under heaven. Young man, I would like you to have a glorious youth; I would like you to have all the sparkle and the brilliance which your young life can give you. What have you better than to live and to enjoy yourself? But how are you to do it? Give your Creator your heart, and the thing is done. It is not a vain thing for you. "Ah!" says the old man, "but it is a vain thing for me; my time is over; if I had begun when I was a lad it might have done; but I am settled in my habits now; I feel sure, sir, it is too late for me; when I hear my grand-children say their prayers as they are going to bed, pretty dears, when they are singing their evening hymn, I wish I was a child again; but my heart has got hard, and I cannot say "Our Father' now; and when I do get to "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,' I get stuck there, I do not know how to get over that, for I have not forgiven old Jones yet who robbed me in that lawsuit; and then you know I am infirm, and have these rheumatics, and a hundred other pains; I do not think religion will suit me." Well, it is just the very thing that will suit you, because it will make you young again. What, "Can a man be born again when he is old?" That is what Nicodemus asked. Yes, a man can be born again, so that the babe shall

die a hundred years old. Oh! to make the autumn of your life and the coming winter of your last days into a new spring and a blessed summer—this is to be done by laying hold of Christ now; and then you shall feel in your old veins the young blood of the new spiritual life, and you will say, "I count the years I lived before a death, but now I begin to live."

I do not know whether I have picked out every character; I am afraid I have not; but this thing I know, though you may be under there, or up in the corner yonder where my eye cannot reach you, yet you may hear this voice and I hope you may hear it when you are gone from this house back to your country-towns and to your houses—

"'Tis religion that can give  
Sweetest pleasures while we live!  
'Tis religion must supply  
Solid comfort when we die.

After death its joys will be  
Lasting as eternity!  
Be the living God my friend,  
Then my bliss shall never end."

And this is the gospel which is preached unto you. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ"—that is trust him—"and thou shalt be saved." May God bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

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**Remember!**



Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee. - Deuteronomy 15:15

In an autobiography of William Jay we read that on one occasion he called to see the famous Mr. John Newton, at Olney, and he observed that over the desk at which he was accustomed to compose his sermons, he had written up in very large letters the following words: "Remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee." To my mind this story invests the text with considerable interest: it was most fitting that such a remarkable convert as he should dwell upon such a theme, and place such a text conspicuously before his own eyes. Might it not with great propriety be placed in a similar position by each one of us? Mr. Newton lived and acted under the influence of the memory which the text commands, as was seen that very morning in his conversation with Mr. Jay. "Sir," said Mr. Newton, "I am glad to see you, for I have a letter just come from Bath, and you can perhaps assist me in the answer to it. Do you know anything of So-and-so (mentioning the name)?" Mr. Jay replied that the man was an awful character, had once been a hearer of the gospel, but had become a leader in every vice. "But, sir," said Mr. Newton, "he writes very penitently; and who can tell? Perhaps a change may have come over him." "Well," said Mr. Jay, "I can only say that if ever he should be converted, I should despair of no one." "And I," said Mr. Newton, "never have despaired of anybody since I was converted myself." So, you see, as he thought of this poor sinner at Bath he was remembering that he also was a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord his God had redeemed him; and why should not the same redemption reach even to this notorious transgressor and save him? The memory of his own gracious change of heart and life gave him tenderness in dealing with the erring and hopefulness with regard to their restoration. May some such good effect be produced in our minds: we are not all called to be preachers of the gospel, but in any capacity a holy, beneficial, sanctifying effect will be produced upon a right mind by remembering that we were bondmen, but the Lord our God redeemed us. May the Holy Spirit at this hour bring the amazing grace of God to our remembrance with melting power.

As to the particular fact of the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, great care was taken that it should be remembered. The month upon which they came out was made the commencement of the year. "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you" (Exodus 12:2). A special injunction was issued "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the Lord thy God: for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night." An ordinance was established on purpose that the deliverance might be commemorated: and the eating of the passover lamb was made binding upon the whole of the people, so that they should not forget the sprinkling of the blood. The word of the Lord ordained, saying, "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever." They were enjoined, also, to instruct their children concerning it, so that in addition to a ceremonial there was an oral tradition to be handed from father to son. "And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand" (Deuteronomy 6:20, 21). Their law of ten commands commenced with a reminder of that remarkable fact- "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: thou shalt have no other gods before me." All through the book of Deuteronomy you will observe that this is the one weighty and oft repeated argument for obedience and faithfulness: "Remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee."

Now, beloved, if the Jew was so carefully instructed to remember his deliverance out of Egypt, should not we also take heed to ourselves that we by no means forget, or cast into the background, our yet greater redemption through the precious blood of Christ, by which we were set free from the yoke and bondage of sin? See how Paul, in Ephesians 2:11,12,13, speaks to us who have been called by grace from the ends of the earth, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were

without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." He puts the same thought into other words in Romans 6:17, 18, when he says- "God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Paul would have us remember our redemption; and God the Holy Ghost who spake by Paul would have us remember it. Will we not give earnest heed to such solemn counsels? The blessed effects that will flow from such a memory urge us to remember it, and because of this our discourse of this morning is intended to be a humble assistance towards such a memory. O my brother, forget all else just now, and give thy heart to the work before thee, and "remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee."

First, then, let us consider our bondage; secondly, our redemption; and thirdly, the influence of the memory of the two facts. I shall not try to say anything fresh or new: it would be out of place to attempt it, for my present duty is to awaken your memories as to former days. I have only to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. He who is only a remembrancer for the past must not look about for novelties. We speak what you do know, and ask you to testify to what you have felt.

I. First let us consider OUR BONDAGE. It was exceedingly like the bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt. There are many points in which a parallel might be drawn. We will indicate them in a few words.

First, when we were unregenerate, and sold under sin, we were enslaved to a mighty power against which we could not contend. It would have been of no use for the Israelites to have commenced an insurrection against Pharaoh: he was too firmly established upon the throne, and his soldiery by far too strong for poor, feeble, shepherd tribes to be able to resist. They scarcely dared to think of such a thing: and, brethren, if fallen man single-handed had the heart to contend with sin and Satan, he would certainly be unable to achieve a victory. The fall has left us

"without strength"; the law with all its force is "weak through the flesh." Alas, man hath no heart for spiritual liberty, else would the Lord lend him power; but apart from power divine, what man is he that can break loose from his sin? Shall the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then shall he that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well, unassisted by divine strength. No, brethren, the fetters which enchain the mind of the carnal man are much too strong for him to snap them. He may resolve to do so, as in moments of reflection some men do; but, alas, he is soon weary of the struggle for liberty, and resigns himself to his prison. If man had been capable of his own redemption there would never have descended from heaven the divine Redeemer; but because the bondage was all too dire for man to set himself free, therefore the eternal Son of God came hither that he might save his people from their sins. Our natural bondage was caused and maintained by a power tremendous in energy and craft. The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, held us beneath his iron sway, and sin exercised a tyrannical dominion over us, from which we could not break.

Worse still, we were like the Israelites in another respect. Our slavery had so degraded us that we had no heart to desire an escape. One of the worst points of slavery is that it frequently degrades men into contentment with their condition. That would be thought by some to be a benefit, but it is a giant evil, for a man has no right to be satisfied in slavery. Such contentment is an ensign of debased manhood. Freedom is the right of every human being, and he is not truly a man if he can be happy in bondage. The Israelites were so trampled down that they crouched at their oppressors' feet, and made themselves as content as they could in their enslaved condition. As they were turned into beasts of burden, so were their minds brutalized, until their chief joy lay in the onions and the cucumbers with which they refreshed themselves, and the fish of which they afterwards spake so longingly. They declined from a thoughtful family into a clan of grovelling laborers without heart or hope; so that when Moses went to them at the first he was not received, and when he was sent of God with his brother Aaron the people at the first hour of conflict shrank into their former cowardice, and would willingly have remained slaves sooner than excite Pharaoh's wrath. They had been

ground down so terribly with their hard labor in mortar and in brick that they scarcely dared to think of freedom: and that was just your case and mine, beloved friends, we too were willing slaves of death and sin. If we are free this morning it was not because when left to ourselves we fought for liberty and disdained to wear a fetter. No, our bonds were on our hearts, and we chose our own degradation. The slave from the south of old watched the northern star, and followed it through brake, and swamp, and forest to obtain his liberty, but our eyes refused to look to Jesus, who is the Star of Freedom. We boasted that we were born free, and were never in bondage to any man, and so we most effectually proved our bondage under our own pride. We, perhaps, called ourselves freethinkers, and at any rate we meant to be free actors, and yet all the while we were in bondage, and did not care to seek true liberty. Can you not recollect when you hugged your chains and kissed your bonds, and like a madman who crowns himself with a wisp of straw, and calls himself a king, embraced the foolish pleasures of this world, and thought yourselves supremely blessed in such base enjoyments?

Remember again, dear brethren, that you were in a bondage similar to that of Egypt, for while in that condition you toiled hard and found that all the service wherein Satan made you to serve was with rigour. The Israelites built treasure cities for Pharaoh, and they are supposed to have erected some of the pyramids; but their wage was very small, and their taskmasters were brutal. Labourers engaged upon royal works received no wages, but were simply served with sufficient bread to keep them alive. The Israelites were called upon to make an enormous quantity of bricks, and at last the chopped straw, which was necessary to make the clay bind together, which had been given out of the royal granaries, was refused them, and they were bidden to go over all the land to hunt up what they could of stubble instead of straw; thus their labor was increased beyond all bearing. Could not many a sinner tell of horrible nights and woeful mornings, when under the power of his passions? Who hath woe? who hath redness of the eyes? who is filled with dread of death? who flees when no man pursueth? Of all tyrants sin and Satan are the most cruel. How are men worn out in the devil's destructive service! What an expense does sin entail! It is a costly thing to many to obey their own vices; they are impoverished by their passions. Those who complain

if they are pressed for subscriptions to holy causes should consider how much more they would have spent in the pleasures of the world. Why, men squander fortunes upon their frivolities or upon their lusts; and encumber future generations to indulge a vice which ruins their health, destroys their reputation, and sends them to an early grave. If you will have your own way, that way will be the hardest you can choose. It does not matter in what position a man may be, whether rich or poor, illiterate and fond of the more vulgar pleasures, or tutored and educated and prone to more fashionable vices; everywhere sin leads on to hard service, and its exactions increase from day to day. If men were but in their senses, drunkenness, gambling, gluttony, wantonness, and many other vices would be rather punishments than pleasures, and yet they abide in them.

There was a time, dear brethren, when in addition to our hard toil our bondage brought us misery. Do you not remember when you dared not think a day's conduct over for the life of you? When if you had been compelled to sit down and review your own character it would have been an intolerable task? I recollect also when a sense of sin came over me, and then indeed my life was made bitter with hard bondage. I labored to set up a righteousness of my own, for I could not yield to the righteousness of Christ. That was laboring as in the very fire. I strove by my own good works to accomplish my own salvation, and tried by prayers and tears to pay the debt I owed to God, but all in vain. I was sinning all the while by refusing Christ, and endeavoring to rival my Savior. So far I speak for myself, but I know that you have done the same. Do you recollect it, brethren, when your pleasures ceased to be pleasures, when all the amusements of the world lost their flavour, and became flat, stale, nauseous, and you turned away and asked in vain for something that would content you? Do you remember when at last you saw yourself in your true condition, and bewailed yourself before the living God as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn? Ah, then you felt like Israel in Egypt when they sighed and cried by reason of the bondage; and blessed be God the parallel runs further, for in your case also God heard the groaning and remembered his covenant (Exodus 2:24).

All this while our enemy was aiming at our destruction. This was what

Pharaoh was driving at with Israel: he intended to cut off the nation by severe tasks, or at least to reduce its strength. As his first policy did not succeed, he set about to destroy the male children; and even so Satan when he has men under his power labors by all means utterly to destroy them; for nothing short of this will satisfy him. Every hopeful thought he would drown in the river of despair, lest by any means the man should shake off his yoke. The total overthrow of the soul of man is the aim of the great enemy. What a mercy to have been redeemed out of the hand of the enemy!

And like Israel in Egypt we were in the hands of a power that would not let us go. There came a voice by Moses which said to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go;" but Pharaoh's answer was, "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go": and such was the language of our corruptions, such the language of the devil who had dominion over us. "I will not let you go," said the fierce prince of darkness, and like a strong man armed he kept his goods in peace. You recollect that telling sermon which thrilled you and awoke in you desires for liberty: you recollect how there seemed to ring in the halls of your nature the resounding voice, "Let my people go"; but you did not go, for that slavish will of yours held you in bondage. Your sins captivated you. Then came the reading of the Scriptures, or a mother's exhortation, or another earnest sermon, and again the voice was heard, "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go." You begin to feel uneasy in your condition, and to venture somewhat into the border country, but you could not escape, the iron had entered into your soul, your heart was captive. Blessed was the day when the strong man armed that kept you as a man keeps his house was overcome by a stronger than he and cast out for ever. Then Jesus took possession of your nature, never to leave it, but to hold his tenancy world without end. Glory be to God, we were bondmen in Egypt, but the Lord our God redeemed us, and let his name be praised.

I would assist you still further to remember that bondage. It cannot be hard for some of you to do so, for you are "from Egypt lately come." Some of you have been set free now these twenty years, some perhaps these fifty years; but it cannot be difficult for you to recollect what must be so indelibly impressed upon you. I can imagine thirty years after coming out

of Egypt, some of the grey fathers who had crossed the Red Sea telling to their sons the sad story of the bondage in Egypt. "I, your father," one of them would say, "was beaten with rods by the taskmaster because when I had made up my full tale of bricks I was required to make twice as many. I toiled far into the night at brick-making, but I could not accomplish the task, and I remember how the blows descended upon my back like burning hail. Look here, my son," he would say, as he stripped himself to show the scars, "these are the memorials of Egyptian bondage." Ah, glory be to God, we are free; no more do we carry clanking chains upon our souls, but we bear the old scars about us still. Sometimes the old temper rises, or the old lusts flames up. When a man has had a bone broken, it may have been well set, and he has for the most part forgotten the accident, yet in bad weather, I have heard it said, "The old bone talks a bit"; and, alas, the bones we broke by our sins will talk a bit at times, and its talk is a sad reminder of our former state. Snatches of ill songs, recollections of old lusts, and I know not what besides, are scars which remind us that we were bondmen in Egypt. Many a mother that came out of Egypt when she looked at her boy would say, "And I might have been the joyful mother of seven sons, but they were one after another snatched from my bosom by the remorseless servant of the Egyptian tyrant, and put to death." With her joy for what was left her would be mingled sorrow for what she had lost. Yes, and in your families it may be your younger children have been brought under religious influences, but your older sons are as irreligious as you were when they were lads at home. Many are led to think of their own evil example in former years, as they see their wayward sons persevering in sin. As you think of them you may say, "I see my bondage in my son; I see my sin repeated in my child." These also are mournful memorials of our carnal state. But, indeed, I need not thus remind you, for everything may refresh your memories as to your former bondage. Is it not so? The task set before you in the text is an easy one, and I charge you, therefore, remember that you were once bondmen in Egypt.

II. In the second place, we have to think of the blessed fact of OUR REDEMPTION: "the Lord thy God redeemed thee." Here again there is a parallel. He redeemed us first by price. Israel in Egypt was an unransomed nation. God claimed of that nation the firstborn to be his; as



it is written, "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." That portion had been his claim from the first, and the law was afterwards carried out by the setting apart of the Levitical tribe to take the place of the firstborn; but Israel in Egypt had never set apart its firstborn at all, and was therefore an unredeemed people. How was all that indebtedness to be made up? The nation must be redeemed by a price, and that price was set forth by the symbol of a lamb which was killed, and roasted, and eaten, while the blood was smeared upon the lintel and the two side posts. Beloved, you and I have been redeemed with blood. Blessed Lord Jesus, "thou wast slain and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood." "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Ye cannot, ye must not, ye shall not forget this. Ye were bondmen, but Jesus your Lord redeemed you. He took your nature, and was thus next of kin to you; and it became his right to redeem you, which right he has exercised to his own cost but to your eternal gain. The price by which you were set free he counted down in a wondrous coinage, minted from his own heart. The ransom is paid, and the jubilee trumpet proclaims that you and your heavenly possessions are now delivered from all mortgage and encumbrance through the blood of Jesus Christ. Remember that with a great price you have obtained this freedom. The Lord saith, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee."

But there would not have been a coming out of Egypt unless there had been a display of power as well as a payment of price, for with a high hand and an outstretched arm the Lord brought forth his people. There are always two redemptions to every man who is saved—redemption by price and redemption by power. Ye know what power God put forth in the land of Egypt when he wrought all his plagues in the field of Zoan, but that was nothing compared with the power of Christ when he broke the head of the old dragon, when he utterly destroyed the kingdom of sin and led our captivity captive. Greater than Moses' rod was Christ's pierced hand. He hath done it; he hath done it. Our tyrant hath no more power to hold us in chains, for Christ hath vanquished him for ever.

Another form of redemption was also seen by Israel, namely, in the power

exerted over themselves. I think sufficient stress has never been laid upon this. That they should have been willing to come out of Egypt was no small thing,-universally willing, so that not a single person remained behind; so unanimous and so eager were they to come out of Egypt, though almost rooted to the soil, that a number of Egyptians came up with them. According to the word of Moses, "Not a hoof shall be left behind," they all left the land, and neither sheep, nor goat, nor ox; much less man, woman, or child remained. Israel was glad to come out, and even Egypt was glad when they departed. It is wonderful that they were all able to come out of Egypt. There was never an army yet but what had some sick in it: the ambulance and the hospital are always wanted: but of this grand army we are told, "He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes." Marvellous display of power this: and so, beloved, we will tell it to the praise of God this day, that he made us willing to come out of the Egypt of our sin to which we were rooted; and making us willing he made us able too: the power of the Spirit came upon us and the might of his grace overshadowed us, and we did arise and came to our Father. Let grace have all the glory. Shall I need to press upon you then to let your minds fly back to the time when you realised your redemption, and came up out of the land of Egypt? It was a divine interposition. "The Lord thy God redeemed thee." And it was personally experienced, for "The Lord thy God redeemed thee." It was a matter of clear consciousness to your own soul. Thou wast a bondman; thou didst know it and feel it: the Lord thy God redeemed thee, and thou didst know it and feel that also. Thou didst know it as much as a galley slave would know it if he no more tugged the oar, as much as the captive who has pined away in the dungeon through weary years would know it when once more he breathed the air, and felt that he was free. "Thou wast a bondman, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee." There can be no doubt about it. Satan himself could not make some of us doubt it, the chains were so real, and the liberty so delightful. It was a mental phenomenon for which there can be no accounting except upon this belief, that the Lord our God himself came and set us free.

III. Thus, brethren, I have set before you the subject for your recollection. I shall now try to show you **THE INFLUENCE WHICH THIS DOUBLE MEMORY OUGHT TO HAVE UPON YOU.**

We should naturally conclude, without any reference to Scripture, that if a Christian man kept always in mind his former and his present state it would render him humble. You have been preaching and God has blessed you to the conversion of many: do you feel elated? "Remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee." You are getting on in knowledge, and your character is evidently much improved; your inner life is full of peace and comfort. Do you feel as if you were some great one? Do not play the fool: you are less than nothing. Remember that thou wast a poor miserable slave, brown, sun-dried, smoke-tinged; and that not long ago. Thou wouldst have been in hell now if it had not been for sovereign grace; or if not there, perhaps thou wouldst have been among drunkards and swearers, and lewd men and women, or at least among the proud, self-righteous Pharisees. When thou art honored of the Lord and happy in the full assurance of faith, still remember that thou wast a bondman, and walk humbly with thy God.

In the next place, be grateful. If you have not all the temporal mercies that you would desire, yet you have received the choicest of all mercies, liberty through Jesus Christ, therefore be cheerful, happy, and thankful. Remember that thou wast a bondman; and if thou hast but little of this world's good, be thankful for the great spiritual blessing thou hast received in being set free from the galling yoke. Do not receive such a liberty as this without blessing that dear, pierced hand which was nailed to the tree that thou mightest be delivered. Let gratitude abound, as thou rememberest the wormwood and the gall.

Being grateful, be patient too. If you are suffering or ailing, or if sometimes your spirits are cast down, or if you are poor and despised, yet say to yourself, "Why should I complain? My lot may seem hard, yet it is nothing in comparison with what it would have been if I had been left a prisoner in the land of Egypt. Thank God, I am no longer in bondage to my sins." The slave of the sad times in America would leap on the Canadian shore; and though he came there with all his earthly goods wrapped up in his handkerchief, and knew not where his next meal would come from, yet he would spring upon the shore and then dance for joy, and say, "Thank God, I am free; I am penniless but free." How much

more, then, may you, whatever your suffering or sorrow may be, exclaim, "Thank God, I was a bondman, but the Lord my God has redeemed me, and I will be patient, whatever I am called to bear."

Next, be hopeful. What may you not yet become? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." You were a bondman, but grace has set you free. Who knows what the Lord may yet make of you? Is there anything that he cannot, will not do for one whom he has already redeemed by his blood? He has set you free from sin; oh, then, he will keep you from falling, and preserve you to the end. "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

Are you thus hopeful? Then be zealous. Here earnestness should find both fire and fuel: we were bondmen, but the Lord has redeemed us. What, then, can be too hard for us to undertake for his sake? We must give all to him who has purchased us to himself, and we must continue to do so as long as we live. John Newton persisted in preaching even when he was really incapable of it, for he said "What, shall the old African blasphemer leave off preaching Jesus Christ while there is breath in his body? No, never." He felt that he must continue to bear testimony, for our text was always before him, "Remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee."

But now kindly follow me while I, as briefly as I can, show you the Lord's own use of this remembrance; and the first text I shall quote will be found in Deuteronomy 5:14. This is what he says- "The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out of thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." You were a bondman. What would you have given for rest then? Now that the Lord has given you this hallowed day of rest guard it sacredly. When you were a bondman you knew the

heart of a servant and you sighed because your toil was heavy; now that you are set free, if you have servants, think of them, and so order your household that they may as much as possible enjoy their Sabbath. Certain household duties must be performed, but plot and plan to make these as light as possible, "that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou." If you meet with any that are in bondage of soul and cannot rest, obey the text in its spiritual teaching. Rest in the Lord Jesus yourself, but endeavor to bring all your family into the same peace, "that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou." Surely if you have been set free from the iron bondage you ought not to want urging to keep with all sacredness this holy day, which the mercy of God has hedged about, nor should you need exhorting to rest in the Lord, and to endeavor to lead others into his rest.

In Deuteronomy 7: we have another use of this remembrance. Here the chosen people are commanded to keep separate from the nations. They were not to intermarry with the Canaanites nor make alliances with them. Israel was to be separated, even as Moses said, "thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God." And the reason he gives in the eighth verse is this: "the Lord redeemed thee out of the house of bondmen." Ah, brethren, if we are redeemed from among men, if there be a special and particular redemption, as we do believe, by which Christ loved his church and gave him self for it, then as the specially blood-bought ones we are under solemn obligations to come out from the world and to be separate from it. Did not Jesus say of his redeemed, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"? Therefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate. In the eighth chapter redemption is used as an argument for obedience, and they are exhorted not to forget the laws and statutes of the Lord, and above all warned lest in the midst of prosperity their heart should be lifted up so as to forget the Lord their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. The same argument runs through the eleventh chapter, and it is a very clear one. We ought to render glad obedience to him who has wrought us so great a deliverance. We find in the thirteenth chapter that the redemption from bondage is used as an argument for loyal attachment to the one and only God. The tendency of the nation was to idolatry, since all the countries round about had gods many and lords many; but the Lord commanded his people to put to death all prophets and dreamers of

dreams who might seek to lead them away from the worship of Jehovah. "Thou shalt stone him with stones that he die," says the tenth verse, "because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." You must not have another God, for no other God delivered you: worship him to whom you owe your all.

Our own text is set in the following connection. If a man entered into forced servitude, or came under any bonds to his fellow man among the Jews, he could only be so held for six years, and on the seventh he was to go free. "And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee." The Lord's people should be considerate of those who are in their employment. The recollection of their own bondage should make them tender and kind to those who are in subservience to themselves, and never should a Christian man be ungenerous, illiberal, severe, churlish with his servants, or with any who are dependent upon him. Be large-hearted. Do not be angry at every little fault, nor swift to observe every slight mistake; and be not for ever standing on your exact rights, litigious, sticking out for the last half-farthing, as some do. I am almost sorry if a mean, stingy man gets converted, for I am afraid he will be no credit to Christianity. There should be in a man redeemed with the blood of Christ something like nobility of soul and benevolence to his fellow men, and so even this stern book of the law teaches us.

I have no time except to remind you that they were bound to keep the passover because of their deliverance from Egypt as we find in the sixteenth chapter at the first verse. "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the Lord thy God: for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night." So let us also take heed unto ourselves that we keep all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. Let us keep the ordinances as they were delivered unto us, and neither alter nor misplace them. Hold fast the truth and be not

moved from it by the cunning craftiness of men. Walk according to the teaching of Scripture in all things, keeping the good old way, because the Lord our God redeemed us, and his truth is unchangeable.

Again, in the sixteenth chapter, verses 10 to 12, you have the great redemption used as an argument for liberality towards the cause of God: they were to give unto the Lord rejoicingly of that which the Lord had given to them. "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee;" and that because of the twelfth verse, "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes." In the twenty-sixth chapter the same teaching is reduced to a set form, for they were there commanded to bring each one a basket of first fruits and offer it unto the Lord, saying- "The Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: and he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me." Need I even for a moment impress this duty upon you?

Last of all, in the twenty-fourth chapter there remains one more lesson. We are there exhorted to be careful concerning the fatherless and the widow (Deuteronomy 24:17). A generous spirit was to be exhibited towards the poor. They were not to fetch in all their sheaves from the field if any were forgotten, nor to scrape up every single ear of corn from among the stubble, as some do in these days, nor to beat their olive tree twice, nor to gather the grapes of their vineyard a second time, but they were to leave something for the poor. This was the argument:-When you were in Egypt, when you had to make bricks without straw, how glad you were to turn your children in among the stubble to gather a few ears to make a loaf of bread; and now the Lord has given you a better land, therefore deal well with the poor. Brethren, let the needy never be forgotten by you; do not be miserly, do not imitate those farmers who would comb their fields with a small-toothed comb if they could, sooner than the poor should glean, raking it and raking it again and again. No, the ransomed Israelites were not even to pick all their fruit, for the

argument was, "Would not you when in Egypt have given anything for a bunch of those grapes which grew in the gardens of the rich?" Think, therefore, of the poor and deal kindly with them, even as you would wish others to deal with you.

With this I close. Be ye thoughtful of all your fellow-men. You that have been redeemed with price, be ye tender-hearted, full of compassion, putting on bowels of mercy. In spiritual things take care that you never rake the corners of your fields. Do not rob the gospel of its sweetness. There is a class of preaching out of which the last ear of wheat has been taken. Their gospel is criticised into nothing. The sceptical commentators come in and pick nearly every bunch of grapes, and then the modern thought gentry devour the rest. The preaching of modern times is as an olive tree beaten till not a trace of fruit remains. Let it not be so with us, but let the preacher say, "I was a bondman, and therefore I will drop handfuls on purpose for poor souls in trouble."

Brethren, be very considerate to seekers. Look them up. Talk to them after the sermon. Say a word to those sitting in your pew which may encourage their poor trembling hearts to lay hold on Jesus Christ. Remember that thou wast a bondman: the smell of the brick-kiln is upon thee now, my brother, my sister: thou hast not yet cleansed all the clay from thy hands with which thou didst work in mortar and in brick. Then do not become selfish, unloving, unkind, but in all things love thy neighbor as thyself, and so prove that thou lovest the Lord thy God with all thy heart. God bless thee. Amen.

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## **The Remembrance Of Christ**



This do in remembrance of me. - 1 Corinthians 11:24

It seems, then, that Christians may forget Christ. The text implies the possibility of forgetfulness concerning him whom gratitude and affection should constrain them to remember. There could be no need for this loving exhortation, if there were not a fearful supposition that our memories might prove treacherous, and our remembrance superficial in its character, or changing in its nature. Nor is this a bare supposition: it is, alas, too well confirmed in our experience, not as a possibility, but as a lamentable fact. It seems at first sight too gross a crime to lay at the door of converted men. It appears almost impossible that those who have been redeemed by the blood of the dying Lamb should ever forget their Ransomer; that those who have been loved with an everlasting love by the eternal Son of God, should ever forget that Son; but if startling to the ear, it is alas, too apparent to the eye to allow us to deny the fact. Forget him who ne'er forgot us! Forget him who poured his blood forth for our sins! Forget him who loved us even to the death! Can it be possible? Yes it is not only possible, but conscience confesses that it is too sadly a fault of all of us, that we can remember anything except Christ. The object which we should make the monarch of our hearts, is the very thing we are most inclined to forget. Where one would think that memory would linger, and unmindfulness would be an unknown intruder, that is the spot which is desecrated by the feet of forgetfulness, and that the place where memory too seldom looks. I appeal to the conscience of every Christian here: Can you deny the truth of what I utter? Do you not find yourselves forgetful of Jesus? Some creature steals away your heart, and you are unmindful of him upon whom your affection ought to be set. Some earthly business engrosses your attention when you should have your eye steadily fixed upon the cross. It is the incessant round of world, world, world; the constant din of earth, earth, earth, that takes away the soul from Christ. Oh! my friends, is it not too sadly true that we can recollect anything but Christ, and forget nothing so easy as him whom we ought to remember? While memory will preserve a poisoned weed, it suffereth the Rose of Sharon to wither.

The cause of this is very apparent: it lies in one or two facts. We forget

Christ, because regenerate persons as we really are, still corruption and death remain even in the regenerate. We forget him because we carry about with us the old Adam of sin and death. If we were purely new-born creatures, we should never forget the name of him whom we love. If we were entirely regenerated beings, we should sit down and meditate on all our Saviour did and suffered; all he is; all he has gloriously promised to perform; and never would our roving affections stray; but centered, nailed, fixed eternally to one object, we should continually contemplate the death and sufferings of our Lord. But alas! we have a worm in the heart, a pest-house, a charnel-house within, lusts, vile imaginations, and strong evil passions, which, like wells of poisonous water, send out continually streams of impurity. I have a heart, which God knoweth, I wish I could wring from my body and hurl to an infinite distance; a soul which is a cage of unclean birds, a den of loathsome creatures, where dragons haunt and owls do congregate, where every evil beast of ill-omen dwells; a heart too vile to have a parallel - "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." This is the reason why I am forgetful of Christ. Nor is this the sole cause; I suspect it lies somewhere else too. We forget Christ because there are so many other things around us to attract our attention. "But," you say, "they ought not to do so, because though they are around us, they are nothing in comparison with Jesus Christ: though they are in dread proximity to our hearts, what are they compared with Christ?" But do you know, dear friends, that the nearness of an object has a very great effect upon its power? The sun is many, many times larger than the moon, but the moon has a greater influence upon the tides of the ocean than the sun, simply because it is nearer, and has a greater power of attraction. So I find that a little crawling worm of the earth has more effect upon my soul than the glorious Christ in heaven; a handful of golden earth, a puff of fame, a shout of applause, a thriving business, my house, my home, will affect me more than all the glories of the upper world; yea, than the beatific vision itself: simply because earth is near, and heaven is far away. Happy day, when I shall be borne aloft on angels' wings to dwell for ever near my Lord, to bask in the sunshine of his smile, and to be lost in the ineffable radiance of his lovely countenance. We see then the cause of forgetfulness; let us blush over it; let us be sad that we neglect our Lord so much, and now let us attend to his word, "This do in remembrance of me," hoping that its solemn sounds may charm away the

demon of base ingratitude.

We shall speak, first of all, concerning the blessed object of memory; secondly, upon the advantages to be derived from remembering this Person; thirdly, the gracious help, to our memory - "This do in remembrance of me;" and fourthly, the gentle command, " This do in remembrance of me." May the Holy Ghost open my lips and your hearts, that we may receive blessings.

I. First of all, we shall speak of THE GLORIOUS AND PRECIOUS OBJECT OF MEMORY - "This do in remembrance of ME." Christians have many treasures to lock up in the cabinet of memory. They ought to remember their election - "Chosen of God ere time began." They ought to be mindful of their extraction, that they were taken out of the miry clay, hewn out of the horrible pit. They ought to recollect their effectual calling, for they were called of God, and rescued by the power of the Holy Ghost. They ought to remember their special deliverances - all that has been done for them, and all the mercies bestowed on them. But there is one whom they should embalm in their souls with the most costly spices - one who, above all other gifts of God, deserves to be had in perpetual remembrance. One I said, for I mean not an act, I mean not a deed; but it is a Person whose portrait I would frame in gold, and hang up in the state-room of the soul. I would have you earnest students of all the deeds of the conquering Messiah. I would have you conversant with the life of our Beloved. But O forget not his person; for the text says, "This do in remembrance of me." It is Christ's glorious person which ought to be the object of our remembrance. It is his image which should be enshrined in every temple of the Holy Ghost.

But some will say, "How can we remember Christ's person, when we never saw it? We cannot tell what was the peculiar form of his visage; we believe his countenance to be fairer than that of any other man - although through grief and suffering more marred - but since we did not see it, we cannot remember it. We never saw his feet as they trod the journeys of his mercy; we never beheld his hands as he stretched them out full of lovingkindness; we cannot remember the wondrous intonation of his language, when in more than seraphic eloquence, he awed the multitude,

and chained their ears to him; we cannot picture the sweet smile that ever hung on his lips, nor that awful frown with which he dealt out anathemas against the Pharisees; we cannot remember him in his sufferings and agonies, for we never saw him." Well, beloved, I suppose it is true that you cannot remember the visible appearance, for you were not then born; but do you not know that even the apostle said, though he had known Christ after the flesh, yet, thenceforth after the flesh he would know Christ no more. The natural appearance, the race, the descent, the poverty, the humble garb, were nothing in the apostle's estimation of his glorified Lord. And thus, though you do not know him after the flesh, you may know him after the spirit; in this manner you can remember Jesus as much now as Peter, or Paul, or John, or James, or any of those favoured ones who once trod in his footsteps, walked side by side with him, or laid their heads upon his bosom. Memory annihilates distance and overleapeth time, and can behold the Lord, though he be exalted in glory.

Ah! let us spend five minutes in remembering Jesus. Let us remember him in his baptism, when descending into the waters of Jordan, a voice was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Behold him coming up dripping from the stream! Surely the conscious water must have blushed that it contained its God. He slept within its waves a moment, to consecrate the tomb of baptism, in which those who are dead with Christ are buried with him. Let us remember him in the wilderness, whither he went straight from his immersion. Oh! I have often thought of that scene in the desert, when Christ, weary and way-worn, sat him down, perhaps upon the gnarled roots of some old tree. Forty days that he fasted, he was an hungered, when in the extremity of his weakness there came the evil spirit. Perhaps he had veiled his demon royalty in the form of some aged pilgrim, and taking up a stone, said, "Way-worn pilgrim, if thou be the Son of God command this stone to be made bread." Methinks I see him, with his cunning smile, and his malicious leer, as he held the stone, and said, "If," - blasphemous if, - "If thou be the Son of God, command that this stone shall become a meal for me and thee, for both of us are hungry, and it will be an act of mercy; thou canst do it easily; speak the word, and it shall be like the bread of heaven; we will feed upon it, and thou and I will be friends for ever." But Jesus said - and O how sweetly did he say it - "Man shall not live by bread

alone." Oh! how wonderfully did Christ fight the tempter! Never was there such a battle as that. It was a duel foot to foot - a single-handed combat - when the champion lion of the pit, and the mighty lion of the tribe of Judah, fought together. Splendid sight! Angels stood around to gaze upon the spectacle, just as men of old did sit to see the tournament of noted warriors. There Satan gathered up his strength; here Apollyon concentrated all his satanic power, that in this giant wrestle he might overthrow the seed of the woman. But Jesus was more than a match for him; in the wrestling he gave him a deadly fall, and came off more than a conqueror. Lamb of God! I will remember thy desert strivings, when next I combat with Satan. When next I have a conflict with roaring Diabolus, I will look to him who conquered once for all, and broke the dragon's head with his mighty blows.

Further, I beseech you remember him in all his daily temptations and hourly trials, in that life-long struggle of his, through which he passed. Oh! what a mighty tragedy was the death of Christ! and his life too? Ushered in with a song, it closed with a shriek. "It is finished." It began in a manger, and ended on a cross; but oh, the sad interval between! Oh! the black pictures of persecution, when his friends abhorred him; when his foes frowned at him as he passed the streets; when he heard the hiss of calumny, and was bitten by the foul tooth of envy; when slander said he had a devil and was mad: that he was a drunken man and a wine-bibber; and when his righteous soul was vexed with the ways of the wicked. Oh! Son of God, I must remember thee; I cannot help remembering thee, when I think of those years of toil and trouble which thou didst live for my sake. But you know my chosen theme - the place where I can always best remember Christ. It is a shady garden full of olives. O that spot! I would that I had eloquence, that I might take you there. Oh! if the Spirit would but take us, and set us down hard by the mountains of Jerusalem, I would say, see there runs the brook of Kedron, which the king himself did pass; and there you see the olive trees. Possibly, at the foot of that olive, lay the three disciples when they slept; and there, ah! there, I see drops of blood. Stand here, my soul, a moment; those drops of blood - dost thou behold them? Mark them; they are not the blood of wounds; they are the blood of a man whose body was then unwounded. O my soul picture him when he knelt down in agony and sweat, - sweat, because he wrestled

with God, - sweat, because he agonized with his Father. "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." O Gethsemane! thy shades are deeply solemn to my soul. But ah! those drops of blood! Surely it is the climax of the height of misery; it is the last of the mighty acts of this wondrous sacrifice. Can love go deeper than that? Can it stoop to greater deeds of mercy? Oh! had I eloquence, I would bestow a tongue on every drop of blood that is there; that your hearts might rise in mutiny against your languor and coldness, and speak out with earnest burning remembrance of Jesus. And now, farewell, Gethsemane.

But I will take you somewhere else, where you shall still behold the "Man of Sorrows." I will lead you to Pilate's hall, and let you see him endure the mockeries of cruel soldiers: the smittings of mailed gloves; the blows of clenched fists; the shame; the spitting, the plucking of the hair: the cruel buffetings. Oh! can you not picture the King of Martyrs, stript of his garments; exposed to the gaze of fiend-like men? See you not the crown about his temples, each thorn acting as a lancet to pierce his head? Mark you not his lacerated shoulders, and the white bones starting out from the bleeding flesh? Oh, Son of Man! I see thee scourged and flagellated with rods and whips, how can I henceforward cease to remember thee? My memory would be more treacherous than Pilate, did it not every cry, Ecce Homo, - "Behold the man."

Now, finish the scene of woe by a view of Calvary. Think of the pierced hands and the bleeding side; think of the scorching sun, and then the entire darkness; remember the broiling fever and the dread thirst; think of the death shriek, "It is finished!" and of the groans which were its prelude. This is the object of memory. Let us never forget Christ. I beseech you, for the love of Jesus, let him have the chief place in your memories. Let not the pearl of great price be dropped from your careless hand into the dark ocean of oblivion.

I cannot, however, help saying one thing before I leave this head: and that is, there are some of you who can very well carry away what I have said, because you have read it often, and heard it before; but still you cannot spiritually remember anything about Christ, because you never had him manifested to you, and what we have never known, we cannot remember.

Thanks be unto God, I speak not of you all, for in this place there is a goodly remnant according to the election of grace, and to them I turn. Perhaps I could tell you of some old barn, hedge-row, or cottage; or if you have lived in London, about some garret, or some dark lane or street, where first you met with Christ; or some chapel into which you strayed, and you might say, "Thank God, I can remember the seat where first he met with me, and spoke the whispers of love to my soul, and told me he had purchased me."

"Dost mind the place, the spot of ground,  
Where Jesus did thee meet?"

Yes, and I would love to build a temple on the spot, and to raise some monument there, where Jehovah-Jesus first spoke to my soul, and manifested himself to me. But he has revealed himself to you more than once - has he not? And you can remember scores of places where the Lord hath appeared of old unto you, saying, "Behold I have loved you with an everlasting love." If you cannot all remember such things, there are some of you that can; and I am sure they will understand me when I say, come and do this in remembrance of Christ - in remembrance of all his loving visitations, of his sweet wooing words, of his winning smiles upon you, of all he has said and communicated to your souls. Remember all these things tonight, if it be possible for memory to gather up the mighty aggregate of grace. "Bless the Lord. O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

II. Having spoken upon the blessed object of our memory, we say, secondly, a little upon THE BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM A LOVING REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST.

Love never says, "Cui bono?" Love never asks what benefit it will derive from love. Love from its very nature is a disinterested thing. It loves; for the creature's sake it loves, and for nothing else. The Christian needs no argument to make him love Christ; just as a mother needs no argument to make her love her child. She does it because it is her nature to do so. The new-born creature must love Christ, it cannot help it. Oh! who can resist the matchless charms of Jesus Christ? - the fairest of ten thousand fairs,

the loveliest of ten thousand loves. Who can refuse to adore the prince of perfection, the mirror of beauty, the majestic Son of God? But yet it may be useful to us to observe the advantages of remembering Christ, for they are neither few nor small.

And first, remembrance of Jesus will tend to give you hope when you are under the burden of your sins. Notice a few characters here tonight. There comes in a poor creature. Look at him! He has neglected himself this last month; he looks as if he had hardly eaten his daily bread. What is the matter with you? "Oh!" says he, "I have been under a sense of guilt; I have been again and again lamenting, because I fear I can never be forgiven; once I thought I was good, but I have been reading the Bible, and I find that my heart is 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;' I have tried to reform, but the more I try, the deeper I sink in the mire, there is certainly no hope for me. I feel that I deserve no mercy; it seems to me that God must destroy me, for he has declared, 'The soul that sinneth it shall die;' and die I must, be damned I must, for I know I have broken God's law." How will you comfort such a man? What soft words will you utter to give him peace? I know! I will tell thee that there is one, who for thee hath made a complete atonement; if thou only believest on him thou art safe for ever. Remember him, thou poor dying, hopeless creature, and thou shalt be made to sing for joy and gladness. See, the man believes, and in ecstasy exclaims, "Oh! come all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul."

"Tell it unto sinners, tell,  
I am, I am out of hell."

Hallelujah! God hath blotted out my sins like a thick cloud! That is one benefit to be derived from remembering Christ. It gives us hope under a sense of sin, and tells us there is mercy yet.

Now, I must have another character. And what does he say? "I cannot stand it any longer; I have been persecuted and ill-treated, because I love Christ; I am mocked, and laughed at, and despised: I try to bear it, but I really cannot. A man will be a man; tread upon a worm and he will turn upon you; my patience altogether fails me; I am in such a peculiar



position that it is of no use to advise me to have patience, for patience I cannot have; my enemies are slandering me, and I do not know what to do." What shall we say to that poor man? How shall we give him patience? What shall we preach to him? You have heard what he has to say about himself. How shall we comfort him under this great trial? If we suffered the same, what should we wish some friend to say to us? Shall we tell him that other persons have borne as much? He will say, "Miserable comforters are ye all!" No, I will tell him, "Brother, you are persecuted; but remember the words of Jesus Christ, how he spake unto us, and said, 'Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.' My brother! think of him, who, when he died, prayed for his murderers, and said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." All you have to bear, is as nothing compared with his mighty sufferings. Take courage; face it again like a man; never say die. Let not your patience be gone; take up your cross daily, and follow Christ. Let him be your motto; set him before your eyes. And, now, receiving this, hear what the man will say. He tells you at once - "Hail, persecution; welcome shame. Disgrace for Jesus shall be my honor, and scorn shall be my highest glory.

"Now, for the love I bear his name,  
What was my gain I count my loss,  
I pour contempt on all my shame,  
And nail my glory to his cross."

There is another effect, you see, to remembering Christ. It tends to give us patience under persecution. It is a girdle to brace up the loins, so that our faith may endure to the end.

Dear friends, I should occupy your time too much if I went into the several benefits; so I will only just run over one or two blessings to be received. It will give us strength in temptation. I believe that there are hours with every man, when he has a season of terrific temptation. There was never a vessel that lived upon the mighty deep but sometimes it had to do battle with a storm. There she is, the poor barque, rocked up and down on the mad waves. See how they throw her from wave to wave, and toss her to mid heaven. The winds laugh her to scorn. Old Ocean takes

the ship in his dripping fingers, and shakes it to and fro. How the mariners cry out for fear! Do you know how you can put oil upon the waters, and all shall be still? Yes. One potent word shall do it. Let Jesus come; let the poor heart remember Jesus, and steadily then the ship shall sail, for Christ has the helm. The winds shall blow no more, for Christ shall bid them shut their mighty mouths, and never again disturb his child. There is nothing which can give you strength in temptation, and help you to weather the storm, like the name of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. Then again, what comfort it will give you on a sick bed - the name of Christ! It will help you to be patient to those who wait upon you, and to endure the sufferings which you have to bear; yea, it shall be so with you, that you shall have more hope in sickness than in health, and shall find a blessed sweetness in the bitterness of gall. Instead of feeling vinegar in your mouth, through your trouble, you shall find honey for sweetness, in the midst of all the trial and trouble that God will put upon you, "For he giveth songs in the night."

But just to close up the advantages of remembering Christ, do you know where you will have the benefit most of all? Do you know the place where chiefly you will rejoice that you ever thought of him? I will take you to it. Hush! Silence! You are going up stairs into a lonely room. The curtains hang down. Some one stands there weeping. Children are around the bed, and friends are there. See that man lying? That is yourself. Look at him; his eyes are your eyes; his hands are your hands. That is yourself. You will be there soon. Man! that is yourself. Do you see it? It is a picture of yourself. Those are your eyes that soon will be closed in death - your hands, that will lie stiff and motionless - your lips that will be dry and parched, between which they will put drops of water. Those are your words that freeze in air, and drop so slowly from your dying lips. I wonder whether you will be able to remember Christ there. If you do not, I will picture you. Behold that man, straight up in the bed; see his eyes starting from their sockets. His friends are all alarmed; they ask him what he sees. He represses the emotion; he tells them he sees nothing. They know that there is something before his eyes. He starts again. Good God! what is that I see - I seem to see? What is it? Ah! one sigh! The soul is gone. The body is there. What did he see? He saw a flaming throne of judgment; he saw God upon it, with his sceptre; he saw books opened; he

beheld the throne of God, and saw a messenger, with a sword brandished in the air to smite him low. Man! that is thyself; there thou wilt be soon. That picture is thine own portrait. I have photographed thee to the life. Look at it. That is where thou shalt be within a few years - ay, within a few days. But if thou canst remember Christ, shall I tell thee what thou wilt do? Oh! thou wilt smile in the midst of trouble. Let me picture such a man. They put pillows behind him; he sits up in bed, and takes the hand of the loved one, and says, "Farewell! weep not for me; the kind God shall wipe away all tears from every eye." Those round about are addressed, "Prepare to meet your God, and follow me to the land of bliss." Now he has set his house in order. All is done. Behold him, like good old Jacob, leaning on his staff, about to die. See how his eyes sparkle; he claps his hands; they gather round to hear what he has to say; he whispers "Victory!" and summoning a little more strength, he cries, "Victory!" and at last, with his final gasp, "Victory, through him that loved us!" and he dies. This is one of the great benefits to be derived from remembering Christ - to be enabled to meet death with blessed composure.

III. We are now arrived at the third portion of our meditation, which is a SWEET AID TO MEMORY.

At schools we used certain books, called "Aids to Memory." I am sure they rather perplexed than assisted me. Their utility was equivalent to that of a bundle of staves under a traveller's arm: true he might use them one by one to walk with, but in the mean time he carried a host of others which he would never need. But our Saviour was wiser than all our teachers, and his remembrances are true and real aids to memory. His love tokens have an unmistakeable language, and they sweetly win our attention.

Behold the whole mystery of the sacred Eucharist. It is bread and wine which are lively emblems of the body and blood of Jesus. The power to excite remembrance consists in the appeal thus made to the senses. Here the eye, the hand, the mouth, find joyful work. The bread is tasted, and entering within, works upon the sense of taste, which is one of the most powerful. The wine is sipped - the act is palpable. We know that we are drinking, and thus the senses, which are usually clogs to the soul, become wings to lift the mind in contemplation. Again, much of the influence of

this ordinance is found in its simplicity. How beautifully simple the ceremony is - bread broken and wine poured out. There is no calling that thing a chalice, that thing a paten, and that a host. Here is nothing to burden the memory - here is the simple bread and wine. He must have no memory at all who cannot remember that he has eaten bread, and that he has been drinking wine. Note again, the mighty pregnancy of these signs - how full they are of meaning. Bread broken - so was your Saviour broken. Bread to be eaten - so his flesh is meat indeed. Wine poured out, the pressed juice of the grape - so was your Saviour crushed under the foot of divine justice: his blood is your sweetest wine. Wine to cheer your heart - so does the blood of Jesus. Wine to strengthen and invigorate you - so does the blood of the mighty sacrifice. Oh! make that bread and wine to your souls tonight a sweet and blessed help of remembrance of that dear Man who once on Calvary died. Like the little ewe lamb, you are now to eat your Master's bread and drink from his cup. Remember the hand which feeds you.

But before you can remember Christ well here, you must ask the assistance of the Holy Spirit. I believe there ought to be a preparation before the Lord's Supper. I do not believe in Mrs. Toogood's preparation, who spent a week in preparing, and then finding it was not the Ordinance Sunday, she said she had lost all the week. I do not believe in that kind of preparation, but I do believe in a holy preparation for the Lord's Supper: when we can on a Saturday if possible, spend an hour in quiet meditation on Christ, and the passion of Jesus; when, especially on the Sabbath afternoon, we can devoutly sit down and behold him, then these scenes become realities, and not mockeries, as they are to some. I fear greatly that there are some of you who will drink the wine, and not think of his blood: and vile hypocrites you will be while you do it. Take heed to yourselves, "He that eateth and drinketh" unworthily, eateth and drinketh - what? - "damnation to himself." This is a plain English word; mind what you are doing! Do not do it carelessly; for of all the sacred things on earth, it is the most solemn. We have heard of some men banded together by drawing blood from their arms and drinking it all round; that was most horrid, but at the same time most solemn. Here you are to drink blood from the veins of Christ, and sip the trickling stream which gushed from his own loving heart. Is not that a solemn thing?

Ought anybody to trifle with it? To go to church and take it for sixpence? To come and join us for the sake of getting charities? Out upon it! It is an awful blasphemy against Almighty God; and amongst the damned in hell, those shall be among the most accursed who dared thus to mock the holy ordinance of God. This is the remembrance of Christ. "This do in remembrance of me." If you cannot do it in remembrance of Christ, I beseech you, as you love your souls, do not do it at all. Oh! regenerate man or woman, enter not into the court of the priests, lest Israel's God resent the intrusion.

IV. And now to close up. Here is a sweet command: "This do in remembrance of me." To whom does this command apply? "This do ye." It is important to answer this question - "This do ye," Who are intended? Ye who put your trust in me. "This do ye in remembrance of me." Well, now, you should suppose Christ speaking to you tonight; and he says, "This do ye in remembrance of me." Christ watches you at the door. Some of you go home, and Christ says, "I thought I said, 'This do ye in remembrance of me.'" Some of you keep your seats as spectators. Christ sits with you, and he says, "I thought I said, 'This do ye in remembrance of me.'" "Lord, I know you did." "Do you love me then?" "Yes, I love thee; I love, Lord; thou knowest I do." "But, I say, go down there - eat that bread, drink that wine." "I do not like to, Lord; I should have to be baptized if I joined that church, and I am afraid I shall catch cold, or be looked at. I am afraid to go before the church, for I think they would ask some questions I could not answer." "What," says Christ, "is this all you love me? Is this all your affection to your Lord. Oh! how cold to me, your Saviour. If I had loved you no more than this, you would have been in hell: if that were the full extent of my affection, I should not have died for you. Great love bore great agonies; and is this all your gratitude to me?" Are not some of you ashamed, after this? Do you not say in your hearts, "it is really wrong?" Christ says, "Do this in remembrance of me," and are you not ashamed to stay away? I give a free invitation to every lover of Jesus to come to this table. I beseech you, deny not yourselves the privilege by refusing to unite with the church. If you still live in sinful neglect of this ordinance, let me remind you that Christ has said, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me in this generation, of him will I be ashamed, when I come in the glory of my Father." Oh, soldier of the

cross, act not the coward's part!

And not to lead you into any mistakes, I must just add one thing, and then I have done. When I speak of your taking the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, do not imagine that I wish you for one moment to suppose that there is anything saving in it. Some say that the ordinance of baptism is non-essential, so is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, it is non-essential, if we look upon it in the light of salvation. Be saved by eating a piece of bread! Nonsense, confounded nonsense! Be saved by drinking a drop of wine! Why, it is too absurd for common sense to admit any discussion upon. You know it is the blood of Jesus Christ; it is the merit of his agonies; it is the purchase of his sufferings; it is what he did, that alone can save us. Venture on him; venture wholly, and then you are saved. Hearest thou, poor convinced sinner, the way of salvation? If I ever meet thee in the next world, thou mightest, perhaps, say to me, "I spent one evening, sir, in hearing you, and you never told me the way to heaven." Well, thou shalt hear it. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in his righteousness, and thou art saved beyond the vengeance of the law, or the power of hell. But trust in thine own works, and thou art lost as sure as thou art alive.

Now, O ever glorious Son of God, we approach thy table to feast on the viands of grace, permit each of us, in reliance upon thy Spirit, to exclaim in the words of one of thine own poets:

"Remember thee, and all thy pains,  
And all thy love to me -  
Yes, while a pulse or breath remains,  
I will remember thee.

And when these failing lips grow dumb,  
And thought and memory flee;  
When thou shalt in thy kingdom come,  
Jesus, remember me!"

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## The Rent Veil

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom - Matthew 27:50-51

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the, veil, that is to say, his flesh - Hebrews 10:19-20

The death of our Lord Jesus Christ was fitly surrounded by miracles; yet it is itself so much greater a wonder than all besides, that it as far exceeds them as the sun outshines the planets which surround it. It seems natural enough that the earth should quake, that tombs should be opened, and that the veil of the temple should be rent, when He who only hath immortality gives up the ghost. The more you think of the death of the Son of God, the more will you be amazed at it. As much as a miracle excels a common fact, so doth this wonders of wonders rise above all miracles of power. That the divine Lord, even though veiled in mortal flesh, should condescend to be subject to the power of death, so as to bow His head on the cross, and submit to be laid in the tomb, is among mysteries the greatest. The death of Jesus is the marvel of time and eternity, which, as Aaron's rod swallowed up all the rest, takes up into itself all lesser marvels.

Yet the rending of the veil of the temple is not a miracle to be lightly passed over. It was made of "fine twined linen, with Cherubims of cunning work." This gives the idea of a substantial fabric, a piece of lasting tapestry, which would have endured the severest strain. No human hands could have torn that sacred covering; and it could not have been divided in the midst by any accidental cause; yet, strange to say, on the instant when the holy person of Jesus was rent by death, the great veil which concealed the holiest of all was "rent in twain from the top to the



bottom." What did it mean? It meant much more than I can tell you now.

It is not fanciful to regard it as a solemn act of mourning on the part of the house of the Lord. In the East men express their sorrow by rending their garments; and the temple, when it beheld its Master die, seemed struck with horror, and rent its veil. Shocked at the sin of man, indignant at the murder of its Lord, in its sympathy with Him who is the true temple of God, the outward symbol tore its holy vestment from the top to the bottom. Did not the miracle also mean that from that hour the whole system of types, and shadows, and ceremonies had come to an end? The ordinances of an earthly priesthood were rent with that veil. In token of the death of the ceremonial law, the soul of it quitted its sacred shrine, and left its bodily tabernacle as a dead thing. The legal dispensation is over. The rent of the veil seemed to say—"Henceforth God dwells no longer in the thick darkness of the Holy of Holies, and shines forth no longer from between the cherubim. The special enclosure is broken up, and there is no inner sanctuary for the earthly high priest to enter: typical atonements and sacrifices are at an end."

According to the explanation given in our second text, the rending of the veil chiefly meant that the way into the holiest, which was not before made manifest, was now laid open to all believers. Once in the year the high priest solemnly lifted a corner of this veil with fear and trembling, and with blood and holy incense he passed into the immediate presence of Jehovah; but the tearing of the veil laid open the secret place. The rent front top to bottom gives ample space for all to enter who are called of God's grace, to approach the throne, and to commune with the Eternal One. Upon that subject I shall try to speak this morning, praying in my inmost soul that you and I, with all other believers, may have boldness actually to enter into that which is within the veil at this time of our assembling for worship. Oh, that the Spirit of God would lead us into the nearest fellowship which mortal men can have with the Infinite Jehovah!

First, this morning, I shall ask you to consider what has been done. The veil has been rent. Secondly, we will remember what we therefore have: we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood Jesus." Then, thirdly, we will consider how we exercise this grace: we "enter by the

blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh."

I. First, think of WHAT HAS BEEN DONE. In actual historical fact the glorious veil of the temple has been rent in twain from the top to the bottom: as a matter of spiritual fact, which is far more important to us, the separating legal ordinance is abolished. There was under the law this ordinance—that no man should ever go into the holiest of all, with the one exception of the high priest, and he but once in the year, and not without blood. If any man had attempted to enter there he must have died, as guilty of great presumption and of profane intrusion into the secret place of the Most High. Who could stand in the presence of Him who is a consuming fire? This ordinance of distance runs all through the law; for even the holy place, which was the vestibule of the Holy of Holies, was for the priests alone. The place of the people was one of distance. At the very first institution of the law when God descended upon Sinai, the ordinance was, "Thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about," There was no invitation to draw near. Not that they desired to do so, for the mountain was together on a smoke, and "even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." "The Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish." If so much as a beast touch the mountain it must be stoned, or thrust through with a dart. The spirit of the old law was reverent distance. Moses and here and there a man chosen by God, might come near to Jehovah; but as for the bulk of people, the command was, "Draw not nigh hither." When the Lord revealed His glory at the giving of the law, we read—"When the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off." All this is ended. The precept to keep back is abrogated, and the invitation is, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." "Let its draw near" is now the filial spirit of the gospel. How thankful I am for this! What a joy it is to my soul! Some of God's people have not yet realized this gracious fact, for still they worship afar off. Very much of prayer is to be highly commended for its reverence; but it has in it a lack of childlike confidence. I can admire the solemn and stately language of worship which recognizes the greatness of God; but it will not warm my heart nor express my soul until it has also blended therewith the joyful nearness of that perfect love which casteth out fear, and ventures to speak

with our Father in heaven as a child speaketh with its father on earth. My brother, no veil remains. Why dost thou stand afar off, and tremble like a slave? Draw near with full assurance of faith. The veil is rent: access is free. Come boldly to the throne of grace. Jesus has made thee nigh, as nigh to God as even He Himself is. Though we speak of the holiest of all, even the secret place of the Most High, yet it is of this place of awe, even of this sanctuary of Jehovah, that the veil is rent; therefore, let nothing hinder thine entrance. Assuredly no law forbids thee; but infinite love invites thee to draw nigh to God.

This rending of the veil signified, also, the removal of the separating sin. Sin is, after all, the great divider between God and man. That veil of blue and purple and fine twined linen could not really separate man from God: for He is, as to His omnipresence, not far from any one of us. Sin is a far more effectual wall of separation: it opens in abyss between the sinner and his Judge. Sin shuts out prayer, and praise, and every form of religious exercise. Sin makes God walk contrary to us, because we walk contrary to Him. Sin, by separating the soul from God, causes spiritual death, which is both the effect and the penalty of transgression. How can two walk together except they be agreed? How can a holy God have fellowship with unholy creatures? Shall justice dwell with injustice? Shall perfect purity abide with the abominations of evil? No, it cannot be. Our Lord Jesus Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He taketh away the sin of the world, and so the veil is rent. By the shedding of His most precious blood we are cleansed from all sin, and that most gracious promise of the new covenant is fulfilled—"Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." When sin is gone, the barrier is broken down, the unfathomable gulf is filled. Pardon, which removes sin, and justification, which brings righteousness, make up a deed of clearance so real and so complete that nothing now divides the sinner from his reconciled God. "The Judge is now the Father: He, who once must necessarily have condemned, is found justly absolving and accepting. In this double sense the veil is rent: the separating ordinance is abrogated, and the separating sin is forgiven.

Next, be it remembered that the separating sinfulness is also taken away through our Lord Jesus. It is not only what we have done, but what we

are that keeps us apart from God. We have sin engrained in us: even those who have grace dwelling them have to complain, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." How can we commune with God with our eyes blinded, our ears stopped, our hearts hardened, and our senses deadened by sin? Our whole nature is tainted, poisoned, perverted by evil; how can we know the Lord? Beloved, through the death of our Lord Jesus the covenant of grace is established with us, and its gracious provisions are on this wise: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." When this is the case, when the will of God is inscribed on the heart, and the nature is entirely changed, then is the dividing veil which hides us from God taken away: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Blessed are all they that love righteousness and follow after it, for they are in a way in which the Righteous One can walk in fellowship with them. Spirits that are like God are not divided from God. Difference of nature hangs up a veil; but the new birth, and the sanctification which follows upon it, through the precious death of Jesus, remove that veil. He that hates sin, strives after holiness, and labors to perfect it in the fear of God, is in fellowship with God. It is a blessed thing when we love what God loves, when we seek what God seeks, when we are in sympathy with divine aims, and are obedient to divine commands: for with such persons will the Lord dwell. When grace makes us partakers of the divine nature; then are we at one with the Lord, and the veil is taken away.

"Yes," saith one, "I see now how the veil is taken away in three different fashions; but still God is God, and we are but poor puny men: between God and man there must of necessity be a separating veil, caused by the great disparity between the Creator and the creature. How can the finite and the infinite commune? God is all in all, and more than all; we are nothing, and less than nothing; how can we meet?" When the Lord does come near to I His favored ones, they own how incapable they are of enduring the excessive glory. Even the beloved John said, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." When we have been especially conscious of the presence and working of our Lord, we have felt our flesh creep, and our blood chill; and then we have understood what Jacob meant when he said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God,

and this is the gate of heaven." All this is true; for the Lord saith, "Thou canst not see my face and live." Although this is a much thinner veil than those I have already mentioned, yet it is a veil; and it is hard for man to be at home with God. But the Lord Jesus bridges the separating distance. Behold the blessed Son of God has come into the world, and taken upon Himself our nature! "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of the flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Though He is God as God is God, yet is He as surely man as man is man. Mark well how in the person of the Lord Jesus we see God and man in the closest conceivable alliance; for they are united in one person forever. The gulf is completely filled by the fact that Jesus has gone through with us even to the bitter end, to death, even to the death of the cross. He has followed out the career of manhood even to the tomb; and thus we see that the veil, which hung between the nature of God and the nature of man, is rent in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We enter into the holiest of all through His flesh, which links manhood to Godhead.

Now, you see what it is to have the veil taken away. Solemnly note that this avails only for believers: those who refuse Jesus refuse the only way of access to God. God is not approachable, except through the rending of the veil by the death of Jesus. There was one typical way to the mercy-seat of old, and that was through the turning aside of the veil; there was no other. And there is now no other way for any of you to come into fellowship with God, except through the rent veil, even the death of Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin. Come this way, and you may come freely. Refuse to come this way, and there hangs between you and God an impassable veil. Without Christ you are without God, and without hope. Jesus Himself assures you, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." God grant that this may not happen to any of you!

For believers the veil is not rolled up, but rent. The veil was not unhooked, and carefully folded up, and put away, so that it might be put in its place at some future time. Oh, no! But the divine hand took it and rent it front top to bottom. It can never be hung up again; that is impossible. Between those who are in Christ Jesus and the great God, there will never be another separation. "Who shall separate us from the

love of God?" Only one veil was made, and as that is rent, the one and only separator is destroyed. I delight to think of this. The devil himself can never divide me from God now. He may and will attempt to shut me out from God; but the worst he could do would be to hang up a rent veil. What would that avail but to exhibit his impotence? God has rent the veil, and the devil cannot mend it. There is access between a believer and his God; and there must be such free access forever, since the veil is not rolled up, and put on one side to be hung up again in days to come; but it is rent, and rendered useless.

The rent is not in one corner, but in the midst, as Luke tells us. It is not a slight rent through which we may see a little; but it is rent from the top to the bottom. There is an entrance made for the greatest sinners. If there had only been a small hole cut through it, the lesser offenders might have crept through; but what an act of abounding mercy is this, that the veil is rent in the midst, and rent from top to bottom, so that the chief of sinners may find ample passage! This also shows that for believers there is no hindrance to the fullest and freest access to God. Oh, for much boldness, this morning, to come where God has not only set open the door, but has lifted the door from its hinges; yea, removed it, post, and bar, and all!

I want you to notice that this veil, when it was rent, was rent by God, not by man. It was not the act of an irreverent mob; it was not the midnight outrage of a set of profane priests: it was the act of God alone. Nobody stood within the veil; and on the outer side of it stood the priests only fulfilling their ordinary vocation of offering sacrifice. It must have astounded them when they saw that holy place laid bare in a moment. How they fled, as they saw that massive veil divided without human hand in a second of time! Who rent it? Who but God Himself? If another had done it, there might have been a mistake about it, and the mistake might need to be remedied by replacing the curtain; but if the Lord has done it, it is done rightly, it is done finally, it is done irreversibly. It is God Himself who has laid sin on Christ, and in Christ has put that sin away. God Himself has opened the gate of heaven to believers, and cast up a highway along which the souls of men may travel to Himself. God Himself has set the ladder between earth and heaven. Come to Him now, ye humble ones. Behold, He sets before you an open door!

II. And now I ask you to follow me, dear friends, in the second place, to an experimental realization of my subject. We now notice WHAT WE HAVE: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest," Observe the threefold "having" in the paragraph now before us, and be not content without the whole three. We have "boldness to enter in." There are degrees in boldness; but this is one of the highest. When the veil was rent it required some boldness to look within. I wonder whether the priests at the altar did have the courage to gaze upon the mercy-seat. I suspect that they were so struck with amazement that they fled from the altar, fearing sudden death. It requires a measure of boldness steadily to look upon the mystery of God: "Which things the angels desire to look into." It is well not to look with a merely curious eye into the deep things of God. I question whether any man is able to pry into the mystery of the Trinity without great risk. Some, thinking to look there with the eyes of their natural intellect, have been blinded by the light of that sun, and have henceforth wandered in darkness. It needs boldness to look into the splendors of redeeming and electing love. If any did look into the holiest when the veil was rent, they were among the boldest of men; for others must have feared lest the fate of the men of Bethshemesh would be theirs. Beloved, the Holy Spirit invites you to took into the holy place, and view it all with reverent eye for it is full of teaching to you. Understand the mystery of the mercy-seat, and of the ark of the covenant overlaid with gold, and of the pot of manna, and of the tables of stone, and of Aaron's rod that budded. Look, look boldly through Jesus Christ: but do not content yourself with looking! Hear what the text says: "Having boldness to enter in." Blessed be God if He has taught us this sweet way of no longer looking from afar, but of entering into the inmost shrine with confidence! "Boldness to enter in" is what we ought to have.

Let us follow the example of the high priest, and, having entered, let us perform the functions of one who enters in. "Boldness to enter in" suggests that we act as men who are in their proper places. To stand within the veil filled the servant of God with an overpowering sense of the divine presence. If ever in his life he was near to God, he was certainly near to God then, when quite alone, shut in, and excluded from all the world, he had no one with him, except the glorious Jehovah. O my

beloved, may we this morning enter into the holiest in this sense! Shut out front the world, both wicked and Christian, let us know that the Lord is here, most near and manifest. Oh that we may now cry out with Hagar, "Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" Oh, how sweet to realize by personal enjoyment the presence of Jehovah! How cheering to feel that the Lord of hosts is with us! We know our God to be a very present help in trouble. It is one of the greatest joys out of heaven to be able to sing—Jehovah Shammah—the Lord is here. At first we tremble in the divine presence; but as we feel more of the spirit of adoption we draw near with sacred delight, and feel so fully at home with our God that we sing with Moses, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Do not live as if God were as far off from you as the east is from the west. Live not far below on the earth; but live on high, as if you were in heaven. In heaven You Will be with God; but on earth He will be with you: is there much difference? He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Jesus hath made us nigh by His precious blood. Try day by day to live in as great nearness to God, as the high priest felt when he stood for awhile within the secret of Jehovah's tabernacle.

The high priest had a sense of communion with God; he was not only near, but he spoke with God. I cannot tell what he said, but I should think that on the special day the high priest unburdened himself of the load of Israel's sin and sorrow, and made known his requests unto the Lord. Aaron, standing there alone, must have been filled with memories of his own faultiness, and of the idolatries and backslidings of the people. God shone upon him, and he bowed before God. He may have heard things which it was not lawful for him to utter, and other things which he could not have uttered if they had been lawful. Beloved, do you know what it is to commune with God? Words are poor vehicles for this fellowship; but what a blessed thing it is! Proofs of the existence of God are altogether her superfluous to those of us who are in the habit of conversing with the Eternal One. If anybody were to write an essay to prove the existence of my wife, or my son, I certainly should not read it, except for the amusement of the thing; and proofs of the existence of God to the man who communes with God are much the same. Many of you walk with God: what bliss! Fellowship with the Most High is elevating, purifying,



strengthening. Enter into it boldly. Enter into His revealed thoughts, even as He graciously enters into yours: rise to His plans, as He condescends to yours; ask to be uplifted to Him, even as He deigns to dwell with you.

This is what the rent of the veil brings us when we have boldness to enter in; but, mark you, the rent veil brings us nothing until we have boldness to enter in. Why stand we without? Jesus brings us near, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Let us not be slow to take up our freedom, and come boldly to the throne. The high priest entered within the veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, with blood, and with incense, that he might pray for Israel; and there he stood before the Most High, pleading with Him to bless the people. O beloved, prayer is a divine institution, and it belongs to us. But there are many sorts of prayers. There is the prayer of one who seems shut out from God's holy temple; there is the prayer of another who stands in the court of the Gentiles afar off, looking towards the temple; there is the prayer of one who gets where Israel stands and pleads with the God of the chosen; there is the prayer in the court of the priests, when the sanctified man of God makes intercession; but the best prayer of all is offered in the holiest of all. There is no fear about prayer being heard when it is offered in the holiest. The very position of the man proves that he is accepted with God. He is standing on the surest ground of acceptance, and he is so near to God that his every desire is heard. There the man is seen through and through; for he is very near to God. His thoughts are read, his tears are seen, his sighs are heard; for he has boldness to enter in. He may ask what he will, and it shall be done unto him. As the altar sanctifieth the gift, so the most holy place, entered by the blood of Jesus, secures a certain answer to the prayer that is offered therein. God give us such power in prayer! It is a wonderful thing that the Lord should hearken to the voice of a man; yet are there such men. Luther came out of his closet, and cried, *Vici*—"I have conquered." He had not yet met his adversaries; but as he had prevailed with God for men, he felt that he should prevail with men for God.

But the high priest, if you recollect, after he had communed and prayed with God, came out and blessed the people. He put on his garments of glory and beauty, which he had laid aside when he went into the holy

place, for there he stood in simple white, and nothing else; and now he came out wearing the breast-plate and all his precious ornaments, and he blessed the people. That is what you will do if you have the boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus: you will bless the people that surround you. The Lord has blessed you, and He will make you a blessing. Your ordinary conduct and conversation will be a blessed example; the words you speak for Jesus will be like a dew from the Lord: the sick will be comforted by your words; the despondent will be encouraged by your faith; the lukewarm will be recovered by your love. You will be, practically, saying to each one who knows you, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and give thee peace." You will become a channel of blessing: "Out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water." May we each one have boldness to enter in, that we may come forth laden with benedictions!

If you will kindly look at the text, you will notice, what I shall merely hint at, that this boldness is well grounded. I always like to see the apostle using a "therefore": "Having therefore boldness." Paul is often a true poet, but he is always a correct logician; he is as logical as if he were dealing with mathematics rather than theology. Here he writes one of his therefores.

Why is it that we have boldness? Is it not because of our relationship to Christ which makes us "brethren?" "Having therefore, brethren, boldness." The feeblest believer has as much right to enter into the holy places as Paul had; because he is one of the brotherhood. I remember a rhyme by John Ryland, in which he says of heaven—

"They shall all be there, the great and the small;  
Poor I shall shake hands with the blessed St. Paul."

I have no doubt we shall have such a position, and such fellowship. Meanwhile, we do shake hands with I Him this morning as he calls us brethren. We are brethren to one another, because we are brethren to Jesus. Where we see the apostle go, we will go; yea, rather, where we see the Great Apostle and High Priest of our profession enter, we will follow. "Having therefore, boldness."

Beloved, we have now no fear of death in the most holy place. The high priest, whoever he might be, must always have dreaded that solemn day of atonement, when he had to pass into the silent and secluded place. I cannot tell whether it is true, but I have read that there is a tradition among the Jews, that a rope was fastened to the high priest's foot that they might draw out his corpse in case he died before the Lord. I should not wonder if their superstition devised such a thing, for it is an awful position for a man to enter into the secret dwelling of Jehovah. But we cannot die in the holy place now, since Jesus has died for us. The death of Jesus is the guarantee of the eternal life of all for whom He died. We have boldness to enter, for we shall not perish.

Our boldness arises from the perfection of His sacrifice. Read the fourteenth verse: "He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." We rely upon the sacrifice of Christ, believing that He was such a perfect Substitute for us, that it is not possible for us to die after our Substitute has died; and we must be accepted, because He is accepted. We believe that the precious blood has so effectually and eternally put away sin from us, that we are no longer obnoxious to the wrath of God. We may safely stand where sin must be smitten, if there be any sin upon us; for we are so washed, so cleaned, and so fully justified that we are accepted in the Beloved. Sin is so completely lifted from us by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, that we have boldness to enter where Jehovah Himself dwells.

Moreover, we have his for certain, that as a priest had a right to dwell near to God, we have that privilege; for Jesus hath made us kings and priests unto God, and all the privileges of the office come to us with the office itself. We have a mission within the holy place; we are called to enter there upon holy business, and so we have no fear of being intruders. A burglar may enter a house, but he does not enter with boldness; he is always afraid lest he should be surprised. You might enter a stranger's house, without an invitation, but You Would feel no boldness there. We do not enter the holiest as housebreakers, nor as strangers; we come in obedience to a call, to fulfill our office. When once we accept the sacrifice of Christ, we are at home with God. Where should a child be bold but in his father's house? Where should a priest stand but in the temple of his

God, for whose service he is set apart? Where should a blood-washed sinner live but with his God, to whom he is reconciled?

It is a heavenly joy to feel this boldness! We have now such a love for God, and such a delight in Him, that it never crosses our minds that we are trespassers when we draw near to Him. We never say, "God, my dread," but "God, my exceeding joy." His name is the music to which our lives are set: though God be a consuming fire we love Him as such, for He will only consume our dross, and that we desire to lose. Under no aspect is God now distasteful to us. We delight in Him, be He what He may. So you see, beloved, we have good grounds for boldness when we enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

I cannot leave this point until I have reminded you that we may have this boldness of entering in at all times, because the veil is always rent, and is never restored to its old place. "The Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy Place within the veil before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not"; but the Lord saith not so to us. Dear child of God, you may at all times have "boldness to enter in." The veil is rent both day and night. Yea, let me say it, even when thine eye of faith is dim, still enter in; when evidences are dark, still have "boldness to enter in"; and even if thou hast unhappily sinned, remember that access is open to thy penitent prayer. Come still through the rent veil, sinner as thou art. What though thou hast backslidden, what though thou art grieved with the sense of thy wanderings, come even now! "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart," but enter at once; for the veil is not there to exclude thee, though doubt and unbelief may make you think it is so. The veil cannot be there, for it was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

III. My time has fled, and I shall not have space to speak as I meant to do upon the last point—HOW WE EXERCISE THIS GRACE. Let me give you the notes of what I would have said.

Let us at this hour enter into the holiest. Behold the way! We come by the way of atonement: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." I have been made to feel really ill through

the fierce and blasphemous words that have been used of late by gentlemen of the modern school concerning the precious blood. I will not defile my lips by a repetition of the thrice-accursed things which they have dared to utter while trampling on the blood of Jesus. Everywhere throughout this divine Book you meet with the precious blood. How can he call himself a Christian who speaks in flippant and profane language of the blood of atonement? My brothers, there is no way into the holiest, even though the veil be rent, without blood. You might suppose that the high priest of old brought the blood because the veil was there; but you have to bring it with you though the veil is gone. The way is open, and you have boldness to enter; but not without the blood of Jesus. It would be an unholy boldness which would think of drawing near to God without the blood of the great Sacrifice. We have always to plead the atonement. As without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, so without that blood there is no access to God.

Next, the way by which we come is an unfailing way. Please notice that word—"by a new way"; this means by a way which is always fresh. The original Greek suggests the idea of "newly slain." Jesus died long ago, but His death is the same now as at the moment of its occurrence. We come to God, dear friends, by a way which is always effectual with God. It never, never loses one whit of its power freshness.

Dear dying lamb, thy precious blood  
Shall never lose its power.

The way is not worn away by long traffic: it is always new. If Jesus Christ had died yesterday, would you not feel that you could plead His merit today? Very well, you can plead that merit after these 19' centuries with as much confidence as at the first hour. The way to God is always newly laid. In effect, the wounds of Jesus incessantly bleed our expiation. The cross is as glorious as though He were still upon it. So far as the freshness, vigor, and force of the atoning death is concerned, we come by a new way. Let it be always new to our hearts. Let the doctrine of atonement never grow stale, but let it have dew upon your souls.

Then the apostle adds, it is a "living way." A wonderful word! The way by

which the high priest went into the holy place was of course a material way, and so a dead way. We come by a spiritual way, suitable to our spirits. The way could not help the high priest, but our way helps us abundantly. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." When we come to God by this way, the way itself leads, guides, bears, brings us near. This way gives its life with which to come.

It is a dedicated way. "which he hath consecrated for us." When a new road is opened, it is set apart and dedicated for the public use. Sometimes a public building is opened by a king or a prince, and so is dedicated to its purpose. Beloved, the way to God through Jesus Christ is dedicated by Christ, and ordained by Christ for the use of poor believing sinners, such as we are. He has consecrated the way towards God, and dedicated it for us, that we may freely use it. Surely, if there is a road set apart for me, I may use it without fear; and the way to God and heaven through Jesus Christ is dedicated by the Saviour for sinners; it is the King's highway for wayfaring men, who are bound for the City of God; therefore, let us use it. "Consecrated for us!" Blessed word!

Lastly, it is a Christly way; for when we come to God, we still come through His flesh. There is no coming to Jehovah, except by the incarnate God. God in human flesh is our way to God; the substitutionary death of the Word made flesh is also the way to the Father. There is no coming to God, except by representation. Jesus represents us before God, and we come to God through Him who is our covenant head, our representative and forerunner before the throne of the Most High. Let us never try to pray without Christ; never try to sing without Christ; never try to preach without Christ. Let us perform no holy function, nor attempt to have fellowship with God in any shape or way, except through that rent which He has made in the veil by His flesh, sanctified for us, and offered upon the cross on our behalf.

Beloved, I have done when I have just remarked upon the next two verses, which are necessary to complete the sense, but which I was obliged to omit this morning, since there would be no time to handle them. We are called to take holy freedoms with God. "Let us draw near," at once, "with a true heart in full assurance of faith." Let us do so boldly,

for we have a great high priest. The twenty-first verse reminds us of this. Jesus is the great Priest, and we are the sub-priests under Him, and since He bids us come near to God, and Himself leads the way, let follow Him into the inner sanctuary. Because He lives, we shall live also. We shall not die in the holy place, unless He dies. God will not smite us unless He smites Him. So, "having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

And then the apostle tells us that we may not only come with boldness, because our high priest leads the way, but because we ourselves are prepared for entrance. Two things the high priest had to do before he might enter: one was, to be sprinkled with blood, and this we have; for "our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience."

The other requisite for the priests was to have their "bodies washed with pure water." This we have received in symbol in our baptism, and in reality in the spiritual cleansing of regeneration. To us has been fulfilled the prayer—

"Let the water and the blood,  
From thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

We have known the washing of water by the Word, and we have been sanctified by the Spirit of His grace; therefore let us enter into the holiest. Why should we stay away? Hearts sprinkled with blood, bodies washed with pure water—these are the ordained preparations for acceptable entrance. Come near, beloved! May the Holy Spirit be the spirit of access to you now. Come to your God, and then abide with Him! He is your Father, your all in all. Sit down and rejoice in Him; take your fill of love; and let not your communion be broken between here and heaven. Why should it be? Why not begin today that sweet enjoyment of perfect reconciliation and delight in God which shall go on increasing in intensity until you behold the Lord in open vision, and go no more out? Heaven will bring a great change in condition, but not in our standing, if even now we stand within the veil. It will be only such a change as there is

between the perfect day and the daybreak; for we have the same sun, and the same light from the sun, and the same privilege of walking in the light. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Division." Amen, and Amen.

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## **Repentance Unto Life**

Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. - Acts 11:18

One of the greatest obstacles which the Christian religion ever overcame, was the inveterate prejudice which possessed the minds of its earliest followers. The Jewish believers, the twelve apostles, and those whom Jesus Christ had called from the dispersed of Israel, were so attached to the idea that salvation was of the Jews, and that none but the disciples of Abraham, or, at any rate, the circumcised ones, could be saved, that they could not bring themselves to the thought that Jesus had come to be the Saviour of all nations, and that in him should all the people of the earth be blessed. It was with difficulty they could allow the supposition; it was so opposite to all their Jewish education, that we find them summoning Peter before a council of Christians, and saying to him, "thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them." Nor could Peter exonerate himself until he had rehearsed the matter fully, and said that God had appeared unto him in a vision, declaring, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common," and that the Lord had bidden him preach the gospel to Cornelius and his household, inasmuch as they were believers. After this the power of grace was so mighty that these Jews could no longer withstand it: and in the teeth of all their previous education, they at once assumed the broad principle of Christianity," and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." Let us bless God that now we are free from the



trammels of Judaism, and that we are not under those of a Gentilism which has in its turn excluded the Jew, but that we live so near the blessed time that is coming, when Jew and Gentile, bond and free, shall feel themselves one in Jesus Christ our Head. I am not now, however, about to enlarge upon this, but my subject this morning is "Repentance unto life." May God give me grace so to speak to you that his word may be as a sharp sword, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow."

By "Repentance unto life," I think we are to understand *that* repentance which is accompanied by spiritual life in the soul, and ensures eternal life to every one who possesses it. "Repentance unto life," I say, brings with it spiritual life, or rather, is the first consequent thereof. There are repentances which are not signs of life, except of natural life, because they are only effected by the power of the conscience and the voice of nature speaking in men; but the repentance here spoken of is produced by the Author of life, and when it comes, it begets such life in the soul, that he who was "dead in trespasses and sins," is quickened together with Christ; he who had no spiritual susceptibilities, now "receives with meekness the engrafted word;" he who slumbered in the very center of corruption, receives power to become one of the sons of God, and to be near his throne. This I think is "repentance unto life," - that which gives life unto a dead spirit. I have said also, this repentance ensures eternal life; for there are repentances of which you hear men speaks which do not secure the salvation of the soul. Some preachers will affirm that men may repent, and may believe, and yet may fall away and perish. We will not consume our time by stopping to expose their error this morning; we have often considered it before, and have refuted all that they could say in defense of their dogma. Let us think of an infinitely better repentance. The repentance of our test is not their repentance, but it is a "repentance unto life;" a repentance which is a true sign of eternal salvation in Christ; a repentance which preserves us through this temporary state in Jesus, and which when we are passed into eternity, gives us a bliss which cannot be destroyed. "Repentance unto life "is the act of salvation of the soul, the germ which contains all the essentials of salvation, which secures them to us, and prepares us for them.

We are this morning to give a very careful and prayerful attention to the "repentance" which is "unto life." First, I shall devote a few minutes to the consideration of *false repentance*; secondly, I shall consider *the signs that mark true repentance*; and after that, I shall extol the *divine beneficence*, of which it is written, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

I. First, then, we will consider certain FALSE REPENTANCES. I will begin with this remark - *that trembling beneath the sound of the gospel is not "repentance."* There are many men who when they hear a faithful gospel sermon, are exceedingly stirred and moved by it. By a certain power which accompanies the Word, God testifies that it is his own Word, and he causes those who hear it involuntarily to tremble. I have seen some men, while the truths of Scripture have been sounded from this pulpit, whose knees have knocked together, whose eyes have flowed with tears as if they had been fountains of water. I have witnessed the deep dejection of their spirit, when - as some of them have told me - they have been shaken until they knew not how to abide the sound of the voice, for it seemed like the terrible trumpet of Sinai thundering only their destruction. Well, my hearers, you may be very much disturbed under the preaching of the gospel, and yet you shall not have that "repentance unto life." You may know what it is to be very seriously and very solemnly affected when you go to God's house, and yet you may be hardened sinners. Let me confirm the remark by an instance: - Paul stood before Felix with the chains upon his hands, and as he preached of "righteousness, temperance, and of judgment to come," it is written, "Felix trembled," and yet procrastinating Felix is in perdition, among the rest of those who have said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee." There are many of you who cannot attend the house of God without being alarmed; you know what it is often to stand aghast at the thought that God will punish you; you may often have been moved to sincere emotion under God's minister; but, let me tell you, you may be after all a castaway, because you have not repented of your sins, neither have you turned to God.

Further still. It is quite possible that you may not only tremble before God's Word, but you may become a sort of amiable Agrippa, and *be*

"almost persuaded" to turn to Jesus Christ, and yet have no "repentance;" you may go further and even desire the gospel; you may say: "Oh! this gospel is such a goodly thing I would I had it. It ensures so much happiness here, and so much joy hereafter, I wish I might call it mine." Oh! it is good, thus to hear this voice of God! but you may sit, and, while some powerful text is being well handled, you may say, "I think it is true;" but it must enter the heart before you can repent. You may even go upon your knees in prayer and you may ask with a terrified lip that this may be blessed to your soul; and after all you may be no child of God. You may say as Agrippa said unto Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;" yet, like Agrippa, you may never proceed beyond the "almost." He was "almost persuaded to be a Christian," but not "altogether." Now, how many of you here have been; almost persuaded" and yet you are not really in the way of eternal life. How often has conviction brought you on your knees and you have "almost" repented, but you have remained there, without actually repenting. See that corpse? It is lately dead. It has scarcely acquired the ghastliness of death, the color is still life-like. Its hand is still warm; you may fancy it is alive, and it seems almost to breathe. Every thing is there - the worm hath scarcely touched it dissolution hath scarcely approached; there is no foeted smell - yet life is gone; life is not there. So it is with you: you are almost alive; you have almost every external organ of religion which the Christian has; but you have not life. You may have repentance, but not sincere repentance. O hypocrite! I warn you this morning, you may not only tremble but feel a complacency towards the Word of God, and yet after all not have "repentance unto life." You may sink down into the pit that is bottomless, and hear it said, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Yet, again, it is possible for men to progress even further than this, and positively to *humble themselves under the hand of God, and yet they may be total strangers to repentance.* Their goodness is not like the morning cloud and the early dew that passeth away, but when the sermon is heard they go home and commence what they conceive to be the work of repentance, they renounce certain vices and follies, they clothe themselves in sack-cloth, their tears flow very freely on account of what they have done; they weep before God; and yet with all that, their

repentance is but a temporary repentance, and they go back to their sins again. Do you deny that such a penitence can exist? Let me tell you of a case. A certain man named Ahab coveted the vineyard of his neighbor Naboth, who would not sell it for a price, nor make an exchange. He consulted with his wife Jezebel, who contrived to put Naboth to death, and thus secure the vineyard to the king. After Naboth was put to death, and Ahab had taken possession of the vineyard, the servant of the Lord met Ahab, and said to him, "Hast thou killed, and also taken possession. Thus saith the Lord, in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall the dogs lick thy blood, even thine. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy prosperity "We read that Ahab went awe, and humbled himself; and the Lord said, "Because Ahab humbleth himself before me I will not bring evil in his days." He had granted him some kind of mercy; but we read in the very next chapter that Ahab rebelled, and in a battle in Ramoth-Gilead, according to the servant of the Lord, he was slain there; so that "the dogs licked his blood "in the very vineyard of Naboth. You, too, I tell you, may humble yourselves before God for a time, and yet remain the slaves of your transgressions. You are afraid of damnation, but you are not afraid of sinning: you are afraid of hell, but you are not afraid of your iniquities; you are afraid of being cast into the pit, but not afraid to harden your hearts against his commands. Is it not true, O sinner, that you are trembling at hell? It is not the soul's state that troubles you, but hell. If hell were extinguished, your repentance would be extinguished; if the terrors awaiting you were withdrawn, you would sin with a higher hand than before, and your soul would be hardened, and would rebel against its sovereign. Be not deceived, my brethren, here; examine yourselves whether you are in the faith; ask yourselves if you have that which is "repentance unto life;" for you may humble yourselves for a time, and yet never repent before God.

Beyond this many advance, and yet fall short of grace. *It is possible that you may confess your sins, and yet may not repent.* You may approach God, and tell him you are a wretch indeed; you may enumerate a long list of your transgressions and of the sins that you have committed, without a sense of the heinousness of your guilt, without a spark of real hatred of your deeds. You may confess and acknowledge your transgressions, and yet have no abhorrence of sin; and if you do not in the strength of God

resist sin, if you do not turn from it, this fancied repentance shall be but the gilding which displays the paint which decorates; it is not the grace which transforms into gold, which will abide the fire. You may even, I say confess your faults, and yet have not repentance.

Once more, and then I have gone to the farthest thought I have to give on this point. *You may do some work meet for repentance, and yet you may be impenitent.* Let me give you a proof of this in a fact authenticated by inspiration.

Judas betrayed his Master; and after having done so, an overwhelming sense of the enormous evil he had committed seized upon him. His guilt buried all hope of repentance, and in the misery of desperation, not the grief of true regret, he confessed his sin to the high priests, crying, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us, see thou to that." Whereupon he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, to show that he could not bear to carry the price of guilt upon him; and left them there. He went out, and - was he saved? No. "He went out and hanged himself." And even then the vengeance of God followed him: for when he had hanged himself he fell from the height where he was suspended, and was dashed to pieces; he was lost, and his soul perished. Yet see what this man did. He had sinned, he confessed his wrong, he returned the gold; still after all that, he was a castaway. Does not this make us tremble? You see how possible it is to be the ape of the Christian so nearly, that wisdom itself, if it be only mortal, may be deceived.

II. Now, having thus warned you that there are many false kinds of repentance, I propose to occupy a short time by some remarks on TRUE REPENTANCE, and the signs whereby we may discern whether we have that "repentance" which is "unto life."

First of all, let me correct one or two mistakes which those who are coming to Jesus Christ very often make. One is, they frequently think they must have deep, horrible, and awful manifestations of the terrors of law and of hell before they can be said to repent. How many have I conversed with, who have said to me what I can only translate into

English to you this morning something in this way: "I do not repent enough, I do not feel myself enough of a sinner I have not been so gross and wicked a transgressor as many - I could almost wish I had; not because I love sin, but because then I think I should have deeper convictions of my guilt, and feel more sure that I had truly come to Jesus Christ." Now it is a great mistake to imagine that these terrible and horrible thoughts of a coming judgment have anything to do with the validity of "repentance." They are very often not the gift of God at all, but the insinuations of the devil; and even where the law worketh and produceth these thoughts, you must not regard them as being part and parcel of "repentance." They do not enter into the essence of repentance. "Repentance" is a hatred of sin; it is a turning from sin and a determination in the strength of God to forsake it. "Repentance" is a hatred of sin, and a forsaking it. It is possible for a man to repent without any terrific display of the terrors of the law; he may repent without having heard the trumpet sounds of Sinai, without having heard more than a distant rumble of its thunder. A man may repent entirely through the power of the voice of mercy. Some hearts God opens to faith, as in the case of Lydia. Others he assaults with the sledge hammer of the wrath to come; some he opens with the picklock of grace, and some with the crowbar of the law. There may be different ways of getting there, but the question is, has he got there? Is he there? It often happens that the Lord is not in the tempest or in the earthquake, but in the "still small voice."

There is another mistake many poor people make when they are thinking about salvation, and that is - that they cannot repent enough; they imagine that were they to repent up to a certain degree, they would be saved. "Oh, sir!" some of you will say, "I have not penitence enough." Beloved, let me tell you that there is not any eminent degree of "repentance" which is necessary to salvation. You know there are degrees of faith, and yet the least faith saves; so there are degrees of repentance, and the least repentance will save the soul if it is sincere. The Bible says, "He that believeth shall be saved," and when it says that, it includes the very smallest degree of faith. So when it says, "Repent and be saved," it includes the man who has the lowest degree of real repentance. Repentance, moreover, is never perfect in any man in this mortal state. We never get perfect faith so as to be entirely free from doubting; and we

never get repentance which is free from some hardness of heart. The most sincere penitent that you know will feel himself to be partially impenitent. Repentance is also a continual life-long act. It will grow continually. I believe a Christian on his death-bed will more bitterly repent than ever he did before. It is a thing to be done all your life long. Sinning and repenting - sinning and repenting, make up a Christian's life. Repenting and believing in Jesus - repenting and believing in Jesus, make up the consummation of his happiness. You must not expect that you will be perfect in "repentance" before you are saved. No Christian can be perfect. "Repentance" is a grace. Some people preach it as a condition of salvation. Condition of nonsense! There are no conditions of salvation. God gives the salvation himself; and he only gives it to those to whom he will. He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy "If, then, God has given you the least repentance, if it be sincere repentance, praise him for it, and expect that repentance will grow deeper and deeper as you go further on. Then this remark I think, ought to be applied to all Christians. Christian men and women, you feel that you have not deep enough repentance. You feel that you have not faith large enough. What are you to do? Ask for an increase of faith, and it will grow. So with repentance. Have you ever tried to get deep repentance? My friends, if you have failed therein, still trust in Jesus, and try every day to get a penitential spirit, Do not expect, I say again, to have perfect repentance at first; sincere penitence you must have, and then under divine grace you will go on from strength to strength, until at last you shall hate and abhor sin as a serpent or a viper, and then shall you be near, very near, the perfection of repentance. These few thoughts, then, in opening the subject. And now you say, what are the signs of true "repentance" in the sight of God?

First, I tell you, there is always *sorrow* with it. No man ever repents of sin without having some kind of sorrow with it. More or less intense, it may be, according to the way in which God calls him, and his previous manner of life, but there must be some sorrow. We do not care when it comes, but at some time or other it must come, or it is not the repentance of the Christian. I knew a man once who professed that he had repented, and he certainly was a changed character, so far as the external was concerned, but I never could see that he had any real sorrow for sin, neither when he professed to believe in Jesus did I ever see any marks of penitence in him.

I considered in that man it was a kind of ecstatic jump into grace; and I found afterwards he had just as ecstatic a jump into guilt again. He was not a sheep of God, for he had not been washed in penitence: for all God's people have to be washed there when converted from their sins. No man can come to Christ and know his pardon without feeling that sin is a hateful thing, for it put Jesus to death. Ye who have tearless eyes, unbended knees, unbroken hearts, how can ye think ye are saved? The gospel promised salvation only to those who really repent.

Lest, however, I should hurt some of you, and make you feel what I do not intend, let me remark that I do not mean to say that you must shed actual tears. Some men are so hard in constitution that they could not shed a tear. I have known some who have been able to sigh and to groan, but tears would not come. Well, I say, that though the tear often affords evidence of penitence, you may have "repentance unto life" without it. What I would have you understand is, that there must be some real sorrow. If the prayer may not be vocal, it must be secret. There must be a groan if there is no word; there must be a sigh if there be no tear, to show the repentance, even though it be but small.

There must be in this repentance, I think, not only sorrow, but there must be practice - practical repentance.

"'Tis not enough to say we're sorry, and repent,  
And then go on from day to day just as we always went"

Many people are very sorry and very penitent for their past sins. Hear them talk. "Oh!" they say, "I deeply regret that ever I should have been a drunkard; and I sincerely bemoan that I should have fallen into that sin; I deeply lament that I should have done so." Then they go straight home; and when one; o'clock on Sunday comes you will find them at it again. And yet such people say they have repented. Do you believe them when they say they are sinners, but do not love sin? They may not love it for the time; but can they be sincerely penitent, and then go and transgress again immediately, in the same way as they did before? How can we believe you if you transgress again and again, and do not forsake your sin? We know a tree by its fruit, and you who are penitent will bring forth works of



repentance. I have often thought it was a very beautiful instance, showing the power of penitence which a pious minister once related. He had been preaching on penitence, and had in the course of his sermon spoke of the sin of stealing. On his way home a laborer came alongside of him, and the minister observed that he had something under his smock-frock. He told him he need not accompany him farther; but the man persisted. At last he said, "I have a spade under my arm which I stole up at that farm; I heard you preaching about the sin of stealing, and I must go and put it there again." That was sincere penitence which caused him to go back and replace the stolen article. It was like those South Sea Islanders, of whom we read who stole the missionaries' articles of apparel and furniture, and everything out of their houses; but when they were savingly converted they brought them all back. But many of you say you repent, yet nothing comes of it; it is not worth the snap of the finger. People sincerely repent, they say, that they should have committed a robbery, or that they have kept a gambling-house; but they are very careful that all the proceeds shall be laid out to their hearts' best comfort. True "repentance" will yield works meet for repentance," it will be practical repentance.

Yet farther. You may know whether your repentance is practical by this test. Does it last or does it not? Many of your repentances are like the hectic flush upon the cheek of the consumptive person which is no sign of health. Many a time have I seen a young man in a flow of newly acquired, but unsound godliness, and he has thought he was about to repent of his sins. For some hours such an one was deeply penitent before God, and for weeks he relinquishes his follies. He attends the house of prayer, and converses as a child of God. But back he goes to his sins as the dog returns to his vomit. The evil spirit has gone "back to his house, and has taken with him seven others more wicked than himself; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." How long has your penitence lasted? Did it continue for months? or did it come upon you and go away suddenly? You said, "I will join the church - I will do this, that, and the other, for God's cause." Are your works lasting? Do you believe your repentance will last six months? Will it continue for twelve months? Will it last until you are wrapped in your winding-sheet?

Yet again, I must ask you one question more. Do you think you you'll

repent of your sins if no punishment were placed before you? or do you repent because you know you shall be punished for ever if you remain in your sins? Suppose I tell you there is no hell at all; that, if you choose, you may swear; and, if you will, you may live without God. Suppose there were no reward for virtue, and no punishment for sin, which would you choose?. Can you honestly say, this morning, "I think, I know, by the grace of God, I would choose righteousness if there were no reward for it, if there were nothing to be gained by righteousness, and nothing to be lost by sin." Every sinner hates his sin when he comes near to the mouth of hell; every murderer hates his crime when he comes to the gallows; I never found a child hate its fault so much as when it was going to be punished for it. If you had no cause to dread the pit - if you knew that you might give up your life to sin, and that you might do so with impunity, would you still feel that you hated sin, and that you could not, would not, commit sin, except through the infirmity of the flesh? Would you still desire holiness? Would you still desire to live like Christ? If so - if you can say this in sincerity - if you thus turn to God and hate your sin with an everlasting hatred, you need not fear but that you have a "repentance" which is "unto life."

III. Now comes the concluding and third point, and that "THE BLESSED BENEFICENCE OF GOD in granting to men "repentance unto life." "Repentance," my dear friends, is the gift of God. It is one of those spiritual favors which ensure eternal life. It is the marvel of divine mercy that it not only provides the way of salvation, that it not only invites men to receive grace, but that it positively makes men willing to be saved. God punished his Son Jesus Christ for our sins, and therein he provided salvation for all his lost children. He sends his minister; the minister bids men repent and believe, and he labors to bring them to God. They will not listen to the call, and they despise the minister. But then another messenger is sent, a heavenly ambassador who cannot fail. He summons men to repent and turn to God. Their thoughts are a little wayward, but after he, the Divine Spirit, pleads with them, they forget what manner of men they were, and they repent and turn. Now, what would we do if we had been treated as God was? If we had made a supper or a feast, and sent out messengers to invite the guests to come, what would we do? Do you think we should take the trouble to go round and visit them all, and

get them to come? And when they sat down and said they could not eat would we open their mouths? If they still declared they could not eat, should we still make them eat? Ah! beloved, I am inclined to think you would not do so. If you had signed the letters of invitation, and the invited would not come to your feast, would you not say, "You shall not have it." But what does God do? He says, "Now I will make a feast, I will invite the people, and if they do not come in, my ministers shall go out and fetch them in bodily. I will say to my servants, go ye out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that they may partake of the feast I have prepared." Is it not a stupendous act of divine mercy that he actually makes them willing? He does not do it by force, but uses a sweet spiritual suasion. They are first as unwilling to be saved as they can be; "but," says God, "that is nothing, I have power to make you turn to me, and I will." The Holy Ghost then brings home the Word of God to the consciences of his children in so blessed a manner, that they can no longer refuse to love Jesus. Mark you, not by any force against the will, but by a sweet spiritual influence changing the will. O, ye lost and ruined sinners! stand here and admire my Master's mercy. He sets not only a feast of good things before men, but he induces them to come and partake of them, and constrains them to continue feasting until he carries them to the everlasting eternal mansion. And as he bears them up, he says to each one, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore, by my lovingkindness I have drawn thee. Now, dost thou love me?" "Oh, Lord," they cry, "thy grace in bringing us here proves that thou dost love us, for we were unwilling to go. Thou saidst, you shall go, we said we would not go, but thou hast made us go. And now, Lord, we bless thee, and love thee for that force. It was sweet constraint." I was a struggling captive, but I am now made willing.

Oh! sovereign grace, my heart subdue!  
I would be led in triumph too;  
A willing captive to my Lord  
To sing the honors of his Word."

Well now, what say you? Some of you will say, "Sir, I have been trying to repent for a long time. In pains and afflictions I have been praying and trying to believe, and doing all I can." I will tell you another thing: you

will try a long time before you will be able to do it. That is not the way to get it. I heard of two gentlemen travelling. One of them said to the other, "I do not know how it is, but you always seem to recollect your wife and family, and all that is doing at home, and you seem as if you connected all things around you with them; but I try to bring mine to my recollection constantly, and yet I never can."; No," said the other, "that is the very reason - because you try. If you could connect them with every little circumstance ye meet, you would easily remember them. I think at such and such a time - now they are rising; at such and such a time - now they are at prayers; at such and such a time - now they are having their breakfast. In this way I have them still before me." I think the same thing happens with regard to "repentance." If a man says, "I want to believe," and tries by some mechanical means to work himself into repentance, it is an absurdity, and he will never accomplish it. But the way for him to repent is by God's grace to believe, to believe and think on Jesus. If he picture to himself the wounded bleeding side the crown of thorns, the tears of anguish - if he takes a vision of all that Christ suffered, I will be bound for it he will turn to him in repentance. I would stake what reputation I may have in spiritual things upon this - that a man cannot, under God's Holy Spirit, contemplate the cross of Christ without a broken heart. If it is not so, my heart is different from any one's else. I have never known a man who has thought upon, and taken a view of the cross, who has not found that it beget "repentance," and beget faith. We look at Jesus Christ if we would be saved, and we then say. "Amazing sacrifice! that Jesus thus died to save sinners." If you want faith, remember he gives it, if you want repentance, he gives it! if you want everlasting life, he gives it liberally. He can force you to feel your great sin, and cause you to repent by the sight of Calvary's cross, and the sound of the greatest, deepest death shriek, "Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachani?" "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" That will beget "repentance;" it will make you weep and say, "Alas! and did my Saviour bleed; and did my Sovereign die for me?" Then beloved, if you would have "repentance," this is my best advice to you - look to Jesus. And may the blessed Giver of all "repentance unto salvation" guard you from the false repentances which I have described, and give you that "repentance," which existeth unto life.

"Repent! the voice celestial cries,  
Nor longer dare delay;

The wretch that scorns the mandate, dies,  
And meets a fiery day.

No more the sovereign eye of GOD  
O'erlooks the crimes of men;  
His heralds are despatch'd abroad  
To warn the world of sin.

The summons reach thro' all the earth  
Let earth attend and fear;  
Listen, ye men of royal birth,  
And let your vassals hear!

Together in his presence bow,  
And all your guilt confess  
Embrace the blessed Saviour now,  
Nor trifle with his grace.

Bow, ere the awful trumpet sound,  
And call you to his bar:  
For mercy knows the appointed bound.  
And turns to vengeance there."

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## **Rest, Rest**

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. - Matthew 11:28-30

We have oft repeated those memorable words, and they have brought us much comfort; but it is possible that we may never have looked deeply

into them, so as to have seen the fulness of their meaning. The works of man will seldom bear close inspection. You shall take a needle which is highly polished, which appears to be without the slightest inequality upon its surface, and you shall put it under a microscope, and it will look like a rough bar of iron; but you shall select what you will from nature, the bark or the leaf of a tree, or the wing or the foot of an insect, and you shall discover no flaw, magnify it as much as you will, and gaze upon it as long as you please. So take the words of man. The first time you hear them they will strike you; you may hear them again and still admire their sentiment, but you shall soon weary of their repetition, and call them hackneyed and over-estimated. The words of Jesus are not so, they never lose their dew, they never become threadbare. You may ring the changes upon his words, and never exhaust their music: you may consider them by day and by night, but familiarity shall not breed contempt. You shall beat them in the mortar of contemplation, with the pestle of criticism, and their perfume shall but become the more apparent. Dissect, investigate, and weigh the Master's teaching word by word, and each syllable will repay you. When loitering upon the Island of Liddo, off Venice, and listening to the sound of the city's bells, I thought the music charming as it floated across the lagune; but when I returned to the city, and sat down in the centre of the music, in the very midst of all the bells, the sweetness changed to a horrible clash, the charming sounds were transformed into a maddening din; not the slightest melody could I detect in any one bell, while harmony in the whole company of noisemakers was out of the question. Distance had lent enchantment to the sound. The words of poets and eloquent writers may, as a whole, and heard from afar, sound charmingly enough; but how few of them bear a near and minute investigation! Their belfry rings passably, but one would soon weary of each separate bell. It is never so with the divine words of Jesus. You hear them ringing from afar and they are sweetness itself. When as a sinner, you roamed at midnight like a traveller lost on the wilds, how sweetly did they call you home! But now you have reached the house of mercy, you sit and listen to each distinct note of love's perfect peal, and wonderingly feel that even angelic harps cannot excel it.

We will, this morning, if we can, conduct you into the inner chambers of out text, place its words under the microscope, and peer into the recesses

of each sentence. We only wish our microscope were of a greater magnifying power, and our ability to expound the text more complete; for there are mines of instruction here. Superficially read, this royal promise has cheered and encouraged tens of thousands, but there is a wealth in it which the diligent digger and miner shall alone discover. Its shallows are cool and refreshing for the lambs, but in its depths are pearls for which we hope to dive.

Our first head, this morning, is rest: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The second head is rest: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

I. Let us begin at the beginning with the first REST, and here we will make divisions only for the sake of bringing out the sense more clearly.

1. Observe the person invited to receive this first rest: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." The word "all" first demands attention: "All ye that labor." There was need for the insertion of that wide word. Had not the Saviour said a little before, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes?" Some one who had been listening to the Saviour, might have said, "The Father, then, has determined to whom he will reveal the Christ; there is a number chosen, according to the Father's good pleasure, to whom the gospel is revealed; while from another company it is hidden!" The too hasty inference, which it seems natural for man to draw from the doctrine is, "Then there is no invitation for me; there is no hope for me; I need not listen to the gospel's warnings and invitations." So the Saviour, as if to answer that discouraging notion, words his invitation thus, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." Let it not be supposed that election excludes any of you from the invitation of mercy; all of you who labor, are bidden to come. Whatever the great doctrine of predestination may involve, rest assured that it by no means narrows or diminishes the extent of gospel invitations. The good news is to be preached to "every creature" under heaven, and in this particular passage it is addressed to all the laboring and heavy laden.

The description of the person invited is very full. It describes him both actively and passively. "All ye that labor"—there is the activity of men bearing the yoke, and ready to labor after salvation; "heavy laden"—there is the passive form of their religious condition, they sustain a burden, and are pressed down, and sorely wearied by the load they bear. There are to be found many who are actively engaged in seeking salvation; they believe that if they obey the precepts of the law they will be saved, and they are endeavoring to the utmost to do them; they have been told that the performance of certain rites and ceremonies will also save them, they are performing those with great care; the yoke is on their shoulders, and they are laboring diligently. Some are laboring in prayer, some are laboring in sacraments, others in self-denials and mortifications, but as a class they are awakened to feel the need of salvation, and they are intensely laboring to save themselves. It is to these the Saviour addresses his loving admonition: in effect he tells them, "This is not the way to rest, your self-imposed labors will end in disappointment; cease your wearisome exertions, and believe in me, for I will at once give you rest—the rest which my labors have earned for believers." Very speedily those who are active in self-righteously working for salvation fall into the passive state, and become burdened; their labor of itself becomes a burden to them. Besides the burden of their self-righteous labor, there comes upon them the awful, tremendous, crushing burden of past sin, and a sense of the wrath of God which is due to that sin. A soul which has to bear the load of its own sin, and the load of divine wrath, is indeed heavily laden. Atlas with the world upon his back had a light load compared with a sinner upon whom mountains of sin and wrath are piled. Such persons frequently are burdened, in addition, by fears and apprehensions; some of them correct, others of them baseless, but anyhow the burden daily grows. Their active labors do not diminish their passive sufferings. The acute anguish of their souls will often be increased in proportion as their endeavors are increased; and while they hope at first that if they labor industriously they will gradually diminish the mass of their sin, it happens that their labor adds to their weariness beneath its pressure; they feel a weight of disappointment, because their labor has not brought them rest; and a burden of despair, because they fear that deliverance will never come. Now these are the persons whom the



Saviour calls to himself—those who are actively seeking salvation, those who are passively bearing the weight of sin and of divine wrath.

It is implied, too, that these are undeserving of rest, for it is said, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." A gift is not of merit but of grace; wages and reward are for those who earn, but a gift is a matter of charity. O you who feel your unworthiness this morning, who have been seeking salvation earnestly, and suffering the weight of sin, Jesus will freely give to you what you cannot earn or purchase, he will give it as an act of his own free, rich, sovereign mercy; and he is prepared, if you come to him, to give it to you now, for so has he promised, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

2. Notice next, the precept here laid down: "Come." It is not "Learn," it is not "Take my yoke"—that is in the next verse, and is intended for the next stage of experience—but in the beginning the word of the Lord is, "Come unto me," "Come." A simple word, but very full of meaning. To come is to leave one thing and to advance to another. Come, then, ye laboring and heavy laden, leave your legal labors, leave your self-reliant efforts, leave your sins, leave your presumptions, leave all in which you hitherto have trusted, and come to Jesus, that is, think of, advance towards, rely upon the Saviour. Let your contemplations think of him who bore the load of human sin upon the cross of Calvary, where he was made sin for us. Let your minds consider him who from his cross hurled the enormous mass of his people's transgressions into a bottomless sepulchre, where it was buried forever. Think of Jesus, the divinely-appointed substitute and sacrifice for guilty man. Then, seeing that he is God's own Son, let faith follow your contemplation; rely upon him, trust in him as having suffered in your stead, look to him for the payment of the debt which is due from you to the wrath of God. This is to come to Jesus. Repentance and faith make up this "Come"—the repentance which leaves that place where you now stand, the faith which comes into reliance upon Jesus.

Observe, that the command to "Come" is put in the present tense, and in the Greek it is intensely present. It might be rendered something like this: "Hither to me all ye that labor and are heavy laden!" It is a "Come" which means not "Come to-morrow or next year," but "Now, at once." Advance,

ye slaves, flee from your task-master now! Weary ones recline on the promise now, and take your rest! Come now! By an act of instantaneous faith which will bring instantaneous peace, come and rely upon Jesus, and he will now give you rest. Rest shall at once follow the exercise of faith. Perform the act of faith now. O may the eternal Spirit lead some laboring heavy laden soul to come to Jesus, and to come at this precise moment!

It is "Come unto me." Notice that. The Christ in his personality is to be trusted in. Not "Come to John, and hear him say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,"" for no rest is there. John commands a preparation for the rest, but he has no rest to give to the soul. Come not to the Pharisees, who will instruct you in tradition, and in the jots and tittles of the law; but go past these to Jesus, the man, the God, the mediator, the Redeemer, the propitiation for human guilt. If you want rest come to Christ in Gethsemane, to Christ on Calvary, to Christ risen, to Christ ascended. If you want rest, O weary souls, ye can find it nowhere until ye come and lay your burdens down at his dear pierced feet, and find life in looking alone to him. There is the precept then. Observe it is nothing but that one word, "Come." It is not "Do;" it is not even "Learn." It is not, "Take up my yoke," that will follow after, but must never be forced out of its proper place. To obtain the first rest, the rest which is a matter of gift—all that is asked of you is that you come to have it. Now, the least thing that charity itself can ask when it gives away its alms, is that men come for it. Come ye needy, come and welcome; come and take the rest ye need. Jesus saith to you, "Come and take what I freely give." Without money come, without merit come, without preparation come. It is just, come, come now; come as you are, come with your burden, come with your yoke, though the yoke be the yoke of the devil, and the burden be the burden of sin, yet come as you are, and the promise shall be fulfilled to you, "I will give you rest."

3. Notice next the promise spoken, "I will give you rest." "I will give." It is a rest that is a gift; not a rest found in our experience by degrees, but given at once. As I shall have to show you, the next verse speaks of the rest that is found, wrought out, and discovered; but this is a rest given. We come to Jesus; we put out the empty hand of faith, and rest is given

us at once most freely. We possess it at once, and it is ours forever. It is a present rest, rest now; not rest after death; not rest after a time of probation and growth and advancement; but it is rest given when we come to Jesus, given there and then. And it is perfect rest too; for it is not said, nor is it implied, that the rest is incomplete. We do not read, "I will give you partial rest," but "rest," as much as if there were no other form of it. It is perfect and complete in itself. In the blood and righteousness of Jesus our peace is perfect.

I shall not stay except to ask you now, brethren and sisters, whether you know the meaning of this given rest. Have you come to Jesus and has he given you perfect and present rest? If so, I know your eye will catch joyously those two little words, "And I," and I would bid you lovingly remember the promiser who speaks. Jesus promises and Jesus performs. Did not all your rest, when first your sin was forgiven, come from him? The load was gone, but who took it? The yoke was removed, but who lifted it from off the shoulder? Do you not give to Jesus, this day, the glory of all your rest from the burden of guilt? Do you not praise his name with all your souls? Yes, I know you do. And you know how that rest came to you. It was by his substitution and your faith in that substitution. Your sin was not pardoned by a violation of divine justice; justice was satisfied in Jesus; he gave you rest. The fact that he has made full atonement is the rest of your spirit this morning. I know that deep down in your consciences, the calm which blesses you springs from a belief in your Lord's vicarious sacrifice. He bore the unrest that you might have the rest, and you receive rest this day as a free gift from him. You have done now with servile toils and hopeless burdens, you have entered into rest through believing; but all the rest and deliverance still comes to you as a gift from his dear hands, who purchased with a price this blessing for your souls. I earnestly wish that many who have never felt that rest, would come and have it; it is all they have to do to obtain it—to come for it; just where they now are, if God enables them to exercise a simple act of faith in Jesus, he will give them rest from all their past sins, from all their efforts to save themselves, a rest which shall be to his glory and to their joy.

II. We must now advance to our second head - REST.

It looks rather strange that after having received rest, the next verse should begin: "Take my yoke upon you." "Ah! I had been set free from laboring, am I to be a laborer again?" Yes, yes, take my yoke and begin. "And my burden is light." "Burden? Why, I was heavy laden just now, am I to carry another burden?" Yes. A yoke—actively and a burden—passively, I am to bear both of these. "But I found rest by getting rid of my yoke and my burden!" And you are to find a further rest by wearing a new yoke, and bearing a new burden. Your yoke galled, but Christ's yoke is easy; your burden was heavy, but Christ's burden is light. Before we enter into this matter more fully, let us illustrate it. How certain it is that a yoke is essential to produce rest, and without it rest is unknown! Spain found rest by getting rid of that wretched monarch Isabella; an iron yoke was her dominion upon the nation's neck, crushing every aspiration after progress by an intolerable tyranny. Up rose the nation, shook off its yoke, and threw aside its burden, and it had rest in a certain sense, rest from evil. But Spain has not fully rested yet, and it seems that she will never find permanent rest till she has voluntarily taken up another yoke, and found for herself another burden. In a word, she must have a strong, settled, recognized government, and then only will her distractions cease. This is just a picture of the human soul. It is under the dominion of Satan, it wears his awful yoke, and works for him; it bears his accursed burden, and groans under it; Jesus sets it free—but has it, therefore, a perfect rest? Yes, a rest from, but not a rest in. What is wanted now is a new government; the soul must have a sovereign, a ruling principle, a master-motive; and when Jesus has taken that position, rest is come. This further rest is what is spoken of in the second verse. Let me give you another symbol. A little stream flowed through a manufacturing town; an unhappy little stream it was, for it was forced to turn huge wheels and heavy machinery, and it wound its miserable way through factories where it was dyed black and blue, until it became a foul and filthy ditch, and loathed itself. It felt the tyranny which polluted its very existence. Now, there came a deliverer who looked upon the streamlet and said, "I will set thee free and give thee rest." So he stopped up the water-course, and said, "abide in thy place, thou shalt no more flow where thou art enslaved and defiled." In a very few days the brooklet found that it had but exchanged one evil for another. Its waters were stagnating, they were gathering into

a great pool, and desiring to find a channel. It was in its very nature to flow on, and it foamed and swelled, and pressed against the dam which stayed it. Every hour it grew more inwardly restless, it threatened to break the barrier, and it made all who saw its angry looks tremble for the mischief it would do ere long. It never found rest until it was permitted to pursue an active course along a channel which had been prepared for it among the meadows and the corn fields. Then, when it watered the plains and made glad the villages, it was a happy streamlet, perfectly at rest. So our souls are made for activity, and when we are set free from the activities of our self-righteousness and the slavery of our sin we must do something, and we shall never rest until we find that something to do. Hence in the text you will be pleased to see that there is something said about a yoke, which is the ensign of working, and something about a burden, which is the emblem of enduring. It is in man's mortal nature that he must do or endure, or else his spirit will stagnate and be far from rest.

1. We will consider this second rest, and notice that it is rest after rest. "I will give you rest" comes before "Ye shall find rest." It is the rest of a man who is already at rest, the repose of a man who has received a given rest, and now discovers the found rest. It is the rest of a learner—"Learn of me, and ye shall find rest." It is not so much the rest of one who was aforesaid laboring and heavy laden, as of one who is to-day learning at the Saviour's feet. It is the rest of a seeker evidently, for finding usually implies a search. Having been pardoned and saved, the saved man in the course of his experience discovers more and more reason for peace; he is learning, and seeking, and he finds. The rest is evidently lighted upon, however, as a thing unknown, which becomes the subject of discovery. The man had a rest from his burden; now he finds a rest, in Christ, which exceeds what he asked or even thought.

I have looked at this rest after rest as being a treasure concealed in a precious box. The Lord Jesus gives to his people a priceless casket, called the gift of rest; it is set with brilliants and inlaid with gems, and the substance thereof is of wrought gold; whosoever possesses it feels and knows that his warfare is accomplished and his sin is pardoned. After awhile the happy owner begins to examine his treasure. It is all his own,

but he has not yet seen it all, for one day he detects a secret drawer, he touches a hidden spring, and lo! Before him lies a priceless Koh-i-noor surpassing all the rest. It had been given him it is certain, but he had not seen it at first, and therefore he finds it. Jesus Christ gives us in the gift of himself all the rest we can ever enjoy, even heaven's rest lies in him; but after we have received him we have to learn his value, and find out by the teaching of his Spirit the fulness of the rest which he bestows.

Now, I say to you who are saved, you who have looked to Jesus Christ, whether you looked this morning or twenty years ago, have you found out all that there is in the gift which Christ has given you? Have you found out the secret drawer yet? He has given you rest, but have you found the innermost rest which he works in your hearts? It is yours, for it is included in the one gift; but it is not yours enjoyed, understood, and triumphed in as yet unless you have found it, for the rest here meant is a rest after rest, a spiritual, experienced rest, which comes only to those who find it by experience.

2. Further observe that the rest in this second part of our text is a rest in service. It is coupled with a yoke, for activity—"Take my yoke;" it is connected with a burden, for endurance—"My burden is light." He who is a Christian will not find rest in being idle. There is no unrest greater than that of the sluggard. If you would rest take Christ's yoke, be actively engaged in his service. As the bullock has the yoke put upon its neck and then begins to draw, so have the yoke of Christ put on your neck and commence to obey him. The rest of heaven is not the rest of sleep; they serve him day and night in his temple. They are always resting, and yet, in another sense, they rest not day nor night. Holy activity in heaven is perfect rest. True rest to the mind of the child of God is rest on the wing, rest in motion, rest in service, not rest with the yoke off, but with the yoke on. We are to enter upon this service voluntarily; we are to take his yoke upon us voluntarily. You observe, it does not say, "Bear my yoke when it is laid upon you, but take it." Do not need to be told by the minister, "My dear brother, such-and-such a work you are bound to do," but take up the yoke of your own accord. Do not merely submit to be the Lord's servant, but seek his service. Ask, "What can I do?" Be desirous to do it voluntarily, cheerfully, do all that lieth in you for the extension of his

kingdom who has given you rest, and you shall find that the rest of your soul shall lie in your doing all you can for Jesus. Every active Christian will tell you he is never happier than when he has much to do; and, on the whole, if he communes with Jesus, never more at rest than when he has least leisure. Look not for your rest in the mere enjoyments and excitements of religion, but find your rest in wearing a yoke which you love, and which, for that reason, is easy to your neck.

But, my dear brother, you must also be willing to bear Christ's burden. Now the burden of Christ is his cross, which every Christian must take up. Expect to be reproached, expect to meet with some degree of the scandal of the cross, for the offence of it never ceases. Persecution and reproach are a blessed burden; when your soul loves Jesus it is a light thing to suffer for him, and therefore never, by any cowardly retirement or refusal to profess your faith, evade your share of this honorable load. Woe unto those who say, "I will never be a martyr." No rest is sweeter than the martyr's rest. Woe unto those who say, "We will go to heaven by night along a secret road, and so avoid the shame of the cross." The rest of the Christian is found not in cowardice but in courage; it lies not in providing for ease but in the brave endurance of suffering for the truth. The restful spirit counts the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt; he falls in love with the cross, and counts the burden light, and so finds rest in service, and rest in suffering. Note that well.

3. The rest before us is rest through learning. Does a friend say, "I do not see how I am ever to get rest in working, and rest in suffering?" My dear brother, you never will except you go to school, and you must go to school to Christ. "Learn of me," saith he, "for I am meek and lowly in heart." Now, in order to learn of Christ it is implied that we lay aside all prejudices of the past. These things much prevent our finding peace. Have you any preconceived notions of what religion should be? Have you fashioned on your own anvil ideas of what the doctrines of the gospel ought to be? Throw them all away; learn of Jesus, and unlearn your own thoughts.

Then, when you are willing to learn, please to note what is to be learned.

In order to get perfect rest of mind you have to learn of Jesus not only the doctrines which he teaches, but a great deal more than that. To go to school to be orthodox is a good enough thing, but the orthodoxy which brings rest is an orthodoxy of the spirit. Observe the text, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." What? For I am wise and learned, and can teach you? No; you are to learn from his example to be "meek and lowly in heart," and in learning that you will "find rest unto your souls." To catch the spirit of Jesus is the road to rest. To believe what he teaches me is something, to acknowledge him as my religious leader and as my Lord is much, but to strive to be conformed to his character, not merely in its external developments but in its interior spirit, this is the grammar of rest. Learn to be like the meek and lowly-hearted One, and ye shall find rest.

He tells us the two points in which we are to learn of him. First, he is meek, then he says he is lowly in heart. Take the work "meek" first. I think that refers to the yoke-bearing, the active labor. If I actively labor for Christ I can only find rest in the labor by possessing the meek spirit of my Lord; for if I go forth to labor for Christ without a meek spirit, I shall very soon find that there is no rest in it, for the yoke will gall my shoulder. Somebody will begin objecting that I do not perform my work according to his liking. If I am not meek I shall find my proud spirit rising at once, and shall be for defending myself; I shall be irritated, or I shall be discouraged and inclined to do no more, because I am not appreciated as I should be. A meek spirit is not apt to be angry, and does not soon take offence, therefore if others find fault, the meek spirit goes working on, and is not offended; it will not hear the sharp word, nor reply to the severe criticism. If the meek spirit be grieved by some cutting censure and suffers for a moment, it is always ready to forgive and blot out the past, and go on again. The meek spirit in working only seeks to do good to others; it denies itself; it never expected to be well treated; it did not aim at being honored; it never sought itself, but purposed only to do good to others. The meek spirit bowed its shoulder to the yoke, and expected to have to continue bowing in order to keep the yoke in the right place for labor. It did not look to be exalted by yoke-bearing; it is fully contented if it can exalt Christ and do good to his chosen ones. Remember how meek and lowly Jesus was in all his service, and how calmly, therefore, he bore



with those who opposed him? The Samaritans would not receive him, and therefore John, who felt the yoke a little galling to his unaccustomed shoulder, cried, "Master, call fire from heaven." Poor John! But Christ bore the yoke of service so well because of his meek spirit that he would do nothing of the kind. If one village would not receive him he passed on to another, and so labored on. Your labor will become very easy if your spirits are very meek. It is the proud spirit that gets tired of doing good if it finds its labors not appreciated; but the brave, meek spirit, finds the yoke to be easy. "Consider him who endured such contradictions of sinners against himself lest ye be weary and faint in your minds." If ye learn his meekness his yoke will be pleasant to your shoulder, and you will never wish to have it removed.

Then, as to the passive part of our rest-lesson, note the text, "I am lowly in heart." We shall all have to bear something for the truth's sake so long as we are here. The reproach is a part of the gospel. The rod is a blessing of the covenant. The lowly heart finds the burden very light because it acquiesces in the divine will. The lowly heart says, "Not my will but thine be done; let God be glorified in me, it shall be all I ask. Rich, poor, sick, or in health, it is all the same to me. If God the great One has the glory, what matters where such a little one as I am may be placed?" The lowly spirit does not seek after great things for itself, it learns in whatsoever state it is therewith to be content. If it be poor, "Never mind," says the lowly one, "I never aspired to be rich; among the great ones of this earth I never desired to shine." If it be denied honor, the humble spirit says, "I never asked for earthly glory, I seek not mine own honor but his that sent me. Why should I be honored, a poor worm like me? If nobody speaks a good word of me, if I get Christ to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," that is enough. And if the lowly-hearted have little wordly pleasure, he says, "This is not my place for pleasure, I deserve eternal pain, and if I do not have pleasures here I shall have them hereafter. I am well content to abide my time." Our blessed Lord was always of that lowly spirit. He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. The baubles of empire had no charm for him. Had fame offered to sound her trumpet for none but him he would have cared not one whit for the offer. The kingdoms of this world and the glory thereof were offered him, and he repelled the tempter. He was gentle, unobtrusive, self-denying; hence

he treated his burden of poverty and shame as a light thing. "He endured the cross, despising the shame." If we once learn Christ's spirit we shall find rest unto our souls.

4. But we must pass on to notice, that it is very evident that the rest which we are to find is a rest which grows entirely out of our spirits being conformed to the spirit of Christ. "Learn of me, and ye shall find rest." It is then a spiritual rest altogether independent of circumstances. It is a vain idea of ours, to suppose that if our circumstances were altered we should be more at rest. My brother, if you cannot rest in poverty, neither would you in riches; if you cannot rest in the midst of persecution, neither would you in the midst of honor. It is the spirit within that gives the rest, that rest has little to do with any thing without. Men have sat on thrones and have found them uneasy places, while others on the rack have declared that they were at rest. The spirit is the spring of rest, as for the outward surroundings they are of small account. Let but your mind be like the mind of Christ, and you shall find rest unto your souls: a deep rest, a growing rest, a rest found out more and more, an abiding rest, not only which you have found, but which you shall go on to find. Justification gave you rest from the burden of sin, sanctification will give you rest from molesting cares; and in proportion as it becomes perfect, and you are like your Saviour, your rest shall become more like that of heaven.

I desire one other thing to be called to your mind before I turn to the practical use of the text, and that is that here, as in the former rest, we are led to adore and admire the blessed person of our Lord. Observe the words, "For I." Oh! it all comes from him still, the second rest as much as the first, the casket and the treasure in the secret drawer. It all hinges there, "For I am." In describing the second rest there is more said concerning him than in the first. In the first part of our text it only says, "I will give you rest;" but in the second part his character is more fully explained—"For I am meek and lowly in heart;" as if to show that as believers grow in grace, and enjoy more rest, they see more of Jesus and know more of him. All they know when sin is pardoned is that he gives it, perhaps they hardly know how; but afterwards when they come to rest in him in sweet fellowship, they know more of his personal attributes, and

their rest for that very reason becomes more deep and perfect.

Come we now to the practical use of all this. Read the chapter before us and find the clue. First, my dear brethren, if you find rest to your souls you will not be moved by the judgment of men. The children in the market-place were the type of our Lord's generation, who railed both at John the Baptist and at our Lord. The generation which now follows the same course, men are sure to cavil at our service. Never mind; take Christ's yoke on you, live to serve him; take Christ's burden, make it a point to bear all things for his sake, and you will not be affected either by praise or censure, for you will find rest to your souls in surrendering yourself to the Father's will. If you learn of Jesus you will have rest from the fear of men. I recollect, before I came to London, being at a prayer-meeting where a very quaint brother prayed for me that I might be delivered from the "bleating of the sheep." I understood it after awhile, he meant that I might live above the fear of man, that when such a person said "How much we have been edified today," I might not be puffed up; or if another said, "How dull the discourse was to-day," I might not be depressed. You will be delivered from "the bleating of the sheep" when you have the spirit of the Good Shepherd.

Next you will be delivered from fretfulness at want of success. "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not." He had wrought his mighty works, and preached the gospel, and they did not repent. Was Jesus discouraged? Was he, as we sometimes are, ready to quit the work? No; his heart rested even then. If we come to Jesus, and take his yoke and burden, we too shall find rest, though Israel be not gathered.

Then, too, our Lord denounced judgments upon those who repented not. He told them that those who had heard the gospel and rejected it would find it more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for them. There are some who quarrel with the judgments of God, and declare that they cannot bear to think of the condemnation of the impenitent. Is not this because they do not bear the burden of the Lord, but are self-willed? The saints are described in the book of Revelation as singing "Hallelujah" while the smoke of Babylon goeth up for ever and

ever. We shall never receive with humble faith the judgment of God in its terror until we take Christ's yoke, and are lowly in heart. When we are like Jesus we shall not feel that the punishment is too much for the sin, but we shall sympathize with the justice of God, and say "Amen" to it. When the mind is lowly it never ventures to sit in judgment upon God, but rests in the conviction that the Judge of all must do right. It is not even anxious to make apologies and smooth down the fact, for it feels, it is not mine to justify him, he can justify himself.

So, again, with regard to the divine sovereignty. Notice the rest of the Saviour's mind upon that matter: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent." Learning of Jesus we too shall rest in reference to divine decrees; we shall rejoice in whatever the Lord determines; predestination will not cast a gloom over us, but we shall thank God for all he ordains.

What a blessed rest! As we open it up, does not its compass and depth surprise you? How sweet to lie passive in his hands, reconciled to every mystery, content with every dispensation, honored by every service satisfied in God!

Now, I do not know whether I am right, but it struck me, when considering this text from various points, that probably our Saviour meant to convey an idea of deeper fellowship than we have yet considered. Did not he mean this—that he carried a yoke on his shoulder, which he calls, "my yoke?" When bullocks are yoked, there are generally two. I have watched them in Northern Italy, and noticed that when two are yoked together, and they are perfectly agreed, the yoke is always easy to both of them. If one were determined to lie down and the other to stand up, the yoke would be very uncomfortable; but when they are both of one mind you will see them look at each other with those large, lustrous, brown eyes of theirs so lovingly, and with a look they read each other's minds, so that when one wants to lie down, down they go, or when one wishes to go forward, forward they both go, keeping step. In this way the yoke is easy. Now I think the Saviour says to us, "I am bearing one end of the yoke on my shoulder; come, my disciple, place your neck under the other side of it, and then learn of me. Keep step with me, be as I am,

do as I do. I am meek and lowly in heart; your heart must be like mine, and then we will work together in blessed fellowship, and you will find that working with me is a happy thing; for my yoke is easy to me, and will be to you. Come, then, true yoke-fellow, come and be yoked with me, take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." If that be the meaning of the text, and perhaps it is, it invites us to a fellowship most near and honorable. If it be not the meaning of the text, it is at any rate a position to be sought after, to be laborers together with Christ, bearing the same yoke. Such be our lot. Amen.

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## Resurgam

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come; Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. - 1 Corinthians 15:35-38

We preach with words; God preacheth to us in acts and deeds. If we would but perceive it, creation and providence are two continual sermons, streaming from the mouth of God. The seasons are four evangelists, each of them having his testimony to utter to us. Doth not summer preach to us of God's bounty, of the richness of his goodness, of that lavish munificence with which he has been pleased to supply the earth, not simply with food for man, but with delights for both ear and eye in the beauteous landscape the melodious birds, and the flowers of various hue? Have you never heard the still small voice of autumn, who bears the wheatsheaf, and whispers to us in the rustling of the seer leaf? He bids us prepare to die. "All we," saith he, "do fade as a leaf, and all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags." Then comes winter, crowned with snow, and he thunders out a most mighty sermon, which, if we would but listen to it, might well impress us with the terrors of God's vengeance, and let us see how soon he can strip the earth of all its pleasantries, and enrobe it in storm, when he shall come himself to judge the earth with righteousness, and the people with equity. But it seems to me that spring reads us a most excellent discourse upon the grand doctrine of revelation. This very month of April, which, if it be not the very entrance of spring, yet certainly introduces us to the fullness of it; this very month bearing by its name the title of the opening month, speaks to us of the resurrection. As we have walked through our gardens, fields, and woods, we have seen the flower-buds ready to burst upon the trees, and the fruit-blossoms hastening to unfold themselves; we have seen the buried flowers upstarting from the sod, and they have spoken to us with sweet,

sweet voice, the words, "Thou too shalt rise again, thou too shalt be buried in the earth like seeds that are lost in winter, but thou shalt rise again, and thou shalt live and blossom in eternal spring."

I propose this morning, as God shall enable, to listen to that voice of spring, proclaiming the doctrine of the resurrection, a meditation all the more appropriate from the fact, that the Sabbath before last we considered the subject of Death, and I hope that then very solemn impressions were made upon our minds. May the like impressions now return, accompanied with more joyous ones, when we shall look beyond the grave, through the valley of the shadow of death, to that bright light in the distance - the splendours and glory of life and immortality.

In speaking to you upon this text, I would remark in the outset, that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is a doctrine peculiar to Christianity. The heathen, by the feeble light of nature, were able to spell out the truth of the immortality of the soul. Those professors of religion who deny that immortality, are not so far advanced in learning as the heathen themselves. When you meet with any who think that the soul of man may possibly become annihilated, make them a present of that little catechism brought out by the Westminster Assembly, which bears the title, "Catechism for the Young and Ignorant." Let them read that through, and begin to understand that God hath not made man in vain. The resurrection of the body was that which was new in the apostolic times. When Paul stood up on Mars hill, in the midst of the learned assembly of the Areopagites, had he spoke." to them about the immortality of the soul, they would not have laughed; they would have respected him, for this was one of the sublime truths which their own wise men had taught, but when he event on to assert that the flesh and blood which was laid in the tomb should yet arise again, that bones which had become the dwelling place of worms, that flesh which had corrupted and decayed, should actually start afresh into life, that the body as well as the soul should live, some mocked' and others said, "We will hear thee again of this matter." The fact is, reason teaches the immortality of the spirit, it is revelation alone which teaches the immortality of the body. It is Christ alone who hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. He was the clearest proclaimer of that grand truth. Albeit that it

had lain in the secret faith of many of the ancient people of God before, yet he it was who first set forth in clear terms the grand truth that there should be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. AS far as I know, the doctrine has not been disputed in the Christian church. There have been some few heretics who have denied it at divers times, but they have been so few, so utterly insignificant, that it is not worth while to take any notice of their scruples, or of the objections which they have urged. Instead thereof, we will turn to our text; one will assume that the doctrine is true, and so proceed to utter some words of explanation upon it.

First, then, our text suggests the real identity of the resurrection body. The apostle uses the figure of a seed, a shrivelled grain of wheat. It is put into the ground, there it dies all the farinaceous part of it decays and forms a peculiarly fine soil, into which the life-germ strikes itself, and upon which the life-germ feeds. The seed itself dies, with the exception of a particle almost too small to be perceived, which is the real life contained within the wheat. By-and-bye we see a green blade upstarting: that grows, swells, and increases, until it comes to be corn in the ear, and afterwards the full corn in the ear. Now no one has any suspicion but that the same wheat arises from the soil into which it was cast. Put into the earth, we believe it springs up, and we are accustomed to talk of it in our ordinary language as being the very same seed which we sowed, although the difference is striking and marvellous. Here you have a plant some three feet high, bearing many grains of wheat, and there you had the other day a little shrivelled grain; yet no one doubts but that the two are the same. So shall it be in the resurrection of the dead. The body is here but as a shrivelled seed; there is no beauty in it that we should desire it. It is put into a grave, like wheat that is sown in the earth, there it rots and it decays, but God preserves within it a sort of life germ which is immortal, and when the trump of the archangel shall shake the heavens and the earth it shall expand to the full flower of manhood, which shall blossom from the earth. a far more glorious form than the manhood which was buried. You are, my brethren, today, but as a heap of wheat, a heap of poor shrivelled corn. Despite that earthly beauty which makes glad our countenances, we are after all shrivelled and worthless, compared with what your bodies shall be when they shall awake from their beds of silent



dust and cold damp clay. Yet whole they shall be different, they shall be precisely the same, it shall be the same body; the identity shall be preserved. Though there shall seem to be but little similarity, yet shall no man doubt but that the very body which was sown in the earth hath sprung up to eternal life. I suppose that if I should bring here a certain grain of seed, and you had never seen the image of the plant into which it would ripen, and I should submit it to a thousand persons here present, and ask them this question - "What form will this seed assume when it shall grow into a plant and bear a flower?" none of you could possibly tell what it would be like; yet when you saw it spring up you would say, "Well, I have no doubt that the heart's-ease sprang from its own seed. I am sure that a violet springs from a violet seed. I cannot doubt that the lily hath its own appropriate root." And another time, when you come to see the seed, you perhaps imagine you see some little likeness, at least you never mistrust the identity. Though there are wide extremes of difference between the tiny mustard seed and the great tree beneath the branches of which the birds of the air build their nests, yet you never for a moment question but what they are precisely the same. The identity is preserved. So shall it be in the resurrection of the dead. The difference shall be extraordinary, yet shall the body be still the same.

In order to affirm this, the ancient Christian church was in the habit in their creed of adding a sentence to the Article which runs thus: - "I believe in the resurrection of the dead." They added, in Latin words to this effect: - "I believe in the resurrection of the dead, of this very flesh and blood." I do not know that the addition was ever authorized by the church, but it was continually used, especially at the time when there was a discussion as to the truth of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The very flesh and blood that is buried, the very eyes that are closed in death, the very hand which stiffens by my corpse, these very members shall live again - not the identical particles of the same matter any more than the self-same particles of the wheat spring up to make a blade, and to make full corn in the ear. Yet shall they be identical, in the true sense of the term, they shall spring up from this body - shall be the true result and development of this poor flesh and blood, which we now drag about with us here below.

Ten thousand objections have been raised against this, but they are all readily answerable. Some have said, "But when men's bodies are dead, and are committed to the grave, they are often dug up, and the careless sexton mixes them up with common mould; nay, it sometimes happens that they are carted away from the churchyard, and strewn over the fields, to become a rich manure for wheat, so that the particles of the body are absorbed into the corn that is growing, and they travel round in a circle until they become the food of man. So that the particle which may have been in the body of one man enters into the body of another. Now," say they, "how can all these particles be tracked?" Our answer is if it were necessary, every atom could be traced. Omnipotence and Omniscience could do it. If it were needful that God should search and find out every individual atom that ever existed, he would be able to detect the present abode of every single particle. The astronomer is able to tell the position of one star by the aberration of the motion of another, by his calculation, apart from observation, he can discover an unknown orb; its hugeness puts it within his reach. But to God there is nothing little or great; he can find out the orbit of one atom by the aberration in the orbit of another atom - he can pursue and overtake each separate particle. But recollect, this is not necessary at all, for, as I said before, the identity may be preserved without there being the same atoms. Just go back to the excellent illustration of our text. The wheat is just the same, but in the new wheat that has grown up there may not be one solitary particle of that matter which was in the seed cast into the ground. A little seed that shall not weigh the hundredth part of an ounce falls into the earth, and springs up and produces a forest tree that shall weigh two tons. Now, if there be any part of the original seed in the tree, it must be but in the proportional of a millionth part, or something less than that. And yet is the tree positively identical with the seed - it is the same thing. And so there may only be a millionth part of the particles of my body in the new body which I shall wear but yet it may still be the same. It is not the identity of the matter that will make positive identity. And I shall show you that again. Are you not aware that our bodies are changing - that in about every ten years we have different bodies from what we had ten years ago? That is to say, by decay, and the continual wearing away of our flesh, there is not in this body I have here, a single particle that was in my body ten years ago, and yet I am the same man. I know I am precisely the

same. So you. You shall have been born in America, and lived there twenty years; you shall suddenly be transferred to India, and live there another twenty years; you come back to America to see your friends - you are the same man, they know you, recognize you, you are precisely the same individual; but yet philosophy teaches us a fact which cannot be denied - that your body would have changed twice in the time you have been absent from your friends; that every particle is gone, and has had its place supplied by another; and yet the body is the same. So that it is not necessary there should be the same particles; it is not needful that you should track every atom and bring it back in order that the body should preserve its identity.

Have you never heard the story of the wife of Peter Martyr, a celebrated reformer, who died some years before the time of Queen Mary? Since his enemies could not reach his body, they took up the body of his wife after she was dead, and buried it in a dunghill. During the reign of Elizabeth, the body was removed from its contemptuous hiding-place; it was then reduced to ashes. In order that the Romanists, if they should ever prevail again, might never do dishonor to that body, they took the ashes of Peter Martyr's wife, and mixed them with the reputed ashes of a Romish saint. Mixing the two together, they said, "Now these Romanists will never defile this body, because they will be afraid of desecrating the relics of their own saint." Perhaps some wiseacres man say, "How can these two be separated?" Why, they could be divided readily enough if God willed to do it; for granted that God is omniscient omnipotent, and you have never to ask how, for Omniscience and Omnipresence put the question out of court, and decide the thing at once. Besides, it is not necessary that it should be so. The life-germs of the two bodies may not have mixed together. God has set his angels to watch over them, as he set Michael to watch over the body of Moses, and he will bring out the two life-germs, and they shall be developed and the two bodies shall start up separately at the sound of the archangel's trump. Remember, then, and doubt not that the very body in which you sinned shall be the very body in which you shall suffer in hell; and the body in which you believe in Christ, and in which you yield yourselves to God, shall be the very body in which you shall walk the golden streets, and in which you shall praise the name of God for ever and ever.

So much upon this first point. But observe, while the identity is real, the transformation is glorious. The body here is mortal, always subject to decay. We dwell in a poor uncomfortable tent, continually is the canvas being rent, the cords are being loosed, and the tent pins are being pulled up. We are full of sufferings, and aches, and pains, which are but the premonitions of coming death. We all know, some by our decayed teeth, which are, as I said the other day, but the emblems of a decayed man; others by those grey hairs which are scattered here and there; we all know that our bodies are so constituted that they cannot remain here except for a limited period, and they must - so God has willed it - return to their native dust. Not so, however, the new body: "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. "It will be a body upon which the tooth of time can have no power, and into which the dart of death can never be thrust. Age shall roll after age, but that body shall exist in everlasting youth. It shall sing, but never shall its song be stayed by weakness; it shall fly, but never shall its flight flag with weariness. There shall be no signs of mortality; the shroud, the mattock, and the spade are never seen in heaven. Such a thing as an open grave shall never appear in the celestial kingdom, there they live, live, live, but never, never, never shall they die. See then, how different the body must be; for as this body is constituted, every nerve and every blood vessel tells me I must die. It cannot be otherwise. I must endure this stern decree, "Dust to dust, earth to earth, ashes to ashes," but in heaven every nerve of the new body shall cry, "Immortality." Every part of that new frame shall speak for itself, and tell to the immortal spirit that they are everlasting companions, managed in eternal wedlock.

There shall be, moreover, a great change in the new body as to its beauty. "It is sown in dishonor; it shall be raised in glory." The old metaphor employed by all preachers upon this doctrine must be used again. You see here a crawling caterpillar, a picture of yourself, a creature that eats and drinks, and may readily be trodden on. Wait a few weeks, that caterpillar shall spin itself enshroud, lie down, become inactive, and sleep. A picture of what you shall do. You must spin your winding-sheet and then be laid in the tomb. But wait awhile; when the warmth of the sun shall come that apparently lifeless thing shall burst its sheath. The chrysalis shall fall off, and the insect fly forth equipped with glittering wings. Having arrived at

its full state of perfection, the imago the very image of the creature shall be seen by us all dancing in the sunbeam. So shall we after passing through our wormhood here to our chrysalis state in the grave, burst our coffins and mount aloft glorious winged creatures made like unto the angels; - the same creatures, but oh! so changed, so different, that we should scarce know our former selves if we could be able to meet them again after we have been glorified in heaven.

There shall be a change, then, in our form and nature. Old master Spenser, who was a rare hand at making metaphors, says, "The body here is like an old rusty piece of iron, but Death shall be the blacksmith, he shall take it and he shall make it hot in his fire, until it shall sparkle and send forth burning heat and look bright and shining." And so surely is it. We are thrust into the earth as into the fire, and there shall we be made to sparkle and to shine and to be full of radiance, no more the rusty things that we once were, but fiery spirits, like the cherubim and the seraphim, we shall wear a power and a glory the like of which we have not even yet conceived.

Again, another transformation shall take place, namely, in power. "It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." The same body that is weak, shall be raised in power. We are puny things here; there is a limit to our labors, and our usefulness is straightened by reason of our inability to perform what we would. And oh, how weak we become when we die! A man must be carried by his own friends to his own grave; he cannot even lay himself down in his last resting-place. Passively he submits to be laid out, to be wrapped up in his winding sheet, and to be shut up in the darkness of the grave. Silently, passively he submits to be carried away with the pall covered over him, and to be put into the earth. The clods are shovelled over him, but he knows it not, neither could he resist his burial if he were conscious of it. But that powerless body shall be raised in power. That was a fine idea of Martin Luther, which he borrowed from St. Anselm, that the saints shall be so strong when they are risen from the dead, that if they chose they could shake the world; they could pull up islands by their roots, or hurl mountains into the air. Some modern writers, borrowing their ideas from Milton, where he speaks of the battles of the angels, where they plucked up the hills with all their shaggy loads,

rivers and trees at once, and hurled them at the fallen spirits, have taught that we shall be clothed with gigantic forge. I think if we do not go the length of the poets, we have every reason to believe that the power of the risen body will be utterly inconceivable. These, however, are but guesses at the truth; this great mystery is yet beyond us. I believe that when I shall enter upon my new body, I shall be able to fly from one spot to another, like a thought, as swiftly as I will; I shall be here and there, swift as the rays of light. From strength to strength, my spirit shall be able to leap onward to obey the behests of God; upborne with wings of ether, it shall flash its way across that shoreless sea, and see the glory of God in all his works, and yet ever behold his face. For the eye shall then be strong enough to pierce through leagues of distance, and the memory shall never fail. The heart shall be able to love to a fiery degree, and the head to comprehend right thoroughly. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. But, brethren and sisters, to come back to reality, and leave fiction for a moment, though it doth not appear what we shad be, yet we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And do you know what we shall be like, if we shall be like him? Behold the picture of what Jesus Christ is like, and we shall be like him. "I saw," saith John, "one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle His head. and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as tee sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." Such shall we be when we are like Christ; what tongue can tell, what soul can guess the glories that surround the saints when they' start from their beds of dust, and rise to immortality.

But now, to turn away from these, which I fear to very many of you are rather uninteresting particulars, let me give you one or two figures which may show to you the change which shall take place in us on the day of resurrection.

Do you see yonder a beggar? he is picking rags from a dunghill, he pulls out piece after piece from the heap of dust, as he uses his rake, you may

see the like any day, if you will go to those great dustyards in Agar Town. There he pulls out piece after piece, and puts it in his basket. What can be the value of those miserable old rags? He takes them away, they are carried off, picked, sorted, rag to its own rag, like to like. By-and-bye they are washed, they are put into the mill, they are beaten hard, they are smashed, they are ground to pulp, and what is that I see just coming out of yonder mill? A clear white sheet, without a stain and whence came this? "I am the son of the old rag," saith he, "nay, I am the identical rag that was but a few hours ago picked from the dung-heap." Oh! strange! Doth purity come out of impurity, and doth this beauty, this utility come out of that which was neither comely nor useful, but which men loathed, and cast away as a worthless thing? See here, brethren, the picture of yourselves; your bodies are like rags, put away into this vast dunghill earth" and there buried, but the angel shall come and sort you, body to its body, the righteous to the righteous, the wicked to the wicked, they shall come together, bone to his bone and flesh to his flesh; and what do I see? - I behold a body like unto an angel, with eyes of fire, and a face like the brightness of the sun, and wings like lightnings for swiftness. Whence art thou, thou bright spirit? I am he that was buried, I am that thing that once was worms' meat, but now I am glorious through the name of Jesus' and through the power of God. You have there before you a picture of the resurrection, a homely picture, it is true, but one which may vividly convey the idea to homely minds.

Take another - one used of old by that mighty preacher, Chrysostom - there is an old house, a straight and narrow cottage, and the inhabitant of it often shivers with the cold winter, and is greatly oppressed by the heat of summer; it is ill adapted to his wants, the windows are too small and very dark, he cannot keep his treasure safely therein; he is often a prisoner; and when I have passed by his house I have heard him sighing at the window: "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." The good master comes, the landlord of the house, he speaks to the tenant, and he bids him come away, "I am about to pull down thy old house," saith he, "and I would not have thee here while I am pulling it stone from stone, lest thou be hurt and injured. Come away with me and live in my palace, while I am pulling thy old house to pieces." He does so, and every stone of the old house is thrown

down; it is levelled with the ground, and even the foundations are dug up. Another is built: it is of costly slabs of marble, the windows thereof are pure and clear, all its gates are of agate, and all its borders of precious stones, while all the foundations thereof are of chrysolite, and the roof thereof is of jasper. And now the master of the house speaks to the old inhabitant, "Come back, and I will show thee the house which I have built for thee." O what joy, when that inhabitant shall enter and find it so well adapted to his wants, where every power shall have full range, where he shall see God out of its windows, not as through a glass, darkly, but face to face, where he could invite even Christ himself to come and sup with him, and not feel that the house is beneath the dignity of the Son of Man. You know the parable, you know how your old house, this clay body, is to be pulled down, how your spirit is to dwell in heaven for a little while without a body, and how afterwards you are to enter into a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, a mansion which is holy, incorruptible, and undefiled, and which shall never decay.

To use yet a fresh figure, I see a beggar passing by a rich man's door, that poor wretch is covered with filth, his garments are hanging about him in pieces as if the wind would blow all away, and drive both man and garments amongst the rags upon the dunghill. How he shivers, how he seeks to pull about him that scant cloak which will not meet around his loins, and will not shield him from the blast. As for his shoes, they are indeed old and clouted, and all his garments are of such a sort that one never could know the original, for they have been mended and patched a thousand times, and now they need to be mended and patched again. He is freely invited to come into the rich man's hall, we will not tell you what is done in the meantime, but we will see him come out of that door again, and would you know him. Would you believe that he is the same man? He has been washed and cleansed; on his back there hangs the imperial purple, while on his head glitters a brilliant crown; his feet are shod with silver, and on his hands there are rings of gold. About the paps he wears a golden girdle; and as he comes abroad bright spirits wait on him and do him honor angels wait to be his servants, and think it to be their highest pleasure to fly to do his will. Is this the same man and is this the same dress? It is the same. By some marvellous might, rather by a divine energy, God has received this beggar, taken him into the inner chamber



of the grave; has washed him from all imperfections; and now he comes out as one of the princes of the blood royal of heaven. And as is his nature, such is his apparel; as is his dignity, such is his estate) and such the company of servants who wait upon him.

Not to multiply illustrations, we will use but one more. I see before me an old and battered cup, which many a black lip hath touched, out of which many a villain's throat has received moisture. It is battered and covered over with filth. Who could tell what metal it is? It is brought in and given to the silversmith, he no sooner receives it, than he begins to break it into pieces, he dashes it into shivers again and again, he pounds it until he has broken it, and then puts it into his fining pot and melts it. Now you begin to see it sparkle again, and by and bye he beats it out and fashions it into a goodly chalice, out of which a king may drink. Is this the same? the very same thing, This glorious cup; is this the old battered silver we saw just now; silver did I say, it looked like battered filth. Yes it is the same, and we who are here below like vessels, alas! too unfit for the master's use; vessels which have even given comfort to the evil ones, and helped to do the work of Satan, we shall be put into the furnace of the grave, and be there melted down and friend and fashioned into a glorious wine cup that shall stand upon the banqueting table of the Son of God.

I have thus sought to illustrate the change, and now I will occupy your attention but one or two minutes on another thought which seems to lie within the range of my text. We have had the real identity under the glorious transformation. I bring you back to a thought kindred to the first. There will be in the bodies of the righteous an undoubted personality of character. If you sow barley, it will not produce wheat: if you sow tares, they will not spring up in the form of rye. Every grain hath its own peculiar form: God hath given to every seed his own body. So, my brothers and sisters, there are differences among us here; no two bodies are precisely alike: there are marks on our countenances, and in our bodily conformation, that show that we are different. We are of one blood, but not of one fashion. Well, when we are put into the grave we shall crumble back, and come to the same elements; but when we rise we shall every one of us rise diverse from the other. The body of Paul shall not produce a body precisely like that of Peter. Nor shall the flesh of

Andrew bring forth a new body like that of the sons of Zebedee, but to every seed his own body. In the case of our blessed Lord and Master you win remember that when he rose himself from the dead he preserved his personality, there were still the wounds in his hands, and still there was the spear-mark in his side. I do not doubt that when he underwent his transfiguration, and at the time of his ascension up to heaven, he still retained the marks of his wounds. For do we not sing, and is not our song based upon Scripture? -

He looks like a Lamb that has been slain,  
And wears his priesthood still.

So, brethren, though of course we shall retain no weaknesses, nothing which will cause sorrow, yet every Christian will retain his individuality; he will be like and yet unlike all his fellows. As we know Isaiah from Jeremy here, so shall we know them above. As I differ from you here, if we two shall together praise God, there shall be some difference between us above. Not the difference in failings, but the difference in the perfections of the form of the new body. I sometimes think martyrs will wear their scars. And why should they not? It were a loss to them if they should lose their honors. Perhaps they shall wear their ruby crown in Paradise, and we shall know them -

"Foremost 'mongst the sons of light  
'Midst the bright ones doubly bright."

Perhaps the men who come from the catacombs of Rome will wear some sort of pallor on their brow that will show that they came from darkness, where they saw not the light of the sun. Perhaps the minister of Christ, though he shall not need to say to his fellows, "know the Lord," shall still be chief among the tellers out of the ways of God. Perhaps the sweet singer of Israel shall still be foremost in the choir of the golden harps, and loudest among them that shall lead the strain. And if these he fancies, yet am I sure that one star differeth from another star in glory. Orion shall not be confounded with Arcturus, nor shall Mazaroth for a moment be confounded with Orion. We shall an be separate and distinct. Perhaps we shall each one have our constellation there, as we shall cluster into our

own societies, and gather around those whom we best have known on earth. Personality will be maintained. I do not doubt but what you will know Isaiah in heaven, and you will recognize the great preachers of the ancient Christian church; you will be able to speak with Chrysostom, and wilt talk with Whitfield. It may be you shall have for your companions those who were your companions here; those with whom you took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God, shall be with you there, and you shall know them, and with transporting joy you shall there together tell your former trials and ancient triumphs, and the glories you are alike made to share.

Treasure up, then, these things, the identity of your body after its glorious transformation, and, at the same time, the personality which will prevail.

I want, now, your solemn attention for some five minutes, while I sketch a most fearful contrast here. The things I have already spoken should make the children of God happy. At Stratford-on-Bow, in the days of Queen Mary, there was once a stake erected for the burning of two martyrs, one of them a lame man, the other a blind man. Just when the fire was lit, the lame man hurled away his staff, and turning round said to the blind man, "Courage, brother, this fire will cure us both." So can the righteous say of the grave, "Courage, the grave will cure us all, we shall leave our infirmities behind us." What patience this should give us to endure all our trials, for they are not of long duration. They are but as the carvings of the graver's tool, shaping these rough blocks of clay, to bring them into the right form and shape, that they may bear the image of the heavenly. But the contrast is awful. Brethren, the wicked must rise again from the dead. The lip with which you have drunk the intoxicating drink till you have reeled again, that lip shall be used in drinking down the fiery wrath of God. Remember, too, ungodly woman, the eyes that are full of lust will one be full of horror, the ear with which you listen to lascivious conversation must listen to the sullen moans, the hollow groans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts. Be not deceived; you sinned in your body, you will be damned in your body. When you die your spirit must suffer alone, that will be the beginning of hell, but your body must rise again, then this very flesh in which you have transgressed the laws of God this very body must smart for it. It must be in the fire and burn, and crack, and writhe

throughout eternity. Your body will be raised incorruptible, otherwise the fire would consume it. It will become like the asbestos stone, which lies in the flame and yet is never consumed. If it were this flesh and blood it would soon die under the pangs we must endure, but it will be a body all but omnipotent. As I spoke of the righteous having such great power, so shall you have; but it will be power to agonize, power to suffer, power to die, and yet to live, uncrushed by the stern foot of death. Think of this, ye sensualists, who care not for your souls, but who pamper your bodies; you shall have that fair complexion scorched away; those members that have become instruments of lust, shall become instruments of hell. Rotting as they will do in the grave, they shall nevertheless rise with a fiery immortality about them, and endure an eternity of agony and unutterable woe and punishment. Is not that enough to make a man tremble and cry, "God be merciful unto me a sinner?"

But further, remember that while your body shall be identically the same, yet it too will be transformed, and as the wheat brings forth the wheat, so the nettle seed brings forth the nettle. What your body will be like I cannot tell, but perhaps as the body of the righteous will come to be like Christ, yours may become like the body of the devil, whatever that may be - the same hideous conformation, the same demon gaze and hellish stare which characterize that proud archangel shall characterize you; you shall have the image and the lineaments of the first traitor stamped upon your fire-enduring face. Seeds of sin, are ye prepared to ripen into the fun blown flower of destruction? Ye seeds of evil, are ye ready to be scattered now from Death's hand, and then to spring up an awful harvest of tormented ones? Yet so it must be unless you turn to God. Except you repent, he has said, and he will do it, he is able to cast both body and soul into hell.

And let me remind you yet once again, that there will be in you an undoubted personality, you will be known in hell. The drunkard shall have the drunkard's punishment; the swearer shall have the swearer's corner to himself. "Bind them up in bundles to burn, and cast them into the fire." Thus saith the voice of inflexible justice. You shall not suffer in another man's body but in your own, and you shall be known to be the very man that sinned against God. You shall be looked at by one who sees

you to-day, if you die impenitent, who will say to you, "We went up to that hall together; we heard a sermon on the resurrection which had a frightful ending; we laughed at it, but we have found out that it is true." And one will say to the other, "I should have known you though we had not met these many years till we met in hell. I should have known you, there is something about your new body which lets me know that it is the same body that you had on earth." And then you will mutually say to one another, "These pangs that we are now enduring, this horror of great darkness, these chains of fire that are reserved for us, are they not well deserved?" And you will curse God together again, and suffer together, and will be made to feel that you have only received the due reward of your deeds. "Did not the man warn us," you will say, "did he not warn us, did he not bid us fly to Christ for refuge? - did we not despise it, and make a jeer of what he said? We are rightly punished; we damned ourselves, we cut our own throats, we kindled hell for ourselves, and found the fuel of our own burning for ever and ever."

Oh! my dear hearers, I cannot bear to stay on this subject; let me finish with just this word. "Whoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." That means you poor man, though perhaps you were drunk last night, and scarcely got up time enough to come here this morning. If thou believest, William, thou shalt be saved. This means thee, poor woman, harlot though thou be - if thou cast thyself on Christ thou art saved. This means thee, respectable man, thou who trustest in thine own works - if thou reliest on Christ thou shalt be saved, but not if thou trustest in thyself. Oh! be wise, be wise. May God give us grace now to learn that highest wisdom, and may we now look to the cross and to the quivering Lamb that bleeds upon it, and see him as he rises from the dead and ascends up on high, and believing in him; may we receive the hope and the assurance of a blissful resurrection in him.

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## **The Resurrection Of The Dead**

There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both the of the just and unjust. -  
Acts 24:15

Reflecting the other day upon the sad state of the churches at the present moment, I was led to look back to apostolic times, and to consider wherein the preaching of the present day differed from the preaching of the apostles. I remarked the vast difference in their style from the set and formal oratory of the present age. I remarked that the apostles did not take a text when they preached, nor did they confine themselves to one subject, much less to any place of worship, but I find that they stood up in any place and declared from the fulness of their heart what they knew of Jesus Christ. But the main difference I observed was in the subjects of their preaching. Surprised I was when I discovered that the very staple of the preaching of the apostles was the resurrection of the dead. I found myself to have been preaching the doctrine of the grace of God, to have been upholding free election, to have been leading the people of God as well as I was enabled into the deep things of his word; but I was surprised to find that I had not been copying the apostolic fashion half as nearly as I might have done. The apostles when they preached always testified concerning the resurrection of Jesus, and the consequent resurrection of the dead. It appears that the Alpha and the Omega of their gospel was the testimony that Jesus Christ died and rose again from the dead according to the Scriptures. When they chose another apostle in the room of Judas, who had become apostate, Acts I.22, they said, "One must be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection;" so that the very office of an apostle was to be a witness of the resurrection. And well did they fulfil their office. When Peter stood up before the multitude, he declared unto them that "David spoke of the resurrection of Christ." When Peter and John were taken before the council, the great cause of their arrest was that the rulers were grieved :because they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." Acts iv. 2. When they were set free, after having been examined, it is said, "With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all." Acts iv. 33. It was this which stirred the curiosity of the Athenians when Paul preached among them, "They said, he seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached unto

them Jesus and the resurrection of the dead." And this moved the laughter of the Areopagites, for when he spoke of the resurrection of the dead, "Some mocked, and others said, we will hear thee again of this matter." Truly did Paul say, when he stood before the council of the Pharisees and Sadducees, "Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am called in question." And equally truly did he constantly assert, "IF Christ be not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain, and ye are yet in your sins." The resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of the righteous is a doctrine which we believe, but which we too seldom preach or care to read about. Though I have inquired of several booksellers for a book specially upon the subject of the resurrection, I have not yet been able to purchase one of any sort whatever; and when I turned to Dr. Owen's works, which are a most invaluable storehouse of divine knowledge, containing much that is valuable on almost every subject; I could find, even there, scarcely more than the slightest mention of the resurrection. It has been set down as a well known truth, and therefore has never been discussed. Heresies have not risen up respecting it; it would almost have been a mercy if there had been, for whenever a truth is contested by heretics, the orthodox fight strongly for it, and the pulpit resounds with it every day. I am persuaded, however, that there is much power in this doctrine; and if I preach it this morning you will see that God will own the apostolic preaching, and there will be conversions. I intend putting it to the test now, to see whether there be not something which we cannot perceive at present in the resurrection of the dead, which is capable of moving the hearts of men and bringing them into subjection to the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There are very few Christians who believe the resurrection of the dead. You may be surprised to hear that, but I should not wonder if I discovered that you yourself have doubts on the subject. By the resurrection of the dead is meant something very different from the immortality of the soul: that, every Christian believes, and therein is only on a level with the heathen, who believes it too. The light of nature is sufficient to tell us that the soul is immortal, so that the infidel who doubts it is a worse fool even than a heathen, for he, before Revelation was given, had discovered it—there are some faint glimmerings in men of

reason which teach that the soul is something so wonderful that it must endure forever. But the resurrection of the dead is quite another doctrine, dealing not with the soul, but with the body. The doctrine is that this actual body in which I now exist is to live with my soul; that not only is the "vital spark of heavenly flame" to burn in heaven, but the very censer in which the incense of my life doth smoke is holy unto the Lord, and is to be preserved for ever. The spirit, every one confesses, is eternal; but how many there are who deny that the bodies of men will actually start up from their graves at the great day? Many of you believe you will have a body in heaven, but you think it will be an airy fantastic body, instead of believing that it will be a body like to this—flesh and blood (although not the same kind of flesh, for all flesh is not the same flesh), a solid, substantial body, even such as we have here. And there are yet fewer of you who believe that the wicked will have bodies in hell; for it is gaining ground everywhere that there are to be no positive torments for the damned in hell to affect their bodies, but that it is to be metaphorical fire, metaphorical brimstone, metaphorical chains, metaphorical torture. But if ye were Christians as ye profess to be, ye would believe that every mortal man who ever existed shall not only live by the immortality of his soul, but his body shall live again, that the very flesh in which he now walks the earth is as eternal as the soul, and shall exist for ever. That is the peculiar doctrine of Christianity. The heathens never guessed or imagined such a thing; and consequently when Paul spoke of the resurrection of the dead, "Some mocked," which proves that they understood him to speak of the resurrection of the body, for they would not have mocked had he only spoken of the immortality of the soul, that having been already proclaimed by Plato and Socrates, and received with reverence.

We are now about to preach that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. We shall consider first the resurrection of the just; and secondly, the resurrection of the unjust.

#### I. There shall be A RESURRECTION OF THE JUST.

The first proof I will offer of this, is, that it has been the constant and unvarying faith of the saints from the earliest periods of time. Abraham



believed the resurrection of the dead, for it is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 11 verse 19, that he "accounted that God was able to raise up Isaac even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." I have no doubt that Joseph believed in the resurrection, for he gave commandment concerning his bones; and surely he would not have been so careful of his body if he had not believed that it should be raised from the dead. The Patriarch Job was a firm believer in it, for he said in that oft repeated text, Job 19:25, 26 ;: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that he shall stand at the latter-day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." David believed it beyond the shadow of a doubt, for he sang of Christ, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." Daniel believed it, for he said, that "Many who sleep in the dust shall rise, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting contempt." Souls do not sleep in the dust; bodies do. It will do you good to turn to one or two passages and see what these holy men thought. For instance, in Isaiah, ch. xxvi. 19, you read: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." We will offer no explanation. The text is positive and sure. Let another prophet speak— Hsa 6:1-2 ; "Come and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." Although this does not declare the resurrection, yet it uses it as a figure which it would not do were it not regarded as a settled truth. It is declared by Paul, also, in Hebrews xi. 35, that such was the constant faith of the martyrs; for he says, "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." All those holy men and women, who, during the time of the Maccabees, stood fast by their faith, and endured the fire and sword, and tortures unutterable, believed in the resurrection, and that resurrection stimulated them to give their bodies to the flames, not caring even for death, but believing that thereby they should attain to a blessed resurrection. But our Saviour brought the resurrection to light in the most excellent manner, for he explicitly and frequently declared it. "Marvel not," said he, "at what I have said unto you. Behold the hour cometh when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of God."

"The hour is coming when he will call the dead to judgment, and they shall stand before his throne." Indeed, throughout his preaching, there was one continued flow of firm belief, and a public and positive declaration of the resurrection of the dead. I will not trouble you with any passages from the writings of the Apostles; they abound therewith. In fact, Holy Scripture is so full of this doctrine that I marvel, brethren, that we should so soon have departed from the stedfastness of our faith, and that it should be believed in many churches that the actual bodies of the saints will not live again, and especially that the bodies of the wicked will not have a future existence. We maintain as our text doth, that "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."

A second proof, we think, we find in the translation of Enoch and Elijah to heaven. We read of two men who went to heaven in their bodies. Enoch "was not; for God took him;" and Elijah was carried to heaven in a chariot of fire. Neither of these men left his ashes in the grave: neither left his body to be consumed by the worm, but both of them in their mortal frames (changed and glorified doubtless) ascended up on high. Now, those two were the pledge to us that all of us shall rise in the same manner. Would it be likely that two bright spirits would sit in heaven clothed in flesh, while the rest of us were unclothed? Would it be at all reasonable that Enoch and Elijah should be the only saints who should have their bodies in heaven, and that we should be there only in our souls —poor souls! longing to have our bodies again. No; our faith tells us that these two men having safely gone to heaven, as John Bunyan hath it, by a bridge that no one else trod, by which they were not under the necessity to wade the river, we shall also rise from the flood, and our flesh shall not for ever dwell with corruption.

There is a remarkable passage in Jude, where it speaks of Michael the Archangel contending with the devil about the body of Moses, and using no "railing accusation." Now, this refers to the great doctrine of angels watching over the bones of the saints. Certainly, it tells us that the body of Moses was watched over by a great archangel; the devil thought to disturb that body, but Michael contended with him about it. Now would there be a contention about that body if it had been of no value? Would Michael contend for that which was only to be the food of worms? Would

he wrestle with the enemy for that which was to be scattered to the four winds of heaven, never to be united again into a new and goodlier fabric? No; assuredly not. From this we learn that an angel watches over every tomb. It is no fiction, when on the marble we carve the cherubs with their wings. There are cherubs with outstretched wings over the head of the grave-stones of all the righteous; ay, and where "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep," in some nook o'ergrown by nettles, there an angel standeth night and day to watch each bone and guard each atom, that at the resurrection those bodies, with more glory than they had on earth, may start up to dwell for ever with the Lord. The guardianship of the bodies of the saints by angels proves that they shall rise again from the dead.

Yet, further, the resurrections that have already taken place give us hope and confidence that there shall be a resurrection of all saints. Do you not remember that it is written, when Jesus rose from the dead many of the saints that were in their graves arose, and came into the city, and appeared unto many? Have ye not heard that Lazarus, though he had been dead three days, came from the grave at the word of Jesus? Have you never read how the daughter of Jarius awoke from the sleep of death when he said, "Talitha cumi?" Have you never seen him at the gates of Nain, bidding that widow's son rise from the bier? Have you forgotten that Dorcas who made garments for the poor, sat up and saw Peter after she had been dead? And do you not remember Eutychus who fell from the third loft and was taken up dead, but who, at the prayer of Paul, was raised again? Or, does not your memory roll back to the time when hoary Elijah stretched himself upon the dead child, and the child breathed, and sneezed seven times, and his soul came to him? Or have you not read that when they buried a man, as soon as he touched the prophet's bones he rose again to life? These are pledges of the resurrection; a few specimens, a few chance gems flung into the world to tell us how full God's hand is of resurrection jewels. He hath given us proof that he is able to raise the dead by the resurrection of a few, who afterwards were seen on earth by infallible witnesses.

We must now, however, leave these things, and refer you once more to the Holy Spirit by way of confirming the doctrine that the saints' bodies

shall rise again. The chapter in which you will find one great proof is in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1Cr 6:13 ;: "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body." The body, then, is the Lord's. Christ died not only to save my soul, but to save my body. It is said he "came to seek and to save that which was lost." When Adam sinned he lost his body, and he lost his soul too; he was a lost man, lost altogether. And when Christ came to save his people, he came to save their bodies and their souls. "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord." Is this body for the Lord, and shall death devour it? Is this body for the Lord, and shall winds scatter its particles far away where they never shall discover their fellows? No! the body is for the Lord, and the Lord shall have it. "And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise us by his own power." Now look at the next verse: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ." Not merely is the soul a part of Christ—united to Christ, but the body is also. These hands, these feet, these eyes, are members of Christ, if I be a child of God. I am one with him, not merely as to my mind, but one with him as to this outward frame. The very body is taken into union. The golden chain which binds Christ to his people goes round the body and soul too. Did not the apostle say "they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church?"—Ephesians v. 31, 32. "They are one flesh;" and Christ's people are not only one with him in spirit, but they are "one flesh" too. The flesh of man is united with the flesh of the God-man; and our bodies are members of Jesus Christ. Well, while the head lives the body cannot die; and while Jesus lives the members cannot perish. Further the Apostle says, in the 19th verse, "Know yet not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price." This body he says, is the temple of the Holy Ghost; and where the Holy Ghost dwells in a body, he not only sanctifies it, but renders it eternal. The temple of the Holy Ghost is as eternal as the Holy Ghost. You may demolish other temples and their gods too, but the Holy Ghost cannot die, nor "can his temple perish." Shall this body which has once had the Holy Ghost in it be always food for worms? Shall it never be seen more, but be like the dry bones of the valley? No; the dry bones shall live, and the temple of the Holy Ghost shall be built up again. Though the legs, the pillars, of that temple fall—though the eyes, the windows of it be

darkened, and those that look out of them see no more, yet God shall rebuild this fabric, re-light the eyes, and restore its pillars and regild it with beauty, yea, "this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible put on incorruption.

But the master argument with which we close our proof is that Christ rose from the dead, and verily his people shall. The chapter which we read at the commencement of the service is proof to a demonstration that if Christ rose from the dead all his people must; that if there be no resurrection, then is Christ not risen. But I will not long dwell on this proof, because I know you all feel its power, and there is no need for me to bring it out clearly. As Christ actually rose from the dead—flesh and blood, so shall we. Christ was not a spirit when he rose from the dead; his body could be touched. Did not Thomas put his hand into his side? and did not Christ say, "Handle me, and see. A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." And if we are to rise as Christ did—and we are taught so—then we shall rise in our bodies—not spirits, not fine aerial things, made of I know not what—some very refined and elastic substance; but "as the Lord our Saviour rose, so all his followers must." We shall rise in our flesh, "though all flesh is not the same flesh;" we shall rise in our bodies, though all bodies are not the same bodies; and we shall rise in glory, though all glories are not the same glories. "There is one flesh of man and another of beasts;" and there is one flesh of this body, and another flesh of the heavenly body. There is one body for the soul here, and another body for the spirit up there; and yet it shall be the same body that will rise again from the grave—the same I say in identity, though not in glory or in adaptation.

I come now to some practical thoughts from this doctrine before I go to the other. My brethren, what thoughts of comfort there are in this doctrine, that the dead shall rise again. Some of us have this week been standing by the grave; and one of our brethren, who long served his Master in our midst, was placed in the tomb. He was a man valiant for truth, indefatigable in labour, self-denying in duty, and always prepared to follow his Lord (Mr. Turner, of Lamb and Flag School), and to the utmost of his ability, serviceable to the church. Now, there were tears shed there: do you know what they were about? There was not a solitary

tear shed about his soul. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul was not required to give us comfort, for we knew it well, we were perfectly assured that he had ascended to heaven. The burial service used in the Church of England most wisely offers us no comfort concerning the soul of the departed believer, since that is in bliss, but it cheers us by reminding us of the promised resurrection for the body; and when I speak concerning the dead, it is not to give comfort as to the soul, but as to the body. And this doctrine of the resurrection has comfort for the mourners in regard to the buried mortality. You do not weep because your father, brother, wife, husband, has ascended to heaven—you would be cruel to weep about that. None of you weep because your dear mother is before the throne; but you weep because her body is in the grave, because those eyes can no more smile on you, because those hands cannot caress you, because those sweet lips cannot speak melodious notes of affection. You weep because the body is cold, and dead, and clay-like; for the soul you do not weep. But I have comfort for you. That very body will rise again; that eye will flash with genius again; that hand will be held out in affection once more. Believe me, I am speaking no fiction. That very hand, that positive hand, those cold, clay-like arms that hung down by the side and fell when you uplifted them, shall hold a harp one day; and those poor fingers, now icy and hard, shall be swept along the living strings of golden harps in heaven. Yea, you shall see that body once more.

"Their inbred sins require  
Their flesh to see the dust,  
But as the Lord their Saviour rose,  
So all his followers must."

Will not that remove your tears. "He is not dead, but sleepeth." He is not lost, he is "seed sown against harvest time to ripen." His body is resting a little while, bathing itself in spices, that it may be fit for the embraces of its Lord.

And here is comfort for you too, you poor sufferers, who suffer in your bodies. Some of you are almost martyrs with aches of one kind and another—lumbagoes, gouts, rheumatisms, and all sorts of sad afflictions that flesh is heir to. Scarcely a day passes but you are tormented with some suffering or other; and if you were silly enough to be always

doctoring yourselves, you might always be having the doctor in your home. Here is comfort for you. That poor old rickety body of yours will live again without its pains, without its agonies; that poor shaky frame will be repaid all it has suffered. Ah! poor negro slave, every scar upon your back shall have a stripe of honor in heaven. Ah! poor martyr, the crackling of thy bones in the fire shall earn thee sonnets in glory; all thy sufferings shall be well repaid by the happiness thou shalt experience there. Don't fear to suffer in your frame, because your frame will one day share in your delights. Every nerve will thrill with delight, every muscle move with bliss; your eyes will flash with the fire of eternity; your heart will beat and pulsate with immortal blessedness; your frame shall be the channel of beatitude; the body which is now often a cup of wormwood will be a vessel of honey; this body which is often a comb out of which gall distilleth, shall be a honeycomb of blessedness to you. Comfort yourselves then, ye sufferers, weary languishers upon the bed: fear not, your bodies shall live.

But I want to draw a word of instruction from the text, concerning the doctrine of recognition. Many have puzzled themselves as to whether they will know their friends in heaven. Well now, if the bodies are to rise from the dead, I see no reason why we should not know them. I think I should know some of my brethren, even by their spirits, for I know their character so well, having talked with them of the things of Jesus, and being well acquainted with the most prominent parts of their character. But I shall see their bodies too. I always thought that a quietus to the question, which the wife of old John Ryland asked. "Do you think," she said, "you will know me in heaven?" "Why," said he, "I know you here; and do you think I shall be a bigger fool in heaven than I am on earth?" The question is beyond dispute. We shall live in heaven with bodies, and that decides the matter. We shall know each other in heaven; you may take that as a positive fact, and not mere fancy.

But now a word of warning, and then I have done with this part of the subject. If your bodies are to dwell in heaven, I beseech you take care of them. I do not mean, take care of what you eat and drink, and wherewithal you shall be clothed; but I mean, take care that you do not let your bodies be polluted by sin. If this throat is to warble for ever with songs of glory,

let not words of lust defile it. If these eyes are to see the king in his beauty, even let this be your prayer, "Turn off my eyes from beholding vanities." If these hands are to hold a palm branch, oh, let them never take a bribe, let them never seek after evil. If these feet are to walk the golden streets, let them not be swift after mischief. If this tongue is for ever to talk of all he said and did, ah! let it not utter light and frothy things. And if this heart is to pulsate for ever with bliss, I beseech you give it not unto strangers; neither let it wander after evil. If this body is to live for ever, what care we ought to take of it; for our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost, and they are members of the Lord Jesus.

Now, will you believe this doctrine or not? If you will not, you are excommunicate from the faith. This is the faith of the Gospel; and if you do not believe it you have not yet received the Gospel. "For if the dead rise not, then your faith is vain, and ye are yet in your sins." The dead in Christ shall rise, and they shall rise first.

II. But now we come to the RESURRECTION OF THE WICKED. Will the wicked rise too? Here is a point of controversy. I shall have some hard things to say now: I may detain you long, but I beg you, nevertheless, hearken to me. Yea, the wicked shall rise.

The first proof is given in the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians, 2Cr 5:10 ;. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Now, since we are all to appear, the wicked must appear, and they will receive the deeds done in the body. Since the body sins, it is only natural that the body should be punished. It would be unjust to punish the soul and not the body, for the body has had as much to do with sin as ever the soul has had. But wherever I go now, I hear it said, "The ministers in old times were wont to say there was fire in hell for our bodies, but it is not so; it is metaphorical fire, fancied fire." Ah! it is not so. Ye shall receive the things done in your body. Though your souls shall be punished, your bodies will be punished as well. Ye who are sensual and devilish, do not care about your souls being punished, because you never think about your souls; but if I tell you of bodily punishment you will think of it far more. Christ may have said that the



soul should be punished; but he far more frequently described the body in misery in order to impress his hearers, for he knew that they were sensual and devilish, and that nothing that did not affect the body would touch them in the least. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the things done in the body according to what we have done, whether it be good or evil."

But this is not the only text to prove the doctrine, I will give you a better one— Mat 5:29 ;. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."—not "thy whole soul," but "thy whole body." Man, this does not say that thy soul shall be in hell—that is affirmed many times—but it positively declares that thy body shall. That same body which is now standing in the aisle, or sitting in the pew, if thou diest without Christ, shall burn for ever in the flames of hell. It is not a fancy of man, but a truth that thy actual flesh and blood, and those very bones shall suffer: "thy whole body shall be cast into hell."

But lest that one proof should not suffice thee, hear another out of the same gospel— Mat 10:28 ;. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Hell will be the place for bodies as well as for souls. As I have remarked, wherever Christ speaks of hell and of the lost state of the wicked, he always speaks of their bodies; you scarcely find him saying anything about their souls. He says, "Where their worm dieth not," which is a figure of physical suffering—the worm torturing for ever the inmost heart, like a cancer within the very soul. He speaks of the "fire that never shall be quenched." Now, do not begin telling me that this is metaphorical fire: who cares for that? If a man were to threaten to give me a metaphorical blow on the head, I should care very little about it; he would be welcome to give me as many as he pleased. And what say the wicked? "We do not care about metaphorical fires." But they are real, sir—yes, as real as yourself. There is a real fire in hell, as truly as you have now a real body—a fire exactly like that which we have on earth in everything except this—that it will not consume, though it will torture you. You have seen the asbestos lying in the fire red hot, but when you

take it out it is unconsumed. So your body will be prepared by God in such a way that it will burn for ever without being consumed; it will lie, not as you consider, in a metaphorical fire, but in actual flame. Did our Saviour mean fictions when he said he would cast body and soul into hell? What should there be a pit for if there were no bodies? Why fire, why chains, if there were to be no bodies? Can fire touch the soul? Can pits shut in spirits? Can chains fetter souls? No; pits and fire and chains are for bodies, and bodies shall be there. Thou wilt sleep in the dust a little while. When thou diest thy soul will be tormented alone—that will be a hell for it—but at the day of judgment thy body will join thy soul, and then thou wilt have twin hells, body and soul shall be together, each brimfull of pain, thy soul sweating in its inmost pore drops of blood, and thy body from head to foot suffused with agony; conscience, judgment, memory, all tortured, but more—thy head tormented with racking pains, thine eyes starting from their sockets with sights of blood and woe; thine ears tormented with

"Sullen moans and hollow groans.  
And shrieks of tortured ghosts."

Thine heart beating high with fever; thy pulse rattling at an enormous rate in agony; thy limbs crackling like the martyrs in the fire, and yet unburnt; thyself, put in a vessel of hot oil, pained, yet coming out undestroyed; all thy veins becoming a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on; every nerve a string on which the devil shall ever play his diabolical tune of Hell's Unutterable Lament; thy soul for ever and ever aching, and thy body palpitating in unison with thy soul. Fictions, sir! Again, I say, they are no fictions, and as God liveth, but solid, stern truth. If God be true, and this Bible be true, what I have said is the truth, and you will find it one day to be so.

But now I must have a little reasoning with the ungodly on one or two points. First, I will reason with such of you as are very proud of your comely bodies, and array yourselves in goodly ornaments, and make yourselves glorious in your apparel. There are some of you who have no time for prayer, but you have time enough for your toilet; you have no time for the prayer-meeting, but you have time enough to be brushing your hair to all eternity; you have no time to bend your knee, but plenty

of time to make yourselves look smart and grand. Ah! fine lady, thou who takest care of thy goodly fashioned face, remember what was said by one of old when he held up the skull:

"Tell her, though she paint herself an inch thick,  
To this complexion she must come at last."

And something more than that: that fair face shall be scarred with the claws of fiends, and that fine body shall be only the medium for torment. Ah! dress thyself proud gentleman for the worm; anoint thyself for the crawling creatures of the grave; and worse, come thou to hell with powdered hair—a gentleman in hell; come thou down to the pit in goodly apparel; my lord, come there, to find yourself no higher than others, except it be higher in torture, and plunged deeper in flames. Ay, it ill becomes us to waste so much time upon the trifling things here, when there is so much to be done, and so little time for doing it, in the saving of men's souls. O God, our God, deliver men from feasting and pampering their bodies when they are only fattening them for the slaughter, and feeding them to be devoured in the flame.

Again, hear me when I say to you who are gratifying your lusts—do you know that those bodies, the lusts of which you gratify here, will be in hell, and that you will have the same lusts in hell that you have here? The debauchee hastes to indulge his body in what he desires—can he do that in hell? Can he find a place there where he shall gratify his lust and find indulgence for his foul desire? The drunkard here can pour down his throat the intoxicating and deadly draught; but where will he find the liquor to drink in hell, when his drunkenness will be as hot upon him as it is here! Ay, where will he find so much as a drop of water to cool his parched tongue? The man who loves gluttony here will be a glutton there; but where will be the food to satisfy him, when he may hold his finger up and see the loaves go away from him, and the fruits refuse his grasp. Oh! to have your passions and yet not to satisfy them! To shut a drunkard up in his cell, and give him nothing to drink! He would dash himself against the wall to get the liquor, but there is none for him. What wilt thou do in hell, O drunkard, with that thirst in thy throat, and having nought but flames to swallow, which increase thy woe? And what wilt thou do, O rake, when still thou wouldst be seducing others, but there are none with

whom thou canst sin? Do I speak plainly? Did not Christ do so? If men will sin, they shall find men who are not ashamed to reprove them. Ah! to have a body in hell, with all its lusts, but not the power to satisfy them! How horrible that hell will be!

But hear me yet again. Oh! poor sinner, if I saw thee going into the inquisitor's den to be tormented, would I not beg of thee to stop ere thou shouldst put thy foot upon the threshold? And now I am talking to you of things that are real. If I were standing on a stage this morning, and were acting these things as fancies, I would make you weep: I would make the godly weep to think that so many should be damned, and I would make the ungodly weep to think that they should be damned. But when I speak of realities, they do not move you half as much as fictions would, and ye sit just as ye did ere the service had commenced. But hear me while I again affirm God's truth. I tell thee sinner, that those eyes that now look on lust shall look on miseries that shall vex and torment thee. Those ears which now thou lendest to hear the song of blasphemy, shall hear moans, and groans, and horrid sounds, such as only the damned know. That very throat down which thou pourest drink shall be filled with fire. Those very lips and arms of thine will be tortured all at once. Why, if thou hast a headache thou wilt run to thy physician; but what wilt thou do when thy head, and heart, and hands, and feet ache all at once? If thou hast but a pain in thy reins, thou wilt search out medicines to heal thee; but what wilt thou do when gout, and rheum, and vertigo, and all else that is vile attack thy body at once? How wilt thou bear thyself when thou shalt be loathsome with every kind of disease, leprous, palsied, black, rotten, thy bones aching, thy marrow quivering, every limb thou hast filled with pain; thy body a temple of demons, and a channel of miseries. And will ye march blindly on? As the ox goeth to the slaughter, and the sheep licketh the butcher's knife, so is it with many of you. Sirs, you are living without Christ, many of you; you are self-righteous and ungodly. One of you is going out this afternoon to take his day's pleasure; another is a fornicator in secret; another can cheat his neighbour; another can now and then curse God; another comes to this chapel, but in secret he is a drunkard; another prates about godliness, and God wots he is a wretched hypocrite. What will ye do in that day when ye stand before your Maker? It is a little thing to have your minister upbraid you know; it is a small thing to be

judged of man's judgment; what will ye do when God shall thunder out not your accusation, but your condemnation, "Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" Ah! sensual ones, I knew I should never move you will I spoke about torments for your souls. Do I move you now? Ah no! Many of you will go away and laugh, and call me, as I remember once being called before, "a hell-fire parson." Well, go; but you will see the hell-fire preacher one day in heaven, perhaps, and you yourselves will be cast out; and looking down thence with reproving glance, it may be, I shall remind you that you heard the word, and listened not to it. Ah! men, it is a light thing to hear it; it will be hard enough to bear it. You listen to me now unmoved; it will be harder work when death gets hold of you and you lie roasting in the fire. Now you despise Christ; you will not despise him then. Now ye can waste your Sabbaths; then ye would give a thousand worlds for a Sabbath if ye could but have it in hell. Now ye can scoff and jeer; there will be no scoffing or jeering then: you will be shrieking, howling, wailing for mercy; but -

"There are no acts of pardon passed  
In the cold grave to which we haste;  
But darkness, death, and long despair,  
Reign in eternal silence there."

O my hearers! the wrath to come! the wrath to come! the wrath to come. Who among you can dwell with devouring fire? Who among you can dwell with everlasting burnings? Can you, sir? can you? Can you abide the flame for ever? "Oh, no," sayest thou, "what can I do to be saved?" Hear thou what Christ hath to say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." "Come, now let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

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**Return, Return, O Shulamite; Return,**

## Return!

Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.  
- Song Of Solomon 6:13

The translation into the Word "Shulamite" is unhappy: it is unmusical, and misses the meaning. The Hebrew word is a feminine of "Solomon." "Solomon" may stand for the bridegroom's name, and then the well-beloved bride takes her husband's name in a feminine form of it, which is Shulamith, Salome, or perhaps better "Solyma." The King has named his name upon her, and as Caius has his Caiia, so Solomon has his Solyma. He is the Prince of Peace, and she is the Daughter of Peace. Aforetime she was called "the fairest among women," but now she is espoused unto her Lord, and has a fullness of peace. Therefore is she called the Peace-laden, or the Peace-crowned. You know how truly it is so with the justified in Christ Jesus. Because the sound is sweeter, and the sense is clearer, permit me to read the text thus—"Return, return, O Solyma: return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in Solyma? As it were the company of two armies." May the Holy Spirit, like a dove, rest upon us while we linger amid the verses of this Song of Loves.

A soul redeemed by blood, and brought by the Holy Spirit into loving, living, lasting union with the Well-Beloved, cannot remain unnoticed. Solomon is known all over the world; Solomon is sought after for his wisdom, and therefore Solyma will shine with something of his brightness, and she will be enquired after too. In the Church of God no man liveth unto himself, or travelleth through the world unwatched. If you are interested in Christ, heaven and earth and hell will be interested in you. Some man are but as a chip in the porridge; they have no savor in themselves, and none comes from them; but the believing man, the Christ-communing man, is full of influences both repellent and attractive, and he may be sure that where he comes he will be known and read. As the house of Israel is among the nations like a burning torch in dry stubble, so also are the spiritual Israel. Voices will cry after the bride of

Christ, "Return! Return! Return! Return!" A pilgrim bound for the Celestial City cannot go through the world, even through the worst part of it, such as Vanity Fair, without being noticed, and questioned, and sought after, and if possible ensnared. Do not think, thou who hast been made a living man by the quickening of the Holy Ghost, that thou canst glide through this world as the spiritually dead can do, for they may be quietly borne along to the place of corruption: the life within thee is too strange, too operative to be overlooked. Thou art a wonder unto many, and thou mayest well be so, for God hath wrought great marvels in thee and for thee. Beloved, ye are the Lord's witnesses, and witnesses must not skulk away in the background or remain dumb. When they bear their honest witness it is in open court, where they will be heard and regarded by all who are concerned in the suit, whether pro or con. Oh, saints of God, you are never unobserved, you are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, and none of these witnesses are indifferent to you: they all watch you with steady gaze to see how you run your race. The good are intent that you should so run as to obtain; and there are evil ones who long for your defeat. Solyma is addressed by urgent voices, who plead with her to return to them. For good or evil, multitudes of tongues cry to her, "Return, return, O Solyma, return, return."

Will you kindly notice from the connection of my text what state Solyma was in when these calls came to her? She was in her glory and beauty. In admiration the question is asked, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" A church or an individual Christian in a low state of grace may escape observation. Who cares about a dead church? Who fights with a lukewarm people? But if Jesus Christ be in the church, or in the heart, he will soon be seen. The evangelist tells us, "he could not be hid." You may slip down the street in the night without a candle, and like a thief you may pass by unobserved, but if the Lord has lighted your candle, and you bear it with you, the watchmen will notice you, the dogs will bark at you, and others will spy you out. As fire reveals itself, so also will grace. A bundle of lavender proclaims its own whereabouts by its fragrance, and so does the life of God in the soul. You may be sure that if the Lord of Hosts is with you, and in you, you will assuredly arouse the animosity of some, and the admiration of others. I pray that you and I may be in a

bright, clear, forcible condition, as the bride was in this part of the Canticle, then shall we be sought after, and enquired about.

It appears that the church in her beauty had gone down to attend to her work. "I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded." She did not sit down in the house to admire herself, nor go into the street to show herself: she went down into her Lord's garden to attend to her proper work, and then it was that they cried, "Return, return." Neither the world nor Christ himself will call much after us if we go forth to make displays of our own excellences. "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts," is a wretched piece of self-consciousness, which disgusts more than it attracts. A diligent life is an attractive life. Do thou, like an ant, work in thy season, carrying thy due burden upon the ant-hill, and if thou doest this for love of Jesus thou doest nobly. Plod on without courting approbation, and rest content to do thine utmost for the common weal. In fellowship with thy Lord humbly do thy day's work in thy day. Seek not great things for thyself. Ask not to rule in the court, but be willing to work in the field, seek not to recline on the couch, but take thy pruning-knife, and go forth among the vines, to fulfill thine office, and in that self-forgetting service thy beauty shall be manifested, and voices shall salute thee, crying, "Return, return."

It appears, too, that while she was thus engaged, she was the subject of a great stir and emotion of heart. Perhaps she had felt dull and dreary till she entered on her work, but while she was busy with her pomegranates and her nuts, she cries, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." She felt that she could hasten like the chariots of a willing people, who rush to the fight from love of their prince. She felt as if she could run after her Beloved: she could leap, she could fly. Like a chariot that is drawn by Pharaoh's swiftest coursers, her spirit left all behind. Thus vigorous and active, she was watched by many eyes, and soon she heard voices coming from the four quarters of the universe, crying, "Return, return, O Shulamith; return, return." I would, dear friends, that all Christians were what they should be. I am told, but I would not judge, that large numbers of professing people are only half alive, and are altogether asleep. If it be so, I wonder not that they are so



inconsiderable in their influence. If they are neither diligent in their Master's business, nor fervent in spirit towards him, they are justly despised by those about them. If it be so with you, my brethren, you are losing the joy of Christian life when you might be filled with delight; you are poverty-stricken, where you might be rich; you are as beggars in the city where you are entitled to take up an honorable burgess-ship. May the Lord revive you! May he forgive your coldness, and set your souls on fire with love to Jesus! If you have life, may you now have it more abundantly! Doth not your Master desire that the feeblest of you may be as David, and David as the angel of the Lord?

I speak to you who are the beloved of the Lord, to you who labor in holy service, to you who are quickened with a high degree of spiritual life, and feel your souls within you stirred with sacred enthusiasm. You are worth addressing: may the Holy Spirit make my address worthy of your attention! Let us use our text in two ways; may each one be profitable!

First, she hears the lower voices that cry, "Return, return, O Solyma return, return," and she answers them with most conclusive negatives. Read the text another way, and in the second place, she hears voices from above, which cry, "Return, return, O Solyma: return, return," and she answers them by her actions as well as by her words.

I. Let us listen for a minute or two, but only with our ears, not with our hearts, to THE LOWER VOICES. Whence come these voices? There are voices from the vasty deep of sin and hell, voices from the tombs which we have quitted, voices from the Egypt from which we have fled. They are crying evermore, like unquiet ghosts, "Return, return." Especially do they call to young souls, who are newly wedded to Jesus, in the hope that they have not as yet forgotten their own kindred and their father's house. When we have gone a long way in the divine life, the world feels dubious of our return, and almost gives us up, preferring rather to accuse than to invite. After many years of faithful service, and of resolute nonconformity to the world, many temptations which assaulted our youth are unknown to our maturity. The devil is not altogether a fool, although he is great in that direction; and therefore he does not continue for ever to use nets which have failed to entangle the birds. If he finds that cajolery will not

ensnare us, he leaves his old tactics and tries other methods. When "Return, return" will not woo us, he puts on his lion form, and roars till the mountains shake. Upon young believers he very commonly uses very powerful inducements to go back. In the hope that he is dealing with Mr. Pliable, he exhibits the hardness of godliness and the pleasantness of sin, and draws the moral that they had better retrace their steps. To them he calls as sweetly as his cruel voice can tone itself, "Return, return, O Shulamith: return, return."

By old companions he does this. They say, "You have left us all, we do not know why. You have turned a fanatic; you have joined with gloomy Christian people, and you are not half the good fellow you used to be. Are you not getting a little tired of those dreary ways? Are not the rules of Christ too precise and Puritanic? Are not the ways of God too self-denying? Is not godliness too holy and too heavenly for poor fallible beings like ourselves? If so, the door is open: we will welcome you back. It is true you rent yourself away and said that you must needs go on pilgrimage to the Celestial City, but we will not throw this in your teeth if you will give up such nonsense. Come, be a good fellow with us once more. We have not drunk up all the wine, nor broken all the viols. We are care-for-nothings still, and we shall be glad to make you as light-hearted as ourselves. You were a jolly fellow before you took those blues, and turned so squeamish: Come, shake it off, and be yourself again." How winningly they put it! How cleverly they mimic the tones of true friendship! One would think they sought our good, and were anxious to be our guardian angels.

Sometimes the desires of nature come to their help, and the tender passion is enlisted on the side of evil. Bright eyes and gentle lips speak to the natural heart, and plead with it to return. The tender love of women has thus played the tempter, and so has the strong affection of men. Courtesy and amiability cry, "Why do you fight so shy of us? You know what happy times we used to have together. Come, you have tried these Christian people and their faith; you must have found it very moping and melancholy: return and be merry once more. See how much more free we are than they, do not live by rule and order; return to the liberty of sin." Thus do her former comrades cry, "Return, return, O Solyma."

The old joys sometimes, in moments of weakness which will come upon us, revive upon the memory, and attempt to mislead us. I have known the young Christian remember what he once thought were joys, and though he has clean left them, and hates them, yet in the distance which lends enchantment he does not notice so much of their shallowness, baseness, and brevity, and he thinks to himself, "In those days I laughed away the hours right merrily; life was light as a feather; in its froth and foam I saw rainbows of delight. Shall I try these things again? Was I not too hasty in renouncing them?" All the while the voices cry enchantingly, like the songs of the Sirens, "Return, return, O Solyma; return, return." They bring out their most melodious music, and omit all discordant passages from the sonnet of life. They would have us hark back to what was once our joy. Oh, brothers, 'tis a wretched temptation, and yet some fall before it.

Do you not know how the world will even call us back to our old cares? We used to fret and worry until by God's grace we were led to try walking by faith, and then the Lord helped us to rest in his love, and wait patiently for him, and now perhaps for years we have had no burdens, for we have cast them on the Lord: we have gone in the morning, and told him the fears of the day, and at night we have had little else to do but to bless him for the mercy which has averted all those fears. We have lived in sweet content, rich in joyful expectation, and not poor even in present felicity; and now perhaps the world says, "You have spent too much of your money on religion; why did you not save it? You wasted a mint of your time upon furthering a kingdom which is imaginary. Oh, if you had given up those energies to the world, and stuck to your business, how much richer you might have been! Come now, quit those dreams, shall those prayer-meetings, leave that tiresome office in the Sunday-school, give up philanthropic speculations, and follow after your personal interests, like a sensible man, you may get on then, if you mind the main chance you may rise in the social scale." There are times when steady, sober people, for whom the temptations of gaiety and vice have no charm at all, stand spell-bound by these more solid but equally degrading offers. Madame Bubble, as you know, offereth to the pilgrim her person, and there are many who turn with loathing from so vile a proffer; but then she also

offereth her purse, and there are men like Mr. Standfast, who are as poor as an owlet, to whom that offer comes with dangerous force. Her voice has a shrill metallic ring, as she cries, "Return, return, O Solyma; return, return. Return from generosity to selfishness, from holy zeal to worldliness and prudence. Seek that which all the nations of the world seek after; that which thou canst see with thine eyes, and enjoy with thy mouth." Many are these calls: I need not go into details, you will hear them soon enough. The Sirens are a numerous and ensnaring sisterhood.

When do these voices come? Their sound is heard full often. "Return, return, return, return,"—four times over the text hath it. They come so often that the word in the epistle to the Hebrews is more than justified, "And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned." These opportunities come in our way everywhere, and at all times. If you wish to leave off being a Christian, if you wish to follow the world in its pleasures or in its labors, the doors are always open. It is a wonderfully forgiving world if you will but quit your protest against it. If we run away from our old master, and wish to return to his service, his yoke is always ready for our neck, he will never deny us employment, even though it be to feed swine. Only too glad is the devil to pardon runaways. He is not ashamed to return with seven others to the house which he aforetime quitted. Often, often the child of God in his early days hears the entreaties of destroyers, as with all subtlety they plead, "Return, return, O Bride of Solomon; return, return."

At times these voices come from quarters to which our hearts lie open. Many a man hath been wooed from the ways of holiness by her that lay in his bosom. Samson had his Delilah. Oftener still, the professing Christian woman has been solicited to forsake her Lord by him who should have helped her in her noblest aspirations. Children have been misled by parents, friends by friends, for Satan hath many servitors, and many who do his bidding almost unwittingly. It is a fight to reach to heaven, and few there be to help us in it, but the path to hell is downward, and multitudes thrust out their hands to urge us to the infernal deeps. These cries are borne to us by every gale, in tones both loud and gentle, "Return, return."

And, dear brethren, we shall find that they solicit us in our best moments. I cannot fully account for the fact, but so it is, that I am most liable to speak unadvisedly with my lips when I have just enjoyed the raptures of high fellowship with God. Yonder shines the Mountain of Transfiguration in its unrivalled splendor, but lo, at the very foot of it the devil rages in the lunatic child! Our highest graces are not to be basted, for, as the most venomous serpents lurk among the brightest flowers, so are temptations most abundant hard by our most spiritual and heavenly joys. Trust not thyself, O child of God, when thou hast seen the invisible, when thou hast stood within the circle of fire, and spoken with God as only his favourites may! Think not thyself secure when thou comest down into thy worldly business, though thou hast bathed thy forehead in the serene light of communion. As pirates distinctly aim to attack the most heavily-laden galleons, so will Satan assail thee when thy vessel has just left the Gold Coast of meditation and prayer. Therefore, watch thou, and pray evermore. That detestable voice, which dared to ask the Master himself to fall down and worship Satan, will come to thee when thou art most bright and shining with the glory of hallowed fellowship, and it will whisper to thee, "Return, return. Come down from the mount, and break the commandments to shivers at its foot." The fiend will call thee Solyma, quoting thy heavenly name—that name of peace and love—and yet he will dare to say, "Return, return." He will flatter us for our virtues, and yet tempt us to the worst of vices. Get thee behind me, Satan. Avaunt, foul fiend! Even when repulsed he will return to the charge, crouch at our feet, and whine out still, "Return, return." The treasures of Egypt, and the pleasures of sin, are his bait and bribe. We cannot and will not return at his bidding, yet his frequent solicitation puts us to a stand, and makes us cry for help.

Notice that our text goes on to say why they wish us to return. "Return, return, that we may look upon thee." And is that all? Am I to be a traitor to my Lord, and quit his holy ways, and forfeit heaven, to be made a show of by thee, O Satan? or by thee, O world? Is this a full reward for treachery—"that we may look upon thee?" Why, their looks are daggers. As the eyes of basilisks are the eyes of the ungodly world; as malignant stars that blast the soul. Whenever you long for ungodly men to see your piety, your piety will wither beneath their glance. Remember how that

expression of looking upon Zion is sometimes used in Scripture; in Micah 4:11 we have it—"Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion." They wished to spy out her sorrows and weaknesses, that they might jest at her, and grieve her: these enemies will do the same with you if you give them the opportunity. Trust a wolf at your throat sooner than worldly men in religious matters. They cannot mean you good, nor do you good should they mean it. They will draw you out and then expose you, they will entice you into sin and then report your faults. When the world loves the holy man it is the love of the vulture for the sick lamb. Fear you the worldling, even when he bears you gifts.

Now hear Solyma's wise answer to her tempters. She says, "What will ye see in Solyma?" Dost thou ask me, O world, to come back and show myself to be thy friend? Dost thou promise me approbation? Dost thou vow to look upon me, and admire me, and take me for an example? What is there in me that thou canst approve of? What wilt thou see in Solyma? What can the world see in a believer? The world knoweth us not, because it knew Christ not. A blind man wants to see me: I need not go far to oblige him, for he will get but little out of it if I yield to his request. What a vain reason,—"That we may look upon thee"! They are so blind they cannot even see themselves, nor know that they are blind. What have you and I to do with them? No, let us walk in the light, and have fellowship with God, and then our life shall be hid with Christ in God, only to be manifested when our Lord is manifested; and we shall be well content to have it so. Listen, O blind world, while we tell you what you would see if we did come to you. "What will ye see in Solyma?" You would see—we grieve to say it—a conflict within us: "As it were the company of two armies." You would see two things in us; and yet neither would give you satisfaction. There is sin in us, but inasmuch as it grieves us to have it there we will not show it you. We do not wish to make mirth for the daughter of Babylon, and when her children ask us to make music for them by singing one of the songs of Zion, we answer, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" If we must tell you what you would see in us, we will confess our faultiness, but warn you that out of this you would get but little joy. You would see two armies, it is true, but neither of them would yield to you. You would see in us a nature like your own; but

it is mortified, kept under, and laid under condemnation. It would give you no great pleasure to see it, for we reckon it to be dead. The dead are poor company. There is in us, it is true, a capacity for all your worldly joys; but the world is crucified to us, and we are crucified unto the world. There is in us a capacity for all your merriment, but if we were forced to be with you we should be dreadful killjoys to you; you would wonder that we did not laugh when you laugh at sin, and that we should not be as ready as you are to run into excess of riot. We should soon weary you, for the Lord has said, "I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people." You would say by and by, "Let these slow souls begone: they hinder our mirth." If we came among you as we are, it would happen with us ere long, as it did with Israel, for "Egypt was glad when they departed." Our nature that is like your nature is put under restraint, and dies daily, and its expiring groans would be sorry music in your ears.

Then, do you know we have another army in us? That is, there is a new life in us, that life is the indwelling Spirit of God, as it is written, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them." If we did return at your request, if we came in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ, with the Holy Spirit indwelling our bodies, and making them his temples, you would not know what to make of us, and consequently you would scoff at us, as Ishmael did at Isaac, or envy us as his brethren envied Joseph. You would be sure to ridicule us, for you would not understand us, and therefore you would count us hypocrites and sanctimonious fools. As well might oxen commune with men as the wicked with the godly. We have a life beyond you and above you, into which you cannot enter. We are sorry for you that you will not receive the heavenly life which is in Christ Jesus, but as you have it not, we cannot make you our confidants or associates. You would grieve us, and we should provoke you; and therefore we are best apart. You say, "Return, return, O Solyma; return, return, that we may look upon thee," and our only answer must be, "What would ye see in Solyma?" Nothing but that which would rebuke and anger you: you would see a company of two armies, both fighting against you.

Come, young brothers and sisters, you that have been tempted to go back, you cannot even tolerate the thought. You have burned your boats behind you, and must conquer or die. Like one of old, you say, "I have opened my

mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." To go back were to give the lie to the word of God, to make God himself false, to tell the worldling that there are, after all, no pleasures in Christ like the pleasures of the world; it would be to spit in your Savior's face, to play the Judas, to sell Christ for pieces of money, or for the filthy lusts of this present evil world. Go back! It were to renounce heaven and all its glories, it were to choose a terrible death-bed, with a guilty conscience ringing the knell of your soul; it were to choose eternal banishment from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power. You cannot return, you cannot even look back. If thou art a true Shulamith, thou wilt not even deliberate for a moment about it, but flinging thyself into the Beloved's arms, thou wilt cry, "Lord, to whom should I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." God help you so to do, for Jesus' sake. That is the first part of our subject.

II. Now we turn to listen, not with our ears only, but with our hearts too, to the call of THE HIGHER VOICES which cry, "Return, return." Brethren, to go to heaven, to go to Christ, to go towards holiness, is a return to God's people: for God's people are originally his children. Though they are prodigals, and have gone into a far country, they always were his children; even when they spent their substance in riotous living they were still his sons, and each of them could speak of "My Father's house." To come to Christ, and holiness, and hearer, is to return. Besides, all God's people have a new life put into them. Whence came that new life but from heaven and God? Therefore to go towards God is for the quickened ones to return. All God's, people are bound for heaven; it is in their charter-party that they should sail for heaven, and therefore to heaven they must go. When the Israelites came out of Egypt to go to Canaan they were not going to a strange land, they were returning to what had always been their inheritance according to the covenant; they were going out of the house of bondage, and they were returning to the land that flowed with milk and honey, where their fathers had sojourned before them. Now, today, as a child of God, I can hear voices out of the yet beyond, ringing out of the glory, and crying to me, "Return, return." My Father is in heaven, my Savior is on the throne; many brethren have gone before; all my heart is with my treasure, therefore I hear the shining ones crying to me every day, "Return, return, O Solyma; return return!" Every harp in the heavenly choir is ringing out an invitation to all the



Lord's beloved, every palm-bearing hand is beckoning to us; every glorified lip is calling us to come up higher.

To return, I think, means this,—come nearer to Christ, nearer to God, nearer to holiness. You are saved; seek to be like your Savior. You did enjoy splendid days at first, in the love of your espousals; return to them; walk always in the light as God is in the light. You were once in the banqueting-house, and the banner over you was love: return to that house of fellowship. Every day seek to lose yourself more in Christ, to live more completely in him, by him, for him, with him. Return, return, to greater heights of holiness, to deeper self-denial, to braver service, to intenser love, to more burning zeal, to more of the Godlike and the Christlike. Return, return. The holiest and the best call us that way. Every saint in heaven cries, "Return"; every child of God on earth who is full of the inner life entreats us to return, and chiefly, that dear voice, which once for us cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is always calling to us, "Return, return." Oh, how sweetly doth he use the name himself did give us, our marriage name! Hear him beseech us, "O Solyma, my best beloved, return, return, and come to me!" These are the higher voices.

Notice that in the text that word "return" is put four times over. Is it not because it is of the highest importance that every child of God should keep returning, and coming nearer to the Father's house? Is it not because it is our highest joy, our strongest security, our best enrichment, to be always coming to Christ as unto a living stone, and getting into closer fellowship with him? As he calls four times, is it not a hint that we are slow to come? We ought to come to Jesus not only at his first call, but even at the glances of his eyes, when he looks as though he longed for our love: it ought to be our rapture to think only of him, and live wholly to him; but as we fail to answer to first pleas, he cries four times, "Return, return, O Solyma; return, return. Come to thine own Husband, thine own loving Lord." He ceases not to entreat until we do return. Do not the reduplications of this call hint at his strong desire after us, his condescending love for us? It does seem so wonderful to me that Christ should want our fellowship, but he does: he cannot be happy without us. Still he sitteth down upon the well when he is thirsty, and looking across

to Samaria's fallen daughter he says to her, "Give me to drink." His people are his fullness; he cannot be filled if they are away: I dared not have said this if the Holy Ghost had not declared it, but it is true. Without his people Jesus would be a Head without a body, and that is a ghastly object; a King without subjects, and that would have been a wretched parody of royalty, a Shepherd without sheep, and that would have been a dolorous office having many pains but no reward. Jesus must have us, or he is a Bridegroom without a bride, bereaven and barren. Oh, how he loves us! How he longs for communion with us! Shall he stand and cry, "Return, return," and will we not come to him at once? Hear him again in another way. He knocks at our door and he cries, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Will we not admit him? If he seeks our company, and therefore calls us to return, our spirit bursts her fetters, she is ashamed of the bonds that hold her on the right and on the left. She cries "Let me go; I must be with my Lord; his voice compels me. My soul would leap out of the body rather than not come at him who cries, 'Return, return, return, return.'"

I have shown you why the call is so oft repeated. Do you not think it is a very instructive call? Permit me to put it thus: "Return," that is, to your first simple faith. If you have risen to greatness of conceit and pride of knowledge, return to your humble thoughts. Shrink to nothing again in the presence of your God. Come to the cross as you came at first, saying,

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"I the chief of sinners am,  
But Jesus died for me."

Return to your first loving intercourse with Christ, for then the days were only bright with his presence, and the night watches were not weary while you could commune with him. Return to the happy love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after him into the wilderness, for those were halcyon days. Return, return, to your first ardor in service. Nothing was too hot, or too heavy for you then; you were impetuous to be engaged in seeking his redeemed. You have grown lazy now, and you think service for God too severe a strain upon you. Return to your first diligence in

joyous service. Return also to your eagerness for holy growth. Then you desired to have the best that God could give you: in those days you resolved to be a thorough Christian; not barely to live, but to live unto God in the highest degree. Return unto that, and aspire after more. If you have left the best form of consecration, return to it. Oh, sea, rise once more to high-water mark, if thou hast turned to ebb! Oh, soul, come back to the highest thou hast ever attained or longed for! As the eagle cries, "higher"; as the river crieth, "fuller"; as the day crieth, "brighter"; so let it be with thee. Thou art married to him whose blood has bought thee, and he cannot, will not be in heaven without thee; therefore, hasten to obey while he saith to thee, "Return, return!"

I beg you to observe what the spouse has to say to this when she is thus called upon to return to the Lord. The Lord saith to her, "Return, return, that we may look upon thee." Is not that a reason for coming back? The Lord says, "that I may look upon thee." He desires your society, and seems gently to hint that you have kept aloof from him. He seems to say,—"You have not been much with me alone lately, you have neglected the reading of the word, and the hearing of it; I have scarcely seen thy face; therefore return, that I may look upon thee." Cover your face and say, "Lord, why shouldst thou look on me? I am full of sin", but then draw near to him, that his look of love may bring thee to repentance, and cause thy sin to pass away. Remember he hath power in his eyes to look thee into purity and beauty. Come and say, "look upon me, Lord; search me, try me, and know my ways." Return, that with infinite pity thy Beloved may see what aileth thee, and then with his dear pierced hand may perform a divine surgery upon thee, and make thee well again.

"Return, that we may look upon thee." I think I may use the phrase to express also that intense satisfaction which Jesus has in every believer. With what pleasure the mother looks upon her child: she remembereth no more the travail for joy that a man is born into the world, but with infinitely greater satisfaction doth Christ see of the travail of his soul in every believer. You ought to show yourselves to Jesus, you have cost him so much: he has loved you even to the death, and loves you still, you ought to abide with him. Return to him that he may look upon you.

And I think, too, when we live near to him, and get into fellowship with him, Jesus feels a sweet complacency towards us. O dear parents, you know the pleasure you have in your loving children; if they have been away from you for years, what a satisfaction it is again to see them within your doors; there is no sight like it! Your Lord loves you so much that it gives him profound pleasure, it swells his heaven to the brim to see you living in his love. What must be his grief when you go fussing about the world, and have no time to talk with him. When you go out sporting and mixing with his enemies, and say that you have no leisure to commune with him! You give delight to him who is Immanuel, God with us, when you frequently approach him, or constantly abide with him. You make him glad with your secret devotion, your heart's affection, your holy boldness, your all-absorbing zeal. Oh, do come to your Lord that he may look upon you!

Did I hear you bashfully say, "What will ye see in Solyma? If Jesus looks on such a dead dog as I am, what will he see in me? I am so full of evil." He will see in you that which delights him. He will see his own work there; yea, he will see himself there. Did you never see the sun reflected in a little splinter of glass? The mirror was scarcely an inch in diameter, yet you saw the heavens in it. Have you never looked upon a bubble blown by a school-boy's pipe, and seen a thousand rainbows in it? When the Lord looks on his people, he sees the reflection of himself: he can see himself in our eyes, and therefore those eyes charm him so that he cries, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." The infinite love there is between Christ and us makes him see no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel, but he looks until he exclaims, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." Be not ashamed to return to your Lord, for he lovingly urges thee to do so. Let your heart and your flesh, like two armies, welcome him, let all your inward conflict aim at coming nearer to him. Rest not till, like Jacob's two bands, you are altogether under the blessing of the covenant angel.

I will turn my text about a little, and give you another rendering, which will suit the heart which is welcoming its Lord. Our Mahanaim, our meeting of hosts, shall not be for war, now that the Lord invites us, like

Jacob to return to the land of milk and honey; but the companies shall be as musical as they are martial. There are within our experiences companies of singing soldiers, choirs of camps. The text exhibits the warring soul, triumphant in her Lord, and meeting him with timbrel and harp.

"Spouse of Christ, in arms contending  
Though thy battle-course must run;  
Yet with prayers for help ascending,  
Shout thy praise for triumphs won."

Oh, if my Lord will come and meet me, he shall see in me whole choirs of songsters! My heart, like Miriam, shall take a timbrel, and all my powers, like the daughters of Israel, shall follow, dancing and singing with glad accord. On the high-sounding cymbals my heart shall play, singing,— "His own right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory. Glory! Glory! Where he cometh glory dwelleth." When shall I come into his presence, and behold my God, my exceeding joy? Then will I praise him with body and soul, with heart and with voice. His coming with all his perfections, and my coming with all my desires, shall make a Mahanaim, and the two hosts, once met, shall encamp together, guarding the King's pavilion, which glitters in the midst. Then shall the warriors become minstrels, and the soldiers shall be singers, as in the valley of Berachah, where all the people triumphed, and they returned to Jerusalem playing upon harps, and psalteries, and trumpets.

Here I leave you in the joyful presence of the King. We cannot cease speaking at a higher point. The Lord keep us in his presence, for his love's sake. Amen.

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## **A Revival Sermon**

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake

the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. - Amos 9:13

God's promises are not exhausted when they are fulfilled, for when once performed they stand just as good as they did before, and we may await a second accomplishment of them. Man's promises even at the best, are like a cistern which holds but a temporary supply; but God's promises are as a fountain, never emptied, ever overflowing, so that you may draw from hem the whole of that which the apparently contain, and they shall be still as full as ever. Hence it is that you will frequently find a promise containing both a literal and spiritual meaning. In the literal meaning it has already been fulfilled to the letter; in the spiritual meaning it shall also be accomplished, and not a jot or tittle of it shall fail. This is rue of the particular promise which is before us. Originally, as you are aware, the land of Canaan was very fertile; it was a land that flowed with milk and honey. Even where no tillage had been exercised upon it the land was so fruitful, that the bees who sucked the sweetness from the wild flowers produced such masses of honey that the very woods were sometimes flooded with it. It was "A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey." When, however, the children of Israel thrust in the ploughshare and began to use the divers arts of agriculture, the land became exceedingly fat and fertile, yielding so much corn, that they could export through the Phoenicians both corn, and wine, and oil, even to the pillars of Hercules, so that Palestine became, like Egypt, the granary of the nations. It is somewhat surprising to find that now the land is barren, that its valleys are parched, and that the miserable inhabitants gather miserable harvests from the arid soil. Yet the promise still stands true, that one day in the ver letter Palestine shall be as rich and fruitful as ever it was. There be those who understand the matter, who assert that if once the rigour of the Turkish rule could be removed, if men were safe from robbers, if the man who sowed could reap, and keep the corn which his own industry had sown and gathered, the land might yet again laugh in the midst of the nations, and become the joyous mother of children. There is no reason *in the soil* for its barrenness. It is simply the neglect that has been brought on, from the fact, that when a man has been industrious, his savings are taken from him by the hand of rapine, and the very harvest for which he toiled

is often reaped by another, and his own blood split upon the soil.

But, my dear friends, while this promise will doubtless be carried out, and every word of it shall be verified, so that the hill-tops of that country shall again bear the vine, and the land shall flow with wine, yet, I take it, this is more fully a spiritual than a temporal promise; and I think that the beginning of its fulfilment is now to be discerned, and we shall see the Lord's good hand upon us, so that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

First, I shall this morning endeavour to explain my text as *a promise of revival*; secondly, I shall take it as *a lesson of doctrine*; then as *a stimulus for Christian exertion*; and I shall conclude with *a word of warning* to those whose hearts are not given to Christ.

I. First, I take the text as being A GREAT PROMISE OF SPIRITUAL REVIVAL. And here, in looking attentively at the text, we shall observe several very pleasant things.

1. In the first place, we notice a promise of *surprising ingathering*. According to the metaphor here used, the harvest is to be so great that, before the reapers can have fully gathered it in, the ploughman shall begin to plough for the next crop—while the abundance of fruit shall be so surprising that before the treader of grapes can have trodden out all the juice of the vine, the time shall come for sowing seed. One season, by reason of the abundant fertility, shall run into another. Now you all know, beloved, what this means in the church. It prophesies that in the Church of Christ we shall see the most abundant ingathering of souls. Pharaoh's dream has been enacted again in the last century. About a hundred years ago, if I may look back in my dream, I might have seen seven ears of corn upon one stalk, rank and strong; anon, the time of plenty went away, and I have seen, and you have seen, in your own lifetime, the seven ears of corn thin and withered in the east wind. The seven ears of withered corn have eaten up and devoured the seven ears of fat corn, and there has been a sore famine in the land. Lo, I see in Whitfield's time, seven bullocks coming up from the river, fat and well-favoured, and since then we have lived to see seven lean kine come up from the same river; and lo! the

seven lean kine have eaten up the seven fat kine, yet have they been none the better for all that they have eaten. We read of such marvellous revivals a hundred years ago, that the music of their news has not ceased to ring in our ears; but we have seen, alas, a season of lethargy, of soul-poverty among the saints, and of neglect among the ministers of God. The product of the seven years has been utterly consumed, and the Church has been none the better. Now, I take it, however, we are about to see the seven fat years again. God is about to send times of surprising fertility to his Church. When a sermon has been preached in these modern times, if one sinner has been converted by it, we have rejoiced with a suspicious joy; for we have thought it something amazing. But, brethren, where we have seen one converted, we may yet see hundreds; where the Word of God has been powerful to scores, it shall be blessed to thousands; and where hundreds in past years have seen it, nations shall be converted to Christ. There is no reason why we should not see all the good that God hath given us multiplied a hundred-fold; for there is sufficient vigour in the seed of the Lord to produce a far more plentiful crop than any we have yet gathered. God the Holy Ghost is not stinted in his power. When the sower went forth to sow his seed, some of it fell on good soil, and it brought forth fruit, some twenty fold, some thirty fold, but it is written, "*Some a hundred fold.*" Now, we have been sowing this seed, and thanks be to God, I have seen it bring forth twenty and thirty fold; but I do expect to see it bring forth a hundred fold. I do trust that our harvest shall be so heavy, that while we are taking in the harvest, it shall be time to sow again; that prayer meetings shall be succeeded by the enquiry of souls as to what they shall do to be saved, and ere the enquirers' meeting shall be done, it shall be time again to preach, again to pray; and then, ere that is over, there shall be again another influx of souls, the baptismal pool shall be again stirred, and hundreds of converted men shall flock to Christ. Oh! We never can be contented with going on as the churches have been during the last twenty years. I would not be censorious, but solemnly in my own heart I do not believe that the ministers of our churches have been free from the blood of men. I would not say a hard word if I did not feel compelled to do it, but I am constrained to remind our brethren that let God send what revival he may, it will not exonerate them from the awful guilt that rests upon them of having been idle and dilatory during the last twenty years. Let all be saved who live *now*; what about those



that have been damned while we have been sleeping? Let God gather in multitudes of sinners, but who shall answer for the blood of those men who have been swept into eternity while we have been going on in our canonical fashion, content to go along the path of propriety, and walk around the path of dull routine, but never weeping for sinners, never agonizing for souls. All the ministers of Christ are not awake yet; but the most of them are. There has come a glad time of arousing, the trumpet has been set to their ear, and the people have heard the sound also, and times of refreshing are come from the presence of the Lord our God; but they have not come before they were needed, for much did we require them; otherwise surely the Church of Christ would have died away into dead formality, and if her name had been remembered, it would have been as a shame and a hissing upon the face of the earth.

2. The promise then, seems to me to convey the idea of surprising ingatherings; and I think there is also the idea of *amazing rapidity*. Notice how quickly the crops succeed each other. Between the harvest and the ploughing there is a season even in our country; in the east it is a longer period. But here you find that no sooner has the reaper ceased his work, or scarce has he ceased it, ere the ploughman follows at his heels. This is a rapidity that is contrary to the course of nature; still it is quite consistent with grace. Our old Baptist churches in the country treat young converts with what they call summering and wintering. Any young believer who wants to join the church in summer, must wait till the winter, and he is put off from time to time, till it is sometimes five or six years before they admit him; they want to try him, and see whether he is fit to unite with such pious souls as they are. Indeed among us all there is a tendency to imagine that conversion must be a slow work—that as the snail creeps slowly on its way, so must grace move very leisurely in the heart of man. We have come to believe that there is more true divinity in stagnant pools than in lightning flashes. We cannot believe for a moment in a quick method of travelling to the kingdom of heaven. Every man who goes there must go on crutches and limp all the way; but as for the swift beasts, as for the chariots whose axles are hot with speed, we do not quite understand and comprehend that. Now, mark, here is a promise given of a revival, and when that revival shall be fulfilled this will be one of the signs of it—the marvellous growth in grace of those who are converted.

The young convert shall that ver day come forward to make a profession of his faith; perhaps before a week has passed over his head you will hear him publicly defending the cause of Christ, and ere many months have gone you shall see him standing up to tell to others what God has done for his soul. There is no need that the pulse of the Church should for ever be so slow. The Lord can quicken her heart, so that her pulse shall throb as rapidly as the pulse of time itself; her floods shall be as the rushing of the Kishon when it swept the hosts of Sisera in its fury. As the fire from heaven shall the Spirit rush from the skies, and as the sacrifice which instantly blazed to heaven, so shall the Church burn with holy and glorious ardour. She shall no longer drive heavily with her wheels torn away, but as the chariot of Jehu, the son of Nimshi, she shall devour the distance in her haste. That seems to me to be one of the promises of the text—the rapidity of the work of grace, so that the plougher shall overtake the reaper.

3. But a third blessing is very manifest here, and one indeed which is simply given to us. Notice the *activity of labour* which is mentioned in the text. God does not promise that there shall be fruitful crops without labor; but here we find mention made of ploughmen, reapers, treaders of grapes, and sowers of seed; and all these persons are girt with singular energy. The ploughman does not wait, because saith he, the season has not yet come for me to plough, be seeing that God is blessing the land, he has his plough ready, and no sooner is one harvest shouted home than he is ready to plough again. And so with the sower; he has not to prepare his basket and to collect his seed; but while he hears the shouts of the vintage, he is ready to go out to work.

Now, my brethren, one sign of a true revival, and indeed an essential part of it is the increased activity of God's labourers. Why, time was when our ministers, thought that preaching twice on Sunday was the hardest work to which a man could be exposed. Poor souls, they could not think of preaching on a week-day, or if there was once a lecture, they had bronchitis, were obliged to go to Jerusalem and lay by, for they would soon be dead if they were to work too hard. I never believed in the hard work of preaching yet. We find ourselves able to preach ten or twelve times a week, and find that we are the stronger for it,—that in fact, it is

the healthiest and most blessed exercise in the world. But the cry used to be, that our ministers were hardly done by, they were to be pampered and laid by, done up in velvet, and only to be brought out to do a little work occasionally, and then to be pitied when that work was done. I do not hear anything of that talk now-a-days. I meet with my brethren in the ministry who are able to preach day after day, day after day, and are not half so fatigued as the were; and I saw a brother minister this week who has been having meetings in his church every day, and the people have been so earnest that they will keep him ver often from six o'clock in the evening to two in the morning. "Oh!" said one of the members, "our minister will kill himself." "Not he," said I, "that is the kind of work that will kill no man. It is preaching to a sleepy congregation that kills good ministers, but not preaching to earnest people." So when I saw him, his eyes were sparkling, and I said to him, "Brother, you do not look like a man who is being killed," "Killed, my brother," said he, "why I am living twice as much as I did before; I was never so happy, never so hearty, never so well." Said he, "I sometimes lack my rest, and want my sleep, when my people keep me up so late, but it will never hurt me; indeed," he said, "I should like to die of such a disease as that—the disease of being so greatly blessed." There was a specimen before me of the ploughman who overtook the reaper,—of one who sowed seed, who was treading on the heels of the men who were gathering in the vintage. And the like activity we have lived to see in the Church of Christ. Did you ever know so much doing in the Christian world before? There are grey-headed men around me who have known the Church of Christ sixty years, and I think they can bear me witness that they never knew such life, such vigour and activity, as there is at present. Everybody seems to have a mission, and everybody is doing it. There may be a great many sluggards, but they do not come across my path now. I used to e always kicking at them, and always being kicked for doing so. But now there is nothing to kick at—every one is at work—Church of England, Independents, Methodists, and Baptists—there is not a single squadron that is behindhand; they have all their guns ready, and are standing, shoulder to shoulder, ready to make a tremendous charge against the common enemy. This leads me to hope, since I see the activity of God's ploughmen and vine dressers, that there is a great revival coming,—that God will bless us, and that right early.

4. We have not yet, however, exhausted our text. The latter part of it says, "The mountains shall drop sweet wine." It is not a likely place for wine upon the mountains. There may be freshets and cataracts leaping down their sides; but who ever saw fountains of red wine streaming from rocks, or gushing out from the hills. Yet here we are told that, "The mountains shall drop sweet wine;" by which we are to understand that conversions shall take place in unusual quarters. Brethren, this day is this promise literally fulfilled to us. I have this week seen what I never saw before. It has been my lot these last six years to preach to crowded congregations, and to see many, many souls brought to Christ; it has been no unusual thing for us to see the greatest and noblest of the land listening to the word of God; but this week I have seen, I repeat, what mine eyes have never before beheld, used as I am to extraordinary things. I have seen the people of Dublin, without exception, from the highest to the lowest, crowd in to hear the gospel. I have known that my congregation has been constituted in a considerable measure of Roman Catholics, and I have seen them listening to the Word with as much attention as though they had been Protestants. I have seen men who never heard the gospel before, military men, whose tastes and habits were not likely to be those of the Puritanic minister, who have nevertheless sat to listen; nay, they have come again—have made it a point to find the place where they could hear the best—have submitted to be crowded, that they might press in to hear the Word, and I have never before seen such intense eagerness of the people to listen to the Gospel. I have heard, too, cheering news of work going on in the most unlikely quarters—men who could not speak without larding their conversation richly with oaths—have nevertheless come to hear the Word; they have listened, and have been convinced, and if the impression do not die away, there has been something done for them which they will not forget even in eternity. But the most pleasing thing I have seen is this, and I must tell it to you. Hervey once said, "Each floating ship, a floating hell." Of all classes of men, the sailor has been supposed to be the man least likely to be reached by the gospel. In crossing over from Holyhead to Dublin and back—two excessively rough passages—I spent the most pleasant hours that I ever spent. The first vessel that I entered, I found my hands ver heartily shaken by the sailors. I thought, "What can these sailors know of me?" and they were calling me "*brother*." Of course, I felt that I was their brother too; but I did not know

how they came to talk to me in that way. It was not generally the way for sailors to call ministers, brother. There was the most officious attention given, and when I made the enquiry "What makes you so kind?" "Why," said one, "because I love your Master, the Lord Jesus." I enquired, and found that out of the whole crew there were but three unconverted men; that though the most of them had been before without God, and without Christ, yet by a sudden visitation of the Spirit of God they had all been converted. I talked to many of these men, and more spiritual, heavenly-minded men I never yet saw. They have a prayer-meeting every morning before the boat starts, and another prayer-meeting after she comes to port; and on Sundays, when they lay-to off Kingstown or Holyhead, a minister comes on board and preaches the gospel; the cabins are crowded; service is held on deck when it can be; and said an eyewitness to me, "The minister preaches very earnestly, but I should like you to hear the men pray; I never heard such praying before," said he, "they pray with such power, as only a sailor can pray." My heart was lifted up with joy, to think of a ship being made a floating Church—a very Bethel for God. When I came back by another ship I did not expect to see the like; but it was precisely the same. The same work had been going on. I walked among hem and talked to them. They all knew me. One man took out of his pocket an old leather covered book in Welch—"Do you know the likeness of that man in front?" said he, "Yes," I said, "I think I do: do you read these sermons?" "Yes, sir," replied he, "we have had your sermons on board this ship, and I read hem aloud as often as I can. If we have a fine passage coming over, I get a few around me, and read hem a sermon." Another man old me a story of a gentleman who stood laughing when a hymn was being sung; and one of the men proposed that they should pray for him. They did, and that man was suddenly smitten down, and began on the quay to cry for mercy, and plead with God for pardon. "Ah! Sir," said the sailors, "we have the best proof that there is a God here, for we have seen this crew marvellously brought to a knowledge of the ruth; and here we are, joyful and happy men, serving the Lord."

Now, what shall we say of this, but that the mountains drop sweet wine? The men who were loudest with their oaths, are now loudest with their songs; those who were the most darling children of Satan, have become the most earnest advocates of the truth: for mark you, once get sailors

converted, and there is no end to the good they can do. Of all men who can preach well, sailors are the best. The sailor has seen the wonders of God in the deep; the hardy British Tar has got a heart that is not made of such cold stuff as many of the hearts of landsmen; and when that heart is once touched, it gives great big beats; it sends great pulses of energy right through his whole frame; and with his zeal and energy what may he not do, God helping him and blessing him?

5. This seems to be in the text—that a time of revival shall be followed by very extraordinary conversion. But, albeit that in the time of revival, grace is put in extraordinary places, and singular individuals are converted, yet these are not a bit behind the usual converts; for if you notice the text does not say, "the mountains shall drop wine" merely, but they "shall drop *sweet* wine." It does not say that the hill shall send forth little streams; but *all the hills shall melt*. When sinners, profligate and debauched persons, are converted to God, we say, "Well, it is a wonderful thing, but I do not suppose they will be very first class Christians." The most wonderful thing is, that these are the best Christians alive; that the wine which God brings from the hills is sweet wine; that when the hills do melt they *all* melt. The most extraordinary ministers of any time, have been most extraordinary sinners before conversion. We might never have had a John Bunyan, if it had not have been for the profanity of Elstow Green; we might never have heard of a John Newton, if it had not have been for his wickedness on shipboard. I mean he would not have known the depths of Satan, nor the trying experience, nor even the power of divine grace, if he had not been suffered wildly to stray, and then wondrously to be brought back. These great sinners are not a whit behind the Church. Always in revival you will find his to be the case, that the converts are not inferior to the best of the converts of ordinary seasons—that the Romanist, and the men who have never heard the gospel, when they are converted, are as true in their faith, as hearty in their love, as accurate in their knowledge, and as zealous in their efforts, as the best of persons who have ever been brought to Christ. "The mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt."

II. I must now go on to the other point very briefly—WHAT IS THE DOCTRINAL LESSON WHICH IS TAUGHT IN OUR TEXT: AND WHAT

IS TAUGHT TO US BY A REVIVAL? I think it is just this,—that God is absolute monarch of the hearts of men. God does not say here *if men are willing*; but he gives an absolute promise of a blessing. As much as to say, "I have the key of men's hearts; I can induce the ploughman to overtake the reaper; I am master of the soil—however hard and rocky it may be I can break it, and I can make it fruitful." When God promises to bless his Church and to save sinners, he does not add, "if the sinners be willing to be saved?" No, great God! Thou ledest free will in sweet captivity, and thy free grace is all triumphant. Man *has* a free will, and God does not violate it; but the free will is sweetly bound with fetters of the divine love till it becomes more free than it ever was before. The Lord, when he means to save sinners, does not stop to ask hem whether they mean to be saved, but like a rushing mighty wind the divine influence sweeps away every obstacle; the unwilling heart bends before the potent gale of grace, and sinners that would not yield are made to yield by God. I know this, if the Lord willed it, there is no man so desperately wicked here this morning that he would not be made now to seek for mercy, however infidel he might be; however rooted in his prejudices against the gospel, Jehovah hath but to will it, and it is done. Into thy dark heart, O thou who hast never seen the light, would the light stream; if he did but say, "Let there be light," there would be light. Thou mayest bend thy fist and lift up thy mouth against Jehovah; but he is thy master yet—thy master to destroy thee, if thou goest on in thy wickedness; but thy master to save thee now, to change thy heart and turn thy will, as he turneth the rivers of water.

If it were not for this doctrine, I wonder where the ministry would be. Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon. The power of our preaching is nought—it can do nothing in the conversion of men by itself; men are hardened, obdurate, indifferent; but the power of grace is greater than the power of eloquence or the power of earnestness, and once let that power be put forth, and what can stand against it? Divine Omnipotence is the doctrine of a revival. We may not see it in ordinary days, by reason of the coldness of our hearts; but we *must* see it when these extraordinary works of grace are wrought. Have you never heard the Eastern fables of the dervish, who wished to teach to a young prince the fact of the existence of a God! The fable hath it, that the young prince could not see

any proof of the Existence of a First Cause: so the dervish brought a little plant and set it before him, and in his sight the little plant grew up, blossomed, brought forth fruit, and became a towering tree in an hour. The young man lifted up his hands in wonder, and he said, "God must have done this." "Oh, but," said the teacher, thou sayst, "God has done this, because it is done in an hour: hath he not done it, when it is accomplished in twenty years?" It was the same work in both cases; it was only the rapidity that astonished his pupil. SO, brethren, when we see the church gradually built up and converted, we lose the sense perhaps of a present God; but when the Lord causes the tree suddenly to grow from a sapling to a strong tall monarch of the forest then we say, "This is God." We are all blind and stupid in a measure, and we want to see sometimes some of these quick upgoings, these extraordinary motions of divine influence, before we will fully understand God's power. Learn, then, O Church of God to-day, this great lesson of the nothingness of man, and the Eternal All of God. Learn, disciples of Jesus, to rest on him: look for your success to *his* power, and while you make your efforts, trust not in your efforts, but in the Lord Jehovah. If ye have progressed slowly, give him thanks for progress; but if now he pleases to give you a marvellous increase, multiply your songs, and sing unto him that worketh all things according to the counsel of his will.

III. I now desire, with great earnestness, as the Holy Ghost shall help me, to make the text A STIMULUS FOR FURTHER EXERTION.

The duty of the Church is not to be measured by her success. It is as much the minister's duty to preach the gospel in adverse times as in propitious seasons. We are not to think, if God withholds the dew, that we are to withhold the plough. We are not to imagine that, if unfruitful seasons come, we are therefore to cease from sowing our seed. Our business is with act, not with result. The church has to do her duty, even though that duty should bring her no present reward. "If they hear thee not, Son of man, if they perish they *shall* perish, but their blood will I not require at thine hands." If we sow the seed, and the birds of the air devour it, we have done what we were commanded to do, and the duty is accepted even though the birds devour the seed. We may expect to see a blessed result, but even if it did not come we must not cease from duty. But while this is



true so far, it must nevertheless be a divine and holy stimulant to a gospel labourer, to know that God is making him successful. And in the present day we have a better prospect of success than we ever had, and we should consequently work the harder. When a tradesman begins business with a little shop at the corner, he waits a while to see whether he will have any customers. By-and-bye his little shop is crowded; he has a name; he finds he is making money. What does he do? He enlarges his premises; the back yard is taken in and covered over; there are extra men employed; still the business increases, but he will not invest all his capital in it till he sees to what extent it will pay. It still increases, and the next house is taken, and perhaps the next: he says, "This is a paying concern, and therefore I will increase it." My dear friends, I am using commercial maxims, but they are common-sense rules, and I like to talk so. There are, in these days, happy opportunities. There is a noble business to be done for Christ. Where you used to invest a little capital, a little effort, and a little donation, invest more. There never was such heavy interest to be made as now. It shall be paid back in the results cent, per cent; nay, beyond all that you expected you shall see God's work prospering. If a farmer knew that a bad year was coming, he would perhaps only sow an acre or two; but if some prophet could tell him, "Farmer, there will be such a harvest next year as there never was," he would say, "I will plough up my grass lands, I will stub up those hedges: ever inch of round I will sow." So do you. There is a wondrous harvest coming. Plough up your headlands; root up your hedges; break up your fallow ground, and sow, even amongst the thorns. Ye know not which shall prosper, this or that; but ye may hope that they shall be alike good. Enlarged effort should always follow an increased hope of success.

And let me give you another encouragement. Recollect that even when this revival comes, an instrumentality will still be wanted. The ploughman is wanted, even after the harvest, and the treader of grapes is wanted, however plentiful the vintage; the greater the success the more need of instrumentality. They began at first to think in the North of Ireland that they could do without ministers; but now that the gospel is spread, never was there such a demand for the preachers of the gospel as now. Proudly men said in their hearts, "God has done this without the intervention of man." I say, they said it proudly, for there is such a thing

as proud humility; but God made them stoop. He made them see that after all he would bless the Word through his servants—that he would make the ministers of God "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds." Brothers and sisters, you need not think that if better times should come, the world will do without you. You will be wanted. "A man shall be precious as the gold of Ophir." They shall take hold of your skirts, and they shall say, "Tell us what we must do to be saved." They shall come to your house; they shall ask your prayers; they shall demand your instructions; and you shall find the meanest of the flock become precious as a wedge of gold. The ploughman shall never be so much esteemed as when he follows after the reaper, and the sower of seed never so much valued as when he comes at the heels of those that tread the grapes. The glory which God puts upon instrumentality should encourage you to use it.

And now I beseech and intreat you, my dear brothers and sisters, inhabitants of this great City of London, let not this auspicious gale pass away without singular effort. I sometimes fear lest the winds should blow on us, and we should have our sails all furled, and therefore the good ship should not speed. Up with the canvas now. Oh! Put on ever stitch of it. Let every effort be used, while God is helping us. Let us be earnest co-workers with him. Methinks I see the clouds floating hither; they have come from the far west, from the shore of America; they have crossed the sea, and the wind has wafted them till the green isle received the showers in its northern extremity. Lo! the clouds are just now passing over Wales, and are refreshing the shires that border on the principality. The rain is falling on Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire; divine grace is distilling, and the clouds are drawing nearer and nearer to us. Mark, my brethren, they tarry not for men, neither stay they for the sons of men. They are floating o'er our heads to-day. Shall they float away, and shall we still be left as dry as ever? 'Tis yours to-day to bring down the rain, though 'tis God's to send the clouds. God has sent this day over this great city a divine cloud of his grace. Now, ye Elijahs, pray it down! To your knees, believers, to your knees. *You* can bring it down, and only you. "For this thing will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." "Prove me now herewith," saith the Lord of hosts, "and see if I will not open the windows of heaven, and give you such a blessing that you shall not have room to

contain it." Will you lose the opportunity, Christians? Will you let men be lost for want of effort? Will you suffer this all-blessed time to roll away unimproved? If so, the Church of one thousand eight hundred and sixty is a craven Church, and is unworthy of its time; and he among you, men and brethren, that has not an earnest heart to-day, if he be a Christian, is a disgrace to his Christianity. When there are such times as these, if we do not every man of us trust in the plough, we shall indeed deserve the worst barrenness of soul that can possibly fall upon us. I believe that the Church has often been plagued and vexed by her God, because when God has favoured her she has not made a proper use of the favour. "Then," saith he, "I will make thee like Gilboa; on thy mount there shall be no dew; I will bid the clouds that they rain no more rain upon thee, and thou shalt be barren and desolate, till once again I pour out the Spirit from on high." Let us spend this week in special prayer. Let us meet together as often as we can, and plead at the throne; and each man of you in private be mighty with your God, and in public be diligent to your efforts to ring your fellow-men to Christ.

IV. I have done, when I have uttered a WORD OF WARNING to those of you who know not Christ.

I am aware that I have many here on Sabbath mornings who never were in the habit of attending a place of worship at all. There is many a gentleman here to-day, who would be ashamed in any society, to confess himself a professor of religion. He has never perhaps, for a long time heard the gospel preached; and now there is a strange sort of fascination that has drawn him here. He came the first time out of curiosity—perhaps to make a joke at the minister's expense; he has found himself enthralled; he does not know how it is, but he has been all this week uneasy, he has been wanting to come again, and when he goes away to-day, he will be watching for next Sabbath. He has not given up his sins, but somehow they are not so pleasurable as they used to be. He cannot swear as he did; if an oath comes out edgeways, it does not roll out in the round form it used to do: he knows better now. Now, it is to such persons that I speak. My dear friends, allow me to express my hearty joy that you are here, and let me also express the hope that you are here for a purpose you do not as yet understand. God has a special favour to you, I do trust, and therefore

he has brought you here. I have frequently remarked, that in any revival of religion, it is not often the children of pious parents that are brought in, but those who never knew anything of Christ before. The ordinary means are usually blessed to those who constantly attend hem; but the express effort, and the extraordinary influence of the Spirit, reach those who were outside the pale of nominal Christians, and made no profession of religion. I am I hopes it may meet you. But if you should despise the Word which you have heard; if the impression that has been made—and you know it has been made—should die away, one of the most awful regrets you will ever have when you come to your right sense and reason in another world will be the feeling that you had an opportunity, but that you neglected it. I cannot conceive a more doleful wail than that of the man who cries at last in hell, "The harvest is past—*there was a harvest*; summer is ended—*there was a summer*—and I am not saved." To go to perdition in ordinary times is hell; but to go from under the sound of an earnest ministry, where you are bidden to come to Christ, where you are entreated with honest tears to come to Jesus—to go there after you have been warned is to go not to hell merely, but *to the ver hell of hell*. The core and marrow of damnation is reserved for men who hear the truth, and feel it too, but yet reject it, and are lost. Oh! My dear hearer, this is a solemn time with you. I pray that God the Holy Spirit may remind you that it may be now or never with you. You may never have another warning, or if you have it, you may row so hardened that you may laugh at it and despise it. My brother, I beseech thee, by God, by Christ Jesus, by thine own immortal welfare, stop and think now whether it be worth while to throw away the hallowed opportunity which is now presented to thee. Wilt thou go and dance away thine impressions, or laugh them out of thy soul? Ah! man, thou mayest laugh thyself into hell, but thou canst not laugh thyself out of it.

There is a turning point in each man's life when his character becomes fixed and settled. That turning point *may* be to-day. It may be that there shall be some solemn seat in this hall, which is a man knew its history he would never sit in it,—a seat in which a man shall sit and hear the Word, and shall say, "I will not yield; I will resist the impression; I will despise it; I will have my sins, even if I am lost for them." Mark your seat, friend, before you go; make a blood-red stain across it, that next time we come

here we may say, "Here a soul destroyed itself." But I pray the rather that God the Holy Spirit may sweetly whisper in thy heart—"Man, yield, for Jesus invites thee to come to him." Oh, may my Master smile into your face this morning, and say, "I love thy soul; trust me with it. Give up thy sins; turn to me." O Lord Jesus, do it! And men shall not resist thee. Oh! Show them thy love, and they must yield. Do it, O thou Crucified One, for thy mercy's sake! Send forth thine Holy Spirit now, and bring the strangers home; and in this hall grant thou, O Lord, that many hearts may be fully resigned to thy love, and to thy grace!

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## Righteous Hatred

Ye that love the Lord, hate evil. - Psalm 97:10

The Christian religion is a golden chain with which the hands of men are fettered from all hatred. The spirit of Christ is love. Wherever he governs, love reigns as a necessary consequence. The Christian man is not allowed to hate any one. Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy; but I say unto you," said Jesus, "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." The word "hate" must be cut out of the language of a Christian, except it be used with one meaning and intention only, and that, the meaning of my text. Thou hast no right, O Christian, to tolerate within thy bosom wrath, malice, anger, harshness, or uncharitableness, towards any creature that God's hands have made. When thou hatest the man's sins, thou art not to hate him, but to love the sinner, even as Christ loved sinners and came to seek and save them. When thou hatest a man's false doctrine, thou art still to love the man, and hate his doctrine even out of love to his soul, with an earnest desire that he may be reclaimed from his error, and brought into the way of truth. Thou hast no right to excrete thy hatred upon any creature, however fallen or debased, however much he may irritate thy temper, or injure thee in thy estate or reputation. Still hatred is a power of manhood, and we believe that all powers of manhood are to be exercised, and may every one of them be exercised as in the fear of God. It is possible to be angry, and yet sin not, and it is possible to hate, and yet not be guilty of sin, but be positively performing a duty. Christian man, thou mayest have hatred in thy heart, if thou wilt only allow it to run in one stream, then it shall not do mischief, but it shall even do good—"Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." As much as the revengeful man hates his enemy, so much hate thou evil. As much as contending despots in battle hate one another, end only seek an opportunity to meet each other face to face, so hate thou evil. As much as hell hateth heaven, and as much as heaven hateth hell, so much mayest thou hate evil. The whole of that passion which, when let

loose in a wrong track, becomes as a fierce lion on its prey, thou mayest keep in leash, (like a noble lion, only destitute of ferocity) against any whom it should not hurt, and thou mayest let it slip against the enemies of the Lord thy God and do great exploits thereby. Tell me of a man who is never angry, that man has not any true zeal for God. We must sometimes be angry against sin. When we see evil, though not vindictive against the persons who commit it, yet angry against the evil we must be; we must hate wickedness always. Doth not David say, "I hate them with a perfect hatred yea, I count them mine enemies." We are to love our enemies, but we are to hate God's enemies. We are to love sinners, but we are to hate sin. As much as it is in the power of man to hate, so much are we to hate evil in every form and fashion.

The duty here enjoined is a general one to all God's people. We are to hate all evil—not some evils. It was said, you know, long ago, of certain professors, that they did

"Compound for sins they were inclined to  
By damning those they had no mind to."

And there are some, I dare say, at this day, who think others extremely guilty for committing iniquities which they do not care to commit, but they themselves commit other sins with which they deal very gently. O Christian, never take hold of sin, except with a gauntlet on thy hand; never go to it with the kid-glove of friendship, never talk delicately of it; but always hate it in every shape. If it come to thee as a little fox, take heed of it, for it will spoil the grapes; if it come to thee as a warring lion, seeking whom it may devour; or if it come with the hug of a bear, seeking by a pretended affection to entice thee into sin, smite it, for its hug is death, and its clasp destruction. Sin of every kind thou art to war with—of lip, of hand, of heart. Sin, however gilded over with profit, however varnished with the seemliness of morality, however much it may be complimented by the great, or however popular it may be with the multitude, thou art to hate it everywhere, in all its disguises, every day in the week, and in every place. War to the knife with sin! We are to draw the sword, and throw away the scabbard. With all thy hosts, O hell, with every brat of thy offspring, O Satan, we are to be at enmity. Not one sin

are we to spare, but against the whole are we to proclaim an utter and entire war of extermination.

In endeavoring to address you upon this subject, I shall first of all begin with it at home: Christian man, hate all evil in thyself. And then, secondly, we will let it go abroad: Christian man, hate all evil in other people, wherever thou seest it.

I. First, then, CHRISTIAN MAN HATE ALL EVIL IN THYSELF. I will strive now to excite thy hate against it, and then I will try to urge thee and assist thee to destroy it.

Thou hast good reason to hate all evil; greater reason than ever the most injured man could bring forward for the hatred of his enemies. Consider what evil has already done thee. Oh! what a world of mischief sin has brought into thy heart! Sin stopped up your eyes, so that you could not see the beauty of the Saviour; it thrust its finger into your ears, so that you could not hear the sweet invitations of Jesus: sin turned your feet into the way of evil, and filled your hands with filthiness. nay, worse than that sin poured poison into the very fountain of your being; it tainted your heart and made it "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Oh! what a creature thou wast when sin had done its utmost with thee before Divine grace began to mend thee! Thou wast an heir of wrath even as others; thou didst "run with the multitude to do evil;" thy mouth was an "open sepulcher." thou didst flatter with thy tongue, and there is nought that can be said of thy fellow-creature living in sin, that could not be said of thee. You must plead guilty to the charge, "such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Oh! you have good cause for hating sin when you look back to the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged. Such mischief did evil do you that your soul would have been everlastingly lost, had not omnipotent love interfered to redeem you. Christian, hate evil. It has been your murderer; it has put its dagger to your heart; it has thrust poison into your mouth; it has done you all the mischief that hell itself could do—mischief which would have wrought your eternal undoing, had not the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ prevented. Thou hast good reason,



then, to hate sin.

Again, Christian, hate evil, for it would be unbecoming if thou didst not when thou considerest thy position in life. A Christian belongs to the blood royal of the universe. Beggars' children may run about the street with unkempt hair and shoeless feet; but should princes of the blood revel in uncleanness? We do not expect to see monarchs' children apparelled in rags; we do not expect to see them rolling themselves in the mire of the streets. And thou, Christian, thou art one of God's aristocracy, a prince of the blood of heaven, a friend of angels, yea, and a friend of God. Good reason hast thou to hate all evil. Why, man, thou art a Nazarite, dedicated to God. Now, to the Nazarite it was enjoined that not only he should not drink wine, but he was not even to eat the grape, nor might he so much as taste the bark of the vine, or anything whatsoever that grew upon it; he must neither touch nor handle it, or else he would be defiled. So is it with thee; thou art the Lord's Nazarite, set apart for himself. Avoid, then, every false way. Let the appearance of evil be kept from thee: it is beneath thy dignity to indulge in the sins which disgrace other men. Thou art not snob as they are; thou art of a nobler race, thou hast sprung from the loins of the Son of God: is he not shine everlasting Father, even he who is the Prince of Peace? I beseech thee, never demean thy royal lineage, nor let thy holy ancestry be stained. You are a peculiar people, a royal generation; wherefore, then, should ye stain your garments in the dust. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil."

Again, you have good reason to hate sin, because it weakens you. Go when you have committed a folly, retire to your chamber and fall upon your knees in prayer. Before the sin was committed, your prayer reached the ear of God and the blessings came down swift as the lightning-flash; but now your knees are weak, your heart refuses to desire, and your tongue refuses to express the faint desires you strive to reach. You attempt, but you fail; you groan, but heaven is shut against your cry; you weep, but your tear penetrates not so as to obtain an answer from the breast of God. There you are; you bring your wants before the throne, and you carry them away again. Prayer becomes a painful duty instead of a most gracious and excellent privilege. This is the result of sin. "Sin will make thee leave off praying, or else praying will make thee leave off

sinning." Oh! thou canst never be strong in sin and strong in prayer. As long as thou indulgest in lust, or sin, or wantonness of any kind, thy power in prayer is taken away, and thy lips are shut when thou attemptest to approach thy God. Or if thou willest, try another exercise: after committing a sin, go into the world and seek to do good. Why, man, thou canst not do it; thou hast lost the power to cleanse others when them art impure thyself. What! can I with filthy fingers wash the face of others? Shall I essay to plough another man's field while my own is lying fallow, and the tall, rank thistle and weed are overspreading it? I am powerless to do good until I have first cleansed my own vessel and made that pure. An unholy minister must be an unsuccessful one, and an unholy Christian must be an unfruitful one. Unless thou desirest to have thy sinews loosed, to have the marrow of thy bones scorched from thee, unless thou willest that the sap of thy being should be dried up, I beseech thee, hate sin, for sin can debilitate and weaken thee so much that thou shalt drag along a miserable existence, the very skeleton of a soul instead of flourishing in the ways of thy God. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil."

In the next place, you will find it extremely useful if, in order to get rid of sin, you are not content with merely restraining it, but always seeking to have it taken clean away by the Holy Spirit. You know, mere moralists restrain their sins, like a river that has locks and dykes: the water is kept from flowing, but then it gradually swells upward and upward, till by-and-bye it overflows with terrible fury. Now, don't be content with mere restraining grace; that will never purge you, for the sin may be there though it break not out. Pray to God that your sin may be taken away, and that though the remnant and the root thereof remain, though the channel be there, yet the stream may be dried up like the stream of the Euphrates before the presence of the Lord your God.

Again, ye have good reason to hate evil, for if you indulge in it you will have to smart for it. God will never kill his children, he has put his sword away; he sheathed that once for all in the breast of Christ, but he has a rod, and that rod sometimes he lays on with a very heavy hand, and maketh the whole body to tingle. The Lord will not be angry with his people so as to cast them off but he will be so angry with them that they shall have to cry, "Heal the bones that thou hast broken, and restore my

soul. O Lord my God." Ah! you that ever have backslidden, you know what it is to be well scourged for when Christ's sheep run way from the shepherd he will not let them perish, but he will often allow the black dog to bring them back in his mouth; he will allow sore trouble and sharp affliction to lay hold upon them, so that they are cast down almost to the gates of hell. A Christian shall never be destroyed, but he shall almost be destroyed; his life shall not totally fail him, but he shall be so beaten and bruised that he shall scarcely know whether he has any life left in him at all. Hate sin, O Christian, unless thou desirest trouble. If thou wouldst strew thy path with thorns and put nettles in thy death pillow, then live in sin; but if thou wouldst dwell in the heavenly places, hearing the everlasting chimes of Paradise ringing in thine own heart, then walk in all the ways of holiness unto the end. Christian man, hate evil.

So far, I have only addressed you selfishly; I have shown you how evil may hurt yourselves; now I will address you with another argument. Christian, hate evil; hate it in yourself, because evil in you will do hurt to others. What hurt the sin of a Christian does to the children of God! The sharpest trials God's church has ever had, has come from her own sons and daughters. I see her, I see her with her garments rent and defiled; I see her hands all bleeding, and her back scarred. O church of the living God, thou fairest among women, how art thou wounded! Where hast thou received these wounds? Has the infidel spit in thy face and reviled thee? Has the Arian rent thy garments? Has the Socinian cast filth upon the whiteness of thine apparel? Who hath wounded thy hands, and who hath scarred thy back? Hath this been done by the impious and profane? "No," saith she, "these are the wounds I have received in the house of my friends. Against my enemies I wear a secret armor, but my friends penetrate within it, and cut me to the very quick." The bishops of God's church, the professed leaders of the Lord's hosts, the pretended followers of the Redeemer, have done more damage to the church than all the church's enemies. If the church were not a divine thing, protected by God, she must have ceased to exist, merely through the failure and iniquity of her own professed friends. I do not wonder that the church of God survived martyrdom and death; but I do marvel that she has survived the unfaithfulness of her own children, and the cruel backsliding of her own members. O Christians, ye do not know how you cause God's name to be

blasphemed, how you stain his church, and bring dishonor upon her escutcheon, when you indulge in sin. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil"

Again, hate it not only for the church's sake, but for the poor sinner's sake. How many sinners every year are driven away from all thought of religion by the inconsistency of professors! And have you ever noticed how the world always delights to chronicle the inconsistency of a professor? I saw only yesterday an account in the paper of a wretch who had committed lust, and it was said that "he had a very sanctified appearance." Ay, I thought, that is the way the press always likes to speak; but I very much question whether there are many editors that know what a sanctified appearance means; at least they will have to look a long time among their own class before they find many that have got much sanctification. However, the reporter put it down that the man had "a sanctified appearance;" and of course it was intended as a fling against all those who make a profession of religion, by making others believe that this man was a professor too. And really the world has had some grave cause for it, for we have seen professing Christians in these days that are an utter disgrace to Christianity, and there are things done in the name of Jesus Christ that it would be a shame to do in the name of Beelzebub. There are things done, too, by those who are accounted members of the church of our Lord Jesus, Methinks, so shameful that Pandemonium itself would scarcely own them. The world has had much cause to complain of the church; O children of God, be careful. The world has a lynx eye: it will see your faults; it will be impossible to hide them; and it will magnify your faults. It will slander you if you have none; give it at least no ground to work upon; "let your garments be always white;" walk in the fear of the Lord, and let this be your daily prayer, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

Once more: I have one argument that methinks must touch your hearts and make you hate evil. You have a friend, the best friend you ever had. I know him, and have loved him, and he has loved me. There was a day, as I took my walks abroad, when I came hard by a spot for ever engraved upon my memory, for there I saw this friend my best, my only friend, murdered. I stooped down in sad affright and looked at him. He was basely murdered. I saw that his hands had been pierced with rough iron

nails, and his feet had been rent with the same. There was misery in his dead countenance so terrible that I scarcely dared to look upon it. His body was emaciated with hunger, his back was red with bloody scourges, and his brow had a circle of wounds about it: clearly could one see that these had been pierced by thorns. I shuddered, for I had known this friend full well. He never had a fault; he was the purest of the pure, the holiest of the holy. Who could have injured him? For he never injured any man: all his life long he "went about doing good;" he had healed the sick, he had fed the hungry, he had raised the dead: for which of these works did they kill him? He had never breathed out anything else but love. And as I looked into the poor sorrowful face so full of agony and yet so full of love, I wondered who could have been a wretch so vile as to pierce hands like his. I said within myself "Where live these traitors? Where can they live? Who are these that could have smitten such an one as this?" Had they murdered an oppressor we might have forgiven them; had they slain one who had indulged in vice or villainy, it might have been his due desert; had it been a murderer and a rebel, or one who had committed sedition, we would have said, "Bury his corpse: justice has at last given him his due." But when thou wast slain, my best, my only beloved, where lodged the traitors? Let me seize them, and they shall be put to death. If there be torments that I can devise, surely they shall endure them all. Oh! what jealousy; what revenge I felt! If I might but find these murderers what would I do with them! And as I looked upon that corpse I heard a footstep, and wondered where it was. I listened, and I clearly perceived that the murderer was close at hand. It was dark, and I groped about to find him. I found that somehow or other wherever I put my hand I could not meet with him, for he was nearer to me than my hand would go. At last I put my hand upon my breast. "I have thee now," said I; for lo! he was in my own heart; the murderer was hiding within my own bosom, dwelling in the recesses of my inmost soul. Ah! then I wept indeed, that I, in the very presence of my murdered Master, should be harbouring the murderer; and I felt myself most guilty while I bowed over his corpse and sung that plaintive hymn:

"'Twere you my sins, my cruel sins,  
His chief tormentors were:  
Each of my crimes became a nail

And unbelief the spear."

Revenge! revenge! Ye that fear the Lord, and love his name, take vengeance on your sins, and hate all evil.

Now, my beloved, my next endeavor must be to urge you to put your sins to death. What shall be done in order that you and I may get rid of our sins? There is the axe of the law; shall we bring that out and smite our sins with it? Alas! they will never die under the blow of Moses.

"Law and terrors do but harden  
All the while they work alone."

I have often striven to overcome sin by the thought of the punishment attached to it but I have very seldom found myself in a frame of mind in which my heart would receive that reason. I believe that to the most of us the terrors of the law, although they ought to be exceedingly terrible, have but little power to check us from sin. I met with a story the other day which showed me, if nothing else, the utter powerlessness of terror for curbing the heart from sin. It is pretended by some that it is necessary that men who commit murder should be capitally executed in order to deter others from crime. There is not, however I believe, the shadow of a hope that the execution of a murderer will ever produce any such effect. Three traitors were once executed in this country—Thistlewood was one of them,—and when the executioner smote off the head of the first man and held it up, saying, "this is the head of a traitor," there was a shudder running through the multitude, a chill, cold feeling which was perceptible even by the executioner. When he killed the next man, and held up the head in like manner, it was evidently looked upon with intense curiosity and awe, but with nothing like so much thrilling caution as the first. And strange to say, when the third head was smitten off, the man was about to hold it up, but he let it drop, and the crowd with one voice cried, "Aha! butter fingers!" and laughed. Would you have supposed that an English crowd, on seeing a poor man die, could have become so hardened in so short a time, as actually to have made a joke of such an incident? Yet so it is; law and terrors never do and never will produce any other effect than to drive men to sin and make them think lightly of it. I would not,

therefore, advise a Christian, if he would get rid of his sins, to indulge continually in the thought of the punishment; but let him adopt a better process: let him go and sit down at the cross of Christ, and endeavor to draw evangelical repentance from the atonement which Christ has offered for our guilt. I know of no cure for sin in a Christian like an abundant intercourse with the Lord Jesus. Dwell much with him, and it is impossible for you to dwell much with sin. What! my Lord Jesus, can I sit at the foot of that tree accursed, and see thy blood flowing for my guilt, and after that indulge in transgression? Yes, I may do it, for I am vile enough for anything, but still this shall be the great clog upon the wheel of my sin, and this repress my lust the most of all,—the thought that Jesus Christ hath lived and died for me.

Again, if you would check sin, endeavor to get as much light as you can upon it. The housewife, when she is busy about her house, with curtains drawn, she may have dusted all the tables, and think everything looks clean; but she opens a little corner of the window, and in streams a ray of light, in which ten thousand grains of dust are dancing up and down. "Ah!" she thinks, "my room is not so clean as I thought it was; here is dust where I thought there was none." Now, endeavor to get, not the farthing rushlight of your own judgment, but the sunlight of the Holy Spirit, streaming upon your heart, and it will help you to detect your sin—and detection of sin is half-way towards its cure. Look well at your transgressions and endeavor to find them out.

Yet another thing, when you have fallen into one sin make confession of it, and let that lead you to search for all the rest. David, you know, never wrote so abject a confession as he did after he had committed one act of sin; then he was led to search his heart, and find out all the rest of his iniquities, and he made a complete confession of them all. When thou seest one sin, be quite sure there is a host there, for they always hunt in packs; and take care when thou dischargest thy confession against one, that there is enough powder and shot in thy confession to wound all thy sins and send them limping away. Be not content with overcoming one sin or one transgression, but labor to get rid of all.

Again, there are many sins by which you will be enticed unless you always

take care to strip sin of its disguises. Sin will sometimes come to you, wrapped up in a Babylonish garment, like Achan's wedge: pull off the covering and you will discover its iniquity. It will sometimes come to you like the iniquity of king Saul, under the form of a sacrifice; strip it and discover that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. Alas! sin is like Jezebel; it attires its head and paints its face and appears lovely to us; unmask it, see its vileness, discover its filthiness, disdain the profit with which it gilds itself, take away the applause with which it endeavors to plume itself, and let it stand in all its naked deformity, and then thou wilt not be so likely to run into it.

Once again. Try always, when your mind is in a sanctified state, to estimate the weight of the evil of sin. When you are in a sinful state you will not feel the weight of the evil. A man that dives into the water may have a thousand tons of water above his head, and not feel the weight because the water is round about him; but take him out of the water, and if you put half a tubful on his head, it presses him down. Now, while you indulge in sin, you will not feel its weight; but when you are out of sin, after it is over, and the Spirit has applied the blood of sprinkling for your forgiveness, and the sanctifying work of the Spirit has begun to restore you, then labor to realize the enormity of your guilt, and by so doing you will be helped to hate it and to overcome it.

With regard to some sins, if thou wouldst avoid them, take one piece of advice—run away from them. Sins of lust especially are never to be fought with, except after Joseph's way; and you know what Joseph did—he ran away. A French philosopher said, "Fly, fly, Telemaque; there remains no way of conquest but by flight." The true soldiers of Christ's cross will stand foot to foot with any sin in the world except this; but here they turn their backs and fly, and then they become conquerors. "Flee fornication," said one of old, and there was wisdom in the counsel; there is no way of overcoming it but by flight. If the temptation attack thee, shut thine eye and stop thy ear, and away, away from it; for thou art only safe when thou art beyond sight and earshot. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil;" and endeavor with all your might to resist and overcome it in yourselves.

Once again, ye that love the Lord, if ye would keep from sin, seek always



to have a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit, never trust yourselves a single day without having a fresh renewal of your piety before you go forth to the day's duties. We are never safe except we are in the Lord's hands. No Christian, be he who he may or what he may, though he be renowned for his piety and prayerfulness, can exist a day without falling into great sin unless the Holy Spirit shall be his protector. Old master Dyer says, "Lock up your hearts by prayer every morning, and give God the key, so that nothing can get in; and then when thou unlockest thy heart at night, there will be a sweet fragrance and perfume of love, joy, and holiness." Take care of that. It is only by the Spirit that you can be preserved from sin.

Above all, let us add, avoid all preachers who endeavor in any way to palliate sin; avoid all experiences and books of experience that give you a way of getting over the fact that the sin of God's people is a vile thing. I know some folks who talk of their sins as if they were proud of them; they speak of their falls, and their backslidings, and transgressions, as if they were blessed experiences: like the dog that had a bell round his neck because he was dangerous, they are proud of that very thing which is their shame. Remember, a nettle is bad anywhere but it is never so bad as in a flower garden, and sin is bad anywhere, but never so hateful as in a Christian. If as you are going home to day you see a boy breaking windows, very likely you will speak to him; but if it is your own boy you will severely chastise him as sure as he is your own son. So likewise doth God deal with his people. When sinners do mischief he rebukes them; when his people do the same he smites them. He will not pass over sin in his own children at any time; it shall never go unchastened. Ye that fear the Lord never palliate sin, for God will not do so; he hateth it with perfect hatred.

II. My second point is, HATE SIN IN OTHERS. Mark it, do not hate others, but hate sin in others. As we have only a few minutes left I will occupy them with but one or two practical remarks.

If you hate sin in others, it will be necessary for you never in any way to countenance it. There is many a Christian who does more mischief than he knows of by a smile. You have heard a young man telling a story of

some of his freaks; perhaps it has been in a railway carriage, and he has been very witty, and you have smiled at him. He knows you, and he seems to think he has done a brave thing—didn't he make a Christian man smile at his sins? You have sometimes heard loose, lewd conversation proceeding from ungodly men, and you have not liked it; it has grated upon your ears; but you have sat very quietly, and others have said, "Ah well, he was still enough; he was sucking it in, and it was clear he liked it." Thus it was stamped at once with the seal of your approbation. Now, never let sin have your countenance. Wherever you are, let it be known that you not only cannot endure it, but that you positively hate it. Don't let people say, "Well, I don't think he likes it;" but let them know you hate it, that you are absolutely angry with it, that you cannot smile at it, but feel your anger rise at the very mention of such shameful things. In the last century it used to be even fashionable and honorable to commit sins, which are now looked upon with scorn, and in another hundred years, some things that are done to-day will be discovered to be desperately vile, and we shall look upon them with disdain also. Christian, I say, never stamp another man's sins with approval.

Again, whenever you are called upon to do it—and that will be very often—take care to let your sentiments with regard to sin come out. Sinful silence may make you a partaker in a sinner's evil ways. If I saw a man breaking into a house and I were going by late in the evening, if I passed very gently, knowing that he was doing wrong, and did not give the alarm, I think I should be an accomplice in the crime. And so, if you are sitting in company where there is evil speaking, or where Christ is blasphemed, if you do not say a word for your Master, you are committing sin in your silence, you are an accomplice in the iniquity. Speak up for your Lord and Master. What if you should get upbraided for it and be called a Puritan? It is a grand name. What if some should say, You are too precise? There is good need that some should be too precise where a great many are far too lax; or if they should never welcome you in their company again, it will be a great gain to be out of it. What if they should speak evil of you? Know you not that you are to rejoice in that day when they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for Christ's namesake? Always by your speaking boldly, let sin be put to the blush.

Then again, when you see evil in any one, always seek, if you see the slightest hope of doing good, for an opportunity of telling him privately of it. I have heard of a gentleman who was swearing, and a godly man who stood by, instead of upbraiding him for it, publicly said, "Sir, I wish to speak to you a moment." "Well," said the gentleman, "you had better come into the coffee-room." They went accordingly; and the godly man said to the other, "My dear friend, I noticed that you took the name of God in vain I know you will excuse my mentioning it. I did not say a word about it when others could hear; but really it is a great sin, and no profit can come from it. Could you not avoid it in future?" The check was thankfully received; the gentleman bowed his acknowledgments, he confessed that it was the fault of his early education, and he trusted that the rebuke might do him good. Do you not think that very often we lose an opportunity of showing our hatred of evil by not endeavoring privately to speak to those whom we discover indulging in sin? Never let slip an opportunity of having a shot at the devil, be it where it may; always let fly at him whenever you see him. If you cannot do it in public, yet if you see a man doing evil, rebuke him in private for his sin.

And yet another thing. If you hate evil, do not get into it yourself, because it is of no use your talking to others about evil unless your own life be blameless. They that live in glass houses must not throw stones. Get out of your own glass house, and then throw as many as you like. Speak to other people, when you have first of all endeavored to set your own life according to the compass of the Gospel.

And now, beloved fellow-men, all of you who love the Saviour, are exhorted this morning to hate evil; and I will just enlarge once more upon this exhortation. Join heart and hand in the hatred of evil, with all men who seek to put it down. Wherever you see a society endeavoring to do good, encourage it. Let this be your doctrine—preach nothing up but Christ, and nothing down but evil. Help all those that are for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom. There is nothing else that can put evil away so quickly as the proclamation of right. Help the minister of the Gospel; pray for him; hold up his hands; endeavor to strengthen him. As for yourself, become a tract distributor, a Sunday-school teacher, or a village preacher. Show your hatred to evil by active efforts in putting it down.

Distribute Bibles, scatter the Word of God broadcast over the land. Send your missionaries to foreign parts and let them penetrate the dens and alleys of London. Go among the rags and filth of our own population and seek to bring some one or two of the Lord's precious jewels who are hidden in the dunghills of the metropolis. Thus, let the Lord Jesus Christ by your means get the victory, and let the evil of this world be cast out. How shall that be done but by the combined exertions of all Christ's church? In these days we have a great many men to fight Christ's battles, if they would but fight. Our churches are increasing at a great rate. There are an immense number of Christians now alive; but I think I would rather have the one hundred and twenty men that were in the upper chamber at the day of Pentecost, than I would have the whole lot of you. I do think those one hundred and twenty men had got more blood in them, more divine Christian blood and zeal, than as many millions of such poor creatures as we are. Why, in those days every member of the church was a missionary. The women did not preach, it is true; but they did what is better than preaching. they lived out the Gospel; and all the men had something to say. They did not leave it as you do to your minister serving God by proxy; they did not set deacons up, and leave them to do all God's work while they folded their arms. Oh! no; all Christ's soldiers went to battle. There was no drafting out one or two of them, and then leaving the others to tarry at home and share the spoil. No, every one fought, and great was the victory. Now, beloved Christians, all of you, at it, and always at it. O Spirit of the living God, descend on every heart, and bid every one of thy soldiers take his sword in his hand, and go straightway up to the victory. For when Zion's children shall feel their individual responsibility, then shall come the day of her triumph. Then shall the walls of Jericho fall flat to the ground, and every soldier of the living God shall be crowned a conqueror. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil," henceforth and for ever.

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# The Righteous Holding On His Way

The righteous also shall hold on his way. - Job 17:9

We are thrice happy in having a goodly number of young beginners in our midst. Our springtide is cheered and beautified with many blossoms of hopeful converts. They have just begun to go on pilgrimage, and would be as happy as the birds of the air were it not that some of them are grievously afflicted with the fear that they shall not hold out to the end. This is one of their daily torments, that, after all, they shall be false to Christ; that the grace of God will fail them, or that they will fail to depend upon it; that so, having begun well, they shall by-and-by be hindered, and shall not obey the truth. Now, perhaps a little plain conversation upon that subject may help to relieve them of their fears. Ignorance about divine truth is not bliss, and is not the friend to bliss: "that the soul be without knowledge is not good." The more we know concerning the doctrines of the gospel the better for our comfort, if by faith we are able to receive them. Many and many a doubt and fear now oppressing the people of God might be driven like chaff before the wind, if they were but better established in the truth relating to the points under their consideration. If they did but know more fully what God has revealed they would tremble less at what Satan suggests. It is, therefore, with the view of very simply talking about this matter of holding on the way of the heavenly pilgrimage, that I have taken this text this morning. May God the Holy Spirit bless it to us.

First, we intend to say, this morning, that the believer must hold on his way-it is necessary that he should do so; secondly, it exceedingly difficult for him to do so-the perseverance of the saints is surrounded with enormous perils; yet, thirdly, this perseverance is guaranteed by divine promise; but, fourthly, it is only guaranteed to certain persons whose character is described in the text as being "the righteous." These shall hold on their way.

I. First, then, it is absolutely essential to final salvation that we should be **PARTICIPATORS IN FINAL PERSEVERANCE.**

It has been said by some that he who once believes is therefore saved. I shall not deny the truth of that statement; but it is an unguarded mode of speech, and does not place the truth in the most Scriptural form. I would infinitely prefer to assert, that "He who truly believes, shall by grace continue to do so, and therefore shall be saved." For it is not true that, supposing a man did once believe, and then became altogether an unbeliever he should be saved. If that were possible, that the believer should altogether fall from the grace of God, and become in all respects changed into an unbeliever, he would be damned; for on this point the word of God is very clear and decided; read the twenty-fourth verse of the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel: "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." If it were possible for one who had entered upon the way of righteousness- truly entered upon it-to turn from it, utterly and totally, the consequences must be his final destruction; for Paul tells us "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Hebrews 6:4-6. That is not the point we raise at all in the discussion of final perseverance. We do not admit the possibility of total apostasy in the case of the real believer in Jesus, but believe that he will hold on his way, and so be saved, but only saved by being enabled to hold on his way. We hold that in order to ultimate salvation, it is absolutely indispensable that every one who is a believer, should continue to be a believer; that he who is made by grace to be holy, should continue to be holy; that he in whom the divine life is placed, should never lose that divine life. It is the keeping of that life which we believe ultimately ends in perfection and everlasting bliss.

1. The necessity of final perseverance is very clear, if you look at the representation of the believer in the Word of God. He is frequently compared to a traveler; but no traveler reaches his journey's end merely by starting upon the road. If it should be a journey of seven weeks' length, if he shall sit down after journeying six weeks, he certainly will not reach

the goal of his desires. It is necessary, if I would reach a certain city, that I should go every mile of the road; for one mile would not take me there; nor if the city be a hundred miles distant, would ninety-nine miles bring me to its streets. I must journey all the length if I would reach the desired place. Frequently, in the New Testament, the Christian is compared to a runner—he runs in a race for a great prize; but it is not by merely starting, it is not by making a great spurt, it is not by distancing your rival for a little time, and then pulling up to take breath, or sauntering to either side of the road, that you will win the race: we must never stop till we have passed the winning-post; there must be no loitering throughout the whole of the Christian career, but onward, like the Roman charioteer, with glowing wheels, we must fly more and more rapidly till we actually obtain the crown. The Christian is sometimes, by the apostle Paul, who somewhat delights to quote from the ancient games, compared to the Grecian wrestler or boxer. But it is of little avail for the champion to give the foe one blow or one fall: he must continue in the combat until his adversary is beaten. Our spiritual foes will not be vanquished until we enter where the conquerors receive their crowns, and therefore we must continue in fighting attitude. It is in vain for us to talk of what we have done or are doing just now, he that continueth to the end, the same shall be saved, and none but he. The believer is commonly compared to a warrior: he is engaged in a great battle, a holy war. Like Joshua, he has to drive out the Canaanites, that have chariots of iron, before he can fully take possession of his inheritance; but it is not the winning of one battle that makes a man a conqueror; nay, though he should devastate one province of his enemy's territories, yet, if he should be driven out by-and-by, he is beaten in the campaign, and it will yield him but small consolation to win a single battle, or even a dozen battles, if the campaign as a whole should end in his defeat. It is not commencing as though the whole world were to be cleared by one display of fire and sword, but continuing, going from strength to strength, from victory to victory, that makes the man the conqueror of his foe. The Christian is also called a disciple or scholar. But who does not know that the boy by going to school for a day or two does not therefore become wise? If the lad should give himself most diligently to his grammar for six months, yet he will never become a linguist unless he shall continue perseveringly in his classic studies. The great mathematicians of our times did not acquire their

science in a single year; they pressed forward with aching brow; they burnt the midnight oil and tortured their brains; they were not satisfied to rest, for they could never have become masters of their art if they had lingered on the road. The believer is also called a builder, but you know of whom it was said, "This man began to build, but was not able to finish!" The digging out of the foundation is most important, and the building up of stone upon stone is to be carried on with diligence, but though the man should half finish the walls, or even complete them, yet if he do not roof in the structure, he becomes a laughing-stock to every passer-by. A good beginning, it is said, is more than half, but a good ending is more than the whole. Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.

In every aspect of the Christian, continuance in faith and well-doing is essential to his safety; without a perpetual perseverance his profession is of no value. We will look at one more illustration, and see this most clearly. Take that simple metaphor of wheat: of what value is the corn in the blade or even in the ear? What man can live upon the green blade or the half-formed ear? The joyous shout of the reaper is only evoked by the full corn in the ear; and you, young believer, you, growing Christian, must press forward and ripen into the perfection of your Christian manhood, for it is only then that the shout of "Hallelujah," and "Glory to God," shall be fully heard. Take the Christian in any way in which God describes him, and he is one in whose ear is whispered the words, "Forward! Onward!" He is not one who can say, "I have attained." In a certain sense it is true he is saved, but as to his ultimate salvation, his perfection before the throne can only be wrought in him by the continual, sustained, and abiding work of the Holy Ghost.

2. But the fact that final perseverance is absolutely necessary is also clear, if you for a moment take into consideration the nature of the case and suppose that the man did not persevere. Imagine a man who started with sincere simple faith in Christ, and with a new heart, and a right spirit; imagine him to have gone back to the world: can you suppose that he will enter heaven? He has deserted good for evil, he has shut his eyes to the light, and gone back to the darkness from which he professed to have escaped. He has, not ignorantly, but knowingly and deliberately quenched within his soul the spark of heavenly flame. He knew that the



road led to hell, and he turned from it, he knew that the other path led to heaven, and he ran in it; but after awhile he tired, he fainted, and he deliberately set his face hell-ward and gave up eternal life, pawning and throwing it away like Esau for a mess of pottage. Do you think it could be said otherwise of him than it was of that selfsame profane Esau, that he found no place for repentance, though he sought, sought it diligently and with tears? For this man, you see, has denied the Lord that bought him. He said he rested on Christ and depended on his precious blood; but he deliberately denies the faith, deliberately returns either to the beggarly elements of his own self-righteousness to rest under the law, or else to plunge again into open sin, and follow the devices of his flesh. What shall be said of this man, but that his last end shall be worse than the first? Enter heaven! how can it be? It is the place of the perfect, and this man, so far from being perfect, does not even press towards it. He has turned aside from perfection, he has given up everything which constituted him a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light; he has, after being illuminated, gone back to the darkness; after being quickened, has gone back to the tomb. What remaineth for him? Take the case into consideration, and you will see at once the impossibility of a non-persevering Christian were entering into heaven.

3. Thirdly, I must strengthen that consideration by reminding you that we have very express declarations in Scripture about professors, and about believers too, if such could be, who do not persevere. Do you not recollect the Savior's words, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"? Luke 9:62. Do you not remember that terrible sentence about the salt, "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned. It is neither fit for the laud, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out"? To the same effect is that fearful warning, "Remember Lot's wife!" she came out of the city of destruction, but she looked back, and became a pillar of salt as an everlasting warning to us against so much as the thought and look of apostasy. Then comes in that warning, where we are told concerning some, that it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; and that word of Paul, "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briars is

rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned;" and that of Peter, in his second epistle, and second chapter: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Supposing a man, then, to have been washed in the blood of Jesus, to be quickened of the Spirit of God-supposing him to have gone back and to have entirely and totally lost all grace, he would be the hopeless man, beyond the reach of mercy, damned while yet living, a living hell even in the midst of this world. O beloved, how necessary then is it that the Christian should persevere and hold on even to the end!

4. I would have you observe the form of many of the promises, and as we have little time this morning, I ask you to read the second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation. There are some very choice promises made to the seven churches, but they are all put in this shape, "To him that overcometh will I give," and so on. Not to him that begins the fight; not to him that buckles on his harness; not to him that proclaims war; but "to him that overcometh will I give." The promises are reserved for such; and you know how, in contradistinction to such promises, it is written, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

Brethren, before I leave this subject this morning, there is something which I wish to press upon your minds: it is not very pleasant, but it is needful for us to hear it. Let me remind you of some whom you yourselves have known, who did appear to be amongst the most gracious and excellent of the earth, who are at this moment so far cast off as to have become entirely forgetful, even of the outward forms of religion, and have gone aside, by fearful sins, we fear, into perdition. That, mark you, has happened in some cases after many years of profession: the vessel has been wrecked at the harbour's mouth. The fire of religious excitement burned all day, at least, so they said (we do not search hearts), and it went out at night, just when it was most required, when the chamber, the chill,

cold chamber, most needed the genial flame. Doubtless John was right when he said, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." But what a dreadful thing, not to persevere, and yet to have had the name of a Christian! When a man goes up a ladder, if he shall fall at the first step, that is bad; but if he shall fall when he has nearly reached the top, what a falling is there! God save us from it! If ever I prayed in my life, I think I did this morning when we were singing those words, "Let us not fall! Let us not fall I" for oh! to fall backward into perdition is the worst way of falling into hell! Christian, it is not with you that you may persevere or not-it is not an optional blessing- you must persevere, or else all you have ever known and felt will be good for nothing to you. You must hold on your way if you are ultimately to be saved.

Let me here say, and I leave the point, that I do not assert that a Christian must daily make progress in grace; he ought to do so, he should do so; but even if he should not do so, he will not be cast away for that. Neither do I assert that a Christian should always be conscious that he is in the way, for many of the best of God's saints are tormented with many doubts and fears. Nor do I say that every departure from the way of God is inevitably fatal: far from it, for many have departed for a season, and have been brought back and restored as penitent backsliders. Christian went down By-path meadow, and yet returned to the right road: that is a very different case from Demas, who forsook the way to dig in the silver mine, and perished in it. The general current of the soul, however, must be onward: the general current and tendency of the believer must be in the way of truth-both as to his heart and his life; and if it be not so, whatever boastings he may make about his faith, whatever experiences he may think he has had, if he do not hold out to the end, there is no salvation, no heaven, no bliss for him.

II. Secondly, it is possible that I may plunge thoughtful minds into deeper gloom still, while I remind you that while final perseverance is necessary, **IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT.**

The way itself renders it so. The way to heaven is no smooth-shaven lawn, no well-rolled gravel path, it is a rough road, up-hill, downdale, across

rivers, and over mountains. He that would get to heaven must have the spirit of Hannibal, who, when he led his troops over the Alps, said, "I will either find a way, or I will make one." You will need all the fortitude that grace itself can give you, in order to reach, along such a road, the city of your desire.

Moreover, the road is long. It is a life-long road. To keep near to God by the space of a week is not the easiest thing conceivable; to deny one's passions, to overcome one's evil desires for the space of a month might be difficult, but this is for life; we shall not be able to lay down this charge till we lay down our bodies. Here we stand upon our watch-tower, not by day alone, though the hot noontide might make us faint, but until the evening star arises, and onward through the dark night till the gleams of morning come; and so day after day, from the first childhood of our spiritual existence until we have matured into a ripe old age, it is watching, watching continually, and laboring and pressing forward. My brethren, I do not know how it is with some of you, but I do feel this and must confess it, that in the early part of our Christian career there is a freshness and a novelty about everything which enables us to travel readily, but after awhile-there is no monotony, it is true, except in ourselves, but it begins to be heavy work to hold on in the ways of the Lord. It ought not to be so, but, alas! it is so; and we have to cry to the strong for strength that we may be renewed, or else the length of the way would wear us out.

Besides that, the road is so contrary to fallen nature. It is a way of faith. If it were a way of sight., one might walk in it easily, but it is a way of faith from the beginning to the end- "the just live by faith;" not a way of sensible comforts; not always a way of joyful experiences, but frequently a path of deep tribulation, solemn heart-searchings, bitterness, and of gall; a way outside the camp where none can sympathize with you; a way of scourging and of flagellation even from the hand of the great Father himself, who hides himself from us for a season. It is a way so contrary to flesh and blood that he who holds out in it has received power from on high, and has the Holy Ghost within him. God himself must dwell in a persevering Christian's heart. The Hebrew word, for hold on, in the text, is very expressive, "it signifies to hold with strength, to hold toughly, to

hold as with the teeth, resolving never to let go, but ever to go on." Beloved, we must hold on with tooth and nail: if we cannot run, we must walk; if we cannot walk, we must clamber on hands and knees up the hill; and if we cannot even do this, we must stand fast. All Christians who have had any experience of divine life will say, that from the way itself it is no easy thing to continue in it.

Then, take into consideration, in the next place, as to our difficulties, our flesh-that heavy load which we have to take along this weary way. We have constitutional sins, any one of which, if left unwatched for a little season, would cause us to make shipwreck of our faith. Some of us are constitutionally idle, we would scarce do anything unless the solemn obligation of duty compelled us. Others are constitutionally angry-quick tempered-and for them to become like little children (which they must do if they would be saved) is no easy task. Some, I know, are naturally desponding; their eyes have always a blue tinge, everything looks blue as they look abroad, and it is not so easy for them to trust in the Lord and do good, waiting patiently for the Lord's appearing. These natural infirmities and weaknesses of ours render it hard to drag our flesh along the road to heaven.

Besides this, who doth not know that he bears a cage of unclean birds within himself? If my passions were all naturally on God's side, and would, without grace, run towards heaven, then there might be no difficulty in holding on the way; but, alas! the whole of our nature, when let alone, straineth and tuggeth to go back to the land of Egypt; and sometimes it seems as if our baser passions would get the victory, and compel us to wear once more the galling yoke, and to fret under the fierce bondage of the Pharaoh of hell. It must not be, it shall not be; but, O God, save me from that evil man, myself. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Paul said so, and we have often had to say it; and, when living nearest to God, we have had to groan most over indwelling sin.

Besides our flesh, however, my brethren, we are all conscious of other foes in our way to heaven. For instance, there is the world. Can you mix with it, and obtain from it any quickening in the spiritual life? You are

compelled to mix in it; your business calls you; common society demands of you that you should in seine measure mix with the world, for if you are not to speak to sinners, you must go out of the world altogether. But is it not hard work, after a week perhaps of toil with ungodly, blaspheming workmen, to come up to the house of God with the mind quite calm? To be in business with its worries, and its cares, and in the world with its customs, and its maxims, and still to be a child of God, is not easy! Ah! you must be a child of God indeed to remain true in such a world as this. Sometimes the world persecutes the Christian, and it is not always the easiest thing to fight with old Giant Grim, and keep the middle of the way and overcome him. Then there is that Vanity Fair, and he is a man indeed who can turn a deaf ear to all are crying, "Buy, buy, buy!" Worst of all there is Madam Bubble, with her sweet speech, and her words softer than butter, while inwardly they are drawn swords. You know how Mr. Standfast had to take to his knees before he could get rid of that old witch, when she offered him all sorts of delights, having caught him just in the frame for it, when he said he was as poor as an owlet, and weary and faint, then it was she offered him all that is fleshly and pleasant; only tears and prayers got him out of that difficulty. "The righteous shall hold on his way." O God, thou hast said it, but if thou hadst not said so, we should have declared that in such a world as this it would be impossible for a Christian, through a life of trial, to maintain his integrity.

Then there is the devil: we put him last, for he is the most terrible foe. When he stretches his feet across the middle of the way, and swears that he will spill our souls, and we shall go no farther; when he brings the past up and tells us of our unfaithfulness; when he insinuates that there is no hereafter, that there is no heaven, but that our faith is all a foolish invention, and an old wives' fable; and then when he holds out present enjoyment and present gain, and tells us that if we do not get these we shall have nothing, and hisses out the accusation that we are hypocrites, and I know not what-ah! then, unless we carry the true Jerusalem blade of the Word of God, and have the grace of God to nerve our arm while we wield that sword of the Spirit, we shall not be "more than conquerors," but die on the road. It is difficult for us to persevere for awhile, but it is difficult in the extreme to do so to the end. To get to heaven is no child's work. He that getteth there will have to fight for every inch of the road;

and when he gets there, oh! how he will clap his hands as he looks back upon the danger; how he will shout with them that triumph when he once finds himself emancipated from ten thousand dangers, and "with God eternally shut in."

III. Thirdly, and, I trust, most comforting to our souls, the PERSEVERANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN IS GUARANTEED.

Would you prefer to hear one or two of the passages of Scripture read which guarantee the perseverance of believers? I have little time this morning, but here is one, the thirty-second chapter of Jeremiah, fortieth verse: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." There is a double blessing: God will not depart from his people; his people shall not depart from him. Thus doubly are they kept by grace. Our Savior's words in the sixth chapter of John, at the thirty-ninth and fortieth verses, are sweetly to the same import: "This is the Father's which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me. I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." You know that memorable passage a little farther on—the tenth chapter of John, twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." If more were wanted, you might turn to that inexpressibly precious passage in the eighth chapter of Romans, where, towards the close, the apostle, having challenged heaven, and earth, and hell, to condemn the believer, saith, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The beloved apostle John, to quote from him once more, has told us in the nineteenth verse of the second chapter of his first epistle, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made

manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." These are just a handful of texts, and a mere handful from a vast mass. So clear is the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, that I venture to assert boldly, that if the Bible does not teach it, it does not teach anything at all. If that be not a clear doctrine of revelation, then neither is the doctrine of the deity of Christ, nor indeed any doctrine, and the Bible must be a mere nose of wax, to be moulded according to our will.

But, beloved, there are these considerations which make the perseverance of the Christian certain to us. Unless the Christian shall persevere, the eternal purpose of God will be defeated; for from the beginning God hath chosen his people unto holiness, to be set apart for his service, to be purified by his grace, that they may be presented at last without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. If believers do not persevere, we have shown that they must perish as other apostates do; therefore, since the purpose of God for the sanctification and safety of his chosen cannot be frustrated, and the design of the Most High standeth fast, we believe that the righteous shall hold on his way.

In addition to this, the work of Jesus Christ would be of no avail unless the bloodwashed held on their way. The Lord Jesus has redeemed his people from among men; but if, though they have been redeemed, they should not persevere unto the end, they would perish, then it would follow that Christ shed his blood in vain; bought those whom he will never have; suffered for the sins of men who afterwards have to suffer for their own sins; which always seems to us to be a supposition fraught with blasphemous impossibility-that Christ should be a surety for men's sins, and be punished in their stead, and yet those men should be punished for the sins which were laid upon their scapegoat. Such must be emphatically the case, brethren, unless those who are redeemed by blood persevere to the end. Jesus has evidently taken their sins, and taken them in vain, suffered for them in vain. He has been their substitute, and yet these men perish.

Moreover, through the righteousness of Christ, believers are justified they are declared to be no longer under the law; but if they do not persevere in



holiness, they perish. How can he perish who is justified? How shall he be condemned who is not under the law, and consequently has no law which can condemn him? The thing becomes impossible. We are involved in a mesh of difficulties, a labyrinth from which we cannot escape, if we suppose it to be possible for a saint to finally fall from grace.

Moreover, all true believers are one with Christ. They are married to him. Shall Christ lose his spouse? They are members of his body: they are declared to be parts of himself; and shall Christ be dismembered? Shall he be a dislocated, disjointed, broken-up humanity? Nay, the church is his fullness-the fullness of him that filleth all in all. If Jesus save not his church, he is not a perfect Christ-he is. a maimed and wounded Savior. My brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ has gone to heaven as our representative: he represents every believer. Does he represent those who shall ultimately be cast into hell? Has he gone to prepare a place for believers? Ay, then they shall have the place prepared for them, for otherwise the places will be prepared, but the people will not come. Has he not said that he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him? How then shall it be possible for those who have come to God by him to perish, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them? Paul uses an overwhelming argument which I cannot this morning open up in full, but it has a triple power about it. "If," said he, "when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved b his life." If when we were enemies, without a thought towards God reconciled us, much more will he save us now that we are his children. If we were reconciled, much more shall we be saved, which is by far the least difficult work of the two; and if the death of Christ sufficed to reconcile us, what shall not the life of the glorious, immortal Savior do? Surety if the death has done so much, the life shall do yet more, and it shall be true as it is written, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Further, my brethren, as we have spoken of the Father and of the Son, there is the Holy Spirit's work to be taken into consideration. He dwelleth in us: shall he be expelled? It is written that we are the temples of the Holy Spirit: shall the temples of the Holy Spirit become like the temples of Jove or of Saturn? Shall they be given up to the moles and the bats,

degraded and defiled? God forbid! He that dwells there will drive out the foe and maintain a shrine for himself in purity. The Holy Ghost has begun to sanctify us: will he begin and not conclude? Shall the Holy Spirit be defeated by the devil and the flesh? Shall the banner of the devil be hanged up in Satan's hall because he hath overcome the elect? Beloved, God gave the victory over to Satan for a moment in the garden of Eden, but with the determination to win it from the strong man; and he has bound captivity captive, and there shall be none of the spoils of the elect left in the hands of the enemy. God shall be conqueror all through the campaign; and at the last the Spirit shall not be defeated in a single heart wherein he came to dwell. Let us rejoice, then, that when we consider the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it does seem impossible that the righteous should be lost. They must, therefore, hold on their way. Beloved, let us fall back upon this truth in our times of worst discouragement; and if any say, "This is not a practical truth, but calculated to lull us into slumber," let us prove, by our activity, that they err, not knowing the truth. I can never conceive that it dispirits the soldier, when he is fighting, to tell him that he must win the victory. This is what Cromwell's ironsides said when they saw the great general riding along the ranks, "'Tis he!" they said, "'tis he!" they felt the victory was sure where Cromwell was, and like thunderbolts they dashed upon their enemies, until as thin clouds before the tempest the foemen flew apace. The certainty of victory gives strength to the arm that wields the sword. To say to the Christian you shall persevere till you get to the journey's end-will that make him sit down on the next mile-stone? No; he will climb the mountain, wiping the sweat from his brow; and as he looks upon the plain, he will descend with surer and more cautious footsteps, because he knows he shall reach the journey's end. God will speed the ship over the waves into the desired haven; will the conviction of that on the part of the captain make him neglect the vessel? Yes, if he be a fool; but if he be a man in his wits, the very certainty that he shall cross the deep will only strengthen him in time of storm to do what he would not have dreamt of doing if he had been afraid the vessel would be cast away. Brethren, let this doctrine impel us to a holy ardency of watchfulness, and may the Lord bless us and enable us to persevere to the end.

IV. Lastly, PERSEVERANCE IS GUARANTEED, BUT NOT TO

## EVERYBODY

There are some here who are not believers in Christ. A text rose up last night out of the Bible and struck me very painfully. I was afraid as I read it that some of you would persevere to the end and would go to hell, for I read these words, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still;" and I wondered whether Christ would say that of some of you. I am afraid of you; you have been warned; you have heard the gospel; you have been entreated to wash in the fountain, and you will not come. You have put off many and many a stroke of conscience, and said, "Go thy way; when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." Now, mind, mind lest Christ should say, "Let him alone; he is unjust, let him be unjust still; he is prayerless, let him be prayerless still; he never feels the word, let him be unfeeling still; he is a tearless, Christless soul, he shall be so for ever." God forbid it! Now, do not any of you who are in that case go home and talk about the comfortable doctrine I have preached; it is nothing to you, you are like the poor shivering outcast in the street, who sees Christmas festivities through the window, in which he has no share. Go home, and God break your heart over this; may God cause you to mourn that there is no gracious perseverance for you, because you have no grace to persevere in; and that if you persevere in the road you are now in, it will only be to keep to the road of destruction that will at last end in the dreadful terminus of hell-fire.

There are, on the other hand, some of you who have made a profession of faith; it may be these hands baptized you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, in this pool beneath. Ah! well, Christ has not said that you shall all persevere. Perhaps you made a profession merely to please parents, or friends, or to do what seemed to be a custom with others; perhaps you never had a deep sense of sin; perhaps you never did rest in Christ: I pray God that you may not persevere, but may repent and begin anew. Do not say, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. Come as a poor sinner to Christ, and you will never be cast away; but if you merely make a profession of a notional religion that you have in your head, and not in your heart, it will be all ill with you at the last. You will be like the plant which had not much earth; when the sun arose, the root was scorched and the plant withered away. May God give you grace-may you be deeply

rooted with grace in your heart.

But it is to you who have faith in God-it is to you that this final perseverance is promised, and I ask you to come this morning and take it. "How," say you, "shall I take it?" Why, come to Jesus just as you did when you first came. That is the true final perseverance, to come always to Christ, having nothing in self, but having all in him. I hope you and I feel this morning that the sweet verse of Toplady still fits our case-

"Nothing in my hand I bring;  
Simply to thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly;  
Wash me, Savior, or I die."

Keep to that, never get an inch beyond that. Stand at the cross's foot and view the sin-atonement blood; rest there living, rest there dying. and then when your spirit mounts to heaven, may your last song be of being washed in blood; and in heaven may it be said of you as of your fellow-sinners, "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The Lord bless you and keep you, and cause his face to shine upon you, and give you peace. Amen and Amen.

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## **The Royal Death Bed**

Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? - Amos 3:6

We have nothing to do this morning with the question of moral evil, and indeed with the awful mystery of the origin of moral evil, we have nothing to do at any time. There may have been some few speculators upon this matter, who like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, could walk in the midst of the fire unharmed, but most men who have ventured near the mouth of this fiery question, have been like Nebuchadnezzar's guards - they have fallen down, destroyed by the blasting influence of its heat. The problem we have to solve is not how was evil born, but how shall evil die—not how it came into the world, but the mischief it has wrought since its coming, and how it is to be driven out. Those persons who fritter away their time in useless and curious enquiries about the origin of moral evil, and so forth, are generally persons who are too idle to attempt the practical casting out of the fiend, and therefore would kill their time, and quiet their consciences by abstruse controversies and vain janglings about subjects with which we have nothing to do.

The evil in the text is that of calamity, and we might so read the verse—"Shall there be a calamity in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?"—a question exceedingly appropriate at the present time. There has been evil in this city; a calamity of an unusual and disastrous nature has fallen upon this nation. We have lost one who will find today a thousand tongues to eulogize him; a prince whose praise is in the mouth of all; and who is in such repute among you that it is utterly needless for me to commend his memory to your hearts. We have lost a man whom it was our habit to suspect so long as he lived, he could do little without arousing our mistrusts; we were always alarmed by phantoms of intrusion, and unconstitutional influence, and now that he has departed, we may sincerely regret that we could not trust where confidence was so well deserved. Not of lack of homage to his rank, his talents, or his house, could he complain, but from his tomb there might well come the still small voice of memory, reminding us of many careless suspicions, a few harsh judgments, and one or two heartless calumnies. I was pleased by a remark made by the leading journal of the age, to the effect that the Prince Consort's removal might suggest deep regrets for our thrifty homage and measured respect. He has deserved nothing but good at our hands. Standing in the most perilous position, his foot has not skipped; standing where the slightest interference might have brought down a

storm of animosity upon his head, he has prudently withheld himself, and let public affairs as much as possible alone. Looking upon the nature of our government, and the position of the throne in our constitution, I can but say, "Verily it is a heavy calamity to lose such a husband for such a Queen." So dire is this evil that our troubled hearts are shadowed with dark forebodings of other ills of which this may be the mournful herald. We were saying with David, "My mountain standeth firm, it shall never be moved;" an earthquake has commenced, the mountain trembles, one great rock hath fallen—what may come next? We did reckon upon war, but we had no forewarnings of a Royal funeral; we looked forward with some apprehension to strifes abroad, but not to losses at home. And now we feel that a corner-stone in the Royal house has been taken away, and we look forward with sorrow and fear to what may come next, and next, and next. We have great faith in our Constitution, but had we not even greater faith in God, we might fear lest the removal of an eminent minister, lest the taking away of some great men who have stood prominent in our commonwealth, should leave us desolate, without earthly helpers. 'Tis not the fall of yonder stately column, which alone has caused us sadness; it is the prophetic finger pointing to other parts of the goodly pile, which has made us full of forebodings of the time when many a noble pillar must lie in the dust, Nor is this all, or the deepest sorrow. We feel this to be an evil upon the city, because of the taking away of a parent from his children, and such children too—princes, princes whom no man may venture to instruct as could a father, princes into whose ears wise counsels will scarcely enter, save through a father's voice—princes and princesses, who needed to have his prudent counsel to steer them through the various trials of their minority, and to cheer them when they should come into the battles of life. He is taken away, who, in concert with the Queen, hath so well trained them, and what his loss may be to their future characters time only shall reveal. More than this—and here we touch the tenderest string and come nearest to the heart of the evil—Her Majesty has lost her beloved husband, her only equal friend, her only confidant, her only councillor in her private cares. Save her children, she has lost all at a blow, and she is this day more widowed than the poorest widower in the land. The bereaved wife of the peasant is too often afflicted by the grasp of chill penury, but she has some equals and friends who prevent the colder hand of regal isolation from freezing the very soul.

In our tenderly beloved Sovereign we see Majesty in misery, and what if I say, we behold the empress of sorrow. Just as the mountain-peaks, the first to catch the sunbeams of summer, are the most terribly exposed to the pitiless blasts of winter, so the elevation of sovereignty with all its advantages in prosperity, involves the maximum of sorrow in the hour of tribulation. What rational man among us would be willing to assume imperial cares in ordinary times, but what must they be now, when household bereavement wrings the heart, and there is no more an affectionate husband to bear his portion of the burden. Brethren, we can only sympathize, but we cannot console. Ordinary cases are often within reach of compassion, but the proper reverence due to the highest authority in the land, renders it impossible for the dearest friend to use that familiarity which is the very life of comfort. This is a calamity indeed! O Lord, the comforter of all those whose hearts are bowed down, sustain and console our weeping monarch? Would that Robert Hall, or Chalmers, could arise from the grave, to depict this sorrow? As for me, my lips are so unaccustomed to courtly phrases, and I understand so little of those depths of sorrow, that I am not tutored and prepared to speak on such a subject as this. I do but stammer and blunder, where there is room for golden utterance and eloquent discourse. Thou God of heaven thou knowest that there beats nowhere a heart that feels more tenderly than ours, or an eye that can weep more sincerely for the sorrow of that Royal Lady, who is thus left alone. Alas! for the Prince who has fallen upon the high places! From the council-chamber he is removed, from the abode of all the graces he is taken away, from the home of loveliness, from the throne of honor he is gone, and it is an evil—such an evil as has never befallen this nation in the lifetime of any one of us—such an evil, that there is but one death—and may that be far removed—which could cause greater sorrow in the land.

But now, our text lifts up its voice, and demands to be heard, since it is a question from the lips of the Eternal God. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"

There are two things upon which we will speak this morning. First, God has done it; secondly, God has done it with a design. Let us endeavor to find, if we can, what that design is.

I. First, then, there is an evil in the city; but God HAS DONE IT.

There was considerable curiosity to enquire into the second cause of this evil. Whence came the fever? We could not suppose it to be bred, as the fever frequently is, in our courts and alleys in the plague-nest where filth provided it with all its food, until it was hatched to pestilence. What were its earliest symptoms, what its growth, and how it was that it baffled the physician's skill. We may lay aside these enquiries, to look apart and away from the second cause, to the first great cause who hath done all. "The Lord hath done it." He gave the breath, and he hath taken it away; he moulded the manly form, and he has laid it prostrate in the dust, he has sent the man and he has said, "Return! to the dust whence thou wast taken." I call to remembrance the notions which have spread throughout this world, and which are still living in our age—the notions which seek to banish God, and make him a stranger in the midst of his own works. God must have done this thing, or else we are driven to some other alternative. How came this calamity about? Shall we suppose it to be by chance? There are still some found foolish enough to believe that events happen without divine predestination, and that different calamities transpire without the overruling hand, or the direct agency of God. Alas! for you and for me, if chance had done it. Ah! what were we, men and brethren, if we were left to chance! We should be like poor mariners, put out to sea in an unsafe vessel, without a chart and without a helm; we should know nothing of the port to which we might ultimately come; we should only feel that we were now the sport of the winds, the captives of the tempest, and might soon be the victims of the all-devouring deep. Alas! poor orphans were we all, if we were left to chance. No father's care to watch over us, but left to the fickleness and fallibility of mortal things! What were all that we see about us, but a great sand storm in the midst of a desert, blinding our eyes, preventing us from ever hoping to see the end through the darkness of the beginning. We should be travelers in a pathless waste, where there were no roads to direct us—travelers who might be overturned and overwhelmed at any moment, and our bleached bones left the victims of the tempest, unknown, or forgotten of all. Thank God it is not so with us. Chance exists only in the heart of fools, we believe that everything which happens to us is ordered by the wise and



tender will of him who is our Father and our Friend, and we see order in the midst of confusion, we see purposes accomplished where others discern fruitless wastes, we believe that, "He hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet."

Some, on the other hand, run to another extreme, still forgetting their God. They deny the thought of chance, but they bend to the idea of fate. Some predestinarians without a God, are as far astray in their ideas as those who believe in chance without a God. For what is the "fate" of some men? It reminds me of one of those huge machines employed in the lead mines, where two wheels are always revolving, and breaking the stones quarried from the pit. The stones at first lie at a distance, but they are continually moving nearer and nearer to the all-devouring mouth of the great wheels, and at last they are crushed and ground. Such is fate in the minds of some men. Or to use another figure. It is like the great car of Juggernaut, dragged along by irresistible power. On it comes, crushing, mangling, flattening beneath in wheels the bleeding bodies lying in the way. From this horrid car of fate none can getaway, none even attempt to escape. They are bound hand and foot, and laid down in its pathway, and when the time comes the wheels will grind the poor wretches to powder. Well, I thank God that while I believe in predestination, I know the difference between that and fate. Fate is predestination blind, demented, brainless, wandering about, achieving wondrous things without a purpose, overturning mountains, plucking up cedars by the roots, scattering firebrands, hurling deaths about, but all without an end. Such is fate.—It is because it must be,—events occur, because they shall be. But predestination is a glorious thing. With many eyes it looketh to the interests of God and his creatures too, and although it saith the thing must be, yet it must be because it is wise, and right, and just, and kind, that it should be; and though we may think that it comes to the same in the end, yet to our hearts the differences are as wide as the poles asunder. Believe not in fate, but believe in God. Say not it was the man's destiny, but say it is God's will. Say not, a cruel and irresistible fate hath snatched him away; but say, a tender hand, finding that the due time was come, hath taken him from evil to come.

These two suppositions being disposed of, there remains another. "Is

there evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" If neither a foolish chance nor an insensate fate hath done it; perhaps the spirit of evil may have inflicted it. Perhaps Satan may bring evils upon us; perhaps he may drag down men to their graves; perhaps he may cut the thread of life; perhaps he is the evil genius of the world, and the keeper of the gates of death. Brethren, we scout the thought at once from our minds. Begone far hence, foul King of Errors! thou art the prince of the air, but thou art not king of kings, nor art thou now the king of death, the keys swing not at the girdle, not from thy black lips can come the summons, "Prepare to meet thy doom," not with thy foul fingers are we plucked from our houses and from our thrones, not through thy cruelty are we given up to us in a black day. Thy despotic and tyrannic mind has no power to lord it over us. No, Jesus, thou hast vanquished Satan, thou hast delivered us from the very fear of death, because thou hast destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil. A thousand angels could not drag us to the grave; and thou, black spirit, thou shalt not be able to confine us there, when once the trump of the archangel shall awaken us from our sleep. Nay, Satan has not done it. Look not on your troubles and trials, my brethren in Christ, as coming from hell. Satan may sometimes be the instrument of your palms, but still they come from God. In the cup of our sorrows, there is not a dreg which the Father did not put there; bitter as the compound may be, the eternal hand of wisdom mixed the whole. The rod may fall, but Satan does not wield it. Like as a father "chasteneth his children," so the Lord doth chasten "them that fear him."

But, once more: one more thought arises in our mind. Perhaps the greatest temptation of modern times, is to impute everything which happens to the laws of nature. Now, this may satisfy philosophy, but theology goes a little further, and while it admits all the laws of matter, yet it asserts that a law is in itself utterly powerless, apart from a power to carry it out. It may be a law that such-and-such things shall be done, but they never will be done unless there be some power to make the law effective. The notion of some in modern times seems to be, that this world is like a great clock, wound up many years ago, in fact, there are some who believe in perpetual motion—and appear to teach that it wound itself up. In order to get rid of God, and send him as far away as possible, they go back to primeval times, and conceive that then all the wheels were

set in motion, and a sufficient quantity of momentum put into the whole affair, so that it is now going on of itself. As to divine interpositions, these they will not believe, miracles, of course, are absurd, and everything is left to the ordinary laws of nature, there being sufficient vitality, according to some, in the world itself to carry on its own acts, according to certain laws and ruled. Blessed be God, we know that this is not true. We believe it is our duty to use every sanitary means to remove the seeds of disease; we believe that they err who would proclaim a fast over a plague, when it were better to sweep the street; we think that they are wrong who only go to the prayer-meeting when they had better go and put down a row of dilapidated cottages and build better ones; we think that they are impractical and do not understand the Scriptures well, who would be on their knees when they ought to be on their feet and doing earnest work for man; but at the same time, still we have it, that the Lord has done everything, and that these calamities come not except God putteth forth his hand—that it is his will to remove men by death, and only by his will could they die. Why, that idea of leaving us all to machinery is an unhappy one to a man who can say, "My Father, my Father in heaven." It is as if a child should be left without nurse or parent, but then there is a cradle which works by machinery, and rocks the child so many hours a day; when it is time for the child to wake he is aroused by machinery; there is an engine ready to feed him; there is a contrivance prepared to take off his garments at night, and an invention to put them on in the morning; he grows up, and whatever is to be done, has to be done by a machine;—no love, no father, no tender nurse, no kind and affectionate mother,—he is the child of machines and wheels; and so, from year to year, he is passed on from one to another. When he comes up into life he is still fed by a machine; he sleeps, he goes on his journeys, in everything that he does he sees no living face, he feels no soft hand, he hears no loving tender voice; it is one clever piece of soulless, lifeless mechanism that accomplishes all. Now, I bless God that is not the case with us. I can see my Father's hand, I thank him I am fed, but I know he feeds me, I know the laws of nature contribute to preserve life, but I see the impress of his presence in my life, and I should feel like a sad and miserable orphan, with nothing that could find my heart's craving after a something to love, if I believed this world to be deserted of its God, and to have been going on with no Father near it to keep it in order, and to make it produce

the insults which he designed. Blessed be God, we have no doubt about our answer to the question. Even if there be evil in a city the Lord hath done it!

Let us pause a moment here, and think. If, then, the Lord hath done it, with what awe is every calamity invested? Standing by the royal death-bed, I thought I was in the presence of a prince, but lo, I see a man. It is thy work, O thou Most High; thou hast sealed those eyes in darkness; thou hast bidden that heart cease its beatings, thou, even thou, hast stretched the manly form in death. How near we are to God! Tread softly, as you go by that little room where your infant's dead body lies yet unburied; for God is there, plucking the flower-bud and appropriating it to himself. You have had some trial yesterday. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet;" for God is in that burning bush. Men see nothing but the calamity; the eyes of faith see God. We sometimes count it matter of interest if we hear that such-and-such a departed worthy slept in such-and-such a room, or wrote in such a place. What shall we say, when we remember that God is there—that God is here—that while we wear these garments of sorrow, when we bowed our heads just now, and shed tears of sympathy, God was here himself,—the All-worker, the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Speak with bated breath; hush, and be silent, you are in the presence of majesty. Let us think of national calamities or of private ills with that reverence which should be inspired by a consciousness of the presence of Deity.

And then, again, if God hath done it, for ever be put away all questions about its being right. It must be right. If any would reply, we would answer them in the curt phrase of Paul, "Nay but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" But to take him away, and to remove him just in the hour of the nation's perils—can this be right. Brethren, it must be. He has died at the best hour; the affliction has come at the most fitting season. It would have been wrong that it should have been otherwise, it would neither have been wise nor kind that he should have been spared. And this I gather from the fact that God has taken him away; and therefore it must be wisest, best, kindest. Only say the same over all your losses. Though your dearest friend be removed, be hushed, be dumb with silence and answer not, because thou didst it, even thou, O God, therefore

we say, "Thy will be done."

And this, too, shall be our best comfort. God hath done it. What! shall we weep for what God hath done! Shall we sorrow when the Master hath taken away what was his own? "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." The gardener had a choice flower in his beds. One morning he missed it. He had tended it so carefully that he looked upon it with the affection of a father to a child, and he hastily ran through the garden and sought out one of the servants, for he thought surely an enemy had plucked it, and he said to him, "Who plucked that rose?" And the servant said, "I saw the master walking through the garden early this morning, when the sun was rising, and I saw him bear it away in his hand." Then he that tended the rose said, "It is well; let him be blessed; it was his own; for him I held it; for him I nursed it and if he hath taken it, it is well: So be it with your hearts. Feel that it is for the best that you have lost your friend, or that your best relation his departed. God has done it. Be ye filled with comfort; for what God hath done can never be a proper argument for tears. Do ye weep, ye heavens, because God hath veiled the stars? Dost thou weep, O earth, because God hath hidden the sun? What God hath done is ever ground for sonnet and for hallelujah. And even here, o'er the dead as yet unburied, our faith begins to sing its song—"Tis well, 'tis well; 'tis for the best, and let the Lord's name be praised now as ever."

II. I now only want your attention for a few minutes while I pass on to the second head. IF GOD HATH DONE IT, HE HATH DONE IT WITH SOME DESIGN.

It is not always proper for us to ask reasons for divine acts, for if he gives no account of his matters we ought not to ask any account. That frivolous affectation of piety which leads even professedly Christian men to call every affliction a judgment, and to consider that every patron who is suddenly taken away, dies as a judgment either upon him or others, I detest from my very soul. The infidel press usually lays hold upon this as being our weakest point. It is not our weakest point; we have nothing to do with it. Those who talk thus know nought of their Bibles. They upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, dream ye that they were worse sinners

than others? I am utterly sick of the cant of a portion of the religious world, when they raised a kind of miniature howl at me, when I said, and still repeat it, that an accident on a railway on the Sunday is not a judgment, but happens in the common course of Providence, and that we are not to look for an immediate reason close at hand for any of these events. God's judgments are a vast deep, they are not that little shadow pool, to the bottom of which every fool's plummet may reach. God has some greater mystery in what he does than these, which every babe might discover. But, we draw a line between private calamities and national calamities. Nations have no future, hence the Judge of Unctions must chastise them here. For individuals, the punishment of sin is not in this world, but in the world to come; but nations will not rise as nations—they will rise as individuals, hence, when a death becomes a national calamity, it is fitting and proper to question, if we do not pry too deep, as to why God hath done it. Personally, the judgment is in the next world, and to each man the end of his career is to come there; but with nations I think there are judgments here, and that we should be wrong if we passed by the dealings of God, without hearing "the rod and him that hath appointed it."

Now, why hath God been pleased to take away the Consort of our Queen?

I think, in the first place, we may see a motive for it in his thus giving a most solemn monition to all the kings and princes of the earth. Thus saith Jehovah, King of kings and Lord of lords: "Emperors and princes! ye thou die like men. Let not your crowns seem to you eternal; there is but one King, immortal, invisible. Think not, when ye stretch your spectres over nations, that yours is an Almighty arm; your arm shall drop the rod, your head shall lose its crown; your purple shall give place to the shroud, and your palace shall be the narrow limits of the tomb." The dead from their graves are crying—

"Princes? this clay muse be your bed  
In spite of all your towers;  
The tall, the mighty, and majestic head  
Must lie as low as ours."

You will say, "But why not remove a common and ordinary person?" Because it would not have that effect. Thou, God, hast spoken from the castle, where the flag, half elevated, hung out the sign of sorrow, and thou hast said to princes who must hear, and to Czars who must listen, "I am God and beside me there is none else. As for you, ye kings, your breath is in your nostrils; men of high degree are vanity; wherein are ye to be accounted of?" We, the multitude, can hear sermons every day, when we see our fellows and our equals removed from us by death; but these high and lofty ones sit up in their state like the gods in high Olympus, and if there were not death in their ranks, they might write themselves down as demigods, and demand worship at our hands, is thy pride, O empire! thy escutcheon marred and blotted; for Death, the herald, hath challenged the royalty of emperors and kings, and dashed down, once for all, his gauntlet in defiance of the princes of the earth. Ye shall sleep like your serfs and slaves; ye shall die like your subjects. Heroes has passed away, as well as the minions he led to slaughter. And so, ye mighty ones, must ye find that Death advances with equal foot to the palace of the king—to the cottage of the poor.

More than this: who can tell how many a heart that had been careless in our court, and thoughtless among our lords, may be made to consider? If anything can do it, this must. They who have been dazzled with the brightness of splendor, and have lost their thought amidst the noise of pomp, will hear for once a sermon by a preacher whom they dare not despise; for God will say to them, "Courtiers! noblemen! peers! I have taken away your head from you; prepare ye to meet your God! "And it may be that today there are knees bowed in prayer which never bowed before, and eyes may weep for sin as well as for death to-day, and hearts may be breaking with a consciousness of guilt, as well as with a sense of loss. 'Tis hard for the rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, thus Providence attempts to make it easy. It is not easy to get the ear of those who are thus immersed in the ordinary gaieties and cares of Court life; but this detains them, death holds the wedding guests, while with his lean and skinny hand uplifted, he tells out the tale, and makes them hear, and checks and keeps them till the story is done. It may be that God intends to bring out for this our age, some who shall stand towards the Church of

God to-day, as Lady Huntingdon and Ann Erskine did to the Church a hundred years ago. It may be he is tutoring to-day, some women who, like Anne of Bohemia, the friend of the Reformers, may become promoters of the gospel of Christ; and those who otherwise might have been strangers may come to lend their influence and their power to the promotion of real godliness, and the vital interests of men.

I think these are not unreasonable things to say. We may see that God has his purpose here. Besides, methinks today God has spoken to us as a people. He has shown to us our entire dependence upon him. He can take away every Prince and every Noble, every Cabinet Minister, and every Privy Councillor; he can leave this nation like a ship dismasted; he can, if he so wills, take the hand from the helm, and let her be drifted out to sea, and there she may be encompassed with the clouds of war and the lightnings of judgment, and all our state may suffer wreck like Nineveh and Babylon of old. Britain! God hath blessed thee, but remember, it is thy God. England, God hath honored thee; but forget not the God who keeps thee. O nation, too apt to become proud of thine own strength, now that thou art today wrapped about with sackcloth, and the ashes are on thy head, bow thou and say, "God is God alone; the shields of the mighty belong unto him, and unto him, and unto him alone, be glory and honor, for ever and ever."

Then, he has spoken to each of us as individuals. I hear a voice which says to me, "Preacher! be instant in season and out of season, be up and doing earnest and fervent, for thy day is short, and thy time shall soon be over." I hear a voice which says to you, officers of the Church, "Be diligent in business, fervent in spirit,—serving the Lord; for soon shall the pallor of death overtake you, and he shall lay his chill hand upon your hoary heads, and stretch you in the cold grave." I hear a voice which speaks to the people of my charge,—the members of this Christian Church—"Work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh wherein no man can work." And I hear a solemn note, tinged as a funeral bell to you who are unconverted, and I translate its message thus,— "Prepare to meet your God, ye careless ones, who are at ease, make ready, for he comes; ye thoughtless ones, who give yourselves no trouble about eternity, make ready, for he comes, drunkard, thou who art a lover of pleasure more



than a lover of God, make ready for he comes, swearer, blasphemer, if there be such a one here, make ready, for he comes; he comes whom thou hast blasphemed; and each one of you, if ye be out of Christ, if your sins still lie upon you, if ye have never sought and found absolution from the lips of God your Father, seek it, seek it, for he comes "When at the battle of Balaklava, the troop of soldiers rode into the valley of death, it must have been a frightful thing to see your comrade reel in the saddle and fall back, to hear bullet after bullet whistling about one's ears; and shots finding their mark in one's companion; to see the road strewn with bodies, and the ranks so continually riddled and thinned. And what has been the life of many of us but such a charge as that? Companions of our boyhood! where are ye? Friends of our youth! how many of you have fallen? And the gray-haired sire, as he looks back can say, "How few survive of all I once knew? How many have gone! What multitudes have fallen in the valley of decision!" And we stand monuments of long-suffering; we stand monuments of mercy! Must not our turn soon come? Must not our turn soon come, I say? Have we a lease of our lives? Can we postpone the dread moment? Can we hope to live long, when the whole of the longest life is short? Let us prepare, for to-morrow may see our coffin measured, to-morrow may behold us ready for our ceremonies; nay, to-night the setting sun may set upon our dead bodies. I do beseech you, remember, men, that ye are mortal. Call to recollection, by this solemn drapery of woe, and by the garment. Of your sorrow, that soon you must be wept over; soon mourners shall go about the streets for you, and you shall go to your long homes. I am addressing some of you this morning, who awake my tenderest anxieties. You have been to hear this voice before, some of you, and you have trembled; but your strong passions are too much for you. You have said, "Go thy way; when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee;" and that convenient season has not come yet. You would be saved; but you must be damned. You have longings after life at times, but the cravings of that old lust, that old habit of drunkenness, that old vice, those old corruptions, come, and you go back like dogs to your vomit, and like sows that were washed to your wallowing in the mire. I speak to some this morning, who have trembled in this house, when they heard the Word preached, and they have gone home, and they have felt for a little while solemnly impressed, but they have put the anger of mercy from them; they have despised their own

salvation. Well, ye shall do it but a few times more, ye shall despise your own souls but a few more days, and then ye shall know, on your deathbeds, that we have not lied to you, but have spoke to you God's truth. May God convince you of that, before you discover it too late, when the judgment shall sit, and your body, together reunited, shall stand before the judgment seat. Feeble as my words may be, it will make a sad part of the account that you were warned to think on your latter end, and to turn to God. Oh! by death and all its terrors, if unaccompanied by faith—by resurrection and the horrors it shall increase, if you shall perish unforgiven—by the judgment and its tremendous pomp—by the sentence and its eternal certainty—by the punishment and its everlasting agony—by time and eternity—by death and the grave—by heaven and by hell—by God and by the wounds of the Savior—awake, ye sleeping ones! Awake, ere ye sleep the sleep of death! The way of salvation is again proclaimed. "Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." On yonder tree he pours out his blood a sacrifice. Trust thy soul with him, and he will save you; put it in his hands, and he will keep it, and at the last he will be answerable for thy soul, and he will present it "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," before the throne of God, even the Father. May the Lord follow with his blessing what has been said, and to him shall be glory.

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## The Royal Pair In Their Glorious Chariot

Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart. - Solomon's Song 3:6-11

Great princes in the east are in the habit of travelling in splendid palanquins, which are at the same time chariots and beds. The person reclines within, screened by curtains from public view; a body-guard protects the equipage from robbers, and blazing torches light up the path along which the travelers proceed. King Solomon, in this Song, describes the Church of Christ, and Christ himself, as travelling through the world in such a palanquin. The day is coming when both our divine Lord and his chosen bride shall be revealed in glory before the eyes of all men. The present age is the period of concealment—the mystical Solomon and his beloved Solyma are both on earth, but they are unseen of men; like the ark of old they dwell within curtains; only the anointed priests of God can discern their beauties, and even these gaze rather by faith than by sight. "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," is certainly true, for Jesus is here; but equally correct is that word of Peter, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." He is here in the reality, power, and influence of his presence, but he is not here as to the visibility of his kingdom and person, for we wait with our loins girt about, and with patience of hope, until the revelation of Jesus Christ. The

portion of the blessed canticle now before us is, we think, descriptive of the progress of the hidden Christ through the world. He has been borne along, in very truth, but he himself has been so little perceived of men, that they even ask the question, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?" He is not now manifested openly to men. If any should say, "Lo here!" or "Lo there! this is Christ!" believe them not, for Christ is not as yet seen. When he doth come he shall be as perceptible as the lightning's flash, which every man's eye discerneth without the need of an instructor. So, also, with his true Church. She also is hidden like her Lord, and though her hand, her foot, or her face may be sometimes seen, yet the whole elect body has never yet been beheld. If any say, "Lo, here is the Church of Christ!" or "Lo there!" believe them not, for it is a fact that there is no corporation of men of which we can say exclusively or even universally, "Lo, this is the Church of Christ." There are tares growing with the wheat in the best guarded field, and on the other hand no one enclosure contains all the wheat. The true Church of Christ is scattered here and there, it is found amongst all denominations, and there is not one denomination of which you can say, "This only is the Church of Christ, or all its members belong to the body of Christ's spouse." Just now the mystical bride is in a certain sense as invisible as her husband. Behold, then, the betrothed ones carried through the world in the sumptuous chariot of which we have to speak this morning.

I must now claim your attention while I notice, first, the glory of the progress of Christ through the world, as described in the sixth verse; secondly, the security of Christ's cause, as represented in thy seventh and eighth; thirdly, the superlative excellence of it, as described in the ninth and tenth; and lastly, our joyful duties with regard to it, as openly declared in the eleventh.

I. First, then, THE MAGNIFICENT PROGRESS, THE GLORIOUS ON-GOING OF THE CHURCH AND HER LORD THROUGH THE WORLD.

"Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" The equipage excites the attention of the on-looker; his curiosity is raised, and he asks, "Who is this?" Now, in the first progress

of the Christian Church, in her very earliest days, there were persons who marvelled greatly; and though they set down the wonders of the day of Pentecost to drunkenness, yet "they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" In after years, many a heathen philosopher said, "What is this new power which is breaking the idols in pieces, changing old customs, making even thrones unsafe-what is this?" By-and-bye, in the age of the Reformation, there were cowed monks, cardinals in their red hats, and bishops, and princes, and emperors, who all said, "What is this? What strange doctrine has come to light?" In the times of the modern reformation, a century ago, when God was pleased to revive his Church through the instrumentality of Whitfield and his brethren, there were many who said, "What is this new enthusiasm, this Methodism? Whence came it, and what power is this which it wields?" And, doubtless, whenever God shall be pleased to bring forth his Church in power, and to make her mighty among the sons of men, the ignorance of men will be discovered breaking forth in yonder, for they will say, "Who is this?" Spiritual religion is as much a novelty now as in the day when Grecian sages scoffed at it on Mars' Hill. The true Church of God is a stranger and pilgrim still; an alien and a foreigner in every land; a speckled bird; a dove in the midst of ravens; a lily among thorns.

The ignorance of men concerning spiritual things is not, however, caused by the darkness of the things themselves, for Christ and his Church are the great lights of the world. When great personages traveled in their palanquins, and more especially on marriage processions, they were attended by a number of persons who, at night, carried high up in the air burning cressets which gave forth a blaze of light. Sometimes these lights were simply torches carried in the hands of running footmen; at other times they were a sort of iron basket lifted high into the air, upon poles, from which went up a pillar of smoke and flame. Our text says "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke?" a beautiful illustration of the fact that wherever Christ and his cause are carried, light is a sure accompaniment. Into whatsoever region the gospel may journey, her every herald is a flash of light, her every minister a flaming fire. God maketh his Churches the golden candlesticks, and saith unto his children "Ye are the lights of the world," is certainly as ever God said "Let there be

light," and there was light over the old creation, so does he say, whenever his Church advances, "Let there be light" and there is light. Dens of darkness, where the bats of superstition had folded their wings and hung themselves up for perpetual ease, have been disturbed by the glare of these divine flambeaux; the innermost caverns of superstition and sin, once black with a darkness which might be felt, have been visited with a light above the brightness of the sun. "The people which sat in darkness have seen a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light has sprung up." Thus saith the Lord unto the nation where his kingdom cometh, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord hath risen upon thee!" Bear ye the Church of Christ to the South Seas; carry Christ and his spouse in his palanquin to the Caffre, the Hottentot, or the Esquimaux, and everywhere the night of death is ended, and the morning with its glorious dawn has come. High lift your lamps, ye servants of our Lord. High lift up the cross of the Redeemer; for in him is light, and the light in the life of men.

But you will tell me that our text rather speaks of "pillars of smoke" than of sparkling lamps. Brethren, the smoke is but the effect of the flame, and even the pillar of smoke is luminous. What is the smoke that has attended the Church? What but the deaths of her martyrs, the sufferings of her confessors, the patient endurance of her valiant sons? Wherever she goes, the thick smoke of her suffering goeth up to heaven. "We are always delivered unto death," said the apostle. The cause of truth involves a perpetual sacrifice; her smoke ascendeth for ever. Black smoke I say it is in the eye of man, but unto God it is a sweet-smelling savor. Never did fat of rams, or the fat of kidneys of fed beasts, smell so sweetly before the Most High as the faith, the love, the courage, which has ascended up to heaven from the dauntless heroes of the Church in past ages when at the stake they have been faithful even unto death. Suffering, and grief, and woe are the lot of the spouse of the despised and rejected Savior, but all these are as things of nought if thereby she may scatter that terrible blackness which blinds the face of man and makes him a stranger to his God.

It often happens that oriental monarchs of immense possessions, are not content with burning common coals in these cressets, but frequently

consume sandal-wood and other woods which give forth a delightful smell; or else, if they use ordinary coals, they sprinkle upon them frankincense and myrrh, so that a delicious perfume is spread on all sides. In the olden times, they also went to great expense in obtaining drugs, which the merchants collected from all parts of the earth, and these were carefully compounded into the renowned "powders of the merchants," which yielded a delicious variety of delicate perfumes, not to be produced by any one aromatic essence. Our inspired poet describes the travelling procession of the royal pair and fails not to dwell upon the delightful perfume of myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant, "which make the wilderness smell as a garden of roses." Wherever the Church of Christ proceeds, though her pathway is a desert, though she marches through a howling wilderness, she scatters the richest perfume. The page of history were only worthy to be blotted in oblivion were it not for the sweet odours which the Church has left upon it. Look at all past ages, and the track of the Church is still redolent with all the richest fragrance of human virtue and divine grace. Wherever the Church advances she makes manifest the savor of the knowledge of Christ in every place! Men believe in Jesus, and unto the Lord faith has all the fragrance of myrrh. They love Jesus; and love in the esteem of heaven is better than frankincense. Loving Christ they endeavor to be like him, till patience, humility, brotherly-kindness, truthfulness, and all things that are honest, lovely, and of good repute, like "powders of the merchant," are spread abroad throughout the whole earth. Tell me where the Church is not, and I will tell you where sin reigns; tell me where Christ and his Church are carried, and I will tell you where you shall find every virtue that can adorn humanity, and every excellence that can magnify the excellence of the grace of God. If you would find an antidote for the deadly exhalations which lurk among this world's deserts of sin, if you would destroy the foul pestilence which reigns in the darkness of heathenism, of Popery, and of infidelity, cry unto the Mighty One—"Arise, thou unknown traveler, arise, and bid thy servants carry thee into the midst of all this misery and death! The light of thy flaming torches shall scatter the darkness, and the burning of thy precious perfumes shall say unto evil—'Fold thy wings!' and unto the pestilence of sin—'Get thee back unto thy den!'"

Among the ten wonders which Jewish tradition ascribes to the temple, we find that the rain never extinguished the fire of the wood which was laid in order upon the altar, nor did the wind ever conquer the pillar of smoke so as to disperse or bend it. Verily it is so with the Church of God, as she cometh out of the wilderness: who shall quench her flaming lamp, or stay the incense of her golden censers? Ride on, Great Prince, and bear thy spouse with thee in thy majestic chariot, till thou hast lit the world with thy divine light, and hast made it a temple filled with a cloud of incense of sweet smell to the nostrils of Jehovah!

## II. We have, secondly, to notice THE SECURITY OF CHRIST'S CHURCH AT ALL TIMES.

Of course when travelling through a wilderness, a royal procession was always in danger of attack. Arabs prowled around; wandering Bedouins were always prepared to fall upon the caravan; and more especially was this the case with a marriage procession, because then the robbers might expect to obtain many jewels, or, if not, a heavy ransom for the redemption of the bride or bridegroom by their friends. What shall I say of the attacks which have been made upon the Church of Christ, and upon Christ himself? They have been incessant. When one form of evil has been routed, another has presented itself. Evil teems with children. The frogs and lice of Egypt were not more numerous than the enemies of the Lord's anointed and his bride. Every day produces new battles. These attacks arise from all quarters; sometimes from the world, and sometimes, alas! from even professed members of the Church. Adversaries lurk everywhere, and until the Church and her Lord shall be revealed in the splendor of the Millennium, having left the wilderness for ever, we must expect to find her molested on every side. My dear brethren, we know that Christ's cause in the world is always safe because of divine protection, and because the legions of God's angels keep watch and ward over the saints. But we have something more tangible than this. Our gracious God has been pleased to commit unto men the ministry of Christ. "Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." The Lord ordaineth that chosen men should be the protectors of his Church; not that they have any power as of themselves to do anything, but He girdeth the weak with strength and maketh the



feeble mighty; so then, men, even the sons of men stand in array around the travelling palanquin of Christ, to guard both the bridegroom and the bride.

Read the 7th and 8th verses carefully, and you will notice that there are enough swordsmen. "Threescore valiant men are about it." There are always enough men chosen of God to guard the Church. Poor Unbelief holds up her hands and cries—"Ah! the good men are all dead; Zion is under a cloud; the Lord hath taken away the great men; we have no valiant defenders of the faith, none such as this crisis may require!" Ah! Unbelief, let the Lord say unto thee as he did unto Elias—"Yet have I left me seven-thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal." There shall be just as many warriors as the crisis shall require. We do not know where the men are to come from, but the Lord will provide. There may be sitting in the Sunday school to-day a child who shall one day shake this nation from one end to the other; there may be even here, unknown, obscure, and unobserved, the man whom God will make strong to rebuke the infamous infidelity of our age. We know not where the anointing rests. We, in our folly, would anoint Eliab or Abinadab, but God hath chosen David, the shepherd's boy, and he will bring him forth and teach him how to hurl the stone at Goliath's brow. Tremble not, neither be ye afraid; God who makes man and makes man's mouth, will find the sixty men when the sixty shall be needed. "The Lord gave the word, great was the company of them that published it." The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Observe that these warriors are men of the right mettle. "Yes," says poor trembling Little-Faith, "we have hosts of men, but they are not like the greathearts of old; they have not the qualifications which the age requires." Ah! but remember, about the bed of Solomon there are "threescore valiant men;" and glory be unto my Master, while I may not flatter the ministry, I must not dishonor him by believing that he has left his Church without valiant defenders. There are Luthers still living who bid defiance to all adversaries; men who can say, "We count not our lives dear unto us that we may finish our course with joy, and fulfill the ministry which the Lord hath delivered unto us." Fear not; you may not at

present know the valor of the Lord's body-guard, but when the Church's battle grows hotter than just now, suddenly there shall be seen a champion stalking to the front of the battle, and men shall say, "Who is this? How he wields that battle-axe! How he splits the armor of his foes! See how he piles them heaps on heaps, and mounts that hill of slaughtered enemies to smite a greater foe! Who is this?" And the answer shall be, "This is a man whom God hath found; the world knew not of him, but God has trained him in the camps of Dan, and now the Spirit moveth him to smite the Philistines.

"Ah!" I think I hear you say, "but though there may be so many men, and men of the right sort, I am afraid they are not in the right place." Look again at the text. It is written—"Threescore valiant men are ABOUT IT;" that is, there are some on that side, and some on this, some before, and some behind; they are all round the travelling chariot of Christ. "I wish there might be one in our parish," says one. Pray for him, and he who has promised to send you all good things may yet send him to you. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he may send forth laborers into his harvest." It is singular how God sometimes raises a mighty man, in this denomination, then in that, and then in the other. Suppose any body of Christians should try to monopolize all the valiant men themselves; why, they could not do it, because every side of the royal bed must be guarded, and in his own place each man is set for the defense of the gospel. The Church is compassed about with mighties, who are under God to do great exploits. If the Lord guides the flight of sparrows, surely he knows how to dispose his ministers; and let the Church be well content to let them occupy their posts until the wilderness is past, and the glory shall be revealed. The Church often makes mistakes, and thinks she can make ministers, or at least choose their position. She can do no such thing. God sends the valiant man; all you can do is to recognize his valor, and accept him as your champion; beyond that you cannot go; this is God's work, not man's. A minister made by men, made valiant by human strength, had better betake himself at once ignominiously to his tent, for his disgrace will be certain. God who sends the men, knows where to put them, so that they may stand round about the bed, and leave no corner unprotected.

Notice that these men are all well armed. The text says expressly, "They

all hold swords." What swords are these? Every valiant man in Christ's Israel holds the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. A man who is a good textuary will usually be a good divine; he who draws from the treasury of the written word will find his spoken word to be fruitful in profit to the people of God. If we use carnal reason; if we rely upon refinement, argument, eloquence, or any other form of the wisdom of man, we shall soon find our enemies will defeat us; but to ply the Word right and left; to give gospel cuts and strokes such as the devil himself cannot parry, this is to overcome the world through the Word of God. Besides this, and here is an opportunity for you all to carry swords—every valiant man in God's Israel carries the sword of prayer, which is comparable to those huge two-handed swords of the olden time, which the soldier lifted up and brought down with such tremendous force, as to cleave a man in halves: prayer is a weapon which no man can effectually resist. If you know how to use it, bring it down upon your foeman's head, and woe unto him! I would to God that in this Church there were found many of these valiant men of Israel! Indeed, would God all the Lord's servants were prophets, that it might be said of all of you that you hold swords. Your holy lives can be swords with which to smite your enemies. The tongues with which you speak of Christ lovingly, tenderly, persuasively—these may be weapons against our common enemy. Oh that when we hear the muster roll at last, it may be said of every Church-member that he held a sword! Do not tremble, ye timid ones, for the ark of the Lord; neither let your fears promote your unbelief; God knows full well how to give the right weapons to the right men, and his Church shall be secure even to the end.

Further, my brethren, these men are not only well armed, but thy are well trained. They are all expert in war; men who have endured temptations themselves; men whose souls have been exercised, men who have slain both the lion and the bear, and are men of war from their youth. Christian ministers especially should be no novices, but both in the school of temptation, and in some school of the prophets, they should be disciplined for fight. May there be such found here! I look out daily for such among you as are taught of God, and much of my time is spent with our young soldiers to make them expert in war. O that the Lord would hear my prayers and bless our college with men, and means, and above

all with his Spirit. Fools are not the men for this age. We want a sound knowledge of doctrine, practical power in preaching, and a thorough insight into the human heart; and where these by earnest prayer can be found in a man and further developed by careful teaching, we are bound to give our aid. Such men should be looked after, and no pains should be spared to bring them forth; in fact, dear friends, you ought to think it a high honor to be allowed to help in putting such men into working order. Oh! how I groan to get my friends to feel the importance of sending out trained young ministers. I give my time and my substance cheerfully, but when will the Christian Church help in this matter as it should?

Further, these men were not only well-trained, but you will see that they were always ready. Each man has his sword upon his thigh, ready to be drawn forth. I know some nominal ministers who seem to me to carry no sword at all. They keep a sheath, a very handsome sheath, with a hilt at the top and a stick inside. What is the good of such men? We want men to have swords in their sheaths, men who can speak with power, and have the demonstration of the Spirit and the power thereof resting upon them. Such men should wear their swords where they are to be got at, so that when the adversary comes they may dash at him at once. Rejoice, O daughter of Zion, thy Lord hath not left thee, even at this day, without some such men!

Observe also that these men were watchful, for "they had their sword on their thigh because of fear in the night." They never sleep, but watch always for the Church's interest. Pray ye that the Lord may raise up many such, who night and day with tears shall watch for the souls of men, and against the enemies of our Israel.

Dear friends, some of you may at times be alarmed when you hear of attacks made upon the Bible. At one time it was thought that ethnology would prove that the human race could not be one; and Moses was terribly abused by some who said it was not possible that all of us could have come of one pair. That battle was fought, and you hear nothing of it now; it is over; learning and argument in the hand of God has routed those antagonists. Then they pelted us with shells, and bones of lizards. Geology threatened to dig our graves; but we have lived all through that

struggle, and we have found geology to be a great blessing, for it has shed a new light on the first chapter of Genesis, and made us understand a great deal better what it meant. Another Amalekite advances to combat; this time it is with figures and numbers; we are to be speared with arithmetic, and slain with algebra! And what will be the result of it? Why, it will do the Bible a world of good, for we shall understand it better. I thank God whenever the Bible is attacked; for all those who know the times and seasons, begin to study just that part of Scripture more carefully, and then we get a clearer light shed upon it, and we find ourselves more confirmed than ever that this is the very truth, and that God hath revealed it to us. "Well, but who will take this matter up?" I do not know, and I do not particularly care, but I know my Master has his threescore valiant men round about his bed, and that each man has his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night, and never mind what the battle may be, the end of it will be for God's glory, and there shall be progress with the chariot of Christ through that which seemed as if it must overthrow it. Cast aside your fears; rejoice, and be glad, O daughter of Zion! Thy Lord is with thee in the travelling chariot, and the threescore valiant men are watching against thy foes.

### III. Meanwhile, reposing in peace, let us notice THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS CHARIOT IN WHICH JESUS RIDES.

It is not difficult to convey to persons the most unacquainted with Eastern manners and customs, an idea of what this palanquin is. It is a sort of large sedan in which one or two persons may recline with ease. Of course, this palanquin could not be made of gold or silver, because then it would be too heavy for carriage; it must be made of wood; hence King Solomon made a bed, or chariot, or palanquin, of the wood of Lebanon. Then there needs to be four pillars supporting the covering and the curtains; the pillars thereof are of silver. The bottom of it should be something massive, in order to sustain the weight of the person; the bottom thereof is of gold. The canopy on the top, is a covering of purple. Since to lie on gold would be very unpleasant, it is covered with delicate, daintily wrought carpets; and so we have the bottom thereof paved, or rather carpeted with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. Some delicate devices of needlework adorn the bottom of this bed-chariot in which the

king and his spouse recline during their journey.

The doctrines of the gospel are comparable, for their antiquity, for their sweet fragrance, for their incorruptibility, to the wood of Lebanon. The gospel of Christ never decays; Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Not one single truth, bears any sign of rot. And to those souls that are enlightened from above, the gospel gives forth a fragrance far richer than the wood of Lebanon.

"No beams of cedar or of fir,  
Can with thy precious truth compare."

I rejoice to know concerning you as a Church, that the more you understand the doctrines of grace the better you love them. You are confirmed in the present faith, and well you may be, for our doctrine is worthy of your confidence. We are not afraid that any truth which Christ has uttered should be tried by the most stringent criticism, for not one single stone of all the bulwarks of Gospel doctrine can ever be removed out of its place. When cedars of Lebanon have yielded to the worm, even then shall the truth as it is in Jesus remain the same.

As for the silver pillars which bear up the canopy, to what should I liken them but to the attributes of God which support and guarantee the efficiency of the great atonement of Christ beneath which we are sheltered. There is the silver pillar of God's justice. He cannot, he will not smite the soul that hides beneath the cross of Christ. If Christ hath paid the debt, how is it possible that God should visit again a second time the iniquity of his people, first on their Surety, and then again on themselves? Then stands the next, the solid pillar of his power. "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand; my Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Then on the other side is the pillar of his love, a silver pillar indeed, bright and sparkling to the eye; love unchanging and eternal, strong as the power and fast as the justice which bear up the canopy on the other side. And here on this side stands immutability, another column upon which the atonement rests. If God could change, then might he cast away his blood-bought; but "because I am God and

change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob rejoice." As for the covering of the chariot, it is of purple. I need not tell you where it was dyed. No Tyrian hues are mingled here. Look up, Christian, and delight thyself in that blood-red canopy which shelters thee from the sun by day and from the moon by night! From hell and heaven, from time and from eternity, art thou secured by this covering which is of purple. Oh! tempting theme to dilate upon the precious and glorious doctrine of atonement! Whenever our adversaries assail the Church, whatever may be the apparent object of their animosity, their real one is always the same, a desperate hatred to the great truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Well, as they hate it, let us love it; and under it let us take our greatest delight.

As for the bottom of this palanquin, which is of gold,—may not this represent the eternal purpose and counsel of God, that purpose which he formed in himself or ever the earth was? Pure was the decree of God, holy, wise, just, for his own glory, and most true; and as the precious things of the temple were all of gold, well may the basis of eternal love, an immutable and unchangeable decree, be compared to much fine gold. I do not know, brethren, how it is with you, but I find it most pleasant to have as the basis of my hope, the firm decree of God. Atonement covers me, I know, but still on this I must rest, Jehovah wills it; God decrees it; he hath said it, and it must be done; he hath commanded and it standeth fast. Oh! that golden sovereignty, whereon is written—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth." Dear brethren, the Apostle plainly tells us that this is the basis on which even the silver pillars rest, "for he hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as he hath chosen us in him from before the foundation of the world."

Then, to make this all soft and pleasant to recline upon, here is pavement of needlework. Soft cushions of love on which to rest. There is a double meaning here, for both the bride and bridegroom find rest in love. Our Lord finds rest in the love of his people. "Here will I dwell for ever." They do, as it were, make these carpets of needle-work in their love and affection for him, and in their trust and confidence in him; and here he rests. On the other hand, our Beloved spent his life to work for us our bed

of rest, so that we must translate it "love of," as well as love for the daughters of Jerusalem." We rest in Christ's love; he rests in our love. Come, I need not explain further, brothers and sisters. Take your rest now to the full. You are married unto Christ; you are one with him; betrothed unto him in faithfulness, embraced in the arms of his affection. Fear not the noise of archers; the "threescore valiant men" protect you, and the king himself embraces you; now solace yourself with him; take your full of his sweet society, and say unto him from the bottom of your heart, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine." Leave fighting for the evidences to the valiant men who can do it; as for you, ye daughters of Jerusalem, rest upon your Lord's bosom; leave conflict to the men ordained to fight, the men expert in war; as for you, be you expert in communion; understand the motions of Jesus' heart; look unto the lustre of his loving eyes; behold his beauties; be ravished with his divine affection to you; and now let your soul be satisfied with favor, and be full of the lovingkindness of the Lord!

IV. We close, then, by noticing THE DUTY OF EVERY BELIEVING HEART newest in connection with the subject.

Let every believer, while he recognizes himself as part of the Church inside the palanquin, yet look upon himself personally as one of the daughters of Zion, and let us each go forth this morning to meet King Solomon. It is not King David; King David is the type of Christ up to the time of his crucifixion - "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and yet King of the Jews. King Solomon is the type of Christ ever since the day when

"They brought his chariot from above,  
To bear him to his throne."

and, with sound of trumpet, conducted him to his Father's presence-chamber above. Now it is King Solomon; King Solomon for wealth, for wisdom, for dignity, for honor, for peace. He is the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and therefore is he King Solomon going forth. Get up from your beds of sloth; rise from your chambers of ease; go forth, go forth to pray, to labor,



to suffer; go forth to live in purity, leaving Babylon behind; go forth to walk with him alone, leaving even your kinsfolk and acquaintance if they will not follow with you. Wherefore tarriest thou at home when the King is abroad? "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, come ye forth to meet him," and behold King Solomon. To-day let your eye rest upon him. Let your eye behold the head that to-day is crowned with glory, wearing many crowns. Behold ye, too, his hands which once were pierced, but are now grasping the scepter. Look to his girdle where swing the keys of heaven, and death, and hell. Look to his feet, once pierced with iron, but now set upon the dragon's head. Behold his legs, like fine brass, as if they glowed in a furnace. Look at his heart, that bosom which heaves with love to you, and when you have surveyed him from head to foot exclaim, "Yea, he is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." Does sin prevail? Behold King Solomon. Have doubts and fears arisen? Behold King Jesus. Are you troubled, and does your enemy annoy you? Look up to him, behold king Solomon. I pray you remember the light in which you are to behold him. Do not think that Christ has lost his former power. Behold him as he was at Pentecost, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals. Oh! how glorious was our Lord when the Church crowned him with her zeal, and the arrows went abroad, and three thousand fell slain by his right hand to be made alive by the breath of his mouth! Oh, how these early saints crowned him, when they brought of their substance and laid it at the apostle's feet, neither did any man count that ought he had was his own. They crowned him with their heart's purest love; the Church had on her brow her bridal-wreath, and her husband wore his nuptial crown. Behold him to-day as wearing that crown still, for he is the same Christ, and do you go forth to meet him, and labor for him, and love him as the first saints did.

Forget not that his mother is to crown him soon in the day of his espousals. He is our brother as well as our husband, and the Church is his mother as well as ours. Oh! she is to crown him soon! The day of his espousals draweth nigh. Hark! I hear the trumpet sound! Jesus comes, and his feet stand upon Mount Olivet; kings and princes lick the dust before him; he gathers sheaves of sceptres beneath his arm even as the mower gathereth wheat with the sickle. He treadeth on principalities and powers, the young lion and the dragon doth he trample under foot. And

now his saints cry, "Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The long-expected one is come, and his mother crowns him in the day of his espousals! Courage, poor heart, courage! Go forth and see King Solomon to-day as he is to lie, and remember,

"It doth not yet appear  
How great we shall be made;  
But when we see our Savior here,  
We shall be like our Head."

When we look on Him; let us rejoice that this is to be our glory. We are to put off this sackcloth and put on scarlet and fine linen. The dust is to be wiped from our brow and the sweat from our face; the shackles are to be taken from our wrist, and the gyves from our legs; and we are to be emancipated, ennobled, glorified, made partners with Christ in all his splendor, and taught to reign with him world without end.

But there are some here that I can hardly call the daughters of Jerusalem, yet they are always round about Zion's gate. Oh, there are many of you who are always listening to our voice, and joining in our hymns, and yet you have not seen our Master yet! Go forth; leave your sinful pleasures, and leave your self-righteousness too; go forth and behold King Solomon. Look to Jesus, sinner, bleeding on the cross, and as thou lookest, love and trust; and I know that as soon as thou hast seen him and trusted him, thou wilt have a crown to put upon his head. It will be the day of thine espousal unto him, and thou wilt crown him with such a crown. Thou wilt decorate that crown with jewels dug from the secret mine of thy deepest heart, and having made this crown, thou wilt put it on his head, and fall down before him and sing -

"All hail the power of Jesu's name,  
Let angels prostrate fall;  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown him Lord of all."

Well, then, we will lay aside every fear, and continue all the day gazing upon our matchless Christ, adoring him, exalting him, and having

fellowship with him; for all is well; his travelling chariot is always safe, and soon will he step out of it with his bride at his right hand, and the world shall be astonished to behold the beauties of the royal pair when he shall be exalted, and they that are with him, before the presence of his Father and all the holy angels!

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## **Sad Fasts Changed To Glad Feasts**

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace. - Zechariah 8:19

My time for discourse upon this subject will be limited, as we shall gather around the communion-table immediately afterwards. So in the former part of my sermon I shall give you an outline of what might be said upon the text if we had time to examine it fully. It will be just a crayon sketch without much light and shade. You will be able to think over the subject at your leisure, and fill up the picture for yourselves!

We have, in the chapters we have read, a blessed message of peace to God's people in the day of their trouble. In the land of their captivity the Jews were in great perplexity. Their sad lament is on record; "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." But their trouble led many of them to seek the Lord and he was found of them. Welcome is such misery which leads to such mercy. In the seventh chapter we are told that, when they sent unto the house of God, to pray before the Lord, and to say, "Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? Then came the word of the Lord." Jehovah has put their tears into his bottle, and in answer to their sighing sent them a message of hope. That message has in it much that is very practical. It is a letter full of mercy, but it is directed to certain

characters. God does not send indiscriminate mercy. If men go on in their sin, he sends them words of judgment; but when they turn from their wickedness, and are renewed by his grace in the spirit of their minds, then it is that words of comfort are spoken to them.

Reviewing the whole message which Zechariah was commissioned to deliver, and which is summed up in our text, there are three things which stand out in clear prominence. The first is, that God calls for transformation of character in the people he is going to bless. The second is, that he promises translation of condition to those whose characters are thus changed and beautiful. And, lastly, he ordains transfiguration of ordinances as the result of the new character and condition. The whole subject is exceedingly suggestive, and well worthy of careful study when you reach your homes.

We must not lose sight of the fact that, primarily, this message is for Israel according to the flesh, and contains a prophesy of their latter-day glory. God hath not cast off his people whom he did foreknow, and there are majestic words here which still await their fulfillment when the set time shall have come. The Lord "will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem", and make the place of his feet glorious in that day. But as "no prophesy of Scripture is of any private interpretation," so the message to the Jews also bears a message for us. Let us seek to learn its lessons well.

I. My text reminds me—and the chapter before us emphasizes the fact—that, when God means to bless his people, HE CALLS FOR TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTER. The promise of the abiding presence of the Lord God Almighty is ever preceded by the call to separation and holiness. "The words which the Lord had cried by the former prophets" made it very clear that only with the righteous nation would God dwell; and Zechariah delivers a similar message.

Very remarkable will be the transformation of character which God shall work. According to the text, love of truth is to be one of the main effects of the change. These people certainly did not set much value on the truth before; they were in love with every lie, with every false god, and with every false prophet. But God would have them taste of his covenant

blessings, and be set free from every false way. It is the only truth that can set men free; yet many there are even to-day who delight to be in bondage to error. How is it with you? Do you love the truth, or can you put up with that which is not true, if it is only pleasant? Say, dear heart, are you anxious after truth—truth in your head, truth in your heart, truth on your tongue, truth in your life? If you are false, and love falsehood, you are taken with a sore disease; and unless you are healed of the plague, you can never enter heaven. You must be transformed and made true, and only the Spirit of truth can effect the mighty change.

Another sign must follow: love of peace. The text also says: "Therefore love peace." In some men it is a plain proof of conversion when they desire peace. Some are naturally very hot-tempered, and soon boil over. These are the men of great force of character, or else of great shallowness: it is the small pot which is soon hot. Some are malicious; they can take enmity quietly, and keep it in the refrigerator of their cold hearts, even for years. Such love is not peace; they are at war with all who have in any degree disappointed or displeased them. When the grace of God takes away an angry, passionate, malicious disposition, it achieves a great wonder. But then grace itself is a great wonder; and unless this change is wrought in you who need it, you shall not see God, for you cannot enter heaven to go into a passion there. Depend upon it, unless you lose your bad temper, you will never be amongst the ranks of the glorified. It must be conquered and removed, if you are to join the happy hosts on high. "They are without fault before the throne of God;" and so must you be if you are to be numbered amongst that company.

Moreover, those whom God blesses have undergone a transformation as to their conduct with each other. Righteous dealing is another effect of the change. Notice the ninth verse of the seventh chapter: "Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, Execute true judgment." This is at all times a necessary admonition, but never more necessary than now, when so many never dream of justice and goodness: in business and in private life many seem to have no care for righteousness. If the thing will pay, they will rob right and left; and they will only be honest because there is an old saw that saith, "Honesty is the best policy." But he that is honest out of policy is the most dishonest man in the world. May God grant us grace to

do what is right at all costs! Christian men, when the grace of God reigns in their souls, would rather be the poorest of the poor than get rich by a single act contrary to uprightness. O beloved members of this church, be upright in all your transactions, clear and straight in your dealings; for how shall you call yourselves the children of the righteous God if you make gain by unholy transactions?

Another point of transformation lies in the exercise of compassion. This comes out in that same ninth verse of the seventh chapter: "Shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother." A great mark of a changed heart is when we become tender, pitiful, and kind. Some men have very little of the milk of human kindness about them. You may lay a case before them, and they will wonder why you should come to them; and when you see how little they do, you yourself wonder why you ever came to them. Many there are whose hearts are locked up in an iron safe, and we cannot find the key! They have hidden the key themselves; there is no getting at their hearts. One such said to a minister who preached a sermon, after which there was to be a collection, "You should preach to our hearts, and then you would get some money." The minister replied, "Yes, I think that is very likely, for that is where you keep your money." The answer was a very good one. That is just where a great many persons carry their treasure; but when the grace of God comes, and renews the miser's heart, he begins to be generous, he has pity upon the poor, and compassion for the fallen: he loves to bless those who are round about him, and make them happy. It is a mark of wonderful transformation in the character of some men, when their heart begins to go a little outside their own ribs, and they can feel for the sorrows of other men.

Notice, next, in the tenth verse of that same seventh chapter, that another mark of God's people is consideration for others: "Oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor." How can he be a child of the all-bountiful Father who would make men work for wages that scarcely keep body and soul together? How can he be a son of the God of love, who will defraud the poor woman whose fingers must go stitch, stitch, stitch, half through the night, before she can even get enough to give her even relief from her hunger? God's children will have nothing to do with this kind of thing. Those who take delight in oppressing the poor,

and who make their gain thereby, will be themselves pinched in eternal poverty; they are little likely to enter the golden gates of paradise. There is many a child of God who has lived here in the depths of poverty; and when he gets to heaven, away from all the struggle and bitterness, is he to see the man who was his oppressor here below, coming into glory to sit side by side with him? I trow not.

Once more, where there is a work of grace, it leads men to brotherliness of character. "And let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart," saith the Lord in the tenth verse of this seventh chapter; and the same thing is repeated in the seventeenth verse of the eighth chapter. I should be sure that some women were converted if they left off imagining evil against others in their hearts. For there are some women—and there are some men, too, I am sorry to say—who cannot think of anybody without thinking evil of them. There are such dreadful persons about, and sometimes we come across them to our dismay. They paint the very saints of God black, and there is no getting away from their slander; nay, let a man live the life of Enoch, yet would some of these people report evil against him. Slander is no sign of a saint; it is the brand of one who is under the dominion of the devil. "For all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord." God save us from them all!

Thus I have given you a brief outline of the transformation of grace. They are great changes because God works them. When men come to him, and yield themselves up to his divine power, he takes away the heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh. He turns their nature to the very reverse of what it was before; then they follow after truth and peace, they love righteousness, and learn kindness, through his good Spirit.

II. The second point to which I would draw your attention, with reference to the methods of God with his people, is that HE PROMISES TRANSMUTATIONS OF CONDITION to those men in whom are found the transformation of character. I have already read the eighth chapter through to you; let us go through it again, and pick out just a note or two of the joy and gladness which are here written in full score.

First, jealousy is a tunnel into communing love. God represents himself,

in the second verse, as being very jealous about his people; because he loved them so much, he was jealous for them with great fury. The people set up false gods in his own city, even in his own temple, and God was angry with them, and would not dwell with them; but when they repented, and he had cleansed them by his mercy, he says, "I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem." What a change! God waits not until, by long obedience, his people win him back. He does not say that he will return when they merit his presence. No, the word comes to us full of surprise and power, "I am returned." Instantly on the repentance, God comes back. A jealous God fights against me. I fly to Christ. He is content. He comes and dwells with me, no longer full of fury, but full of tenderness and love. If any of you have had God fighting against you, in holy jealousy chasing out your sin, happy will you be if you yield yourselves to Christ at once; if you do so, God will come quickly, and make your hearts to be his abode. May many get that transformation at this good hour!

Next, desolation is turned into population. On account of sin, Jerusalem became desolate. "I scattered them with a whirlwind," saith the Lord, "among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate." Zion sat like a widow, nobody came up to her solemn feasts; but God returned to her and he says, in the fourth verse, "There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." So that when God comes to bless his people, where there was nobody, there seems to be everybody. When churches and congregations sin, God often minishes them, and brings them low; but when they return to their God, the old saints are seen there again, and there are new-born believers in plenty. God can soon change the estate of his people. It is the same with individual souls who have gone away from God, but afterwards repent and return to him. Then the desolation of heart is forgotten in the joy of the multitude of sweet and holy thoughts and interests, that crowd the heart and life. Old experiences revive, and new life and joy are born, where God comes near to us in grace and power. What a wonderful change this is! May we all taste its bliss!



Another change of condition follows: scattering is turned into gathering. God goes on to say that, as he scattered his people, so he will bring them together again from the east and from the west. This, as I have already said, has a first reference to the scattered Israel, but how true it also is of us! When the Lord leaves us, we are scattered like sheep without a shepherd in a cloudy and dark day; but when we turn to him, his word is sure. "I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness." May we know, in our new experience, the truth of that promise, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee," and may it be to us according to his word!

The next change is, that poverty is turned into plenty. Whereas they become poor, and were half-starved with famine, God tells them that the city shall be prosperous: "The vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew." God often changes men's circumstances when he changes their hearts. When he has been beating and bruising, if men will but yield to him, he turns to them in love and plenty. May the Lord do this with any of us who have grieved him, and brought his rod upon us! There is no truer word in the Book of God than this, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." With the covenant blessings of grace, God often bestows the common blessings of this life, even as it is written in the chapter before us, "I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things."

Farther on in the chapter we are told of another change: ill-will is turned into good-will. Before the Lord graciously visited them, no man loved his neighbor. So we read in the tenth verse. But when God's grace came, and changed their character, then one city went to another, and said, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also;" and they went up to the house of the Lord together. Oh, where the grace of God comes, it makes men friends! Enemies they may have been before, but then they go and seek one another out, and they say, "Come, old friend, let us end all this; give me your hand, and let by-gones be by-gones." There is nothing like love and unity among the people until

the grace of God comes and conquers the natural ill-will which else would have had dominion. May such a transmutation take place between any here who may be at variance, and may all bitterness and hatred, if such things exist, be put away!

Did you not notice also, in the reading of this chapter, how these people had been a curse, and how by the presence of God the curse is turned into a blessing? "And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong." When a believer dishonours God, one of the worst results of it is, that he becomes a snare to the people round about him. The very heathen look upon him as a curse. Inconsistent professors are the greatest stumbling blocks to the spread of the cause of Christ. But when their character is changed by the abounding grace of God, they become like overflowing springs, sending streams of blessing far and wide.

Moreover, in the day of blessing, their reproach is turned into honour. The nation had been despised; nobody would honour a Jew; but when they honoured God, then God would honour them, and ten men would take hold of the skirts of a man that was a Jew, saying, "We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." A man of God would then become more precious than the gold of Ophir. Well, my friends, when we return to God, God very soon has ways of making us honourable, so that we are of value among men. He makes use of us, and men begin to perceive that we are not to be despised if God is with us, and his blessing rests upon us.

Thus have I hurried over these two points, because I want to dwell a little longer on the text itself; it was necessary, however, to introduce it in this way.

III. Now we come to this fact, which always accompanies God's presence. HE ORDAINS TRANSFIGURATIONS OF ORDINANCES. Four fasts, which had been kept by the Jews, were to be turned into feasts, when the character of the men who observed them had changed, and God had dealt graciously with them. Before this, their feasts had been farces, occasions

of self-glorification, and all manner of pride. Now, these days were to be festivals of gladness, and times of drawing near to God, rejoicing in his good gift. In like manner, when a man becomes a believer in Christ, and is renewed, this principle operates; many a fast is turned into a feast, and many a sorrow and sadness into joy and gladness.

When the communion-table shall be uncovered, you will see before you, in the emblems of the death of our Lord, what might have been the memory of a fast. The Lord of life and glory was nailed to the accursed tree. He died by the act of guilty men. We, by our sins, crucified the Son of God. We might have expected that, in remembrance of his death, we should have been called to a long, sad, rigorous fast. Do not many men think so even to-day? See how they observe Good Friday, a sad, sad day to many; yet our Lord has never enjoined our keeping such a day, or bidden us to look back upon his death under such a melancholy aspect. Instead of that, having passed out from under the old covenant into the new, and resting in our risen Lord, who once was slain, we commemorate his death by a festival most joyous. It came over the passover, which was a feast of the Jews; but unlike that feast, which was kept by unleavened bread, this feast is brimful of joy and gladness. It is composed of bread and of wine, without a trace of bitter herbs, or anything that suggests sorrow and grief. The bread and the cup most fitly set forth the death of our Lord and Saviour, and the mode of that death, even by the shedding of his blood; but as they stand before us now, they evoke no tears, they suggest no sighs. The memorial of Christ's death is a festival, not a funeral; and we are to come to the table with gladsome hearts, ay, and go away from it with praises, for "after supper they sang a hymn." At both ends it was psalm-singing. The great Hallel of the Jews commenced it, and another psalm, full of joy and gladness out of the hallelujahs of the psalms finished it. Oh, what hath God wrought! We crucified the Christ of God; but in that crucifixion we have found our ransom. With wicked hands he was slain by us; but his blessed sacrifice hath put all our sin away for ever. Our hymn rightly asks—

"It is finished;' shall we raise  
Songs of sorrow, or of praise?  
Mourn to see the Saviour die,

Or proclaim his victory?"

But it justly answers—

"Lamb of God! Thy death hath given  
Pardon peace, and hope of heaven:  
'It is finish'd;' let us raise  
Songs of thankfulness and praise!"

As the Lord's Supper leads the way in that direction, I may say that every other fast of the Christian has been transfigured in the same manner. The Sabbath is to many people a very dreary day; but to many of us it is a fast which has been turned into a feast. I am often amused when I read the accounts that are given by some people of an English Sabbath-day. In all soberness it is set forth what we Puritans do on this first day of the week. We wake up in the morning, and say to ourselves, "Another dreadfully miserable day come around," and then we go off to our places of worship, where we sit with frightfully long faces, and listen to terribly dismal sermons; we do not sing, or even smile; but we howl out some ugly psalm, and make ourselves as unhappy as ever we can be. When we come home, we draw down the blinds to keep the sun out. We never go into the garden to admire the flowers. Well, you know the rest of the story. I think we are descendants of the people who killed the cat on Monday because it cause mice on Sunday—at least, so I have heard. But if I had not read all this, I should not have known it. Often, when I see in the paper some description of myself, I say, "Well, people somehow seem to know me better than I know myself; I never thought anything of the kind; it has never entered my head. Yet here is it in black and white." O beloved friends! Our idea of the Lord's-day is altogether different from this hideous caricature of it. If I had to describe our Sabbaths, I should say that they are full of brightness, and joy, and delight. I should tell of our singing, with full hearts, of the happy prospect before us in that land—

"Where congregations ne'er break up,  
And Sabbaths have no end."

I am sure we should not be likely to go to that heavenly country if our

Sabbaths here were as dreary as some say they are. Why, here in this house, we have had our merriest times! Of old, when the prodigal came back, "they began to be merry," and I have never heard that they have left off; at any rate, I do not think that we have. We have rejoiced with the joy of harvest as we have heard of sinners saved, and have known that we are saved ourselves. I grant you that, before we knew the Lord, it did sometimes seem to our young minds rather a dull thing to read the Bible, and hear sermons, and to keep the Sabbaths; but now that we have come to Christ, and he has saved us, now that we are his; the first day of the week, which was a fast, has become a feast, and we look with eager delight for the Sundays to come round one after another. In fact, these Lord's-days are the beds of flowers in our gardens. The week-days are only the gravel paths that yield us little but weariness as we walk along them. Happy Sabbath! We hail thy coming with delight, and sing—

"Welcome sweet day of rest,  
That saw the Lord arise;  
Welcome to this reviving breast,  
And these rejoicing eyes!

"The King himself comes near,  
And feasts his saints to-day;  
He we may sit, and see him here,  
And love, and praise, and pray."

So, you see, this is a second instance in which what might have been a fast is turned into a feast.

There is another thing that is to some of us now a great feast, though formerly it was as full of weariness as a fast. It is the hearing of the doctrine of grace. I know some brethren who always sit very uneasily when I begin to preach the doctrines of grace. I am sorry that it is so, and I hope that they will grow wiser. Still, all of us did not always like to hear about God's electing love and absolute sovereignty; about the special redemption of Christ for his people; and about the union to Christ being an everlasting union, never to be broken. There was a time when we did not join very heartily in the lines—

"Once in Christ, in Christ forever,  
Nothing from his love can sever."

But, oh, when your heart gets into full fellowship with God, if it is with you as it is with me, you will be glad to get on that string! Is there anything that gives us greater joy than to know our calling and election, and to make it sure; to know that the Father loved us as he loved Christ from before the foundation of the world, and that he loves us with such a love that can never end, and can never change, but will continue when the sun burns black as a coal? It was because they heard these grand doctrines that such crowds used to gather in the Desert in France to hear the old Calvinistic preachers. It was the hold these truths of grace had upon the minds and hearts of men that explains how it was that, under the gospel oaks in England, vast numbers used to come hear plain, and often illiterate men, preach the gospel. They preached a gospel that had something in it; and the people soon discover the real article when it is set before them. There is much that goes for gospel now, and if you could have a mile of it, you would not get an inch of consolation out of it, for there is nothing in it. But when your soul is heavy, and when your heart is sad, there is nothing like the old faith to put cheer and life into you. How often have I read Elisha Coles on Divine Sovereignty through and through when I have been ill! When the heart begins to sink, if one gets a grip of the sovereignty of God, and the way of his grace, whereby he saveth the unworthy, and getteth unto himself glory by his faithfulness to his promises, what had been a fast becomes to the child of God a feast of fat things, and royal cheer of a goodly sort.

You will all go with me in the next point. Sometimes the day of affliction becomes as a fast which has been turned into a feast. It is a trying thing to lose one's health, and to be near to death; to lose one's wealth, and to wonder how the children will be fed; to have heavy tidings of disaster come to you day after day in doleful succession. But if you can grasp the promise, and know that "All things work together for good to them that love God;" if you can see a covenant God in all, then the fast turns into a feast, and you say, "God is going to favour me again. He is only pruning the vine to make it bring forth better grapes. He is going to deal with me

again after his own wise, loving, and fatherly way of discipline." You then hear the Lord saying to you—

"Then trust me, and fear not: thy life is secure;  
My wisdom is perfect, supreme is my power;  
In love I correct thee, thy soul to refine,  
To make thee at length in my likeness to shine."

I have met with some saints who have been happier in their sickness and in their poverty than ever they were in health and in wealth. I remember how one, who had been long afflicted, and had got well, but had lost some of the brightness of the Lord's presence, which he had enjoyed during his sickness, said, "Take me back to my bed again. Let me be ill again, for I was well when I was ill. I am afraid that I am getting ill now that I am well." It is often worth while being afflicted in order to experience the great lovingkindness of God, which he bestows so abundantly on us in the hour of trouble and perplexity. Yes, God turns our fasts into feasts, and we are glad in the midst of our sorrow; we can praise and bless his name for all that he does.

Once more: the solemn truth of the coming of the Lord is a feast to us, though at first it was a fast. With very great delight we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will shortly come. He is even now in the act of coming. The passage that we read, "Surely, I come quickly," would be better translated, "Surely, I am coming quickly." He is on the road, and will certainly appear, to the joy of his people, and for the emancipation of the world. There are certain writers who say they know when he is coming; do not you be plagued with them; they know no more about it than you do. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only;" said the Lord Jesus. Perhaps the Lord may come sooner than any of us expect; before this "diet of worship" shall break up, he may be here. On the other hand, he may not come for a thousand years, or twice ten thousand years. The times and the seasons are with him, and it is not for us to pry behind the curtain. Those of our number who are unsaved may well dread his coming, for he will come to destroy them that obey not the gospel. "Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of

darkness, and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." That day will be terror, and not light to you. When he cometh, he shall judge the earth in righteousness, and woe unto his adversaries; for "He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken into shivers." You have grave need to keep the fast of the Second Advent, for to you it is dies irae, day of wrath and day of vengeance, day of dread and day of woe. But if you become a believer, and by grace are transformed, as I described in the earlier part of this discourse, then it shall be a feast to you. Then you will look out for his appearing as the day of your hope, and will gladly say, "Ay, let him come! Come Lord, nor let thy chariots wait! Come, Lord! Thy church entreats thee to tarry no longer! Come, thou absent love, thou dear unknown, thou fairest of ten thousand! Come to thy church, and make her glad!" To us the thought of the glorious Advent of Christ is no fast; it is a blessed feast. Our songs never rise higher than when we get on this strain. With what fervor we lift up our voices, and sing—

"Brothers, this Lord Jesus  
Shall return again,  
With his Father's glory,  
With his angel train;  
For all wreaths of empire  
Meet upon his brow,  
And our hearts confess him  
King of glory now"!

Last of all, to come still more closely home, the approach of death is to most men a dreadful fast. Not the Mohammedan Ramadan can be more full of piteous grief than some men when they are obliged to think of death. If some of you were put into a room to-morrow and were compelled to stay there all day, and to think of death, it would certainly be a very gloomy time to you. You will die, however, perhaps suddenly, perhaps by slow degrees. There will come a time when people will walk very gently round your bed, when they will wipe the death-sweat from your brow, when they will bow over you to see whether you still breathe, or whether you have gone. Out of the six thousand persons here to-night, there are some, certainly, who will never see New Year's Day. Usually this



is some one who does not see even another Sabbath-day. Almost every week we get an intimation that a hearer of the previous week has died before the next Lord's-day.

Who among us will first be gone? Dare you think of it? O beloved, when once you have peace with God, and you know that you are going to behold his face, whom though you have not seen, yet you love, then you can think of death without trembling. I think that there is nothing more delightful to the man who has the full assurance of faith, than to be familiar with the grace, and with the resurrection morning, and with the white robe, and with the harp of gold, and with the palm, and with the endless song. The thought of death is more a feast to us than a fast; for as Watts sings—

"Jesus can make a dying bed  
Feel soft as downy pillows are,  
While on his breast I lean my head,  
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

"Well, I shall soon be home," says one old saint; and she spoke of it as she used to speak, when a girl, of the holidays, and of her going away from school. "I shall soon behold the King in his beauty," says another; he speaks of it as he might have spoken, when a young man, of his marriage-day. Children of God can not only read Young's Night Thoughts without feeling any chill of solemnities there written out; but they can write in their diaries notes of expectation, at the thought of being with Christ, and almost notes of regret that they have not passed away to the glory, but are lingering here in the land of shadows. "What?" said one, who had been long lying senseless, when he came back again to consciousness, "And am I here still? I had half hoped to have been in my heavenly Father's home and palace above, long before this; and I am still here." Truly, beloved, the fast is turned into a feast, when we reach this experience. We will not hesitate to say, "Come, Lord, take us to thyself." Oh for a sight of the King in his beauty!

"Father, I long, I faint to see  
The place of thine abode;  
I'd leave thy earthly courts, and flee

Up to thy seat, my God."

I knew right well a beloved brother in Christ with whom I was very familiar, who stood up one Sabbath morning, and announced just that verse. I thought of him when I repeated it, and I wondered whether it was quite as true to me as it was to him. He gave it out, and said—

"Father, I long, I faint to see  
The place of thine abode;  
I'd leave thy earthly courts, and flee  
Up to thy seat, my God!"

Then he stopped, there was a silence; and at last, one of the congregation ventured upstairs into the pulpit, and found that the preacher was gone. His prayer was heard. He was gone to the place of God" abode. Oh, happy they who die thus! The Lord grant that we may never pray against a sudden death! We may almost pray for it when once our soul is right with God. I can join John Newton, and instead of dreading the change, say—

"Rather, my spirit would rejoice,  
And long, and wish, to hear thy voice;  
Glad when it bids me earth resign,  
Secure of heaven, if thou art mine."

But is Christ yours? Has the fast been changed into a feast for you, by faith in the crucified Saviour? God help you to answer that question with a glad, hearty "Yes"! Then may he make all your life "joy and gladness", changing your fearful fasts into "cheerful feasts", until at length all of us, who believe in Christ, and who love his appearing, shall sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb! Amen.

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## The Saint's Heritage And Watchword

No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord. - Isaiah 54:17

This is the fifth of November, a day very notable in English history. The events which transpired on it ought never to be forgotten. On this memorable day, the Catholics, foiled in all their schemes for crushing our glorious Protestantism, devised a plot horrible and diabolical enough to render them for ever hateful among upright men. The vast Armada of Spain on which they had relied, had been by the breath of God scattered and given to destruction, and now the cowardly traitors attempted by the foulest means the end which they could not accomplish by open warfare. Under the Houses of Parliament the deadly powder was concealed which they hoped would be a death-blow to both Houses, and so annihilate the power of Protestantism; but God looked from heaven, he confounded their knavish tricks, he laid their secrets bare, and discovered their treachery. Hallelujah to the King immortal, invisible, who guarded us, and guards us still from the devices of Rome and hell. Praise to his name, we are free from the Pope of Rome, to whom—

"Britons never will be slaves."

"While for our princes they prepare,  
In caverns deep a burning snare,  
He shot from heaven a piercing ray,  
And the dark treachery brought to day."

Nor is this the only event for which the fifth of November is notable, for in 1688, we as a nation experienced a deliverance equally as great. James II had attempted to revive the dying cause of Popery, and the hopes of

Satan were great. But sturdy Protestants would not easily lose their dear-bought liberties, and, therefore, brought about the glorious revolution by which King William III ascended the throne, and from him the succession has been happily continued until the reign of our Queen, for whom our earnest prayers shall rise.

"Such great deliverance God hath wrought,  
And down to us salvation brought,  
And still the care of guardian heaven,  
Secures the bliss itself has given."

Blessed be God that on this fifth of November we can record such deliverances! Our Puritan forefathers never suffered this day to pass over without a commemoration service. So far from this day being forgotten, it ought to be remembered, not by the saturnalia of striplings, but by the songs of saints. I think I have in my possession now a record of sermons preached on the fifth of November by Matthew Henry. Many divines of his time regularly preached on this day. I think the true Protestant feeling of this country, which has lately so revived, and which has shown itself so strongly, will scarcely forgive me, if I do not this morning return most humble and hearty thanks to that God who has delivered us from the curse, and enabled us to stand as Protestant men free to preach the gospel of Christ.

I notice in my text two things this morning—the first is, the saint's heritage; the second, the saint's watchword.

I. First, the saint's heritage—"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord;" and then comes the saint's watchword—"Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

Now, do not suppose that this morning I shall either have time, or opportunity, or talents, or power, to enter into an investigation of all the saint's heritages, especially when you remember that "all things are ours"—the gift of God, the purchase of the Saviour's blood; so that time

would fail us to talk of the possessions of the child of God. This world is his; earth is his lodge, and heaven his home. This life is his, with all its sorrows and its joys; death is his, with all its terrors and solemn realities; and eternity is his, with all its immortality and its grandeur. God is his, with all his attributes. The saint has a prospective right to every thing. God hath made him the heir of all things; for we are co-heirs with Christ, and joint-heirs with the Son of God. O, we have not time enough in the term of seventy years to read over once the fair inventory of the saint's possessions. If we could read it over once, there would be such a depth unfathomable, such a height immeasurable, such an intensity of value, such a depth of preciousness, that we should need to read it over an eternal number of times before we should ever be able to comprehend the love of God. So, then, you see I am not about to enter into the heritage of God's people at large; but I am going to speak of one peculiar item of that bright heritage as mentioned in my text; and that is preservation. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise up against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." I shall speak of this as being the heritage, not only of the church at large, but the personal and particular possession of every true believer, and every elect child of God.

First, then, there is the promise that we shall have protection against the hand of men: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." Satan has always used the hand of man against the church of Christ. The weapon of physical force has ever been brought to bear against the church of God. From the day when first Cain with his club struck his brother Abel and laid him low, down to the time Zacharias the son of Barachias—from that time until now, the weapon has been constantly used against the church of God. There has never been a time when a weapon has not been forged against the church of Christ. Yea, even at the present moment, as I stand here, and with the eye of fancy survey our world, I see a fire blazing—fierce is the flame and high its pile of fuel. I see a monarch forging a weapon; a crowned tyrant longs to bring forth chains of iron for the liberties of Europe, and smaller despots long to destroy the germ of all true liberty, the glorious gospel of the blessed God. I see the armies ready against the Lord of hosts, ready to do battle against the servants of God.\* Still here is the sweet comfort; they may forge the

weapon; they may fashion the sword; they may shut the prison door; they may confine the prisoners, they may make their instruments of torture; but they can not prosper; for God hath said it: He "breaketh the bow; and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire." "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." He will not let it do so.

Let us just look back through history, and see how God has fulfilled this gracious promise to his church in past days. He has one it sometimes in this way. He has not allowed the sword so much as to touch his church. At other times he has suffered the sword to do its work; and yet out of evil he hath brought forth good. Sometimes no weapon that has been formed against the church has prospered, because God has not suffered it so much as to touch the church. Look at many cases of history. There is the overthrow of Pharaoh. Look yonder, there he is at the head of all the chivalry of Egypt pursuing the chosen race. The sea divides to give refuge to the Lord's elect. Lo, they tread the pebbly bottom of the sea of Edom, while the waters stand like walls of snow-white crystal on the right and on the left. But the impious monarch, all unawed by this mighty marvel, shouts, "On, on, soldiers of Memphis! do ye fear to tread where slaves are bold?" See, they boldly dash between the watery heights; chariot and horse are in the sea, madly pursuing Israel. Ho, Israel! fear not the uplifted spear, dread not the rattling chariot; they are marching to their tombs, their weapons shall not prosper. Moses uplifts the rod of God, the parted floods embrace with eager joy, and grasp the helpless foe within their arms.

"Over horse and over car,  
Over every man of war,  
Over Pharaoh's crown of gold  
The loud thundering billows rolled.  
Mid the water dark and dread,  
Down they sank, they sank like lead!"

Again, my brethren, behold another glorious proof of the promise. Haman had conceived a hatred to Mordecai, and for his sake the whole race of Jews must perish. How deep he lays his plots, how readily he obtains the consent of the king, how sure is he of revenge. Even now in

imagination he sees Mordecai swinging on the lofty gallows, and all his kindred given to slaughter. Ah, thou enemy, delight in thine imagination, for it shall be disappointed; rejoice in thy design, but it shall be utterly confounded. There is a God in the courts of heaven, and an Esther in the palace of Shushan. Thou thyself shalt be hanged on thine own gallows, and the race of David shall revenge the deed of the Agagite upon his sons. O, Israel, well mayest thou rejoice at the feast of Purim, for the weapon of the mighty is broken. Nor here alone can we see the promise fulfilled; for time would fail me to tell of conquered Amalek and routed Midian. Scarce can we speak of Philistia and her giants given to the beasts of prey, or Edom slaughtered by the sword. Let the armies witness who fled at the fancied rumbling of chariots, or that host who in one night became the inhabitants of the realms of death. Let the warriors who rest with their rusted swords beneath their earthy pillows rise from their long sleep and confess the futility of their efforts; yea, let monarchs now in the chains of hell bear witness to their own utter confusion when the Lord appeared in battle for his chosen. March on, despot; bid thy slaves rise against the free, crush the helpless, and usurp the dominions of thy neighbor; but know that the Lord is mightier than thou. Thy northern hordes are not invincible; and Britons, with the help of God, shall teach thee that in vain thou liftest the hand of robbery. Thou contendest with a nation in whose midst the elect of God are praying against thee, and thou shalt know that God has said unto her holy seed, "No weapon formed against thee shall prosper."

But now another view of the subject presents itself. Sometimes God has suffered the enemy to exact upon us, and the sword has been used with terrible effect. O, there have been dark and gloomy days for the chosen church of Christ! When persecution has cried, "Havoc, and let slip the dogs of war," blood has flowed like water over the land! our enemies have triumphed. the martyr was bound to the stake, or was crucified upon the tree; the pastor was cut off, and the flocks were scattered. Cruel torture—awful suffering was endured by the saints of God. The elect cried, and said, "O Lord, how long? let it repent thee concerning thy servants." The enemy laughed, and said, "Ah, ah! so would we have it." Zion was under a cloud. Her precious saints, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen vessels, the work of the hands of the potter, and her princes were

trodden down like mire in the streets. O, my soul! how was it in that sad day, when the enemy came in upon her like a flood, and she could scarcely lift up the standard of the Lord against him? O God, there was an hour when thou wouldst not hear the cry of thine elect! It seemed as if thine ear was deaf; the plaint of the widow was unheeded; the groans, the agonies, and the cries of martyrs were unnoticed; and thou didst still allow the enemy to vex thy children. Persecution shook the land, and sent forth its burning lava of cruelty, devastating the fair fields of the church of God. But did the enemy prosper? Did he succeed? Did persecution destroy his church? Did the weapon formed against us prosper? No! Each time that the church had a wave pass over her she rose out of it, and lifted her fair countenance, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners. She was all the more glorious for it all. Every time her blood was shed each drop became a man, and each man thus converted stood prepared to pour out the vital current from his veins to defend the cause. Ah! those were times when, instead of the church being diminished and brought low, God did multiply her, and persecution worked for her good instead of causing her evil. The persecutor did not destroy the church. Christ's church never sails so well as when she is rocked from side to side by the winds of persecution; when the spray of her blood dashes in the front, and when at every lurch she is well-nigh overwhelmed. Nothing has helped God's church so much as persecution; it has increased, and been strengthened by it.

You will remember that this is not only the heritage of the church at large, but of every individual believer. And now I can speak to some poor souls who are in this place of worship. O brother! O sister! there is a word for thee this morning. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." There are some dear sisters who come into this house of prayer under fear of brutal husbands—others, sons and daughters who have cruel fathers. I know there are some here who meet with dire and terrible persecution because they come to the house of God. O, little do some of us know when we meet here what our next neighbor on the seat has had to suffer to come up to this house! "I could a tale unfold would ruffle up your spirits"—a tale of persecution endured by some of the saints of God in this place. This is a word for you: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." The blow of a brutal husband shall not injure you; it



may injure your body, but it can not injure your soul. "Fear not them that kill the body, and afterward have no more that they can do, but fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell." Why should you fear? God is on your side. Remember, Christ has said, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad when they say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Rejoice, and leap for joy, for great shall be your reward in heaven." Hold on, young man; hold on, young woman; still continue in the fear of God, and you shall find that persecution shall work for your good. But mark thee, persecutor, if thou art here this morning, there is a chain in hell of hot iron that shall be bound around thy waist; there are fiends that have whips of fire, and they shall scourge thy soul throughout eternity, because thou darest to put a stumbling-block in the way of God's children. Remember what Scripture saith: "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the sea."

The second portion of the heritage is, "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." Here is a protection from the tongue of men. Satan leaves no stone unturned against the church of God. He uses not simply the hand, but, what is oftener a harder weapon, the tongue. We can bear a blow sometimes, but we can not endure an insult. There is a great power in the tongue. We can rise from a blow which laid us low on the ground; but we can not so easily recover from slander; that lays the character low. "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn."

Look at the church at large and see how she has condemned her adversaries. When first she came into the world, she had to oppose Judaism; but she has condemned it, and its doctrines are now effete: then up started philosophers, and said it was foolishness, because they found nothing of worldly wisdom in it. But what has become of the philosopher now? Where is the stoic who boasted of his wisdom? where the Epicurean who lectured in the streets of Greece? Where are they now? They are gone, and their names are only used as words that were—as things that have ceased to be—as figures of antiquity. Then Satan invented Mohammedanism in order to oppose the truth; but where is that? We

have condemned it long ago. It is now a bloated carcass, almost without life, not able to stand. The cross has made the crescent wane.

Where are the various systems of infidelity which have arisen one after another? They are gone quite out of sight. Now and then we felt rather alarmed; because we heard that some great people were going to prove that the Bible was not true, and our creed was not sound. I remember talking with an old man once: "Ah," said he, "sir, this geology will quite ruin man's belief in the Bible." But where is geology now? Instead of opposing the gospel, it furnishes many powerful confirmations of the facts of revelation. Each one of the sciences has, in its imperfect condition, been used as a battering-ram against the truth of God; but as soon as it has been understood it has been made a pillar in Zion's outworks. Fear not, O son of God, that the perversions of men of science can damage our cause. Lying tongues we shall condemn. O infidelity! abortion of the night! thou hast been condemned a thousand times. Thou art a Protean creature, changing thy shape as ages change. Once thou wast a laughing idiotic plaything for Voltaire; then a bullying blasphemer with Tom Paine; then a cruel, blood-drinking fiend, fit mate for Robespierre; anon, a speculating theorist with Owen; and now a worldly, gross, secularizing thing for impious lecturers and profane admirers. I fear thee not, infidelity; thou art an asp, biting at iron, spending thy spleen, and breaking thy fangs.

My friends, did you ever walk the centuries, and mark the rise and fall of various empires of unbelief? If so, you will seem to be on a battle-field, and you see corpses; you ask the name of the dead, and some one replies, that is the corpse of such a system, and that the carcass of such a theory; and, mark you, as surely as time rolls on, the now rampant style of infidelity will perish, and, in fifty years, we shall see the skeleton of an exploded scheme, and of its admirers the epitaph will be, "Here lies a fool, called of old, a secularist." Now, what shall we say of Mormonism, the haggard superstition of the West; or of Puseyism, the express image of Popery; or of Socinian and Arian heresies, of Arminian perversions, or of Antinomian abuse? What shall we say of each, but that their death-knell shall soon toll, and these children of hell shall sink back to their birth-place in the pit. And yon old and crazy church upon the seven hills

has dared to hurl its anathemas at the saints of the Lord. Still doth she hold the wine-cup of abomination; still is she robed in scarlet, and her sway is over many waters; but she shall be condemned in judgment. Lo, the millstone in the hand of the archangel hastens to its fall, and Babylon the Great shall perish with a terrible overthrow. Then shall this cry go up from the Church of God, "Shout, O heavens, for the Lord hath done it; sing, O ye inhabitants of the earth, for the promise is accomplished, and every opposing tongue is condemned!"

Now, I wish to make this a personal heritage of each child of God—"every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn." O! what a sweet thought that is for me, for there are many tongues busy about me. Some say, "He is a good man;" others say, "He is deceiving the people." Well, if God will convert more sinners, and bring more to his church, they may decide which way they like. I am not careful to answer any of the self-thought infallible in this matter. You never knew of a preacher who gathers a crowd, or who is doing any good, but he is sure to be slandered, and vilified, and so on; but here is a promise—"Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn." We can afford a little slander, because we know we shall have all the more to condemn. The more accusers, the more acquittals; the more slander, so much the more honor of God: so the enemy may just slander still for what we care; for "every tongue that shall rise against us in judgment we shall condemn."

But I know that there are some of my hearers who believe and love the doctrines of grace; and sometimes you are called to dispute and contend for them. I know you are; I trust you are; I hope you love to "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." I know what is the case with many of you: when you come to plead with an infidel you do not know what to say. Has it not been so with you many a time? You have said, "I almost wish I could hold my tongue, for the man has confounded me;" yet remember, "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn." Last time you had that dispute, you thought your adversary conquered, did you not? You thought wrong. He might glory in his intellectual prowess. He might say, "Oh, that man is nothing to me." But leave him alone till he gets to bed; and when the hours of darkness

are around him, he will seriously begin to think. He conquered you in appearance; but now you master him. Wait till he is sick, and then your words shall ring in his ears; they shall come up again from the grave if he should survive you, and you will conquer him then. Do not be afraid to argue for the truth. Do not think that infidels are wise men; or Arminians are so exceedingly learned. Stand up for the truth; and there is so much solid learning and real truth to be found in the doctrines that we uphold, that none of you need be ashamed of them. They are mighty and must prevail. The mighty God of Jacob, by the demonstration of the Holy Ghost, makes them triumphant!

There is one that has risen against me in judgment many times, and I dare say he has troubled many of the dear people of the Lord here—that is Satan. He is always rising in judgment against us. Whenever we get into a little trouble, he comes and says, "You are no saint." If we commit a sin—"You should not sin like that, if you had been a child of God; you have no interest in the covenant; you are an enthusiast, you have deceived yourself." How many times Satan has risen against me in judgment—so risen that I have been fool enough to heed what he said. I have told him sometimes, "You are a liar, and the father of lies;" but at other times I have believed his malicious accusation. O, it is no easy thing to stand against the insinuations of the evil one. You, my brethren, are not strangers to his devices. He has set conscience at you, the hell-hounds of legal convictions howled upon you, and the drum of terrible doom thundered in you ears; then up stood the fiend himself and denied your union with Jesus, claiming you as his own prey and portion. Ah, how glorious the moment when our Advocate entered the forum of conscience, and assured us that he had pleaded our cause in the court of King's Bench above. And, oh, when he showed us the adversary's brief, spoiled by the nails of the cross, we felt that the tongue of Satan was condemned, and his calumnies hushed. Glorious Councillor, all praise to thine adorable name.

Let the saints know also that they shall soon have a yet more public triumph over their cruel enemy. At the day of judgment, the foe of God and man shall be dragged from his cell, shall lift his brazen front with thunder scarred, receive his sentence, and begin a hell more terrible than

all he has endured before. O saint, dost thou know that thou shalt judge him? Know you not that you shall judge angels? You, sons of God, shall sit as assessors with the firstborn Son, and when he shall pronounce the doom of the dragon, you shall solemnly say "Amen" to the sentence. Rejoice, O poor tried one; thou shalt tread upon the head of thine enemy, and thou shalt know that the promise is fulfilled in thine own experience—"Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

But now, beloved, I have spoken sufficiently for the present on this glorious heritage of the saints of God. The weapons are not to prosper, and the tongues are to be condemned. II. Now we must close up with THE SAINT'S WATCHWORD. What is that? "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

In ancient times, if not at present, armies used to have their watchwords, by which they might recognize one another in the dark. We want a watchword now. It is very difficult to tell the children of God unless we have certain signs. God himself gives us the watchword. "Your righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." You can always tell a saint of God by this watchword. If he says, "My righteousness of God," you may safely believe that he is a disciple of Jesus Christ. If he does not understand our shibboleth, he may not have lived in that country where they speak the pure language of Canaan, and that may excuse defects in his language. He may differ from us in some points, but if he sincerely says, "My righteousness is of God," you may safely conclude that he is not an enemy of truth. I mean "THE TRUTH as it is in Jesus."

We may understand this watchword in two senses. It may mean that Christian justification in the eyes of the world is of God; and again, their righteousness and salvation is of God. O, there is to be a time when God's children shall come out clear of all slander, when falsehood shall be swept away, and they shall stand forth justified even by their enemies. Their slanderers shall have nothing to say against them. They shall share in the admiration which an assembled universe shall be constrained to give to him who doeth all things well. But this vindication will not be brought about by their own efforts. They have not been anxious to avoid reproach

for Christ's sake. They have not wept and bemoaned themselves because they were counted the offscouring of all things. No; their righteousness, their entire clearing from the aspersions of malice and the calumnies of envy will come from Jehovah. The escutcheon of the church is in the Lord's hands, and he will wipe away all her defilement. The character of the saints God himself shall vindicate, and all liars shall have their portion in the lake of fire and brimstone. Let this be the pennon on our lance; let this be our cheering watchword, our vindication—"Our righteousness is of the Lord." Now for the second meaning "Their justifying righteousness is of me," saith the Lord.

Now, if I wished to test you all, and might ask you only one question, I would ask this: What is your righteousness? Now come along in single file. What is your righteousness? O, I am as good as my neighbors. Go along with you; you are not my comrade. What is your righteousness? Well, I am rather better than my neighbors, for I go to chapel regularly. Off with you, sir; you do not know the watchword. And you next; what is your righteousness? I have been baptized, and am a member of the church. Yes, and so you may; and if that is your hope, you are in the gall of bitterness. Now, you next; what is your hope? O, I do all I can, and Christ makes up the rest. Rubbish! You are a Babylonian, you are no Israelite: Christ is no make-weight—away with you. Here comes the last. What is your righteousness? My righteousness is filthy rags, except one righteousness which I have, which Christ wrought out for me on Calvary, imputed to me by God himself, which makes me pure and spotless as an angel. Ah, brother, you and I are fellow-soldiers: I have found you out; that is the watchword. "Your righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." I do not ask whether you are Churchmen, or whether you are Methodists, or Independents, or Baptists, if you do but know this watchword—"Your righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." I can forgive all those other minor things, if you can sing—

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness,  
My beauty are, my glorious dress."

Tell me you have got any other trust, and I will have nothing to do with you. Tell me you can work out your own salvation, and I will not

acknowledge you for a brother. But if you tell me that from first to last you rely on Jesus, then I acknowledge you as a fellow-soldier; and I am glad to see you wherever I meet you.

But to wind up; we have had the heritage of the saints, and we have had the watchword of the saints. What next shall we say? We will say, how well God has kept his promise. Has he not? You must know that it is just 249 years ago—it will be 250 next year—the fifth jubilee—since under the Parliament-house the train was laid, and the gun powder ready, to blow up the House of Lords and Commons, and utterly to destroy the nation. Ah, this night 249 years ago, how Satan gloated on the thought that he should destroy the church, and exalt his darlings to honors in the place of those who loved the Lord. Where are their mighty men? O! they said, the foundations will be removed; and what will the righteous do? They thought that surely their end would be accomplished. But how sadly were they disappointed! They were discovered. Down went the soldiers, and found out the plot; and Popery had been prevented from spreading throughout Great Britain. O, blessed be the name of the Lord! "no weapon that is formed against the church shall prosper." We glory because we can put our finger upon history and exclaim, God is true, and events are witnesses of his faithfulness.

O beloved, has the Holy Ghost given you an inwrought knowledge of the truth of this word of God? Have you experienced blessed deliverances from the right hand of the Most High? Many of you, I fear, have neither part nor lot in this matter, and you have true cause to lament your terrible loss in being unable to grasp these covenant blessings. But some of us may now anticipate the hour when we shall obtain complete redemption with all the blood-bought family, and then, ah, then, how shall we with rapture review delivering grace in all its thousand instances! Hark! hark! methought I heard sweet music; methought I heard a song descending from the regions up above, borne down by gales whose breath is sweet as that which comes from the spicy groves of Araby. I hear a sound not earthly: it is, it must be celestial, for no mortal sonnets can with these compare. O river of harmony! Where are the lips from which thou flowest? The heavens are opened; I see a host in white robes, with crowns upon their heads, and palm-branches in their hands. Who are these?

whence come they? These are they who have passed through much tribulation. We have whitened our robes in the blood of the Lamb; therefore we are without fault before the throne of God, and we serve him day and night in his temple. Holy ones, repeat the song; saints of God, re-echo the chorus; repeat it yet again, that these ears may hear it. What do you sing? "No weapon that is formed against us hath prospered; every tongue that hath risen against us in judgment we have condemned." This is the heritage—"Our righteousness is of the Lord." Farewell, saints of God! Now, saints below, take up the train, and sing it by holy, faithful, confident anticipation—

"No weapon hath prospered, the foe is o'ercome;  
No tongue hath succeeded, the wise ones are dumb;  
The Lord is our glory, and each of the host  
Shall yet shout hosannah on Canaan's fair coast."

Glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, world without end.

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## **Salvation By Knowing The Truth**

..God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. - 1 Timothy 2:3-4

May God the Holy Ghost guide our meditations to the best practical result this evening, that sinners may be saved and saints stirred up to diligence. I do not intend to treat my text controversially. It is like the stone which makes the corner of a building, and it looks towards a different side of the gospel from that which is mostly before us. Two sides of the building of truth meet here. In many a village there is a corner where the idle and the quarrelsome gather together; and theology has



such corners. It would be very easy indeed to set ourselves in battle array, and during the next half-hour to carry on a very fierce attack against those who differ from us in opinion upon points which could be raised from this text. I do not see that any good would come of it, and, as we have very little time to spare, and life is short, we had better spend it upon something that may better tend to our edification. May the good Spirit preserve us from a contentious spirit, and help us really to profit by his word.

It is quite certain that when we read that God will have all men to be saved it does not mean that he wills it with the force of a decree or a divine purpose, for, if he did, then all men would be saved. He willed to make the world, and the world was made: he does not so will the salvation of all men, for we know that all men will not be saved. Terrible as the truth is, yet is it certain from holy writ that there are men who, in consequence of their sin and their rejection of the Savior, will go away into everlasting punishment, where shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. There will at the last be goats upon the left hand as well as sheep on the right, tares to be burned as well as wheat to be garnered, chaff to be blown away as well as corn to be preserved. There will be a dreadful hell as well as a glorious heaven, and there is no decree to the contrary.

What then? Shall we try to put another meaning into the text than that which it fairly bears? I trow not. You must, most of you, be acquainted with the general method in which our older Calvinistic friends deal with this text. "All men," say they,— "that is, some men": as if the Holy Ghost could not have said "some men" if he had meant some men. "All men," say they; "that is, some of all sorts of men": as if the Lord could not have said "all sorts of men" if he had meant that. The Holy Ghost by the apostle has written "all men," and unquestionably he means all men. I know how to get rid of the force of the "alls" according to that critical method which some time ago was very current, but I do not see how it can be applied here with due regard to truth. I was reading just now the exposition of a very able doctor who explains the text so as to explain it away; he applies grammatical gunpowder to it, and explodes it by way of expounding it. I thought when I read his exposition that it would have

been a very capital comment upon the text if it had read, "Who will not have all men to be saved, nor come to a knowledge of the truth." Had such been the inspired language every remark of the learned doctor would have been exactly in keeping, but as it happens to say, "Who will have all men to be saved," his observations are more than a little out of place. My love of consistency with my own doctrinal views is not great enough to allow me knowingly to alter a single text of Scripture. I have great respect for orthodoxy, but my reverence for inspiration is far greater. I would sooner a hundred times over appear to be inconsistent with myself than be inconsistent with the word of God. I never thought it to be any very great crime to seem to be inconsistent with myself; for who am I that I should everlastingly be consistent? But I do think it a great crime to be so inconsistent with the word of God that I should want to lop away a bough or even a twig from so much as a single tree of the forest of Scripture. God forbid that I should cut or shape, even in the least degree, any divine expression. So runs the text, and so we must read it, "God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Does not the text mean that it is the wish of God that men should be saved? The word "wish" gives as much force to the original as it really requires, and the passage should run thus—"whose wish it is that all men should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth." As it is my wish that it should be so, as it is your wish that it might be so, so it is God's wish that all men should be saved; for, assuredly, he is not less benevolent than we are. Then comes the question, "But if he wishes it to be so, why does he not make it so?" Beloved friend, have you never heard that a fool may ask a question which a wise man cannot answer, and, if that be so, I am sure a wise person, like yourself, can ask me a great many questions which, fool as I am, I am yet not foolish enough to try to answer. Your question is only one form of the great debate of all the ages,—"If God be infinitely good and powerful, why does not his power carry out to the full all his beneficence?" It is God's wish that the oppressed should go free, yet there are many oppressed who are not free. It is God's wish that the sick should not suffer. Do you doubt it? Is it not your own wish? And yet the Lord does not work a miracle to heal every sick person. It is God's wish that his creatures should be happy. Do you deny that? He

does not interpose by any miraculous agency to make us all happy, and yet it would be wicked to suppose that he does not wish the happiness of all the creatures that he has made. He has an infinite benevolence which, nevertheless, is not in all points worked out by his infinite omnipotence; and if anybody asked me why it is not, I cannot tell. I have never set up to be an explainer of all difficulties, and I have no desire to do so. It is the same old question as that of the negro who said, "Sare, you say the devil makes sin in the world." "Yes, the devil makes a deal of sin." "And you say that God hates sin." "Yes." "Then why does not he kill the devil and put an end to it?" Just so. Why does he not? Ah, my black friend, you will grow white before that question is answered. I cannot tell you why God permits moral evil, neither can the ablest philosopher on earth, nor the highest angel in heaven.

This is one of those things which we do not need to know. Have you never noticed that some people who are ill and are ordered to take pills are foolish enough to chew them? That is a very nauseous thing to do, though I have done it myself. The right way to take medicine of such a kind is to swallow it at once. In the same way there are some things in the Word of God which are undoubtedly true which must be swallowed at once by an effort of faith, and must not be chewed by perpetual questioning. You will soon have I know not what of doubt and difficulty and bitterness upon your soul if you must needs know the unknowable, and have reasons and explanations for the sublime and the mysterious. Let the difficult doctrines go down whole into your very soul, by a grand exercise of confidence in God.

I thank God for a thousand things I cannot understand. When I cannot get to know the reason why, I say to myself, "Why should I know the reason why? Who am I, and what am I, that I should demand explanations of my God?" I am a most unreasonable being when I am most reasonable, and when my judgment is most accurate I dare not trust it. I had rather trust my God. I am a poor silly child at my very best: my Father must know better than I. An old parable-maker tells us that he shut himself up in his study because he had to work out a difficult problem. His little child came knocking at the door, and he said "Go away, John: you cannot understand what father is doing; let father

alone." Master Johnny for that very reason felt that he must get in and see what father was doing—a true symbol of our proud intellects; we must pry into forbidden things, and uncover that which is concealed. In a little time upon the sill, outside the window, stood Master Johnny, looking in through the window at his father; and if his father had not with the very tenderest care just taken him away from that very dangerous position, there would have been no Master Johnny left on the face of the earth to exercise his curiosity in dangerous elevations. Now, God sometimes shuts the door, and says, "My child, it is so: be content to believe." "But," we foolishly cry. "Lord, why is it so?" "It is so, my child," he says. "But why, Father, is it so?" "It is so, my child, believe me." Then we go speculating, climbing the ladders of reasoning, guessing, speculating, to reach the lofty windows of eternal truth. Once up there we do not know where we are, our heads reel, and we are in all kinds of uncertainty and spiritual peril. If we mind things too high for us we shall run great risks. I do not intend meddling with such lofty matters. There stands the text, and I believe that it is my Father's wish that "all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." But I know, also, that he does not will it, so that he will save any one of them, unless they believe in his dear Son; for he has told us over and over that he will not. He will not save any man except he forsakes his sins, and turns to him with full purpose of heart: that I also know. And I know, also, that he has a people whom he will save, whom by his eternal love he has chosen, and whom by his eternal power he will deliver. I do not know how that squares with this; that is another of the things I do not know. If I go on telling you of all that I do not know, and of all that I do know, I will warrant you that the things that I do not know will be a hundred to one of the things that I do know. And so we will say no more about the matter, but just go on to the more practical part of the text. God's wish about man's salvation is this,—that men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

Men are saved, and the same men that are saved come to a knowledge of the truth. The two things happen together, and the two facts very much depend upon each other. God's way of saving men is not by leaving them in ignorance. It is by a knowledge of the truth that men are saved; this will make the main body of our discourse, and in closing we shall see how this truth gives instruction to those who wish to be saved, and also to

those who desire to save others. May the Holy Spirit make these closing inferences to be practically useful.

Here is our proposition: **IT IS BY A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH THAT MEN ARE SAVED.**

Observe that stress is laid upon the article: it is the truth, and not every truth. Though it is a good thing to know the truth about anything, and we ought not to be satisfied to take up with a falsehood upon any point, yet it is not every truth that will save us. We are not saved by knowing any one theological truth we may choose to think of, for there are some theological truths which are comparatively of inferior value. They are not vital or essential, and a man may know them, and yet may not be saved. It is the truth which saves. Jesus Christ is the truth: the whole testimony of God about Christ is the truth. The work of the Holy Ghost in the heart is to work in us the truth. The knowledge of the truth is a large knowledge. It is not always so at the first: it may begin with but a little knowledge, but it is a large knowledge when it is further developed, and the soul is fully instructed in the whole range of the truth.

This knowledge of the grand facts which are here called the truth saves men, and we will notice its mode of operation. Very often it begins its work in a man by arousing him, and thus it saves him from carelessness. He did not know anything about the truth which God has revealed, and so he lived like a brute beast. If he had enough to eat and to drink he was satisfied. If he laid by a little money he was delighted. So long as the days passed pretty merrily, and he was free from aches and pains, he was satisfied. He heard about religion, but he thought it did not concern him. He supposed that there were some people who might be the better for thinking about it, but as far as he was concerned, he thought no more about God or godliness than the ox of the stall or the ostrich of the desert. Well, the truth came to him, and he received a knowledge of it. He knew only a part, and that a very dark and gloomy part of it, but it stirred him out of his carelessness, for he suddenly discovered that he was under the wrath of God. Perhaps he heard a sermon, or read a tract, or had a practical word addressed to him by some Christian friend, and he found out enough to know that "he that believeth not is condemned already,

because he hath not believed on the Son of God." That startled him. "God is angry with the wicked every day:"—that amazed him. He had not thought of it, perhaps had not known it, but when he did know it, he could rest no longer. Then he came to a knowledge of this farther truth, that after death there would be a judgment, that he would rise again, and that, being risen, he would have to stand before the judgment-seat of God to give an account of the things which he had done in the body. This came home very strikingly to him. Perhaps, also, such a text as this flamed forth before him,—"For every idle word that man shall speak he must give an account in the day of judgment." His mind began to foresee that last tremendous day, when on the clouds of heaven Christ will conic and summon quick and dead, to answer at his judgment-seat for the whole of their lives. He did not know that before, but, knowing it, it startled and aroused him. I have known men, when first they have come to a knowledge of this truth, become unable to sleep. They have started up in the night. They have asked those who were with them to help them to pray. The next day they have been scarcely able to mind their business, for a dreadful sound has been in their ears. They feared lest they should stumble into the grave and into hell. Thus they were saved from carelessness. They could not go back to be the mere brute beasts they were before. Their eyes had been opened to futurity and eternity. Their spirits had been quickened—at least so much that they could not rest in that doltish, dull, dead carelessness in which they had formerly been found. They were shaken out of their deadly lethargy by a knowledge of the truth.

The truth is useful to a man in another way: it saves him from prejudice. Often when men are awakened to know something about the wrath of God they begin to plunge about to discover divers methods by which they may escape from that wrath. Consulting, first of all, with themselves, they think that, if they can reform—give up their grosser sins, and if they can join with religious people, they will make it all right. And there are some who go and listen to a kind of religious teacher, who says, "You must do good works. You must earn a good character. You must add to all this the ceremonies of our church. You must be particular and precise in receiving blessing only through the appointed channel of the apostolical succession." Of the aforesaid mystical succession this teacher has the

effrontery to assure his dupe that he is a legitimate instrument; and that sacraments received at his hands are means of grace. Under such untruthful notions we have known people who were somewhat aroused sit down again in a false peace. They have done all that they judged right and attended to all that they were told. Suddenly, by God's grace, they come to a knowledge of another truth, and that is that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God. They discover that salvation is not by works of the law or by ceremonies, and that if any man be under the law he is also under the curse. Such a text as the following comes home, "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"; and such another text as this, "Ye must be born again," and then this at the back of it—"that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." When they also find out that there is necessary a righteousness better than their own—a perfect righteousness to justify them before God, and when they discover that they must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus, or else they must utterly perish, then they are saved from false confidences, saved from crying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. It is a grand thing when a knowledge of the truth stops us from trusting in a lie. I am addressing some who remember when they were saved in that way. What an opening of the eyes it was to you! You had a great prejudice against the gospel of grace and the plan of salvation by faith; but when the Lord took you in hand and made you see your beautiful righteousness to be a moth-eaten mass of rags, and when the gold that you had accumulated suddenly turned into so much brass, cankered, and good for nothing,—when you stood stripped naked before God, and the poor cobwebs of ceremonies suddenly dropped from off you, oh, then the Lord was working his salvation in your soul, and you were being saved from false confidences by a knowledge of the truth.

Moreover, it often happens that a knowledge of the truth stands a man in good stead for another purpose; it saves him from despair. Unable to be careless, and unable to find comfort in false confidences, some poor agitated minds are driven into a wide and stormy sea without rudder or compass, with nothing but wreck before them. "There is no hope for me," says the man. "I perceive I cannot save myself. I see that I am lost. I am dead in trespasses and sins, and cannot stir hand or foot. Surely now I

may as well go on in sin, and even multiply my transgressions. The gate of mercy is shut against me; what is the use of fear where there is no room for hope?" At such a time, if the Lord leads the man to a knowledge of the truth, he perceives that though his sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool, and though they be red like crimson they shall be as white as snow. That precious doctrine of substitution comes in—that Christ stood in the stead of the sinner, that the transgression of his people was laid upon him, and that God, by thus avenging sin in the person of his dear Son, and honoring his law by the suffering of the Savior, is now able to declare pardon to the penitent and grace to the believing. Now, when the soul comes to know that sin is put away by the atoning blood; when the heart discovers that it is not our life that saves us, but the life of God that comes to dwell in us; that we are not to be regenerated by our own actions, but are regenerated by the Holy Ghost who comes to us through the precious death of Jesus, then despair flies away, and the soul cries exultingly, "There is hope. There is hope. Christ died for sinners: why should I not have a part in that precious death? He came like a physician to heal the sick: why should he not heal me? Now I perceive that he does not want my goodness, but my badness; he does not need my righteousness, but my unrighteousness: for he came to save the ungodly and to redeem his people from their sins. I say, when the heart comes to a knowledge of this truth, then it is saved from despair; and this is no small part of the salvation of Jesus Christ.

A saving knowledge of the truth, to take another line of things, works in this way. A knowledge of the truth shows a man his personal need of being saved. O you that are not saved, and who dream you do not need to be, you only require to know the truth, and you will perceive that you must be saved or lost for ever.

A knowledge of the truth reveals the atonement by which we are saved: a knowledge of the truth shows us what that faith is by which the atonement becomes available for us: a knowledge of the truth teaches us that faith is the simple act of trusting, that it is not an action of which man may boast; it is not an action of the nature of a work, so as to be a fruit of the law; but faith is a self-denying grace which finds all its strength in him upon whom it lives, and lays all its honor upon him. Faith



is not self in action but self forsaken, self abhorred, self put away that the soul may trust in Christ, and trust in Christ alone. There are persons now present who are puzzled about what faith is. We have tried to explain it a great many times to you, but we have explained it so that you did not understand it any the better; and yet the same explanation has savingly instructed others. May God the Holy Ghost open your understandings that you may practically know what faith is, and at once exercise it. I suppose that it is a very hard thing to understand because it is so plain. When a man wishes the way of salvation to be difficult he naturally kicks at it because it is easy; and, when his pride wants it to be hard to be understood, he is pretty sure to say that he does not understand it because it is so plain. Do not you know that the unlettered often receive Christ when philosophers refuse him, and that he who has not called ninny of the great, and many of the mighty, has chosen poor, foolish, and despised things? That is because poor foolish men, you know, are willing to believe a plain thing, but men wise in their own conceits desire to be, if they can, a little confounded and puzzled that they may please themselves with the idea that their own superior intellect has made a discovery; and, because the way of salvation is just so easy that almost an idiot boy may lay hold of it, therefore they pretend that they do not understand it. Some people cannot see a thing because it is too high up; but there are others who cannot see it because it is too low down. Now, it so happens that the way of salvation by faith is so simple that it seems beneath the dignity of exceedingly clever men. May God bring them to a knowledge of this truth: may they see that they cannot be saved except by giving up all idea of saving themselves; that they cannot be saved except they step right into Christ, for, until they get to the end of the creature, they will never get to the beginning of the Creator. Till they empty out their pockets of every mouldy crust, and have not a crumb left; they cannot come and take the rich mercy which is stored up in Christ Jesus for every empty, needy sinner. May the Lord be pleased to give you that knowledge of the truth!

When a man comes in very deed to a knowledge of the truth about faith in Christ, he trusts Christ, and he is there and then saved from the guilt of sin; and he begins to be saved altogether from sin. God cuts the root of the power of sin that very day; but yet it has such life within itself that at the scent of water it will bud again. Sin in our members struggles to live.

It has as many lives as a cat: there is no killing it. Now, when we come to a knowledge of the truth, we begin to learn how sin is to be killed in us—how the same Christ that justifies, sanctifies, and works in us according to his working who worketh in us mightily, that we may be conformed to the image of Christ, and made meet to dwell with perfect saints above. Beloved, many of you that are saved from the guilt of sin, have a very hard struggle with the power of sin, and have much more conflict, perhaps, than you need to have, because you have not come to a knowledge of all the truth about indwelling sin. I therefore beg you to study much the word of God upon that point, and especially to see the adaptation of Christ to rule over your nature, and to conquer all your corrupt desires, and learn how by faith to bring each sin before him that, like Agag, it may be hewed in pieces before his eyes. You will never overcome sin except by the blood of the Lamb. There is no sanctification except by faith. The same instrument which destroys sin as to its guilt must slay sin as to its power. "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb," and so must you. Learn this truth well, so shall you find salvation wrought in you from day to day.

Now, I think I hear somebody say, "I think I know all about this." Yes, you may think you know it, and may not know anything at all about it. "Oh, but," says one, "I do know it. I learned the 'Assembly's Catechism' when I was a child. I have read the Bible ever since, and I am well acquainted with all the commonplaces of orthodoxy." That may be, dear friend, and yet you may not know the truth. I have heard of a man who knew how to swim, but, as he had never been in the water, I do not think much of his knowledge of swimming: in fact, he did not really know the art. I have heard of a botanist who understood all about flowers, but as he lived in London, and scarcely ever saw above one poor withered thing in a flowerpot, I do not think much of his botany. I have heard of a man who was a very great astronomer, but he had not a telescope, and I never thought much of his astronomy. So there are many persons who think they know and yet do not know because they have never had any personal acquaintance with the thing. A mere notional knowledge or a dry doctrinal knowledge is of no avail. We must know the truth in a very different way from that.

How are we to know it, then? Well, we are to know it, first, by a believing knowledge. You do not know a thing unless you believe it to be really so. If you doubt it, you do not know it. If you say, "I really am not sure it is true," then you cannot say that you know it. That which the Lord has revealed in holy Scripture you must devoutly believe to be true. In addition to this, your knowledge, if it becomes believing knowledge, must be personal knowledge—a persuasion that it is true in reference to yourself. It is true about your neighbor, about your brother, but you must believe it about yourself, or your knowledge is vain—for instance, you must know that you are lost—that you are in danger of eternal destruction from the presence of God—that for you there is no hope but in Christ—that for you there is hope if you rest in Christ—that resting in Christ you are saved. Yes, you. You must know that because you have trusted in Christ you are saved, and that now you are free from condemnation, and that now in you the new life has begun, which will fight against the old life of sin, until it overcome, and you, even you, are safely landed on the golden shore. There must be a personal appropriation of what you believe to be true. That is the kind of knowledge which saves the soul.

But this must be a powerful knowledge, by which I mean that it must operate in and upon your mind. A man is told that his house is on fire. I will suppose that standing here I held up a telegram, and said, "My friend, is your name so-and-so?" "Yes." "Well, your house is on fire." He knows the fact, does he not? Yes, but he sits quite still. Now, my impression is about that good brother, that he does not know, for he does not believe it. He cannot believe it, surely he may believe that somebody's house is on fire, but not his own. If it is his house which is burning, and he knows it, what does he do? Why he gets up and goes off to see what he can do towards saving his goods. That is the kind of knowledge which saves the soul—when a man knows the truth about himself, and therefore his whole nature is moved and affected by the knowledge. Do I know that I am in danger of hell fire? And am I in my senses? Then I shall never rest till I have escaped from that danger. Do I know that there is salvation for me in Christ? Then I never shall be content until I have obtained that salvation by the faith to which that salvation is promised: that is to say, if I really am in my senses, and if my sin has not made me beside myself as sin does, for sin works a moral madness upon the mind of man, so that he

puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, and dances on the jaws of hell, and sits down and scoffs at Almighty mercy, despises the precious blood of Christ and will have none of it, although there and there only is his salvation to be found.

This knowledge when it comes really to save the soul is what we call experimental knowledge - knowledge acquired according to the exhortation of the psalmist, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good"—acquired by tasting. Now, at this present moment, I, speaking for myself, know that I am origin ally lost by nature. Do I believe it? Believe it? I am as sure of it as I am of my own existence. I know that I am lost by nature. It would not be possible for anybody to make me doubt that: I have felt it. How many weary days I spent under the pressure of that knowledge! Does a soldier know that there is such a thing as a cat when he has had a hundred lashes? It would take a deal of argument to make him believe there is not such a thing, or that backs do not smart when they feel the lash. Oh, how my soul smarted under the lash of conscience when I suffered under a sense of sin! Do I know that I could not save myself? Know it? Why, my poor, struggling heart labored this way and that, even as in the very fire with bitter disappointment, for I labored to climb to the stars on a treadmill, and I was trying and trying and trying with all my might, but never rose an inch higher. I tried to fill a bottomless tub with leaking buckets, and worked on and toiled and slaved, but never accomplished even the beginning of my unhappy task. I know, for I have tried it, that salvation is not in man, or in all the feelings, and weepings, and prayings, and Bible readings, and church goings, and chapel goings which zeal could crowd together. Nothing whatsoever that man does can avail him towards his own salvation. This I know by sad trial of it, and failure in it.

But I do know that there is real salvation by believing in Christ. Know it? I have never preached to you concerning that subject what I do not know by experience. In a moment, when I believed in Christ I leaped from despair to fullness of delight. Since I have believed in Jesus I have found myself totally new—changed altogether from what I was; and I find now that, in proportion as I trust in Jesus, I love God and try to serve him; but if at any time I begin to trust in myself, I forget my God, and I become

selfish and sinful. Just as I keep on being nothing and taking Christ to be everything, so am I led in the paths of righteousness. I am merely talking of myself, because a man cannot bear witness about other people so thoroughly as he can about himself. I am sure that all of you who have tried my Master can bear the same witness. You have been saved, and you have come to a knowledge of the truth experimentally; and every soul here that would be saved must in the same way believe the truth, appropriate the truth, act upon the truth, and experimentally know the truth, which is summed up in few words:—"Man lost: Christ his Savior. Man nothing: God all in all. The heart depraved: the Spirit working the new life by faith." The Lord grant that these truths may come home to your hearts with power.

I am now going to draw two inferences which are to be practical. The first one is this: in regard TO YOU THAT ARE SEEKING SALVATION. Does not the text show you that it is very possible that the reason why you have not found salvation is because you do not know the truth? Hence, I do most earnestly entreat the many of you young people who cannot get rest to be very diligent searchers of your Bibles. The first thing and the main thing is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but if you say, "I do not understand it," or "I cannot believe," or if there be any such doubt rising in your mind, then it may be because you have not gained complete knowledge of the truth. It is very possible that somebody will say to you, "Believe, believe, believe." I would say the same to you, but I should like you to act upon the common-sense principle of knowing what is to be believed and in whom you are to believe. I explained this to one who came to me a few evenings ago. She said that she could not believe. "Well," I said, "now suppose as you sit in that chair I say to you, 'Young friend, I cannot believe in you': you would say to me, 'I think you should.' Suppose I then replied, 'I wish I could.' What would you bid me do? Should I sit still and look at you till I said, 'I think I can believe in you'? That would be ridiculous. No, I should go and enquire, 'Who is this young person? What kind of character does she bear? What are her connections?' and when I knew all about you, then I have no doubt that I should say, 'I have made examination into this young woman's character, and I cannot help believing in her.'" Now, it is just so with Jesus Christ. If you say, "I cannot believe in him," read those four blessed testimonies of

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and especially linger much over those parts where they tell you of his death. Do you know that many, while they have been sitting, as it were, at the foot of the cross, viewing the Son of God dying for men, have cried out, "I cannot help believing. I cannot help believing. When I see my sin, it seems too great; hut when I see my Savior my iniquity vanishes away." I think I have put it to you sometimes like this: if you take a ride through London, from end to end, it will take you many days to get an idea of its vastness; for probably none of us know the size of London. After your long ride of inspection you will say, "I wonder how those people can all be fed. I cannot make it out. Where does all the bread come from, and all the butter, and all the cheese, and all the meat, and everything else? Why, these people will be starved. It is not possible that Lebanon with all its beasts, and the vast plains of Europe and America should ever supply food sufficient for all this multitude." That is your feeling. And then, to-morrow morning you get up, and you go to Covent Garden, you go to the great meat-markets, and to other sources of supply, and when you come home you say, "I feel quite different now, for now I cannot make out where all the people come from to eat all this provision: I never saw such store of food in all my life. Why, if there were two Londons, surely there is enough here to feed them." Just so—when you think about your sins and your wants you get saying, "How can I be saved?" Now, turn your thoughts the other way; think that Christ is the Son of God: think of what the merit must be of the incarnate God's hearing human guilt; and instead of saying, "My sin is too great," you will almost think the atoning sacrifice too great. Therefore I do urge you to try and know more of Christ; and I am only giving you the advice of Isaiah, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." Know, hear, read, and believe more about these precious things, always with this wish—"I am not hearing for hearing's sake, and I am not wishing to know for knowing's sake, but I am wanting to hear and to know that I may be saved." I want you to be like the woman that lost her piece of silver. She did not light a candle and then say, "Bravo, I have lit a candle, this is enough." She did not take her broom and then sit down content, crying, "What a splendid broom." When she raised a dust she did not exclaim, "What a dust I am making! I am surely making progress now." Some poor sinners, when they have been seeking, get into a dust of soul-trouble, and think it to be a comfortable sign. No, I'll warrant you,

the woman wanted her groat: she did not mind the broom, or the dust, or the candle; she looked for the silver. So it must be with you. Never content yourself with the reading, the hearing, or the feeling. It is Christ you want. It is the precious piece of money that you must find; and you must sweep until you find it. Why, there it is! There is Jesus! Take him! Take him! Believe him now, even now, and you are saved.

The last inference is for YOU WHO DESIRE TO SAVE SINNERS. You must, dear friends, bring the truth before them when you want to bring them to Jesus Christ. I believe that exciting meetings do good to some. Men are so dead and careless that almost anything is to be tolerated that wakes them up; but for real solid soul-work before God' telling men the truth is the main thing. What truth? It is gospel truth, truth about Christ that they want. Tell it in a loving, earnest, affectionate manner, for God wills that they should be saved, not in any other way, but in this way—by a knowledge of the truth. He wills that all men should be saved in this way—not by keeping them in ignorance, but by bringing the truth before them. That is God's way of saving them. Have your Bible handy when you are reasoning with a soul. Just say, "Let me call your attention to this passage." It has a wonderful power over a poor staggering soul to point to the Book itself. Say, "Did you notice this promise, my dear friend? And have you seen that passage?" Have the Scriptures handy. There is a dear brother of mine here whom God blesses to many souls, and I have seen him talking to some, and turning to the texts very handily. I wondered how he did it so quickly, till I looked in his Bible, and found that he had the choice texts printed on two leaves and inserted into the book, so that he could always open upon them. That is a capital plan, to get the cheering words ready to hand, the very ones that you know have comforted you and have comforted others. It sometimes happens that one single verse of God's word will make the light to break into a soul, when fifty days of reasoning would not do it. I notice that when souls are saved it is by our texts rather than by our sermons. God the Holy Ghost loves to use his own sword. It is God's word, not man's comment on God's word, that God usually blesses. Therefore, stick to the quotation of the Scripture itself, and rely upon the truth. If a man could be saved by a lie it would be a lying salvation. Truth alone can work results that are true. Therefore, keep on teaching the truth. God help you to proclaim the

precious truth about the bleeding, dying, risen, exalted, coming Savior; and God will bless it.

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## **Salvation Of The Lord**

Salvation is of the Lord. - Jonah 2:9

Jonah learned this sentence of good theology in a strange college. He learned it in the whale's belly, at the bottom of the mountains, with the weeds wrapped about his head, when he supposed that the earth with her bars was about him for ever. Most of the grand truths of God have to be learned by trouble; they must be burned into us with the hot iron of affliction, otherwise we shall not truly receive them. No man is competent to judge in matters of the kingdom, until first he has been tried; since there are many things to be learned in the depths which we can never know in the heights. We discover many secrets in the caverns of the ocean, which, though we had soared to heaven, we never could have known. He shall best meet the wants of God's people as a preacher who has had those wants himself; he shall best comfort God's Israel who has needed comfort; and he shall best preach salvation who has felt his own need of it. Jonah, when he was delivered from his great danger, when, by the command of God the fish had obediently left its great deeps and delivered its cargo upon dry land, was then capable of judging; and this was the result of his experience under his trouble - "Salvation is of the Lord."

By salvation here we do not merely understand the special salvation which Jonah received from death; for according to Dr. Gill, there is something so special in the original, in the word salvation having one more letter than it usually has, when it only refers to some temporary deliverance, that we can only understand it here as relating to the great work of the salvation of the soul which endureth for ever. That "salvation



is of the Lord," I shall this morning try to show as best I can. First, I shall endeavor to *explain the doctrine*; then I shall try to show you *how God has guarded us from making any mistakes, and has hedged us up to make us believe the gospel*; then I shall dwell upon *the influence of this truth upon men*; and shall close up by showing you *the counterpart of the doctrine*. Seeing every truth hath its obverse, so hath this.

I. First, then, to begin by explanation, let us EXPOUND THIS DOCTRINE - the doctrine that salvation is of the Lord, or of Jehovah. We are to understand by this, that the whole of the work whereby men are saved from their natural estate of sin and ruin, and are translated into the kingdom of God and made heirs of eternal happiness, is of God, and of him only. "Salvation is of the Lord."

To begin, then, at the beginning, *the plan of salvation is entirely of God*. No human intellect and no created intelligence assisted God in the planning of salvation; he contrived the way, even as he himself carried it out. The plan of salvation was devised before the existence of angels. Before the day-star flung its ray across the darkness, when as yet the unnavigated ether had not been fanned by the wing of seraph, and when the solemnity of silence had never been disturbed by the song of angel, God had devised a way whereby he might save man, whom he foresaw would fall. He did not create angels to consult with them; no, of himself he did it. We might truly ask the question, "With whom took he counsel? Who instructed him, when he planned the great architecture of the temple of mercy? With whom took he counsel when he digged the deeps of love, that out of them there might well up springs of salvation? Who aided him?" None. He himself, alone, did it. In fact, if angels had then been in existence, they could not have assisted God; for I can well suppose that if a solemn conclave of those spirits had been held, if God had put to them this question, "Man will rebel; I declare I will punish; my justice, inflexible and severe, demands that I should do so; but yet I intend to have mercy;" if he had put the question to the celestial squadrons of mighty ones, "How can those things be? How can justice have its demands fulfilled, and how can mercy reign?" the angels would have sat in silence until now; they could not have dictated the plan; it would have surpassed angelic intellect to have conceived the way whereby

righteousness and peace should meet together, and judgment and mercy should kiss each other. God devised it, because without God it could not have been devised. It is a plan too splendid to have been the product of any mind except of that mind which afterward carried it out. "Salvation" is older than creation; it is "of the Lord."

And as it was of the Lord in planning so *it was of the Lord in execution*. No one has helped to provide salvation; God has done it all himself. The banquet of mercy is served up by one host; that host is he to whom the cattle on a thousand hills belong. But none have contributed any dainties to that royal banquet; he hath done it all himself. The royal bath of mercy, wherein black souls are washed, was filled from the veins of Jesus; not a drop was contributed by any other being. He died upon the cross, and as an expiator he died alone. No blood of martyrs mingled with that stream; no blood of noble confessors and of heroes of the cross entered into the river of atonement; that is filled from the veins of Christ, and from nowhere else beside. He hath done it wholly. Atonement is the unaided work of Jesus. On yonder cross I see the man who "trod the winepress alone;" in yonder garden I see the solitary conqueror, who came to the fight single-handed, whose own arm brought salvation, and whose omnipotence sustained him. "Salvation is of the Lord," as to its provisions; Jehovah - Father, Son, and Spirit - hath provided everything.

So far we are all agreed: but now we shall have to separate a bit. "Salvation is of the Lord" *in the application of it*. "No," says the Arminian, "it is not; salvation is of the Lord, inasmuch as he does all for man that he can do; but there is something that man must do, which if he does not do, he must perish." That is the Arminian way of salvation. Now last week I thought of this very theory of salvation, when I stood by the side of that window of Carisbrooke castle, out of which King Charles of unhappy and unrighteous memory, attempted to escape. I read in the guide book that every thing was provided for his escape; his followers had means at the bottom of the wall to enable him to fly across the country, and on the coast they had their boats lying ready to take him to another land; in fact every thing was ready for his escape. But here was the important circumstance: his friends had done all they could; he was to do the rest; but that doing the rest was just the point and brunt of the battle.

It was to get out of the window, out of which he was not able to escape by any means, so that all his friends did for him went for nothing, so far as he was concerned. So with the sinner. If God had provided every means of escape, and only required him to get out of his dungeon, he would have remained there to all eternity. Why, is not the sinner by nature dead in sin? And if God requires him to make himself alive, and then afterward he will do the rest for him, then verily, my friends, we are not so much obliged to God as we had thought for; for if he require so much as that of us, and we can do it, we can do the rest without his assistance. The Romanists have an extraordinary miracle of their own about St. Dennis, of whom they tell the lying legend that after his head was off he took it up in his hands and walked with it two thousand miles; whereupon, said a wit, "So far as the two thousand miles go, it is nothing at all; it is only the first step in which there is any difficulty." So I believe, if that is taken, all the rest can be easily accomplished. And if God does require of the sinner - dead in sin - that he should take the first step, then he requireth just that which renders salvation as impossible under the gospel as ever it was under the law, seeing man is as unable to believe as he is to obey, and is just as much without power to come to Christ as he is without power to go to heaven without Christ. The power must be given to him of the Spirit. He lieth dead in sin; the Spirit must quicken him. He is bound hand and foot and fettered by transgression; the Spirit must cut his bonds, and then he will leap to liberty. God must come and dash the iron bars out of their sockets, and then he can escape from the window, and make good his escape afterward; but unless the first thing be done for him, he must perish as surely under the gospel as he would have done under the law. I would cease to preach, if I believed that God, in the matter of salvation, required any thing whatever of man which he himself had not also engaged to furnish. For how many have I frequently hanging upon my lips of the worst of characters - men whose lives have become so horribly bad, that the lip of morality would refuse to give a description of their character? When I enter my pulpit am I to believe that these men are to do something before God's Spirit will operate upon them? If so, I should go there with a faint heart, feeling that I never could induce them to do the first part. But now I come to my pulpit with a sure confidence - God the Holy Spirit will meet with these men this morning. They are as bad as they can be; he will put a new thought into their hearts; he will give them

new wishes; he will give them new wills, and those who hated Christ will desire to love him; those who once loved sin will, by God's divine Spirit, be made to hate it; and here is my confidence, that what they can not do, in that they are weak through the flesh, God sending his Spirit into their hearts will do for them, and in them, and so they shall be saved.

Well then, says one, that will make people sit still and fold their arms. Sir, it shall not. But if men did so I could not help it; my business, as I have often said in this place before, is not to prove to you the reasonableness of any truth, nor to defend any truth from its consequences; all I do here, and I mean to keep to it, is just to assert the truth, because it is in the Bible; then, if you do not like it, you must settle the quarrel with my Master, and if you think it unreasonable, you must quarrel with the Bible. Let others defend Scripture and prove it to be true; they can do their work better than I could; mine is just the mere work of proclaiming. I am the messenger; I tell the Master's message; if you do not like the message, quarrel with the Bible, not with me; so long as I have Scripture on my side I will dare and defy you to do any thing against me. "Salvation is of the Lord." The Lord has to apply it, to make the unwilling willing, to make the ungodly godly, and bring the vile rebel to the feet of Jesus, or else salvation will never be accomplished. Leave that one thing undone, and you have broken the link of the chain, the very link which was just necessary to its integrity. Take away the fact that God begins the good work, and that he sends us what the old divines call preventing grace - take that away, and you have spoilt the whole of salvation; you have just taken the key-stone out of the arch, and down it tumbles. There is nothing left then.

And now on the next point we shall a little disagree again, "Salvation is of the Lord," *as to the sustaining of the work in any man's heart*. When a man is made a child of God he does not have a stock of grace given to him with which to go on for ever, but he has grace for that day; and he must have grace for the next day, and grace for the next, and grace for the next, until days shall end, or else the beginning shall be of no avail. As a man does not make himself spiritually alive, so neither can he keep himself so. He can feed on spiritual food, and so preserve his spiritual strength; he can walk in the commandments of the Lord, and so enjoy rest and peace,

but still the inner life is dependent upon the Spirit as much for its after existence as for its first begetting. I do verily believe that if it should ever be my lot to put my foot upon the golden threshold of Paradise, and put this thumb upon the pearly latch, I should never cross the threshold unless I had grace given me to take that last step whereby I might enter heaven. No man of himself, even when converted, hath any power, except as that power is daily, constantly, and perpetually infused into him by the Spirit. But Christians often set up for independent gentlemen; they get a little stock of grace in hand, and they say, "My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved." But ah! it is not long before the manna begins to be putrid. It was only meant to be the manna for the day, and we have kept it for the morrow, and therefore it fails us. We must have fresh grace.

"For day by day the manna fell;  
O to learn that lesson well."

So look day by day for fresh grace. Frequently too the Christian wants to have grace enough for a month vouchsafed to him in one moment. "O!" he says, "what a host of troubles I have coming - how shall I meet them all? O! that I had grace enough to bear me through them all! "My dear friends, you will have grace enough for your troubles, as they come one by one. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be;" but thy strength shall never be as thy months, or as thy weeks. Thou shalt have thy strength as thou hast thy bread. "Give us this day our daily bread." Give us this day our daily grace. But why is it you will be troubling yourself about the things of to-morrow? The common people say, "Cross a bridge when you come to it." That is good advice. Do the same. When a trouble comes, attack it, and down with it, and master it ; but do not begin now to forestall your woes. "Ah! but I have so many," says one. Therefore I say, do not look further before thee than thou needest. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Do as the brave Grecian did, who, when he defended his country from Persia, did not go into the plains to fight, but stood in the narrow pass of Thermopylae; there, when the myriads came to him, they had to come one by one, and he felled them to the earth. Had he ventured into the plain he would have been soon devoured, and his handfull would have been melted like a drop of dew in the sea. Stand in the narrow pass of to-

day, and fight thy troubles one by one; but do not rush into the plains of tomorrow, for there thou wilt be routed and killed. As the evil is sufficient so will the grace be. "Salvation is of the Lord."

But, lastly, upon this point. *The ultimate perfection of salvation is of the Lord.* Soon, soon, the saints of earth shall be saints in light; their hairs of snowy age shall be crowned with perpetual joy and everlasting youth; their eyes suffused with tears shall be made bright as stars, never to be clouded again by sorrow; their hearts that tremble now are to be made joyous and fast, and set for ever like pillars in the temple of God. Their follies, their burdens, their griefs, their woes, are soon to be over; sin is to be slain, corruption is to be removed, and a heaven of spotless purity and of unmingled peace is to be theirs for ever. But it must still be by grace. As was the foundation such must the top-stone be; that which laid on earth the first beginning must lay in heaven the top-most stone. As they were redeemed from their filthy conversation by grace, so they must be redeemed from death and the grave by grace too, and they must enter heaven singing

"Salvation of the Lord alone;  
Grace is a shoreless sea."

There may be Arminians here, but they will not be Arminians there; they may here say, "It is of the will of the flesh," but in heaven they shall not think so. Here they may ascribe some little to the creature; but there they shall cast their crowns at the Redeemer's feet, and acknowledge that he did it all. Here they may sometimes look a little at themselves, and boast somewhat of their own strength; but there, "Not unto us, not unto us," shall be sung with deeper sincerity and with more profound emphasis than they have even sung it here below. In heaven, when grace shall have done its work, this truth shall stand out in blazing letters of gold, "Salvation is of the Lord."

II. Thus I have tried to expound the gospel. Now shall I show you How GOD HAS HEDGED THIS GOSPEL ABOUT.

Some have said salvation in some cases is the result of *natural*

*temperament.* Well, Sir, well; God has effectually answered your argument. You say that some people are saved because they are naturally religious and inclined to be good; unfortunately I have never met with any of that class of persons yet; but I will suppose for a moment that there are such people. God has unanswerably met your objection; for, strange to say, the great number of these who are saved are just the most unlikely people in the world to have been saved, while a great number of those who perish were once just the very people whom, if natural disposition had any thing to do with it, we should have expected to see in heaven. Why, there is one here who in his youth was a child of many follies. Often did his mother weep over him, and cry and groan over her son's wanderings; for what with a fierce high spirit that could brook neither bit nor bridle, what with perpetual rebellions and ebullitions of hot anger, she said, "My son, my son, what wilt thou be in thy riper years? Surely thou wilt dash in pieces law and order, and be a disgrace to thy father's name." He grew up; in youth he was wild and wanton, but, wonder of wonders, on a sudden he became a new man, changed, altogether changed; no more like what he was before than angels are like lost spirits. He sat at her feet, he cheered her heart, and the lost, fiery one became gentle, mild, humble as a little child, and obedient to God's commandments. You say, wonder of wonders! But there is another here. He was a fair youth: when but a child he talked of Jesus; often when his mother had him on her knee he asked her questions about heaven; he was a prodigy, a wonder of piety in his youth. As he grew up, the tear rolled down his cheek under any sermon; he could scarcely bear to hear of death without a sigh; sometimes his mother caught him, as she thought, in prayer alone. And what is he now? He has just this very morning come from sin; he has become the debauched desperate villain, has gone far into all manner of wickedness and lust, and sin, and has become more damnably corrupt than other men could have made him only his own evil spirit, once confined, has now developed itself; he has learned to play the lion in his manhood, as once he played the fox in his youth. I do not know whether you have ever met with such a case; but it very frequently is so. I know I can say that in my congregation some abandoned wicked fellow has had his heart broken, and been led to weep, and has cried to God for mercy, and renounced his vile sin; whilst some fair maiden by his side hath heard the same sermon, and if there was a tear she brushed it away;

she still continues just what she was, "without God and without hope in the world." God has taken the base things of the world, and has just picked his people out of the very roughest of men, in order that he may prove that it is not natural disposition, but that "salvation is of the Lord" alone.

Well, but some say, it is *the minister* they hear who converts men. Ah! that is a grand idea, full sure. No man but a fool would entertain it. I met with a man some time ago who assured me that he knew a minister who had a very large amount of converting power in him. Speaking of a great evangelist in America, he said, "That man, sir, has got the greatest quantity of converting power I ever knew a man to have; and Mr.. So-and-so in a neighboring town I think is second to him." At that time this converting power was being exhibited; two hundred persons were converted by the converting power of this second best, and joined to the church in a few months. I went to the place some time afterwards - it was in England - and I said, "How do your converts get on?" "Well," said he, "I can not say much about them." "How many out of those two hundred whom you received in a year ago stand fast?" "Well," he said, "I am afraid not many of them; we have turned seventy of them out for drunkenness already." "Yes," I said, "I thought so: that is the end of the grand experiment of converting power." If I could convert you all, any one else might unconvert you; what any man can do another man can undo; it is only what God does that is abiding.

No, my brethren; God has taken good care it shall never be said conversion is of man, for usually he blesses those who seem to be the most unlikely to be useful. I do not expect to see so many conversions in this place as I had a year ago, when I had far fewer hearers. Do you ask why? Why, a year ago I was abused by every body; to mention my name was to mention the name of the most abominable buffoon that lived. The mere utterance of it brought forth oaths and cursing; with many men it was a name of contempt, kicked about the street as a football; but then God gave me souls by hundreds, who were added to my church, and in one year it was my happiness to see not less than a thousand personally who had then been converted. I do not expect that now. My name is somewhat esteemed now, and the great ones of the earth think it no



dishonor to sit at my feet; but this makes me fear lest my God should forsake me now that the world esteems me. I would rather be despised and slandered than aught else. This assembly that you think so grand and fine, I would readily part with, if by such a loss I could gain a greater blessing. "God has chosen the base things of the world;" and, therefore, I reckon that the more esteemed I may be, the worse is my position, so much the less expectation shall I have that God will bless me. He hath but his treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man." A poor minister began to preach once, and all the world spoke ill of him; but God blessed him. By-and-bye they turned round and petted him. He was the man - a wonder! God left him! It has often been the same. It is for us to recollect, in all times of popularity, that "Crucify him; crucify him" follows fast upon the heels of "Hosanna," and that the crowd to-day, if dealt faithfully with, may turn into the handful of to-morrow; for men love not plain speaking. We should learn to be despised, learn to be contemned, learn to be slandered, and then we shall learn to be made useful by God. Down on my knees I have often fallen, with the hot sweat rising from my brow, under some fresh slander poured upon me; in an agony of grief my heart has been well-nigh broken; till at last I learned the art of bearing all and caring for none. And how my grief runneth in another line. It is just the opposite. I fear lest God should forsake me, to prove that he is the author of salvation, that it is not in the preacher, that it is not in the crowd, that it is not in the attention I can attract, but in God, and in God alone. And this thing I hope I can say from my heart: if to be made as the mire of the streets again, if to be the laughingstock of fools and the song of the drunkard once more will make me more serviceable to my Master, and more useful to his cause, I will prefer it to all this multitude, or to all the applause that man could give. Pray for me, dear friends, pray for me, that God would still make me the means of the salvation of souls; for I fear he may say, "I will not help that man, lest the world should say he has done it," for "salvation is of the Lord," and so it must be, even to the world's end.

### III. And now WHAT IS, WHAT SHOULD BE, THE INFLUENCE OF THIS DOCTRINE UPON MEN?

Why, first, with sinners, this doctrine is *a great battering ram against*

*their pride.* I will give you a figure The sinner in his natural estate reminds me of a man who has a strong and well-nigh impenetrable castle into which he has fled. There is the outer moat; there is a second moat; there are the high walls; and then afterward there is the dungeon and keep, into which the sinner will retire. Now, the first moat that goes round the sinner's trusting place is his good works. "Ah!" he says, "I am as good as my neighbor; twenty shillings in the pound down, ready money, I have always paid; I am no sinner; 'I tithe mint and cummin;' a good respectable gentleman I am indeed." Well, when God comes to work with him, to save him, he sends his army across the first moat; and as they go through it, they cry, "Salvation is of the Lord;" and the moat is dried up, for if it be of the Lord, how can it be of good works? But when that is done, he has a second intrenchment - ceremonies. "Well," he says, "I will not trust in my good works, but I have been baptized, I have been confirmed; do not I take the sacrament? That shall be my trust." "Over the moat! Over the moat!" And the soldiers go over again, shouting, "Salvation is of the Lord." The second moat is dried up; it is all over with that. Now they come to the next strong wall; the sinner, looking over it, says, "I can repent, I can believe, whenever I like; I will save myself by repenting and believing." Up come the soldiers of God, his great army of conviction, and they batter this wall to the ground, crying, "'Salvation is of the Lord.' Your faith and your repentance must all be given you, or else you will neither believe nor repent of sin." And now the castle is taken; the man's hopes are all cut off; he feels that it is not of self; the castle of self is overcome, and the great banner upon which is written "Salvation is of the Lord" is displayed upon the battlements. But is the battle over? O no; the sinner has retired to the keep, in the center of the castle; and now he changes his tactics. "I can not save myself," says he, "therefore I will despair; there is no salvation for me." Now this second castle is as hard to take as the first, for the sinner sits down and says, "I can't be saved, I must perish." But God commands the soldiers to take this castle too, shouting, "Salvation is of the Lord;" though it is not of man, *it is of God*; "he is able to save, even to the uttermost," though you can not save yourself. This sword, you see, cuts two ways; it cut pride down, and then it cleaves the skull of despair. If any man say he can save himself, it halveth his pride at once; and if another man say he can not be saved, it dasheth his despair to the earth; for it affirms that he can be saved,

seeing, "Salvation is of the Lord." That is the effect this doctrine has upon the sinner, may it have that effect on you!

But what influence has it upon the saint? Why, it is the keystone of all divinity. *I will defy you to be heterodox* if you believe this truth. You must be sound in the faith if you have learned to spell this sentence - "Salvation is of the Lord;" and if you feel it in your soul *you will not be proud*; you can not be; you will cast every thing at his feet, confessing that you have done nothing, save what he has helped you to do and therefore the glory must be where the salvation is. If you believe this *you will not be distrustful*. You will say, "My salvation does not depend on my faith, but on the Lord; my keeping does not depend on myself, but on God who keepeth me; my being brought to heaven rests not now in my own hands, but in the hands of God;" you will, when doubts and fears prevail, fold your arms, look upward and say,

"And now my eye of faith is dim,  
I trust in Jesus, sink or swim."

If you can keep this in your mind *you may always be joyful*. He can have no cause for trouble who knows and feels that his salvation is of God. Come on, legions of bell; come on demons of the pit!

"He that has helped me bears me through,  
And makes me more than conqueror too."

Salvation resteth not on this poor arm, else should I despair, but on the arm of yon Omnipotent - that arm on which the pillars of the heavens do lean. "Whom should I fear ? The Lord is my strength and my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

And this, may by grace, *nerve you to work for God*. If you had to save your neighbors you might sit down and do nothing; but since "salvation is of the Lord," go on and prosper. Go and preach the gospel; go and tell the gospel everywhere. Tell it in your house, tell it in the street, tell it in every land and every nation; for it is not of yourself, it is "of the Lord." Why do not our friends go to Ireland to preach the gospel? Ireland is a disgrace to

the Protestant church. Why do not they go and preach there? A year or so ago a number of our brave ministers went over there to preach; they did right bravely; they went there, and they came back again, and that is about the sum total of the glorious expedition against Popery. But why come back again? Because they were stoned, good easy men! Do they not think that the gospel ever will spread without a few stones? But they would have been killed! Brave martyrs they! Let them be enrolled in the red chronicle. Did the martyrs of old, did the apostles shrink from going to any country because they would have been killed? No, they were ready to die: and if half a dozen ministers had been killed in Ireland, it would have been the finest thing in the world for liberty in future; for after that the people dare not have touched us; the strong arm of the law would have put them down; we might have gone through every village of Ireland afterwards, and been at peace; the constabulary. would soon have put an end to such infamous murder; it would have awakened the Protestantism of England to claim the liberty which is our right there as we give it elsewhere. We shall never see any great change till we have some men in our ranks who are willing to be martyrs. That deep ditch can never be crossed till the bodies of a few of us shall fill it up; and after that it will be easy work to preach the gospel there. Our brethren should go there once more. They can leave their white cravats at home, and the white feather too, and go forth with a brave heart and a bold spirit; and if the people mock and scoff, let them mock and scoff on. George Whitefield said, when he preached on Kennington Common, where they threw dead cats and rotten eggs at him, "This is only the manure of Methodism, the best thing in the world to make it grow; throw away as fast as you please." And when a stone cut him on the forehead, he seemed to preach the better for a little blood-letting. O! for such a man to dare the mob, and then the mob would not need to be dared. Let us go there, recollecting that "salvation is of the Lord," and let us in every place and at every time preach God's Word, believing that God's Word is more than a match for man's sin, and God will yet be master over all the earth.

My voice fails me again, and my thoughts too, I was weary this morning, when I came into this pulpit, and I am weary now. Sometimes I am joyous and glad, and feel in the pulpit as if I could preach for ever; at other times I feel glad to close; but yet with such a text I would that I

could have finished up with all the might that mortal lip could summon. O! to let men know this, that their salvation is of God! Swearer, swear not against him in whose hand thy breath is! Despiser, despise not him who can save you or destroy you. And thou hypocrite, seek not to deceive him from whom salvation comes, and who therefore knows right well whether thy salvation come from him.

IV. And now in concluding, let me just tell you WHAT IS THE OBSERVE OF THIS TRUTH. Salvation is of God: then *damnation is of man*. If any of you are damned, you will have no one to blame but yourselves; if any of you perish, the blame will not lie at God's door; if you are lost and cast away, you will have to bear all the blame and all the tortures of conscience yourself; you will lie for ever in perdition, and reflect, "I have destroyed myself; I have made a suicide of my soul; I have been my own destroyer; I can lay no blame to God." Remember, if saved, you must be saved by God alone, though if lost you have lost yourselves. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel." With my last faltering sentence I bid you stop and think. Ah! my hearers, my hearers! it is an awful thing to preach to such a mass as this. But the other Sunday, as I came down stairs, I was struck with a memorable sentence, uttered by one who stood there. He said, "There are 9000 people this morning without excuse in the day of judgment." I should like to preach so that this always might be said; and if I can not, O may God have mercy on me, for his name's sake! But now remember! Ye have souls; those souls will be damned, or saved. Which will it be ? Damned they must be for ever, unless God shall save you; unless Christ shall have mercy upon you, there is no hope for you. Down on your knees I Cry to God for mercy. Now lift up your heart in prayer to God. May now be the very time when you shall be saved. Or ever the next drop of blood shall run through your veins, may you find peace! Remember, that peace is to be had now. If you feel now your need of it, it is to be had now. And how? For the mere asking for it. ' Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find."

"But if your ears refuse  
The language of his grace,  
Your hearts grow hard, like stubborn Jews,  
That unbelieving race,

The Lord with vengeance drest,  
Shall lift his hand and swear,  
You that despised my promised rest  
Shall have no portion there."

O! that ye may not be despisers, lest ye "wonder and perish!" May ye now fly to Christ, and be accepted in the beloved. It is my last best prayer. May the Lord hear it. Amen.

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## **Salvation To The Uttermost**

Where he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. - Hebrews 7:25

Salvation is a doctrine peculiar to revelation. Revelation affords us a complete history of it, but nowhere else can we find any trace thereof. God has written many books, but only one book has had for its aim the teaching of the ways of mercy. He has written the great book of creation, which is our duty and our pleasure to read. It is a volume embellished on its surface with starry gems and rainbow colours, and containing in its inner leaves marvels at which the wise may wonder for age, and yet find a fresh theme for their conjectures. Nature is the spelling-book of man, in which he may learn his Maker's name, he hath studded it with embroidery, with gold, with gems. There are doctrines of truth in the mighty stars, and there are lessons written on the green earth and in the flowers upspringing from the sod. We read the books of God when we see the storm and tempest, for all things speak as God would have them; and if our ears are open we may hear the voice of God in the rippling of every rill, in the roll of every thunder, in the brightness of every lightning, in the twinkling of every star, in the budding of every flower. God has written

the great book of creation, to teach us what he is - how great, how mighty. But I read nothing of salvation in creation. The rocks tell me, "Salvation is not in us;" the winds howl, but they howl not salvation: the waves rush upon the shore, but among the wrecks which they wash up, they reveal no trace of salvation; the fathomless caves of ocean bear pearls, but they bear no pearls of grace; the starry heavens have their flashing meteors, but they have no voices of salvation. I find salvation written nowhere, till in this volume of my Father's grace I find his blessed love unfolded towards the great human family, teaching them that they are lost, but that he can save them, and that in saving them he can be "just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly." Salvation, then, is to be found in the Scriptures, and in the Scriptures only; for we can read nothing of it elsewhere. And while it is to be found only in Scripture, I hold that the peculiar doctrine of revelation is salvation. I believe that the Bible was sent not to teach me history, but to teach me grace - not to give me a system of philosophy, but to give me a system of divinity - not to teach worldly wisdom, but spiritual wisdom. Hence I hold all preaching of philosophy and science in the pulpit to be altogether out of place. I would check no man's liberty in this matter, for God only is the Judge of man's conscience; but it is my firm opinion that if we profess to be Christians, we are bound to keep to Christianity; if we profess to be Christian ministers, we drive away the Sabbath-day, we mock our hearers, we insult God, if we deliver lectures upon botany, or geology, instead of delivering sermons of salvation. He who does not always preach the gospel, ought not to be accounted a true-called minister of God.

Well, then it is salvation I desire to preach to you. We have, in our text, two or three things. In the first place, we are told *who they are who will be saved*, "them that come into God by Jesus Christ;" in the second place we are told *the extent of the Saviour's ability to save*, "He is able to save to the uttermost;" and in the third place, we have *the reason given why he can save*, "seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

I. First, we are told THE PEOPLE WHO ARE TO BE SAVED. And the people who are to be saved are "those who come unto God by Jesus Christ." There is no limitation here of sect or denomination: it does not say, the Baptist, the Independent, or the Episcopalian that come unto

God by Jesus Christ, but it simply says, "*them*," by which I understand men of all creeds, men of all ranks, men of all classes, who do but come to Jesus Christ. They shall be saved, whatever their apparent position before men, or whatever may be the denomination to which they have linked themselves.

1. Now, I must have you notice, in the first place, *where these people come to*. They "come unto God." By coming to God we are not to understand the mere formality of devotion, since this may be but a solemn means of sinning. What a splendid general confession is that in the Church of England Prayer Book: "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep; we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and there is no health in us." There is not to be found a finer confession in the English language. And yet how often, my dear friends, have the best of us mocked God by repeating such expressions verbally, and thinking we have done our duty! How many of you go to chapel, and must confess your own absence of mind while you have bowed your knee in prayer, or uttered a song of praise! My friends, it is one thing to go to church or chapel; it is quite another thing to go *to God*. There are many people who can pray right eloquently, and who do so; who have learned a form of prayer by heart, or, perhaps, use an extemporary form of words of their own composing: but who, instead of going to God, are all the while going from God. Let me persuade you all not to be content with mere formality. There will be many damned who never broke the Sabbath, as they thought, but who, all their lives were Sabbath-breakers. It is as much possible to break the Sabbath in a church as it is to break the Sabbath in the park; it is as easy to break it here in this solemn assembly as in your own houses. Every one of you virtually break the Sabbath when you merely go through a round of duties, having done which, you retire to your chambers, fully content with yourselves, and fancy that all is over - that you have done your day's work - whereas, you have never come to God at all, but have merely come to the outward ordinance and to the visible means, which is quite another thing from coming to God himself.

And let me tell you, again, that coming *to God* is not what some of you suppose - *now and then sincerely performing an act of devotion, but*



*giving to the world the greater part of your life.* You think that if sometimes you are sincere, if now and then you put up an earnest cry to heaven, God will accept you; and though your life may be still worldly, and your desires still carnal, you suppose that for the sake of this occasional devotion God will be pleased, in his infinite mercy, to blot out your sins. I tell you, sinners, there is no such thing as bringing half of yourselves to God, and leaving the other half away. If a man has come here, I suppose he has brought his whole self with him; and so if a man comes to God, he cannot come, half of him, and half of him stay away. Our whole being must be surrendered to the service of our Maker. We must come to him with an entire dedication of ourselves, giving up all we are, and all we ever shall be, to be thoroughly devoted to his service, otherwise we have never come to God aright. I am astonished to see how people in these days try to love the world and love Christ too; according to the old proverb, they "hold with the hare and run with the hounds." They are real good Christians sometimes, when they think they ought to be religious; but they are right bad fellows at other seasons, when they think that religion would be a little loss to them. Let me warn you all. It is of no earthly use for you to pretend to be on two sides of the question. "If God be God, serve him; If Baal be God, serve him." I like an out-and-out man of any sort. Give me a man that is a sinner: I have some hope for him when I see him sincere in his vices, and open to acknowledging his own character; but if you give me a man who is half-hearted, who is not quite bold enough to be all for the devil, nor quite sincere enough to be all for Christ, I tell you, I despair of such a man as that. The man who wants to link the two together is in an extremely hopeless case. Do you think, sinners, you will be able to serve two masters, when Christ has said you cannot? Do you fancy you can walk with God and walk with mammon too? Will you take God on one arm, and the devil on the other? Do you suppose you can be allowed to drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of Satan at the same time? I tell you, ye shall depart, as cursed and miserable hypocrites, if so you come to God. God will have the whole of you come, or else you shall not come at all. The whole man must seek after the Lord; the whole soul must be poured out before him; otherwise it is no acceptable coming to God at all. Oh, halts between two opinions, remember this and tremble.

I think I hear one say, "Well, then, tell us what it is to come to God." I answer, coming to God implies, *leaving something else*. If a man comes to God, he must leave his sins; he must leave his righteousness; he must leave both his bad works and his good ones, and come to God, leaving them entirely.

Again, coming to God implies, *there is no aversion towards him*; for a man will not come to God while he hates God; he will be sure to keep away. Coming to God signifies having *some love to God*. Again: coming to God signifies *desiring God*, desiring to be near to him. And, above all, it signifies *praying to God and putting faith in him*. This is coming to God; and those that have come to God in that fashion are among the saved. They come *to God*: that is the place to which their eager spirits hasten.

2. But notice, next, *how they come*. The "come unto God by Jesus Christ." We have known many persons who call themselves natural religionists. They worship the God of nature, and they think that they can approach God apart from Jesus Christ. There be some men we wot of who despise the mediation of the Saviour, and, who, if they were in an hour of peril, would put up their prayer at once to God, without faith in the Mediator. Do such of you fancy that you will be heard and saved by the great God your Creator, apart from the merits of his Son? Let me solemnly assure you, in God's most holy name, there never was a prayer answered for salvation, by God the Creator, since Adam fell, without Jesus Christ the Mediator. "No man can come unto God but by Jesus Christ;" and if any one of you deny the Divinity of Christ, and if any soul among you do not come to God through the merits of a Saviour, bold fidelity obliges me to pronounce you condemned persons; for however amiable you may be, you cannot be right in the rest, unless you think rightly of him. I tell you, ye may offer all the prayers that ever may be prayed, but ye shall be damned, unless ye put them up through Christ. It is all in vain for you to take your prayers and carry them yourself to the throne. "Get thee hence, sinner; get thee hence," says God; "I never knew thee. Why didst not thou put thy prayer into the hands of a Mediator? It would have been sure of an answer. But as thou presentest it thyself, see what I will do with it!" And he read your petition, and casts it to the four winds of heaven; and thou goest away unheard, unsaved. The Father will never save a man

apart from Christ; there is not one soul now in heaven who was not saved by Jesus Christ; there is not one who ever came to God aright, who did not come through Jesus Christ. If you would be at peace with God, you must come to him through Christ, as the way, the truth, and the life, making mention of his righteousness, and of his only.

3. But when these people come, *what do they come for?* There are some who think they come to God, who do not come for the right thing. Many a young student cries to God to help him in his studies; many a merchant comes to God that he may be guided through a dilemma in his business. They are accustomed, in any difficulty, to put up some kind of prayer which, if they knew its value, they might cease from offering, for "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." But the poor sinner, in coming to Christ, has only one object. If all the world were offered to him, he would not think it worth his acceptance if he could not have Jesus Christ. There is a poor man, condemned to die, locked up in the condemned cell: the bell is tolling: he will soon be taken off to die on the gallows. There, man, I have brought you a fine robe. What! not smile at it? Look! it is stiff with silver! Mark you not how it is bedizened with jewels? Such a robe as that cost many and many a pound, and much fine workmanship was expended on it. Contemptuously he smile at it! See here, man, I present thee something else: here is a glorious estate for thee, with broad acres, fine mansions, parks and lawns; take that title deed, 'tis thine. What! not smile, sir? Had I given that estate to any man who walked the street, less poor than thou art, he would have danced for very joy. And wilt not thou afford a smile, when I make thee rich and clothe thee with gold? Then let me try once more. There is Caesar's purple for thee; put it on thy shoulders - there is his crown; it shall sit on no other head but thine. It is the crown of empires that know no limit. I'll make thee a king; thou shalt have a kingdom upon which the sun shall never set; thou shalt reign from pole to pole. Stand up; call thyself Caesar. Thou art emperor. What! no smile? What dost thou want? "Take away that bauble," says he of the crown; "rend up that worthless parchment; take away that robe; ay, cast it to the winds. Give it to the kings of the earth who live; but I have to die, and of what use are these to me? Give me a pardon, and I will not care to be a Caesar. Let me live a beggar, rather than die a prince." So is it with the sinner when he comes to God:

he comes for salvation. He says -

"Wealth and honor I disdain;  
Earthly comforts, Lord, are vain,  
These will never satisfy,  
Give me Christ, or else I die."

Mercy is his sole request. O my friends, if you have ever come to God, crying out for salvation, and for salvation only, then you have come unto God aright. It were useless then to mock you. You cry for bread: should I give you stones? You would but hurl them at me. Should I offer you wealth? It would be little. We must preach to the sinner who comes to Christ, the gift for which he asks - the gift of salvation by Jesus Christ the Lord - as being his own by faith.

4. One more thought upon this coming to Christ. *In what style do these persons come?* I will try and give you a description of certain persons, all coming to the gate of mercy, as they think, for salvation. There comes one, a fine fellow in a coach and six! See how hard he drives, and how rapidly he travels; he is a fine fellow: he has men in livery, and his horses are richly caparisoned; he is rich, exceeding rich. He drives up to the gate, and says, "Knock at that gate for me; I am rich enough, but still I dare say it would be as well to be on the safe side; I am a very respectable gentleman; I have enough of my own good works and my own merits, and this chariot, I dare say, would carry me across the river death, and land me safe on the other side; but still, it is fashionable to be religious, so I will approach the gate. Porter! undo the gates, and let me in; see what an honorable man I am." You will never find the gates undone for that man; he does not approach in the right manner. There comes another; he has not quite so much merit, but still he has some; he comes walking along, and having leisurely marched up, he cries, "Angel! open the gate to me; I am come to Christ: I think I should like to be saved. I do not feel that I very much require salvation; I have always been a very honest, upright, moral man; I do not know myself to have been much of a sinner; I have robes of my own; but I would not mind putting Christ's robes on; it would not hurt me. I may as well have the wedding garment; then I can have mine own too." AH! the gates are still hard and fast, and there is no

opening of them. But let me show you the right man. There he comes, sighing and groaning, crying and weeping all the way. He has a rope on his neck, for he thinks he deserves to be condemned. He has rags on him, he comes to the heavenly throne; and when he approaches mercy's gate he is almost afraid to knock. He lifts up his eyes and he sees it written, "Knock, and it shall be opened to you;" but he fears lest he should profane the gate by his poor touch; he gives at first a gentle rap, and if mercy's gate open not, he is a poor dying creature; so he gives another rap, then another and another; and although he raps times without number, and no answer comes, still he is a sinful man, and he knows himself to be unworthy; so he keeps rapping still; and at last the good angel smiling from the gate, says, "Ah! this gate was built for beggars not for princes; heaven's gate was made for spiritual paupers, not for rich men. Christ died for sinners, not for those who are good and excellent. He came into the world to save the vile.

'Not the righteous -  
Sinners, Jesus came to call.'

Come in, poor man! Come in. Thrice welcome!" And the angels sin, "Thrice welcome!" How many of you, dear friends, have come to God by Jesus Christ in that fashion? Not with the pompous pride of the Pharisee, not with the cant of the good man who thinks he deserves salvation, but with the sincere cry of a penitent, with the earnest desire of a thirsty soul after living water, panting as the thirsty hart in the wilderness after the water-brooks, desiring Christ as they that look for the morning; I say, more than they that look for the morning. As my God who sits in heaven liveth, if you have not come to God in this fashion, you have not come to God at all; but if you have thus come to God, here is the glorious word for you - "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him."

II. Thus we have disposed of the first point, the coming to God; and now, secondly, WHAT IS THE MEASURE OF THE SAVIOUR'S ABILITY? This is a question as important as if it were for life or death - a question as to the ability of Jesus Christ. How far can salvation go? What are its limits and its boundaries? Christ is a Saviour: how far is he able to save? He is a

Physician: to what extent will his skill reach to heal diseases? What a noble answer the text gives! "He is able to save to the uttermost." Now, I will certainly affirm, and no one can deny it, that no one here knows how far the uttermost is. David said, if he took the wings of the morning, to fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, even there should God reach him. But who knoweth where the uttermost is? Borrow the angel's wing, and fly far, far beyond the most remote star: go where wing has never flapped before, and where the undisturbed ether is as serene and quiet as the breast of Deity itself; you still, beyond the bounds of creation, where space itself falls, and where chaos takes up its reign: you will not come to the uttermost. It is too far for mortal intellect to conceive of; it is beyond the range of reason or of thought. Now, our text tells us that Christ is "able to save to the uttermost."

1. Sinner, I shall address thee first; and saints of God, I shall address you afterwards. Sinner, Christ is "able to save to the uttermost;" by which we understand that *the uttermost extent of guilt* is not beyond the power of the Saviour. Can any one tell what is the uttermost amount to which a man might sin? Some of us conceive that Palmer has gone almost to the uttermost of human depravity; we fancy that no heart could be much more vile than that which conceived a murder so deliberate, and contemplated a crime so protracted; but I can conceive it possible that there might be even worse men than he, and that if his life were spared, and he were set at large, he might become even a worse man than he is now. Yea, supposing he were to commit another murder, and then another, and another, would he have gone to the uttermost? Could not a man be yet more guilty? As long as ever he lives, he may become more guilty than he was the day before. But yet my text says, Christ is "able to save to the uttermost." I may imagine a person has crept in here, who thinks himself to be the most loathsome of all beings, the most condemned of all creatures. "Surely," says he, "I have gone to the utmost extremity of sin; none could outstrip me in vice." My dear friend, suppose you had gone to the uttermost, remember that even then you would not have gone beyond the reach of divine mercy; for he is "able to save to the uttermost," and it is possible that you yourself might go a little further, and therefore you have not gone to the uttermost yet. However far you may have gone - if you have gone to the very arctic regions of vice, where

the sun of mercy seems to scatter but a few oblique rays, there can the light of salvation reach you. If I should see a sinner staggering on in his progress to hell, I would not give him up, even when he had advanced to the last stage of iniquity. Though his foot hung trembling over the very verge of perdition, I would not cease to pray for him; and though he should in his poor drunken wickedness go staggering on till one foot were over hell, and he were ready to perish, I would not despair of him. Till the pit had shut her mouth upon him I would believe it still possible that divine grace might save him. See here! he is just upon the edge of the pit, ready to fall; but ere he falls, free grace bids, "Arrest that man!" Down mercy comes, catches him on her broad wings, and he is saved, a trophy of redeeming love. If there be any such in this vast assembly - if there be any here of the outcast of society, the vilest of the vile, the scum, the draff of this poor world, - oh! ye chief of sinners! Christ is "able to save to the uttermost." Tell that everywhere, in every garret, in every cellar, in every haunt of vice, in every kennel of sin; tell it everywhere! "To the uttermost!" "He is able to save them to the uttermost."

2. Yet again: not only to the uttermost of crime, but *to the uttermost of rejection*. I must explain what I mean by this. There are many of you here who have heard the gospel from your youth up. I see some here, who like myself are children of pious parents. There are some of you upon whose infant forehead the pure heavenly drops of a mother's tears continually fell; there are many of you here who were trained up by one whose knee, whenever it was bent, was ever bent for you, her first-born son. Your mother has gone to heaven, it may be, and all the prayers she ever prayed for you are as yet unanswered. Sometimes you wept. You remember well how she grasped your hand, and said to you, "Ah! John, you will break my heart by this your sin, if you continue running on in those ways of iniquity: oh! if you did but melt, and you would fly to Christ." Do you not remember that time? The hot sweat stood upon your brow, and you said - for you could not break her heart - "Mother, I will think of it;" and you did think of it; but you met your companion outside, and it was all gone: your mother's expostulation was brushed away; like the thin cobwebs of the gossamer, blown by the swift north wind, not a trace of it was left. Since then you have often stepped in to hear the minister. Not long ago you heard a powerful sermon; the minister spoke as though he were a

man just started from his grave, with as much earnestness as if he had been a sheeted ghost come back from the realms of despair, to tell you his own awful fate, and warn you of it. You remember how the tears rolled down your cheeks. while he told you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come; you remember how he preached to you Jesus and salvation by the cross, and you rose up from your seat in that chapel, and you said, "Please God I am spared another day, I will turn to him with full purpose of heart." And there you are, still unchanged - perhaps worse than you were; and you have spent your Sunday afternoon the angel knows where: and your mother's spirit knows where you have spent it too, and could she weep, she would weep over you who have this day despised God's Sabbath, and trampled on his Holy Word. But dost thou feel in thine heart to-night the tender motions of the Holy Spirit? Dost thou feel something say, "Sinner! come to Christ now?" Dost thou hear conscience whispering to thee, telling thee of thy past transgression? And is there some sweet angel voice, saying, "Come to Jesus, come to Jesus; he will save you yet?" I tell you, sinner, you may have rejected Christ to the very uttermost; but he is still able to save you. There are a thousand prayers on which you have trampled, there are a hundred sermons all wasted on you, there are thousands of Sabbaths which you have thrown away; you have rejected Christ, you have despised his Spirit; but still he ceases not to cry, "Return, return!" He is "able to save thee to the uttermost," if thou comest unto God by him.

3. There is another case which demands my particular attention to-night. It is that of the man who has gone *to the uttermost of despair*. There are some poor creatures in the world, who from a course of crime have become hardened, and when at last aroused by remorse and the pricklings of conscience, there is an evil spirit which broods over them, telling them it is hopeless for such as they are to seek salvation. We have met with some who have gone so far that they have thought that even devils might be saved rather than they could. They have given themselves up for lost, and signed their own death-warrant, and in such a state of mind have positively taken the halter in their hand, to end their unhappy lives. Despair has brought many a man to a premature death; it hath sharpened many a knife, and mingled many a cup of poison. Have I a despairing person here? I know him by his sombre face and downcast



looks. He wishes he were dead, for he thinks that hell itself could be scarce worse torment than to be here expecting it. Let me whisper to him words of consolation. Despairing soul! hope yet, for Christ is able to save to the uttermost;" and though thou art put in the lowest dungeon of the castle of despair, though key after key hath been turned upon thee, and the iron grating of thy window forbids all filing, and the height of thy prison-wall is so awful that thou couldst not expect to escape, yet let me tell thee, there is one at the gate who can break every bolt, and undo every lock; there is one who can lead thee out to God's free air and save thee yet, for though the worst may come to the worst, he "is able to save thee to the uttermost."

4. And now a word to the saint, to comfort him: for this text is his also. Beloved brother in the gospel! Christ is able to save thee to the uttermost. Art thou brought very low by *distress*? hast thou lost house and home, friend and property? Remember, thou hast not come "to the uttermost" yet, Badly off as thou art, thou mightest be worse. He is able to save thee; and suppose it should come to this, that thou hadst not a rag left, nor a crust, nor a drop of water, still he would be able to save thee, for "he is able to save to the uttermost." So with temptation. If thou shouldst have the sharpest *temptation* with which mortal was ever tried, he is able to save thee. If thou shouldst be brought into such a predicament that the foot of the devil should be upon thy neck, and the fiend should say, "Now I will make an end of thee," God would be able to save thee then. Ay, and in the uttermost *infirmity* shouldst thou live for many a year, till thou art leaning on thy staff, and tottering along thy weary life, if thou shouldst outlive Methusaleh, thou couldst not live beyond the uttermost, and he would save thee then. Yes, and when thy little bark is launched by *death* upon the unknown sea of eternity, he will be with thee; and though thick vapours of gloomy darkness gather round thee, and thou canst not see into the dim future, though thy thoughts tell thee that thou wilt be destroyed, yet God will be "able to save thee to the uttermost."

Then, my friends, if Christ is able to save a Christian to the uttermost, do you suppose he will ever let a Christian perish? Wherever I go, I hope always to bear my hearty protest against the most accursed doctrine of a saint's falling away and perishing. There are some ministers who preach

that a man may be a child of God (now, angels! do not hear what I am about to say, listen to me, ye who are down below in hell, for it may suit you) that a man may be a child of God to-day, and a child of the devil to-morrow; that God may acquit a man, and yet condemn him - save him by grace, and then let him perish - suffer a man to be taken out of Christ's hands, though he has said such a thing shall never take place. How will you explain this? It certainly is no lack of power. You must accuse him of a want of love, and will you dare to do that? He is full of love; and since he has also the power, he will never suffer one of his people to perish. It is true, and ever shall be true, that he will save them to the very uttermost.

III. Now, in the last place, WHY IS THAT JESUS CHRIST IS "ABLE TO SAVE TO THE UTTERMOST?" The answer is, that he "ever liveth to make intercession for them." This implies that *he died*, which is indeed the great source of his saving power. Oh! how sweet it is to reflect upon the great and wonderous works which Christ hath done, whereby he hath become "the high priest of our profession," able to save us! It is pleasant to look back to Calvary's hill, and to behold that bleeding form expiring on the tree; it is sweet, amazingly sweet, to pry with eyes of love between those thick olives, and hear the groanings of the Man who sweat great drops of blood. Sinner, if thou askest me how Christ can save thee, I tell thee this - he can save thee, because he did not save himself; he can save thee, because he took thy guilt and endured thy punishment. There is no way of salvation apart from the satisfaction of divine justice. Either the sinner must die, or else some one must die for him. Sinner, Christ can save thee, because, if thou comest to God by him, then he died for thee. God has a debt against us, and he never remits that debt; he will have it paid. Christ pays it, and then the poor sinner goes free.

And we are told another reason why he is able to save: not only because he died, but *because he lives to make intercession for us*. That Man who once died on the cross is alive; that Jesus who was buried in the tomb is alive. If you ask me what he is doing; I bid you listen. Listen, if you have ears! Did you not hear him, poor penitent sinner? Did you not hear his voice, sweeter than harpers playing on their harps? Did you not hear a charming voice? Listen! what did it say? "O my Father! forgive - !" Why, he mentioned your own name! "O my Father, forgive him; he knew not

what he did. It is true he sinned against light, and knowledge, and warnings; sinned wilfully and woefully; but, Father, forgive him!" Penitent, if thou canst listen, thou wilt hear him praying for thee. And that is why he is able to save.

A warning and a question, and I have done. First, a warning. Remember, *there is a limit to God's mercy*. I have told you from the Scriptures, that "he is *able* to save to the uttermost;" but there is a limit to his purpose to save. If I read the Bible rightly, there is one sin which can never be forgiven. It is the sin against the Holy Ghost. Tremble, unpardoned sinners, lest ye should commit that. If I may tell you what I think the sin against the Holy Ghost is, I must say that I believe it to be different in different people; but in many persons, the sin against the Holy Ghost consists in stifling their convictions. Tremble, my hearers, lest to-night's sermon should be the last you hear. Go away and scorn the preacher, if you like; but do not neglect his warning. Perhaps the very next time thou laughest over a sermon, or mockest at a prayer, or despisest a text, the very next oath thou swearest, God may say, "He is given to idols, let him alone; my Spirit shall no more strive with that man; I will never speak to him again." That is the warning.

And now, lastly, the question. *Christ has done so much for you: what have you ever done for him?* Ah! poor sinner, if thou knewest that Christ died for thee - and I know that he did, if thou repentest - if thou knewest that one day thou wilt be his, wouldst thou spit upon him now? wouldst thou scoff at God's day, if thou knewest that one day it will be thy day? wouldst thou despise Christ, if thou knewest that he loves thee now, and will display that love by-and-bye? Oh! there are some of you that will loathe yourselves when you know Christ because you did not treat him better. He will come to you one of these bright mornings, and he will say, "Poor sinner, I forgive you;" and you will look up in his face, and say, "What! Lord, forgive me? I used to curse thee, I laughed at thy people, I despised everything that had to do with religion. Forgive me?" "Yes," says Christ, "give me thy hand; I loved thee when thou hatedst me: come here!" And sure there is nothing will break a heart half so much as thinking of the way in which you sinned against one who loved you so much.

Oh! beloved, hear again the text, - "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." I am no orator, I have no eloquence; but if I were the one, and had the other, I would preach to you with all my soul. As it is, I only talk right on, and tell you what I do know; I can only say again,

"He is able;  
He is willing: doubt no more.

Come, ye thirsty, come and welcome,  
God's free bounty glorify:  
True belief and true repentance,  
Every grace that brings us nigh -  
Without money,  
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy."

For he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him."  
O Lord! make sinners come! Spirit of God! make them come! Compel them to come to Christ by sweet constraint, and let not our words be in vain, or our labour lost; for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **Samson Conquered**

And she said, the Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house. - Judges 16:20-21

Samson is, in many respects, one of the most remarkable men whose

history is recorded in the pages of inspiration. He enjoyed a singular privilege only accorded to one other person in the Old Testament. His birth was foretold to his parents by an angel. Isaac was promised to Abraham and Sarah by angels whom they entertained unawares; but save Isaac, Samson was the only one whose birth was foretold by an angelic messenger before the opening of the gospel dispensation. Before his birth he was dedicated to God, and set apart as a Nazarite. Now, a Nazarite was a person who was entirely consecrated to God, and in token of his consecration he drank no wine; and allowed his hair to grow, untouched by the razor. Samson, you may therefore understand, was entirely consecrated to God, and when any saw him, they would say, "That man is God's man, a Nazarite, set apart." God endowed Samson with supernatural strength, a strength which never could have been the result of mere thews and sinews. It was not the fashioning of Samson's body that made him strong; it was not the arm, or the fist with which he smote the Philistines; it was a miracle that dwelt within him, a continued going forth of the omnipotence of God, which made him mightier than thousands of his enemies. Samson appears very early to have discovered in himself this great strength, for "the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan." He judged Israel for thirty years, and gloriously did he deliver them. What a noble being he must have been! See him, when he steps into the vineyard for a moment from his parents. A lion that has been crouching there springs upon him, but he meets him all unarmed, receives him upon his brawny arms and rends him like a kid. See him afterwards, when his countrymen have bound him and taken him down from the top of the rock, and delivered him up to the thousands of the Philistines. He has scarcely come near them, when, without a weapon, with his own foot, he begins to spurn them; and seeing there the jaw-bone of an ass, he takes that ignoble weapon, and sweeps away the men that had helmets about their heads and were girded with greaves of brass. Nor did his vigour fail him in his later life, for he died in the very prime of his days. One of his greatest exploits was performed at this very season. He is entrapped in the city of Gaza. He remains there till midnight; so confident is he in his strength that he is in no hurry to depart, and instead of assailing the guard, and making them draw the bolts, he wrenches up the two posts, and takes away the gate, bar and all, and, carries his mighty burden for miles to the top of a hill that is before

Hebron. Every way it must have been a great thing to see this man, especially if one had him for a friend. Had one been his foe, the more distant the sight the better, for none could escape from him but those who fled; but to have him for a friend and to stand with him in the day of battle, was to feel that you had an army in a single man, and had in one frame that which would strike thousands with terror. Samson, however, though he had great physical strength, had but little mental force, and even less spiritual power. His whole life is a scene of miracles and follies. He had but little grace, and was easily overcome by temptation. He is enticed and led astray. Often corrected; still he sins again. At last he falls into the hands of Delilah. She is bribed with an enormous sum, and she endeavours to get from him the secret of his strength. He foolishly toys with the danger, and plays with his own destruction. At last goaded by her importunity, he lets out the secret which he ought to have confided to no one but himself. The secret of his strength lay in his locks. Not that his hair made him strong; but that his hair was the symbol of his consecration, and was the pledge of God's favour to him. While his hair was untouched he was a consecrated man; as soon as that was cut away, he was no longer perfectly consecrated, and then his strength departed from him. His hair is cut away; the locks that covered him once are taken from him, and there he stands a shaveling, weak as other men. Now the Philistines begin to oppress him, and his eyes are burned out with hot iron. How are the mighty fallen! How are the great ones taken in the net! Samson, the great hero of Israel, is seen with a shuffling gait walking towards Gaza. A shuffling gait, I said, because he had just received blindness, which was a new thing to him, therefore, he had not as yet learned to walk as well as those who, having been blind for years, at last learn to set their feet firmly upon the earth. With his feet bound together with brazen fetters - an unusual mode of binding a prisoner, but adopted in this case because Samson was supposed to be still so strong, that any other kind of fetter would have been insufficient - you see him walking along in the midst of a small escort towards Gaza. And now he comes to the very city out of which he had walked in all his pride with the gates and bolts upon his shoulders; and the little children come out, the lower orders of the people come round about him, and point at him - "Samson, the great hero, hath fallen! let us make sport of him!" What a spectacle! The hot sun is beating upon his bare head, which had once been

protected by those luxuriant locks. Look at the escort who guard him, a mere handful of men, how they would have fled before him in his brighter days; but now a child might overcome him. They take him to a place where an ass is grinding at the mill, and Samson must do the same ignoble work. Why, he must be the sport and jest of every passer by, and of every fool who shall step in to see this great wonder - the destroyer of the Philistines made to toil at the mill. Ah, what a fall was there, my brethren! We might indeed stand and weep over poor blind Samson. That he should have lost his eyes was terrible; that he should have lost his strength was worse; but that he should have lost the favour of God for awhile; that he should become the sport of God's enemies, was the worst of all. Over this indeed we might weep.

Now, why have I narrated this story? Why should I direct your attention to Samson? For this reason. Every child of God is a consecrated man. His consecration is not typified by any outward symbol; we are not commanded to let our hair grow for ever, nor to abstain from meats or drinks. The Christian is a consecrated man, but his consecration is unseen by his fellows, except in the outward deeds which are the result thereof.

And now I want to speak to you, my dear friends, as consecrated men, as Nazarites, and I think I shall find a lesson for you in the history of Samson. My first point shall be the strength of the consecrated, for they are strong men; secondly, the secret of their strength; thirdly, the danger to which they are exposed; and fourthly, the disgrace which will come upon them if they fall into this danger.

I. First, THE STRENGTH OF THE CONSECRATED MAN. Do you know that the strongest man in all the world is a consecrated man? Even though he may consecrate himself to a wrong object, yet if it be a thorough consecration, he will have strength - strength for evil, it may be, but still strength. In the old Roman wars with Pyrrhus, you remember an ancient story of self-devotion. There was an oracle which said that victory would attend that army whose leader should give himself up to death. Decius the Roman Consul, knowing this, rushed into the thickest of the battle, that his army might overcome by his dying. The prodigies of valour

which he performed are proofs of the power of consecration. The Romans at that time seemed to be every man a hero, because every man was a consecrated man. They went to battle with this thought - "I will conquer or die; the name of Rome is written on my heart; for my country I am prepared to live, or for that to shed my blood." And no enemies could ever stand against them. If a Roman fell there were no wounds in his back, but all in his breast. His face, even in cold death, was like the face of a lion, and when looked upon it was of terrible aspect. They were men consecrated to their country; they were ambitious to make the name of Rome the noblest word in human language; and consequently the Roman became a giant. And to this day let a man get a purpose within him, I care not what his purpose is, and let his whole soul be absorbed by it, and what will he not do? You that are "everything by turns and nothing long," that have nothing to live for, soulless carcasses that walk this earth and waste its air, what can you do? Why nothing. But the man who knows what he is at, and has his mark, speeds to it "Like an arrow from a bow shot by an archer strong." Nought can turn him aside from his design. How much more is this true if I limit the description to that which is peculiar to the Christian - consecration to God! Oh! what strength that man has who is dedicated to God! Is there such an one here? I know there is. I know that there be many who have consecrated themselves to the Lord God of Israel in the secret of their chamber; and who can say in their hearts,

"Tis done; the great transaction's done  
I am my Lord's, and he is mine.  
He drew me, and I followed on,  
Glad to obey the voice divine."

Now, the man that can say that, and is thoroughly consecrated to God; be he who he may or what he may, he is a strong man, and will work marvels.

Need I tell you of the wonders that have been done by consecrated men? You have read the stories of olden times, when our religion was hunted like a partridge on the mountains. Did you never hear how consecrated men and women endured unheard-of pangs and agonies? Have you not



read how they were cast to the lions, how they were sawn in sunder, how they languished in prisons, or met with the swifter death of the sword? Have you not heard how they wandered about in sheeps' skins and goats' skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy? Have you not heard how they defied tyrants to their face, how, when they were threatened, they dared most boldly to laugh at all the threats of the foe - how at the stake they clapped their hands in the fire, and sang psalms of triumph when men, worse than fiends, were jeering at their miseries? How was this? What made women stronger than men, and men stronger than angels? Why this, - they were consecrated to God. They felt that every pang which rent their heart was giving glory to God, that all the pains they endured in their bodies were but the marks of the Lord Jesus, whereby they were proven to be wholly dedicated unto him. Nor in this alone has the power of the consecrated ones been proved. Have you never heard how the sanctified ones have done wonders? Read the stories of those who counted not their lives dear unto them, that they might honour their Lord and Master by preaching his Word, by telling forth the gospel in foreign lands. Have you not heard how men have left their kindred and their friends, and all that life held dear - have crossed the stormy sea, and have gone into the lands of the heathen, where men were devouring one another? Have you not known how they have put their foot upon that country, and have seen the ship that conveyed them there fading away in the distance, and yet without a fear have dwelt amongst the wild savages of the woods, have walked into the midst of them, and told them the simple story of the God that loved and died for man? You must know how those men have conquered, how those, who seemed to be fiercer than lions, have crouched before them, have listened to their words, and have been converted by the majesty of the gospel which they preached. What made these men heroes? What enabled them to rend themselves away from all their kith and kin, and banish themselves into the land of the stranger? It was because they were consecrated, thoroughly consecrated to the Lord Jesus Christ. What is there in the world which the consecrated man cannot do? Tempt him; offer him gold and silver; carry him to the mountain top, and show him all the kingdoms of the world, and tell him he shall have all these if he will bow down and worship the god of this world. What saith the consecrated man? "Get thee behind me, Satan; I have more than all this which thou dost offer me; this world is

mine, and worlds to come; I despise the temptation; I will not bow before thee." Let men threaten a consecrated man, what does he say? "I fear God, and, therefore, I cannot fear you; if it be right in your sight to obey man rather than God, judge ye; but, as for me, I will serve none but God." You may, perhaps, have seen in your life a consecrated man. Is he a public character? What cannot he do? He preaches the gospel, and at once a thousand enemies assail him; they attack him on every side; some for this thing, and some for that; his very virtues are distorted into vices, and his slightest faults are magnified into the greatest crimes. He has scarce a friend; the very ministers of the gospel shun him; he is reckoned to be so strange that every one must avoid him. What does he do? Within the chamber of his own heart he holds conference with his God, and asks himself this question - am I right? Conscience gives the verdict, - yes, and the Spirit bears witness with his spirit that conscience is impartial. "Then," says he, "come fair, come foul, if I am right, - neither to the right hand nor to the left will I turn." Perhaps he feels in secret what he will not express in public. He feels the pang of desertion, obloquy, and rebuke; he cries -

"If on my face, for thy dear name,  
Shame and reproach shall be,  
I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame,  
If thou'lt remember me."

As for himself in public, none can tell that he careth for any of these things; for he can say with Paul - "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me that I may win Christ and finish my course with joy." What cannot a consecrated man do? I do believe if he had the whole world against him, he would prove more than a match for them all. He would say - "Heaps upon heaps, with the jaw-bone of an ass, have I slain my thousand men." I care not how violent may be his foe; nor how great may be the advantage which that foe may get on him: though the lion may have crouched for the spring, and may be leaping upon him, yet will he rend him as a kid, for he is more than a conqueror through him that loved him. He is alone such, who is wholly consecrated unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

"But," says some one, "can we be consecrated to Christ? I thought that was for ministers only." Oh, no, my brethren; all God's children must be consecrated men. What are you? Are you engaged in business? If you are what you profess to be, your business must be consecrated to God. Perhaps you have no family whatever, and you are engaged in trade, and are saving some considerable sum a-year; let me tell you the example of a man thoroughly consecrated to God. There lives in Bristol, (name unknown), a man whose income is large; and what does he do with it? He labours in business continually that this income may come to him, but of it, every farthing every year is expended in the Lord's cause except that which he requires for the necessaries of life. He makes his necessities as few as possible, that he may have the more to give away. He is God's man in his business. I do not exhort you to do the same. You may be in a different position; but a man who has a family, and is in business, should be able to say - "Now, I make so much from my business; my family must be provided for - but I seek not to amass riches. I will make money for God and I will spend it in his cause. Did I not say, when I joined the church -

"All that I am, and all I have,  
Shall be for ever thine;  
Whate'er my duty bids me give,  
My cheerful hands resign."

And if I said it, I meant it." I do not understand some Christian people who sing that hymn, and then pinch, screw, and nip anything when it comes to God's cause. If I sing that, I mean it. I would not sing it unless I did. If I join the church, I understand that I give myself and all that I have up to that church; I would not make a lying profession; I would not make an avowal of a consecration which I did not mean. If I have said, "I am Christ's;" by his grace I will be Christ's. Brethren, you in business may be as much consecrated to Christ as the minister in his pulpit; you may make your ordinary transactions in life a solemn service of God. Many a man has disgraced a cassock, and many another has consecrated a smockfrock: many a man has defiled his pulpit cushions, and many another has made a cobbler's lapstone holiness unto the Lord. Happy the man who is consecrated unto the Lord; where'er he is, he is a consecrated

man, and he shall do wonders.

It has often been remarked that in this age we are all little men. A hundred years ago, or more, if we had gone through the churches, we might have readily found a number of ministers of great note. But now we are all little men, the drivelling sons of nobodies; our names shall never be remembered, for we do nothing to deserve it. There is scarce a man alive now upon this earth; there are plenty to be found who call themselves men, but they are the husks of men, the life has gone from them, the precious kernel seems to have departed. The littleness of Christians of this age results from the littleness of their consecration to Christ. The age of John Owen was the day of great preachers; but let me tell you, that that was the age of great consecration. Those great preachers whose names we remember, were men who counted nothing their own: they were driven out from their benefices, because they could not conform to the Established Church, and they gave up all they had willingly to the Lord. They were hunted from place to place; the disgraceful five-mile act would not permit them to come within five miles of any market town; they wandered here and there to preach the gospel to a few poor sheep, being fully given up to their Lord. Those were foul times; but they promised they would walk the road fair or foul, and they did walk it knee deep in mud; and they would have walked it if it had been knee deep in blood too. They became great men; and if we were, as they were, wholly given up to God - if we could say of ourselves, "From the crown of my head to the sole of my foot, there is not a drop of blood that is not wholly God's; all my time, all my talents, everything I have is God's" - if we could say that, we should be strong like Samson, for the consecrated must be strong.

II. Now, in the second place, **THE SECRET OF THEIR STRENGTH.** What makes the consecrated man strong? Ah! beloved; there is no strength in man of himself. Samson without his God was but a poor fool indeed. The secret of Samson's strength was this - as long as he was consecrated he should be strong; so long as he was thoroughly devoted to his God, and had no object but to serve God, (and that was to be indicated by the growing of his hair) so long, and no longer, would God be with him to help him. And now you see, dear friends, that if you have any strength

to serve God, the secret of your strength lies in the same place. What strength have you save in God? Ah! I have heard some men talk as if the strength of free will, of human nature, was sufficient to carry men to heaven. Free will has carried many souls to hell, but never a soul to heaven yet. No strength of nature can suffice to serve the Lord aright. No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost. No man can come to Christ except the Father that hath sent Christ doth draw him. If, then, the first act of Christian life is beyond all human strength, how much more are those higher steps far beyond any one of us? Do we not utter a certain truth when we say in the words of Scripture, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." I think every one who has a really quickened soul will sooner or later be made to feel this. Ay! I question whether a man can be converted a day without finding out his own weakness. It is but a little space before the child finds that he can stand alone so long as God his Father takes him by the arms and teaches him to go, but that if his Father's hand be taken away he has no power to stand, but down he falls at once. See Samson without his God, going out against a thousand men. Would they not laugh at him? and with scarcely time to express his terror, he would flee, or be rent in pieces. Imagine him without his God, locked up in Gaza, the gates fast closed. He goes out into the streets to escape; but how can he clear a passage? He is caught like a wild bull in a net; he may go round and round the walls, but where shall be his deliverance? Without his God he is but as other men. The secret of his strength lies in his consecration, and in the strength which is its result. Remember, then, the secret of your strength. Never think that you have any power of your own; rely wholly upon the God of Israel; and remember that the channel through which that strength must come to you must be your entire consecration to God.

III. In the third place, What is THE PECULIAR DANGER OF A CONSECRATED MAN? His danger is that his locks may be shorn, that is to say, that his consecration may be broken. As long as he is consecrated he is strong; break that, he is weak as water. Now there are a thousand razors with which the devil can shave off the locks of a consecrated man without his knowing it. Samson is sound asleep; so clever is the barber that he even lulls him to sleep as his fingers move across the pate, the

fool's pate, which he is making bare. The devil is cleverer far than even the skilful barber; he can shave the believer's locks while he scarcely knows it. Shall I tell you with what razors he can accomplish this work? Sometimes he takes the sharp razor of pride, and when the Christian falls asleep and is not vigilant, he comes with it and begins to run his fingers upon the Christian's locks, and says, "What a fine fellow you are! What wonders you have done! Didn't you rend that lion finely? Wasn't it a great feat to smite those Philistines hip and thigh? Ah you will be talked-of as long as time endures for carrying those gates of Gaza away. You need not be afraid of anybody." And so on goes the razor, lock after lock falling off, and Samson knows it not. He is just thinking within himself, "How brave am I! How great am I!" Thus works the razor of pride - cut, cut, cut away - and he wakes up to find himself bald, and all his strength gone. Have you never had that razor upon your head? I confess I have on mine. Have you never, after you have been able to endure afflictions, heard a voice saying to you, "How patient you were!" After you have cast aside some temptation, and have been able to keep to the unswerving course of integrity, has not Satan said to you, "That is a fine thing you have done; that was bravely done." And all the while you little knew that it was the cunning hand of the evil one taking away your locks with the sharp razor of pride. For mark, pride is a breach of our consecration. As soon as I begin to get proud of what I do, or what I am, what am I proud of? Why, there is in that pride the act of taking away from God his glory. For I promised that God should have all the glory, and is not that part of my consecration? and I am taking it to myself. I have broken my consecration; my locks are gone, and I become weak. Mark this, Christian - God will never give thee strength to glorify thyself with. God will give thee a crown, but not to put on thine own head. As sure as ever a Christian begins to write his feats, and his triumphs upon his own escutcheon, and take to himself the glory, God will lay him level with the dust.

Another razor he also uses is self-sufficiency. "Ah," saith the devil as he is shaving away your locks, "You have done a very great deal. You see they bound you with green withes, and you snapped them in sunder, they merely smelt the fire and they burst. Then they took new ropes to bind you; ah! you overcame even them; for you snapped the ropes in sunder as

if they had been a thread. Then they weaved the seven locks of your head, but you walked away with loon, and web too, beam and all. You can do anything, don't be afraid: you have strength enough to do anything; you can accomplish any feat you set your will upon." How softly the devil will do all that; how will he be rubbing the poll while the razor is moving softly along and the locks are dropping off, and he is treading them in the dust. "You have done all this, and you can do anything else." Every drop of grace distils from heaven. O my brethren, what have we that we have not received? Let us not imagine that we can create might wherewith to gird ourselves. "All my springs are in thee." The moment we begin to think that it is our own arm that has gotten us the victory, it will be all over with us - our locks of strength shall be taken away, and the glory shall depart from us. So, you see, self-sufficiency, as well as pride, may be the razor with which the enemy may shave away our strength.

There is yet another, and a more palpable danger still. When a consecrated man begins to change his purpose in life and live for himself - that razor shaves clean indeed. There is a minister; when he first began his ministry he could say, "God is my witness I have but one object, that I may free my skirts from the blood of every one of my hearers, that I may preach the gospel faithfully and honour my Master." In a little time, tempted by Satan, he changes his tone and talks like this, "I must keep my congregation up. If I preach such hard doctrine, they won't come. Did not one of the newspapers criticise me, and did not some of my people go away from me because of it? I must mind what I am at. I must keep this thing going. I must look out a little sharper, and prone my speech down. I must adopt a little gentler style, or preach a new-fashioned doctrine; for I must keep my popularity up. What is to become of me if I go down? People will say, 'Up like a rocket, down like the stick;' and then shall all my enemies laugh." Ah, when once a man begins to care so much as a snap of the finger about the world, it is all over with him. If he can go to his pulpit, and say, "I have got a message to deliver; and whether they will hear or whether they will not hear, I will deliver it as God puts it into my mouth; I will not change the dot of an i, or the cross of a t for the biggest man that lives, or to bring in the mightiest congregation that ever sat at minister's feet" - that man is mighty. He does not let human judgments move him, and he will move the world. But let him turn aside, and think

about his congregation, and how that shall be kept up; ah Samson! how are thy locks shorn? What canst thou do now? That false Delilah has destroyed thee - thine eyes are put out, thy comfort is taken away, and thy future ministry shall be like the grinding of an ass around the continually revolving mill; thou shalt have no rest or peace ever afterwards. Or let him turn aside another way. Suppose he should say, "I must get preferment, or wealth, I must look well to myself, I must see my nest feathered, that must be the object of my life." I am not now speaking of the ministry merely, but of all the consecrated; and as sure as ever we begin to make self the primary object of our existence our locks are shorn. "Now," says the Lord, "I gave that man strength, but not to use it for himself. Then I put him into a high position, but not that he might clothe himself about with glory; I put him there that he might look to my cause, to my interests; and if he does not do that first, down he shall go." You remember Queen Esther: she is exalted from being a simple humble maiden, to become the wife of the great monarch - Ahasuerus. Well, Haman gets a decree against her nation, that it shall be destroyed. Poor Mordecai comes to Esther, and says, "You must go in to the king and speak to him." "Well," says she, "but if I do I shall die." "Ah," says he, "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther was not made Queen Esther that she might make herself glorious, but that she might be in a position to save the Jews; and now if she prefers herself before her country then it is all over with her - Vashti's fate shall be as nothing compared with her destruction.

And so, if you live in this world, and God prospers you, you get perhaps into some position, and you say, "Here I am; I will look out for myself; I have been serving the church before, but now I will look to myself a little." "Come, come," says human nature; "you must look after your family," (which means, you must look after yourself). Very well, do it sir, as your main object, and you are a ruined man. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these shall be added to you." If you keep your eye single, your whole body shall be full of light. Though you seemed as if you had shut out half the light by having that single eye, yet



your body shall be full of light. But begin to have two masters, and two objects to serve, and you shall serve neither; you shall neither prosper for this world, nor for that which is to come. Oh, Christian, above all things take care of thy consecration. Ever feel that thou art wholly given up to God, and to God alone.

IV. And now, lastly, there is THE CHRISTIAN'S DISGRACE. His locks are cut off. I have seen him, young as I am, and you with grey hairs upon your brows have seen him oftener than I; I have seen him in the ministry. He spake like an angel of God; many there were that regarded him, and did hang upon his lips; he seemed to be sound in doctrine and earnest in manner. I have seen him turn aside; it was but a little thing, - some slight deviation from the ancient orthodoxy of his fathers, some slight violation of the law of his church. I have seen him, till he has given up doctrine after doctrine, until, at last, the very place wherein he preached has become a bye-word and a proverb; and the man is pointed out by the grey-headed sire to his child as a man who is to be looked upon with suspicion; who, if he lectures, is to be heard with caution; and if he preaches, is not to be listened to at all. Have you not seen him? What disgrace was there! What a fall! The man who came out in the camps of Dan, and seemed to be moved by the Spirit of the Lord, has become the slave of error. He has gone into the very camps of the enemy, and there he is now, grinding in the mill for the Philistine, whom he ought to have been striking with his arm. Now there are two ways of accounting for this. Such a man is either a thorough hypocrite or a fallen believer. Sometimes, people say of persons who turn aside to sin, "There now; look, there is a Christian fallen, - a child of God fallen." It is something like the vulgar, when at night they see a bright light in the sky, and say, "Ah, there is a star fallen." It was not a star; the stars are all right. Take a telescope; they are every one there. The Great Bear has not lost a star out of it's tail; and if you look, there is the belt of Orion all safe, and the dagger has not dropped out of it. What is it, then? We do not know exactly what it is. Perhaps it may be a few gases up there for a little while, that have burst, and that is all; or some wandering substance cast down, - and quite time that it should be. But the stars are all right. So, depend upon it, the children of God are always safe. Now these men who have turned aside and broken their consecration vow, are pointed at as a disgrace to

themselves and dishonour to the church. And you who are members of Christ's church, you have seen men who stood in your ranks as firm soldiers of the cross, and you have noticed them go out, from us, "because they were not of us," or like poor Samson, you have seen them go to their graves with the eyes of their comfort put out, with the feet of their usefulness bound with brazen fetters, and with the strength of their arms entirely departed from them. Now, do any of you wish to be backsliders? Do you wish to betray the holy profession of your religion? My brethren, is there one among you who this day makes a profession of love to Christ, who desires to be an apostate? Is there one of you who desires like Samson to have his eyes put out, and to be made to grind in the mill? Would you, like David, commit a great sin, and go with broken bones to the grave? would you, like Lot, be drunken, and fall into lust? No, I know what you say, "Lord, let my path be like the eagle's flight; let me fly upwards to the sun, and never stay and never turn aside. Oh, give me grace that I may serve thee, like Caleb, with a perfect heart, and that from the beginning even to the end of my days, my course may be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Ay, I know what is your desire. How, then, shall it be accomplished? Look well to your consecration; see that it is sincere; see that you mean it, and then look up to the Holy Spirit, after you have looked to your consecration, and beg of him to give you daily grace; for as day-by-day the manna fell, so must you receive daily food from on high. And, remember, it is not by any grace you have in you, but by the grace that is in Christ, and that must be given to you hour by hour, that you are to stand, and having done all, to be crowned at last as a faithful one, who has endured unto the end. I ask your prayers that I may be kept faithful to my Lord; and on the other hand, I will offer my earnest prayers, that you may serve him while he lends you breath, that when your voice is lost in death, you may throughout a never ending immortality, praise him in louder and sweeter strains.

And as for you that have not given yourselves to God, and are not consecrated to him, I can only speak to you as to Philistines, and warn you, that the day shall come when Israel shall be avenged upon the Philistines. You may be one day assembled upon the roof of your pleasures, enjoying yourselves in health and strength; but there is a

Samson - called Death, who shall pull down the pillars of your tabernacle, and you must fall and be destroyed - and great shall be the ruin. May God give you grace that you may be consecrated to Christ; so that living or dying, you may rejoice in him, and may share with him the glory of his Father.

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## Satan's Banquet

The governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now. - John 2:9-10

The governor of the feast said more than he intended to say, or rather, there is more truth in what he said than he himself imagined. This is the established rule all the world over: "the good wine first, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse." It is the rule with men; and have not hundreds of disappointed hearts bewailed it? Friendship first - the oily tongue, the words softer than butter, and afterwards the drawn sword. Ahithophel first presents the lordly dish of love and kindness to David, then afterwards that which is worse, for he forsakes his master, and becomes the counsellor of his rebel son. Judas presents first of all the dish of fair speech and of kindness; the Saviour partook thereof, he walked to the house of God in company with him, and took sweet counsel with him; but afterwards there came the dregs of the wine - "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." Judas the thief betrayed his Master, bringing forth afterwards "that which is worse." Ye have found it so with many whom ye thought your friends. In the heyday of prosperity, when the sun was shining, and the birds were singing, and all was fair and gay and cheerful with you, they brought forth the good wine; but there came a chilling frost, and nipped your flowers, and the leaves fell from the trees, and your streams were frosted with the ice, and then they brought forth that which is worse, - they forsook you and fled; they left you in your hour of peril, and taught you that great truth, that "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." And this is the way all the world over - I say it once again - not merely with men, but with nature too.

"Alas, for us, if thou wert all,  
And nought beyond O earth;"

for doth not this world serve us just the same? In our youth it brings forth the best wine; then we have the sparkling eye, and the ear attuned to music; then the blood flows swiftly through the veins and the pulse beats joyously; but wait a little and there shall come forth afterwards that which is worse, for the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves; the grinders shall fail because they are few, they that look out of the windows shall be darkened, all the daughters of music shall be brought low; then shall the strong man totter, the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail, the mourners shall go about the streets. First there is the flowing cup of youth, and afterwards the stagnant waters of old age, unless God shall cast into those dregs a fresh flood of his lovingkindness and tender mercy, so that once again, as it always happeneth to the Christian, the cup shall run over, and again sparkle with delight. O Christian, trust not thou in men; rely not thou upon the things of this present time, for this is evermore the rule with men and with the world - "the good wine first, and when ye have well drunken, then that which is worse."

This morning, however, I am about to introduce you to two houses of feasting. First, I shall bid you look within the doors of the devil's house, and you will find he is true to this rule; he brings forth first the good wine, and when men have well drunk, and their brains are muddled therewith, then he bringeth forth that which is worse. Having bidden you look there and tremble, and take heed to the warning, I shall then attempt to enter with you into the banquetting house of our beloved Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and of him we shall be able to say, as the governor of the feast said to the bridegroom, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now;" thy feasts grow better, and not worse: thy wines grow richer, thy viands are daintier far, and thy gifts more precious than before. "Thou hast kept the good wine until now."

I. First, we are to take a warning glance at the HOUSE OF FEASTING WHICH SATAN HATH BUILDED: for as wisdom hath builded her house, and hewn out her seven pillars, so hath folly its temple and its tavern of feasting, into which it continually tempts the unwary. Look within the banquetting house, and I will shew you four tables and the guests that sit

thereat; and as you look at those tables you shall see the courses brought in. You shall see the wine cops brought, and you shall see them vanish one after another, and you shall mark that the rule holds good at all four tables - first the good wine, and afterwards that which is worse - yea, I shall go further - afterwards, that which is worst of all.

1. At the first table to which I shall invite your attention, though I beseech you never to sit down and drink thereat, sit the PROFLIGATE. The table of the profligate is a gay table; it is covered over with a gaudy crimson, and all the vessels upon it look exceedingly bright and glistening. Many there be that sit thereat, but they know not that they are the guests of hell, and that the end of all the feast shall be in the depths of perdition. See ye now the great governor of the feast, as he comes in? He has a bland smile upon his face; his garments are not black, but he is girded with a robe of many colours, he hath a honied word on his lip, and a tempting witchery in the sparkle of his eye. He brings in she cup, and says, "Hey, young man, drink hereat, it sparkleth in the cup, it moveth itself aright. Do you see it? It is the wine-cup of pleasure." This is the first cup at the banquetting house of Satan. The young man takes it, and sips the liquor. At first it is a cautious sip; it is but a little he will take, and then he will restrain himself. He does not intend to indulge much in lust, he means not to plunge headlong into perdition. There is a flower there on the edge of that cliff: he will reach forward a little and pluck it, but it is not his intention to dash himself from that beetling crag and destroy himself. Not he! He thinks it easy to put away the cup when he has tested its flavour! He has no design to abandon himself to its intoxication. He takes a shallow draught. But O how sweet it is! How it makes his blood tingle within him. What a fool I was, not to have tasted this before! he thinks. Was ever joy like this? Could it be thought that bodies could be capable of such ecstasy as this? He drinks again; this time he takes a deeper draught, and the wine is hot in his veins. Oh! how blest is he! What would he not say now in the praise of Bacchus, or Venus, or whatever shape Beelzebub chooses to assume? He becomes a very orator in praise of sin? It is fair, it is pleasant, the deep damnation of lust appeareth as joyous as the transports of heaven. He drinks, he drinks, he drinks again, till his brain begins to reel with the intoxication of his sinful delight. This is the first course. Drink, O ye drunkards of Ephraim, and bind the crown of

pride about your head, and call us fools because we put your cup from us; drink with the harlot and sup with the lustful; ye may think yourselves wise for so doing, but we know that after these things there cometh something worse, for your vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah, your grapes are grapes of gall, the clusters are bitter; your wine is the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps.

Now with a leer upon his brow, the subtle govenor of the feast riseth from his seat. His victim has had enough of the best wine. He takes away that cup, and he brings in another, not quite so sparkling. Look into the liquor; it is not beaded over with the sparkling bubbles of rapture; it is all flat, and dull, and insipid; it is called the cup of satiety. The man has had enough of pleasure, and like a dog he vomits, though like a dog he will return to his vomit yet again. Who hath woe? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. I am now speaking figuratively of wine, as well as literally. The wine of lust bringeth the same redness of the eyes; the profligate soon discovers that all the rounds of pleasure end in satiety. "What!" says he, "What more can I do? There! I have committed every wickedness that can be imagined, and I have drained every cup of pleasure. Give me something fresh! I have tried the theatres all round: there! I don't care so much as one single farthing for them all. I have gone to every kind of pleasure that I can conceive. It is all over. Gaiety itself grows flat and dull. What am I to do?" And this is the devil's second course - the course of satiety - a fitful drowsiness, the result of the previous excess. Thousands there are who are drinking of the tasteless cup of satiety every day, and some novel invention whereby they may kill time, some new discovery whereby they may give a fresh vent to their iniquity would be a wonderful thing to them; and if some man should rise up who could find out for them some new fashion of wickedness, some deeper depths in the deeps of the nethermost hell of lasciviousness, they would bless his name, for having given them something fresh to excite them. That is the devil's second course. And do you see them partaking of it? Three are some of you that are having a deep draught of it this morning. You are the jaded horses of the fiend of lust, the disappointed followers of the will-o'-the-wisp of pleasure. God knows, if you were to speak your heart out you would be obliged to say, "There! I have tried pleasure, and I do not find it pleasure ; I have gone the round, and I am

just like the blind horse at the mill, I have to go round again. I am spell-bound to the sin, but I cannot take delight in it now as I once did, for all the glory on it is as a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer.

Awhile the feaster remains in the putrid sea of his infatuation, but another scene is opening. The governor of the feast commandeth another liquor to be broached. This time the fiend bears a black goblet, and he presents it with eyes full of hell-fire, flashing with fierce damnation. "Drink of that, sir," says he, and the man sips it and starts back and shrieks, "O God! that ever I must come to this!" You must drink, sir! He that quaffs the first cup, must drink the second, and the third. Drink, though it be like fire down your throat! Drink it, though it be as the lava of Etna in your bowels! Drink! you must drink! He that sins must suffer; he that is a profligate in his youth must have rottenness in his bones, and disease within his loins. He who rebels against the laws of God, must reap the harvest in his own body here. Oh! there are some dreadful things that I might tell you of this third course. Satan's house has a front chamber full of everything that is enticing to the eye and bewitching to the sensual taste; but there is a back chamber, and no one knoweth, no one hath seen the whole of its horrors. There is a secret chamber, where he shovels out the creatures whom he hath himself destroyed - a chamber, beneath whose floor is the blazing of hell, and above whose boards the heat of that horrible pit is felt. It may be a physician's place rather than mine, to tell of the horrors that some have to suffer as the result of their iniquity. I leave that; but let me tell the profligate spendthrift, that the poverty which he will endure is the result of his sin of extravagant spendthriftcy; let him know, also, that the remorse of conscience that will overtake him is not an accidental thing that drops by chance from heaven, - it is the result of his own iniquity; for, depend upon it, men and brethren, sin carries an infant misery in its bowels, and sooner or later it must be delivered of its terrible child. If we sow the seed we must reap the harvest. Thus the law of hell's house stands - "first, the good wine, then, afterwards, that which is worse."

The last course remains to be presented. And now, ye strong men who mock at the warning, which I would fain deliver to you with a brother's



voice and with an affectionate heart, though with rough language. Come ye here, and drink of this last cup. The sinner has at the end brought himself to the grave. His hopes and joys were like gold put into a bag full of holes, and they have all vanished - vanished for ever; and now he has come to the last; his sins haunt him, his transgressions perplex him; he is taken like a bull in a net, and how shall he escape. He dies, and descends from disease to damnation. Shall mortal language attempt to tell you the horrors of that last tremendous cup of which the profligate must drink, and drink for ever? Look at it: ye cannot see its depths, but cast an eye upon its seething surface, I hear the noise of rushing to and fro, and a sound as of gnashing of teeth and the wailing of despairing souls. I look into that cup, and I hear a voice coming up from its depths - "These shall go away into everlasting punishment;" for "Tophet is prepared of old, the pile thereof is wood and much smoke, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it." And what say ye to this last course of Satan? "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Profligate! I beseech thee, in the name of God, start from this table! Oh, be not so careless at thy cups; be not so asleep, secure in the peace which thou now enjoyest! Man! death is at the door, and at his heels is swift destruction. As for you, who as yet have been restrained by a careful father and the watchfulness of an anxious mother, I beseech you shun the house of sin and folly. Let the wise man's words be written on thine heart, and be thou mindful of them in the hour of temptation - "Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: for the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell."

2. Do ye see that other table yonder in the middle of the palace? Ah! good easy souls! Many of you had thought that you never went to the feast of hell at all; but there is a table for you too; it is covered over with a fair white cloth, and all the vessels upon the table are most clean and comely. The wine looks not like the wine of Gomorrah, it moveth aright, like the wine from the grapes of Eshcol; it seems to have no intoxication in it; it is like the ancient wine which they pressed from the grape into the cup having in it no deadly poison. Do ye see the men who sit at this table?

How self-contented they are! Ask the white fiends who wait at it, and they will tell you, "This is the table of the self-righteous: the Pharisee sits there. You may know him; he has his phylactery between his eyes; the hem of his garment is made exceeding broad; he is one of the best of the best professors." "Ah!" saith Satan, as he draws the curtain and shuts off the table where the profligates are carousing, "be quiet; don't make too much noise, lest these sanctimonious hypocrites should guess what company they are in. Those self-righteous people are my guests quite as much as you, and I have them quite as safely." So Satan, like an angel of light, brings forth a gilded goblet, looking like the chalice of the table of communion. And what wine is that? It seems to be the very wine of the sacred Eucharist; it is called the wine of self-satisfaction, and around the brim you may see the bubbles of pride. Look at the swelling froth upon the bowl - "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." You know that cup, my self-deceiving hearers; Oh that ye knew the deadly hemlock which is mixed therein. "Sin as other men do? Not you; not at all. You are not going to submit yourself to the righteousness of Christ: what need you? You are as good as your neighbours; if you are not saved, you ought to be, you think. Don't you pay everybody twenty-shillings in the pound? Did you ever rob anybody in your life? You do your neighbours a good turn; you are as good as other people." Very good! That is the first cup the devil gives, and the good wine makes you swell with self-important dignity, as its fumes enter your heart and puff it up with an accursed pride. Yes! I see you sitting in the room so cleanly swept and so neatly garnished, and I see the crowds of your admirers standing around the table, even many of God's own children, who say, "Oh that I were half as good as he." While the very humility of the righteous provides you with provender for your pride. Wait awhile, thou unctious hypocrite, wait awhile, for there is a second course to come. Satan looks with quite as self-satisfied an air upon his guests this time as he did upon the troop of rioters. "Ah!" says he, "I cheated those gay fellows with the cup of pleasure - I gave them, afterwards, the dull cup of satiety, and I have cheated you, too; you think yourselves all right, but I have deceived you twice, I have befooled you indeed." So he brings in a cup which, sometimes, he himself doth not like to serve. It is called the cup of discontent and unquietness of mind, and many there be that have to

drink this after all their self-satisfaction. Do you not find, you that are very good in your own esteem, but have no interest in Christ, that when you sit alone and begin to turn over your accounts for eternity, that they do not square somehow - that you cannot strike the balance exactly to your own side after all, as you thought you could? Have not you sometimes found, that when you thought you were standing on a rock, there was a quivering beneath your feet? You heard the Christian sing boldly, -

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who ought to my charge shall lay?  
While, thro' thy blood, absolv'd I am  
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

And you have said, "Well, I cannot sing that, I have been as good a Churchman as ever lived, I never missed going to my church all these years, but I cannot say I have a solid confidence." You had once a hope of self-satisfaction; but now the second course has come in, and you are not quite so contented. "Well," says another, "I have been to my chapel, and I have been baptized, and made a profession of religion, though I was never brought to know the Lord in sincerity and in truth, and I once thought it was all well with me, but I want a something which I cannot find." Now comes a shaking in the heart. It is not quite so delightful as one supposed, to build on one's own righteousness. Ah! that is the second course. Wait awhile, and mayhap in this world, but certainly in the hour of death, the devil will bring in the third cup of dismay, at the discovery of your lost condition. How many a man who has been self-righteous all his life, has, at the last discovered that the thing whereon he placed his hope had failed him. I have heard of an army, who, being defeated in battle, endeavoured to make good a retreat. With all their might the soldiers fled to a certain river, where they expected to find a bridge across which they could retreat and be in safety. But when they came to the stream, there was heard a shriek of terror - "The bridge is broken, the bridge is broken!" All in vain was that cry; for the multitude hurrying on behind, pressed upon those that were before and forced them into the river, until the stream was glutted with the bodies of drowned men. Such must be the fate of the self-righteous. You thought there was a bridge of ceremonies;

that baptism, confirmation, and the Lord's Supper, made up the solid arches of a bridge of good works and duties. But when you come to die, there shall be heard the cry - "The bridge is broken, the bridge is broken!" It will be in vain for you to turn round then. Death is close behind you; he forces you onward, and you discover what it is to perish, through having neglected the great salvation, and attempting to save yourself through your own good works. This is the last course but one: and your last course of all, the worst wine, your everlasting portion must be the same as that of the profligate. Good as you thought yourself to be, inasmuch as you proudly rejected Christ, you must drink the winecup of the wrath of God; that cup which is full of trembling. The wicked of the earth shall wring out the dregs of that cup, and drink them; and you also must drink of it as deep as they. Oh, beware in time! Put away your high looks, and humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved.

3. Some of you have as yet escaped the lash, but there is a third table crowded with most honourable guests. I believe there have been more princes and kings, mayors and aldermen, and great merchants sitting at this table, than at any other. It is called the table of worldliness. "Humph," says a man, "Well, I dislike the profligate; there's my eldest son, I've been hard at work saving up money all my life, and there's that young fellow, he will not stick to business: he has become a real profligate, I am very glad the minister spoke so sharp about that. As for me - there now; I don't care about your self-righteous people a single farthing; to me it is of no account at all; I don't care at all about religion in the slightest degree; I like to know whether the funds rise or fall, or whether there is an opportunity of making a good bargain; but that's about all I care for." Ah! worldling, I leave read of a friend of yours, who was clothed in scarlet, and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. Do you know what became of him? You should remember it, for the same end awaits yourself. The end of his feast must be the end of yours. If your God is this world, depend upon it you shall find that your way is full of bitterness. Now, see that table of the worldly man, the mere worldling, who lives for gain. Satan brings him in a flowing cup, "There," says he, "Young man, you are starting in business; you need not care about the conventionalities of honesty, or about the ordinary old-fashioned fancies

of religion; get rich as quick as ever you can. Get money - get money - honestly if you can, but, if not, get it anyhow," says the devil; and down he puts his tankard. "There," says he, "is a foaming draught for you." "Yes," says the young man, "I have abundance now. My hopes are indeed realised." Here, then, you see the first and best wine of the worldling's feast, and many of you are tempted to envy this man. "Oh, that I had such a prospect in business," says one, "I'm not half so sharp as he is, I could not deal as he deals; my religion would not let me. But how fast he gets rich! O that I could prosper as he does." Come, my brother, judge not before the time, there's a second course to come, the thick and nauseous draught of care. The man has got his money, but they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare. Wealth ill-gotten, or ill-used, or hoarded, brings a canker with it, that does not canker the gold and silver, but cankers the man's heart, and a cankered heart is one of the most awful things a man can have. Ah! see this money-lover, and mark the care which sits upon heart. There is a poor old woman, that lives near his lodge gate. She has but a pittance a week, but she says, "Bless the Lord, I have enough!" She never asks how she is to live, or how she is to die, or how she is to be buried, but sleeps sweetly on the pillow of contentment and faith; and here is this poor fool with untold gold, but he is miserable because he happened to drop a sixpence as he walked along the streets, or because he had an extra call upon his charity, to which the presence of some friend compelled him to yield; or perhaps he groans because his coat wears out too soon.

After this comes avarice. Many have had to drink of that cup; may God save any of us from its fiery drops. A great American preacher has said, "Covetousness breeds misery. The sight of houses better than our own, of dress beyond our means, of jewels costlier than we may wear, of stately equipage, and rare curiosities beyond our reach, these hatch the viper brood of covetous thoughts; vexing the poor, who would be rich; tormenting the rich, who would be richer. The covetous man pines to see pleasure; is sad in the presence of cheerfulness; and the joy of the world is his sorrow, because all the happiness of others is not his. I do not wonder that God abhors him. He inspects his heart as he would a cave full of noisome birds, or a nest of rattling reptiles, and loathes the sight of its crawling tenants. To the covetous man life is a nightmare, and God lets

him wrestle with it as best he may. Mammon might build its palace on such a heart, and Pleasure bring all its revelry there, Honour all its garlands - it would be like pleasures in a sepulchre, and garlands on a tomb." When a man becomes avaricious, all he has is nothing to him; "More, more, more!" says he, like some poor creatures in a terrible fever, who cry, "Drink, drink, drink!" and you give them drink, but after they have it, their thirst increases. Like the horse-leech they cry, "Give, give, give!" Avarice is a raving madness which seeks to grasp the world in its arms, and yet despises the plenty it has already. This is a curse of which many have died; and some have died with the bag of gold in their hands, and with misery upon their brow, because they could not take it with them into their coffin, and could not carry it into another world. Well, then, there comes the next course. Baxter, and those terrible old preachers used to picture the miser, and the man who lived only to make gold, in the middle of hell; and they imagined Mammon pouring melted gold down his throat, "There," say the mocking devils, "that is what you wanted, you have got it now; drink, drink, drink!" and the molten gold is poured down. I shall not, however, indulge in any such terrible imaginations, but this much I know, he that liveth to himself here, must perish; he who sets his affections upon things on earth, hath not digged deep - he has built his house upon the sands; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, down must come his house, and great must be the fall thereof. It is the best wine first, however; it is the respectable man, - respectable and respected, - everybody honours him, - and afterwards that which is worse, when meanness has beggared his wealth, and covetousness has maddened his brain. It is sure to come, as sure as ever you give yourself up to worldliness.

4. The fourth table is set in a very secluded corner, in a very private part of Satan's palace. There is the table set for secret sinners, and here the old rule is observed. At that table, in a room well darkened, I see a young man sitting to-day, and Satan is the servitor, stepping in so noiselessly, that no one would hear him. He brings in the first cup - and O how sweet it is! It is the cup of secret sin. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." How sweet that morsel, eaten all alone! Was there ever one that rolled so delicately under the tongue? That is the first; after that, he brings in another, - the wine of an unquiet conscience. The man's

eyes are opened. He says, "What have I done? What have I been doing? Ah," cries this Achan, "the first cup you brought me, I saw sparkling in that a wedge of gold, and a goodly Babylonish garment; and I thought, 'Oh, I must have that;' but now my thought is, What shall I do to hide this, where shall I put it? I must dig. Ay, I must dig deep as hell before I shall hide it, for sure enough it will be discovered."

The grim governor of the feast is bringing in a massive bowl, filled with a black mixture. The secret sinner drinks, and is confounded; he fears his sin will find him out. He has no peace, no happiness, he is full of uneasy fear; he is afraid that he shall be detected. He dreams at night that there is some one after him; there is a voice whispering in his ear, and telling him "I know all about it; I will tell it." He thinks, perhaps, that the sin which he has committed in secret will break out to his friends; the father will know it, the mother will know it. Ay, it may be even the physician will tell the tale, and blab out the wretched secret. For such a man there is no rest. He is always in dread of arrest. He is like the debtor I have read of; who, owing a great deal of money, was afraid the bailiffs were after him: and happening one day to catch his sleeve on the top of a palisade, said, "There, let me go; I'm in a hurry. I will pay you to-morrow," imagining that some one was laying hold of him. Such is the position in which the man places himself by partaking of the hidden things of dishonesty and sin. Thus he finds no rest for the sole of his foot for fear of discovery. At last the discovery comes; it is the last cup. Often it comes on earth; for be sure your sin will find you out, and it will generally find you out here. What frightful exhibitions are to be seen at our police courts of men that are made to drink that last black draught of discovery. The man who presided at religious meetings, the man who was honoured as a saint, is at last unmasked. And what saith the judge - and what saith the world of him? He is a jest, and a reproach, and a rebuke everywhere. But, suppose he should be so crafty, that he passes through life without discovery - though I think it is almost impossible - what a cup he must drink when he stands at last before the bar of God! "Bring him forth, jailor! Dread keeper of the dungeon of hell, lead forth the prisoner." He comes! The whole world is assembled, "Stand up, sir! Did you not make a profession of religion? did not every body think you a saint?" He is speechless. But many there are in that vast crowd who cry, "We thought him so." The

book is open, his deeds are read: transgression after transgression all laid bare. Do you hear that hiss? The righteous, moved to indignation, are lifting up their voices against the man who deceived them, and dwelt among them as a wolf in sheep's clothing. Oh, how fearful it must be to bear the scorn of the universe! The good can bear the scorn of the wicked but for the wicked to bear the shame and everlasting contempt which righteous indignation will heap upon them, will be one of the most frightful things, next to the eternal endurance of the wrath of the Most High, which, I need not add, is the last cup of the devil's terrible feast, with which the secret sinner must be filled, for ever and ever.

I pause now, but it is just to gather up my strength to beg that anything I may have said, that shall have the slightest personal bearing upon any of my hearers, may not be forgotten. I beseech you, men and brethren, if now you are eating the fat, and drinking the sweet of hell's banquet, pause and reflect what shall the end be? "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. He that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." I cannot spare more time far that, most assuredly.

II. But you must pardon me while I occupy only a few minutes in taking you into the HOUSE OF THE SAVIOUR, where he feasts his beloved. Come and sit with us at Christ's table of outward providences. He does not feast his children after the fashion of the prince of darkness: for the first cup that Christ brings to them is very often a cup of bitterness. There are his own beloved children, his own redeemed; who have but sorry cheer. Jesus brings in the cup of poverty and affliction, and he makes his own children drink of it, till they say, "Thou hast made me drunken with wormwood, and thou hast filled me with bitterness." This is the way Christ begins. The worst wine first. When the serjeant begins with a young recruit, he gives him a shilling, and then, afterwards, come the march and the battle. But Christ never takes his recruits so. They must count the cost, lest they should begin to build, and not be able to finish. He seeks to have no disciples who are dazzled with first appearances. He begins roughly with them, and many have been his children who have found that the first course of the Redeemer's table has been affliction, sorrow, poverty, and want.



In the olden time, when the best of God's people were at the table, he used to serve them worst, for they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy, and they kept on drinking of these bitter cups for many a day; but let me tell you afterwards he brought out sweeter cups for them, and you that have been troubled have found it so. After the cup of affliction, comes the cup of consolation, and, oh, how sweet is that! It has been the privilege of these lips to drink that cup after sickness and pain; and I can bear witness, that I said of my Master, "Thou hast kept the best wine until now." It was so luscious, that the taste thereof did take away every taste of the bitterness of sorrow; and I said, "Surely the bitterness of this sickness is all past, for the Lord has manifested himself to me, and given me his best wine." But, beloved, the best wine is to come last. God's people will find it so outwardly. The poor saint comes to die. The master has given him the cup of poverty, but now no more he drinks thereof, he is rich to all the intents of bliss. He has had the cup of sickness; he shall drink of that no more. He has had the cup of persecution, but now he is glorified, together with his Master, and made to sit upon his throne. The best things have come last to him in outward circumstances. There were two martyrs once burned at Stratford-le-Bow; one of them was lame, and the other blind, and when they were tied to the stake, the lame man took his crutch and threw it down, and said to the other, "Cheer up, brother, this is the sharp physic that shall heal us, I shall not be lame within an hour of this time nor shalt thou be blind." No, the best things were to come last. But I have often thought that the child of God is very much like the crusaders. The crusaders started of on their journey, and they had to tight their way through many miles of enemies and to march through leagues of danger. You remember, perhaps, in history, the story that when the armies of the Duke of Bouillon came in sight of Jerusalem, they sprang from their horses, clapped their hands, and cried, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem." They forgot all their toils, all the weariness of the journey and all their wounds, for there was Jerusalem in their sight. And how will the saint at last cry, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," when all sorrow, and all poverty, and sickness are past, and he is blest with immortality. The bad wine - bad did I say? nay the bitter wine is taken away, and the best wine is brought out, and the saint sees himself glorified for ever with Christ

Jesus.

And now, we will sit down at the table of inward experience. The first cup that Christ brings to his children, when they sit at that table, is one so bitter that, perhaps, no tongue can ever describe it, - it is the cup of conviction. It is a black cup, full of the most intense bitterness. The apostle Paul once drank a little of it, but it was so strong that it made him blind for three days. The conviction of his sin overpowered him totally; he could only give his soul to fasting and to prayer, and it was only when he drank of the next cup that the scales fell from off his eyes. I have drank of it, children of God, and I thought that Jesus was unkind, but, in a little while, he brought me forth a sweeter cup, the cup of his forgiving love, filled with the rich crimson of his precious blood. Oh! the taste of that wine is in my mouth this very hour, for the taste thereof is as the wine of Lebanon, that abideth in the cask for many a day. Do you not remember, when, after you had drunk the cup of sorrow, Jesus came and showed you his hands and his side, and said, "Sinner, I have died for thee, and given myself for thee; believe on me?" Do you not remember how you believed, and sipped the cup, and bow you believed again and took a deeper draught, and said, "Blessed be the name of God from this time forth and for ever; and let the whole earth say, 'Amen,' for he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder, and let the captives go free?" Since then the glorious Master has said to you, "Friend, come up higher!" and he has taken you to upper seats in the best rooms, and he has given you sweeter things. I will not tell you, to-day, of the wines you have drank. The spouse in Solomon's Song may supply the deficiency of my sermon this morning. She drank of the spiced wine of his pomegranate; and so have you, in those high and happy moments when you had fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. But tarry awhile, he has kept the best wine yet. You shall soon come near the banks of the Jordan, and then you shall begin to drink of the old wine of the kingdom, that has been barrelled up since the foundation of the world. The vintage of the Saviour's agony; the vintage of Gethsemane shall soon be broached for you, the old wine of the kingdom. You are come into the land "Beulah," and you begin to taste the full flavour of the wines on the lees well refined. You know how Bunyan describes the state which borders on the vale of death. It was a land flowing with milk and honey; a

land where the angels often came to visit the saints, and to bring bundles of myrrh from the land of spices. And now the high step is taken, the Lord puts his finger upon your eyelids and kisses your soul out at your lips. Where are you now? In a sea of love, and life, and bliss, and immortality. "O Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, thou hast indeed kept the best wine until now! My Master! I have seen thee on the Sabbath, but this is an everlasting Sabbath. I have met thee in the congregation, but this is a congregation that shall ne'er break up. O my Master! I have seen the promises, but this is the fulfilment. I have blessed thee for gracious providences, but this is something more than all these: thou didst give me grace, but now thou hast given me glory; thou wast once my shield, but thou art now my sun. I am at thy right hand, where there is fullness of joy for ever. Thou hast kept thy best wine until now. All I ever had before was as nothing compared with this."

And, lastly, for only time fails me, I could preach a week upon this subject. The table of communion is one at which God's children must sit. And the first thing they must drink of there, is the cup of communion with Christ in his sufferings. If thou wouldst come to the table of communion with Christ, thou must first of all drink of the wine of Calvary. Christian, thy head must be crowned with thorns. Thy hands must be pierced, I mean not with nails, but, spiritually thou must be crucified with Christ. We must suffer with him, or else we cannot reign with him; we must labour with him first, we must sup of the wine which his Father gave him to drink, or else we cannot expect to come to the better part of the feast. After drinking of the wine of his sufferings, and continuing to drink of it, we must drink of the cup of his labours, we must be baptized with his baptism, we must labour after souls, and sympathise with him in that ambition of his heart - the salvation of sinners, and after that he will give us to drink of the cup of his anticipated honours. Here on earth we shall have good wine in communion with Christ in his resurrection, in his triumphs and his victories, but the best wine is to come at last. O chambers of communion, your gates have been opened to me; but I have only been able to glance within them; but the day is coming when on your diamond hinges ye shall turn, and stand wide open for ever and ever; and I shall enter into the king's palace and go no more out. O Christian! thou shalt soon see the King in his beauty; thy head

shall soon be on his bosom; thou shalt soon sit at his feet with Mary; thou shalt soon do as the spouse did, thou shalt kiss him with the kisses of thy lips, and feel that his love is better than wine. I can conceive you, brethren, in the very last moment of your life, or rather, in the first moment of your life, saying, "He has kept the best wine until now." When you begin to see him face to face, when you enter into the closest fellowship, with nothing to disturb or to distract you, then shall you say "The best wine is kept until now."

A saint was once dying, and another who sat by him said - "Farewell, brother, I shall never see you again in the land of the living." "Oh," said the dying man, "I shall see you again in the land of the living that is up yonder, where I am going; this is the land of the dying." Oh brethren and sisters, if we should never meet again in the land of the dying, have we a hope that we shall meet in the land of the living, and drink the last wine at last.

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## **Satan Considering The Saints**

And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job. -  
Job 1:8

How very uncertain are all terrestrial things! How foolish would that believer be who should lay up his treasure anywhere, except in heaven! Job's prosperity promised as much stability as anything can do beneath the moon. The man had round about him a large household of, doubtless, devoted and attached servants. He had accumulated wealth of a kind which does not suddenly depreciate in value. He had oxen, and asses, and cattle. He had not to go to markets, and fairs, and trade with his goods to procure food and clothing, for he carried on the processes of agriculture

on a very large scale round about his own homestead, and probably grew within his own territory everything that his establishment required. His children were numerous enough to promise a long line of descendants. His prosperity wanted nothing for its consolidation. It had come to its flood-tide: where was the cause which could make it ebb?

Up there, beyond the clouds, where no human eye could see, there was a scene enacted which augured no good to Job's prosperity. The spirit of evil stood face to face with the infinite Spirit of all good. An extraordinary conversation took place between these two beings. When called to account for his doings, the evil one boasted that he had gone to and fro throughout the earth, insinuating that he had met with no hindrance to his will, and found no one to oppose his freely moving and acting at his own pleasure. He had marched everywhere like a king in his own dominions, unhindered and unchallenged. When the great God reminded him that there was at least one place among men where he had no foothold, and where his power was unrecognized, namely, in the heart of Job; that there was one man who stood like an impregnable castle, garrisoned by integrity, and held with perfect loyalty as the possession of the King of Heaven; the evil one defied Jehovah to try the faithfulness of Job, told him that the patriarch's integrity was due to his prosperity, that he served God and eschewed evil from sinister motives, because he found his conduct profitable to himself. The God of heaven took up the challenge of the evil one, and gave him permission to take away all the mercies which he affirmed to be the props of Job's integrity, and to pull down all the outworks and buttresses and see whether the tower would not stand in its own inherent strength without them. In consequence of this, all Job's wealth went in one black day, and not even a child was left to whisper comfort. A second interview between the Lord and his fallen angel took place. Job was again the subject of conversation; and the Great One defied by Satan, permitted him even to touch him in his bone and in his flesh, till the prince became worse than a pauper, and he who was rich and happy was poor and wretched, filled with disease from head to foot, and fain to scrape himself with a miserable potsherd, to gain a poor relief from his pain.

Let us see in this the mutability of all terrestrial things. He hath founded

it upon the floods," is David's description of this world; and, if it be founded on the floods, can you wonder that it changes oft? Put not your trust in anything beneath the stars: remember that "Change" is written on the fore-front of nature. Say not therefore, "My mountain standeth firm: it shall never be moved;" the glance of Jehovah's eye can shake thy mountain into dust, the touch of his foot can make it like Sinai, to melt like wax, and to be altogether on a smoke. "Set your affection on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," and let your heart and your treasure be where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal." The words of Bernard may here instruct us: "That is the true and chief joy which is not conceived from the creature, but received from the Creator, which (being once possessed thereof) none can take from thee: compared with which all other pleasure is torment, all joy is grief, sweet things are bitter, all glory is baseness, and all delectable things are despicable."

This is not, however, our subject this morning. Accept thus much as merely an introduction to our main discourse. The Lord said to Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" Let us deliberate, first, in what sense the evil spirit may be said to consider the people of God; secondly, let us notice what it is that he considers about them; and then, thirdly, let us comfort ourselves by the reflection that one who is far above Satan considers us in a higher sense.

#### I. First, then, IN WHAT SENSE MAY SATAN BE SAID TO CONSIDER THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

Certainly not in the usual Biblical meaning of the term "consider." "O Lord consider my trouble." "Consider my meditation." "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Such consideration implies good-will and a careful inspection of the object of benevolence with regard to a wise distribution of favour. In that sense Satan never considers any. If he has any benevolence, it must be towards himself; but all his considerations of other creatures are of the most malevolent kind. No meteoric flash of good flits across the black midnight of his soul. Nor does he consider us as we are told to consider the works of God, that is, in order to derive instruction as to God's wisdom and love and kindness. He does not

honour God by what he sees in his works, or in his people. It is not with him, "Go to the ant; consider her ways and be wise;" but he goes to the Christian and considers his ways and becomes more foolishly God's enemy than he was before. The consideration which Satan pays to God's saints is upon this wise. He regards them with wonder, when he considers the difference between them and himself. A traitor, when he knows the thorough villainy and the blackness of his own heart, cannot help being astounded, when he is forced to believe another man to be faithful. The first resort of a treacherous heart is to believe that all men would be just as treacherous, and are really so at bottom. The traitor thinks that all men are traitors like himself, or would be, if it paid them better than fidelity. When Satan looks at the Christian, and finds him faithful to God and to his truth, he considers him as we should consider a phenomenon—Perhaps despising him for his folly, but yet marveling at him, and wondering how he can act thus. "I," he seems to say, "a prince, a peer of God's parliament, would not submit my will to Jehovah. I thought it better to reign in hell than serve in heaven: I kept not my first estate, but fell from my throne. How is it that these stand? What grace is it which keeps these? I was a vessel of gold, and yet I was broken; these are earthen vessels, but I cannot break them! I could not stand in my glory—what can be the matchless grace which upholds them in their poverty, in their obscurity, in their persecution, still faithful to the God who doth not bless and exalt them as he did me!" It may be that he also wonders at their happiness. He feels within himself a seething sea of misery. There is an unfathomable gulf of anguish within his soul, and when he looks at believers, he sees them quiet in their souls, full of peace and happiness, and often without any outward means by which they should be comforted, yet rejoicing and full of glory. He goes up and down through the world and possesses great power, and there be many myrmidons to serve him, yet he hath not the happiness of spirit possessed by yonder humble cottager, obscure, unknown, having no servants to wait upon her, but stretched upon the bed of weakness. He admires and hates the peace which reigns in the believer's soul.

His consideration may go farther than this. Do you not think that he considers them to detect, if possible, any flaw and fault in them, by way of solace to himself? "They are not pure," saith he—"these blood-bought

ones—these elect from before the foundations of the world,—they still sin! These adopted children of God, for whom the glorious Son bowed his head and gave up the ghost!—even they offend!" How must he chuckle, with such delight as he is capable of, over the secret sins of God's people, and if he can see anything in them inconsistent with their profession, anything which appears to be deceitful, and therein like himself, he rejoices. Each sin born in the believer's heart, cries to him, "My father! my Father!" and he feels something like the joy of fatherhood as he sees his foul offspring. He looks at the "old man" in the Christian, and admires the tenacity with which it maintains its hold, the force and vehemence with which it struggles for the mastery, the craft and cunning with which every now and then, at set intervals, at convenient opportunities, it putteth forth all its force. He considers our sinful flesh, and makes it one of the books in which he diligently reads. One of the fairest prospects, I doubt not, which the devil's eye ever rests upon, is the inconsistency and the impurity which he can discover in the true child of God. In this respect he had very little to consider in God's true servant, Job.

Nor is this all, but rather just the starting point of his consideration. We doubt not that he views the Lord's people, and especially the more eminent and excellent among them, as the great barriers to the progress of his kingdom; and just as the engineer, endeavouring to make a railway, keeps his eye very much fixed upon the hills and rivers, and especially upon the great mountain through which it will take years laboriously to bore a tunnel, so Satan, in looking upon his various plans to carry on his dominion in the world, considers most such men as Job. Satan must have thought much of Martin Luther. "I could ride the world over," says he, "if it were not for that monk. He stands in my way. That strong-headed man hates and mauls my firstborn son, the pope. If I could get rid of him I would not mind though fifty thousand smaller saints stood in my way." He is sure to consider God's servant, if there be "none like him," if he stand out distinct and separate from his fellows. Those of us who are called to the work of the ministry must expect from our position to be the special objects of his consideration. When the glass is at the eye of that dreadful warrior, he is sure to look out for those who by their regimentals are discovered to be the officers, and he bids his sharpshooters be very careful to aim at these, "For," saith he, "if the standard-bearer fall, then



shall the victory be more readily gained to our side, and our opponents shall be readily put to rout." If you are more generous than other saints, if you live nearer to God than others, as the birds peck most at the ripest fruit, so may you expect Satan to be most busy against you. Who cares to contend for a province covered with stones and barren rocks, and ice-bound by frozen seas? But in all times there is sure to be contention after the fat valleys where the wheat-sheaves are plenteous, and where the husbandman's toil is well requited, and thus, for you who honour God most, Satan will struggle very sternly. He wants to pluck God's jewels from his crown, if he can, and take the Redeemer's precious stones even from the breastplate itself. He considers, then, God's people; viewing them as hindrances to his reign, he contrives methods by which he may remove them out of his way, or turn them to his own account. Darkness would cover the earth if he could blow out the lights; there would be no fruit to shake like Lebanon, if he could destroy that handful of corn upon the top of the mountains; hence his perpetual consideration is to make the faithful fail from among men.

It needs not much wisdom to discern that the great object of Satan in considering God's people is to do them injury. I scarcely think he hopes to destroy the really chosen and blood-bought heirs of life. My notion is that he is too good a divine for that. He has been foiled too often when he has attacked God's people, that he can hardly think he shall be able to destroy the elect, for you remember the soothsayers who are very nearly related to him, spoke to Haman on this wise; "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." He knows right well that there is a seed royal in the land against whom he fights in vain; and it strikes me if he could be absolutely certain that any one soul was chosen of God, he would scarcely waste his time in attempting to destroy it, although he might seek to worry and to dishonour it. It is however most likely that Satan no more knows who God's elect are than we do, for he can only judge as we do by outward actions, though he can form a more accurate judgment than we can through longer experience, and being able to see persons in private where we cannot intrude; yet into God's book of secret decrees his black eye can never peer. By their fruits he knows them, and we know them in the same manner. Since, however, we are often

mistaken in our judgment, he too may be so; and it seems to me that he therefore makes it his policy to endeavour to destroy them all—not knowing in which case he may succeed. He goeth about seeking whom he may devour, and, as he knows not whom he may be permitted to swallow up, he attacks all the people of God with vehemence. Some one may say, "How can one devil do this?" He does not do it by himself alone. I do not know that many of us have ever been tempted directly by Satan: we may not be notable enough among men to be worth his trouble; but he has a whole host of inferior spirits under his supremacy and control, and as the centurion said of himself, so he might have said of Satan—"he saith to this spirit, 'Do this,' and he doeth it, and to his servant, 'Go,' and he goeth." Thus all the servants of God will more or less come under the direct or indirect assaults of the great enemy of souls, and that with a view of destroying them; for he would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. Where he cannot destroy, there is no doubt that Satan's object is to worry. He does not like to see God's people happy. I believe the devil greatly delights in some ministers, whose tendency in their preaching is to multiply and foster doubts and fears, and grief, and despondency, as the evidences of God's people. "Ah," saith the devil, "preach on; you are doing my work well, for I like to see God's people mournful. If I can make them hang their harps on the willows, and go about with miserable faces, I reckon I have done my work very completely." My dear friends, let us watch against those specious temptations which pretend to make us humble, but which really aim at making us unbelieving. Our God takes no delight in our suspicions and mistrusts. See how he proves his love in the gift of his dear Son Jesus. Banish then all your ill surmisings, and rejoice in unmoved confidence. God delights to be worshipped with Joy. Oh come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart." "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice." Satan does not like this. Martin Luther used to say, "Let us sing psalms and spite the devil," and I have no doubt Martin Luther was pretty nearly right; for that lover of discord hates harmonious, joyous praise. Beloved brother, the arch-enemy wants to make you wretched here, if he cannot have you hereafter; and in this, no doubt, he is aiming a blow at the honour of God. He is well

aware that mournful Christians often dishonour the faithfulness of God by mistrusting it, and he thinks if he can worry us until we no more believe in the constancy and goodness of the Lord, he shall have robbed God of his praise. "He that offereth praise, glorifieth me," says God; and so Satan lays the axe at the root of our praise, that God may cease to be glorified.

Moreover, if Satan cannot destroy a Christian, how often has he spoilt his usefulness? Many a believer has fallen, not to break his neck—that is impossible,—but he has broken some important bone, and he has gone limping to his grave! We can recall with grief some men once eminent in the ranks of the Church, who did run well, but on a sudden, through stress of temptation, they fell into sin, and their names were never mentioned in the Church again, except with bated breath. Everybody thought and hoped they were saved so as by fire, but certainly their former usefulness never could return. It is very easy to go back in the heavenly pilgrimage, but it is very hard to retrieve your steps. You may soon turn aside and put out your candle, but you cannot light it quite so speedily. Friend, beloved in the Lord, watch against the attacks of Satan and stand fast, because you, as a pillar in the house or God are very dear to us, and we cannot spare you. As a father, or as a matron in our midst, we do you honour, and oh—we would not be made to mourn and lament—we do not wish to be grieved by hearing the shouts of our adversaries while they cry "Aha! Aha! so would we have it," for alas! there have been many things done in our Zion which we would not have told in Gath, nor published in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised should rejoice, and the sons of the Philistines should triumph. Oh may God grant us grace, as a Church, to stand against the wiles of Satan and his attacks, that having done his worst he may gain no advantage over us, and after having considered, and considered again, and counted well our towers and bulwarks, he may be compelled to retire because his battering rams cannot jar so much as a stone from our ramparts, and his slings cannot slay one single soldier on the walls.

Before I leave this point, I should like to say, that perhaps it may be suggested, "How is it that God permits this constant and malevolent consideration of his people by the evil one?" One answer, doubtless, is,

that God knows what is for his own glory, and that he giveth no account of his matters; that having permitted free agency, and having allowed, for some mysterious reason, the existence of evil, it does not seem agreeable with his having done so to destroy Satan; but he gives him power that it may be a fair hand-to-hand fight between sin and holiness, between grace and craftiness. Besides, be it remembered, that incidentally the temptations of Satan are of service to the people of God; Fenelon says they are the file which rubs off much of the rust of self-confidence, and I may add, they are the horrible sound in the sentinel's ear, which is sure to keep him awake. An experimental divine remarks, that there is no temptation in the world which is so bad as not being tempted at all; for to be tempted will tend to keep us awake: whereas, being without temptation, flesh and blood are weak—and though the spirit may be willing, yet we may be found falling into slumber. Children do not run away from their father's side when big dogs bark at them. The howlings of the devil may tend to drive us nearer to Christ, may teach us our own weakness, may keep us upon our own watch-tower, and be made the means of preservation from other ills. Let us "be sober, be vigilant, because our adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour;" and let us who are in a prominent position be permitted affectionately to press upon you one earnest request, namely, "Brethren, pray for us." that, exposed as we are peculiarly to the consideration of Satan, we may be guarded by divine power. Let us be made rich by your faithful prayers that we may be kept even to the end.

## II. Secondly, WHAT IS IT THAT SATAN CONSIDERS WITH A VIEW TO THE INJURY OF GOD'S PEOPLE?

It cannot be said of him as of God, that he knoweth us altogether; but since he has been now nearly six thousand years dealing with poor fallen humanity, he must have acquired a very vast experience in that time, and having been all over the earth, and having tempted the highest and the lowest, he must know exceeding well what the springs of human action are, and how to play upon them. Satan watches and considers first of all our peculiar infirmities. He looks us up and down, just as I have seen a horse-dealer do with a horse; and soon finds out wherein we are faulty. I, a common observer, might think the horse an exceedingly good one, as I

see it running up and down the road, but the dealer sees what I cannot see, and he knows how to handle the creature just in such quarters and at such points that he soon discovers any hidden mischief. Satan knows how to look at us and reckon us up from heel to head, so that he will say of this man, "His infirmity is lust," or of that other, "He hath a quick tempter," or of this other, "He is proud," or of that other, "He is slothful." The eye of malice is very quick to perceive a weakness, and the hand of enmity soon takes advantage of it. When the arch-spy finds a weak place in the wall of our castle, he takes care to plant his battering-ram, and begin his siege. You may conceal, even from your dearest friend, your infirmity, but you will not conceal it from your worst enemy. He has lynx eyes, and detects in a moment the joint in your harness. He goes about with a match, and though you may think you have covered all the gunpowder of your heart, yet he knows how to find a crack to put his match through, and much mischief will he do, unless eternal mercy shall prevent.

He takes care also to consider our frames and states of mind. If the devil would attack us when our mind is in certain moods, we should be more than a match for him: he knows this, and shuns the encounter. Some men are more ready for temptation when they are distressed and desponding; the fiend will then assail them. Others will be more liable to take fire when they are jubilant and full of joy; then will he strike his spark into the tinder. Certain persons, when they are much vexed and tossed to and fro, can be made to say almost anything; and others, when their souls are like perfectly placid waters, are just then in a condition to be navigated by the devil's vessel. As the worker in metals knows that one metal is to be worked at such a heat, and another at a different temperature; as those who have to deal with chemicals know that at a certain heat one fluid will boil, while another reaches the boiling-point much earlier, so Satan knows exactly the temperature at which to work us to his purpose. Small pots boil directly they are put on the fire, and so little men of quick temper are soon in a passion; larger vessels require more time and coal before they will boil, but when they do boil, it is a boil indeed, not soon forgotten or abated. The enemy, like a fisherman, watches his fish, adapts his bait to his prey; and knows in what seasons and times the fish are most likely to bite. This hunter of so souls comes upon us unawares, and often we are overtaken in a fault and or caught in a trap through an

unwatchful frame of mind. That rare collector of choice sayings, Thomas Spencer, has the following which is to the much to the point—"The chameleon, when he lies on the grass to catch flies and grasshoppers, taketh upon him the colour of the grass, as the polypus doth the colour of the rock under which he lurketh, that the fish may boldly come near him without any suspicion of danger. In like manner, Satan turneth himself into that shape which we least fear, and sets before us such objects of temptation as are most agreeable to our natures, that so he may the sooner draw us into his net; he sails with every wind, and blows us that way which we incline ourselves through the weakness of nature. Is our knowledge in matter of faith deficient? He tempts us to error. Is our conscience tender? He tempts us to scrupulosity, and too much preciseness. Hath our conscience, like the ecliptic line, some latitude? He tempts us to carnal liberty. Are we bold spirited? He tempts us to presumption. Are we timorous and distrustful? He tempteth us to desperation. Are we of a flexible disposition? He tempteth us to inconstancy. Are we stiff? He labours to make obstinate heretics, schismatics, or rebels of us. Are we of an austere temper? He tempteth us to cruelty. Are we soft and mild? He tempteth us to indulgence and foolish pity. Are we hot in matters of religion? He tempteth us to blind zeal and superstition. Are we cold? He tempteth us to Laodicean lukewarmness. Thus doth he lay his traps, that one way or other, he may ensnare us."

He also takes care to consider our position among men. There are a few persons who are most easily tempted when they are alone; they are the subjects then of great heaviness of mind, and they may be driven to most awful crimes: perhaps the most of us are more liable to sin when we are in company. In some company I never should be led into sin; into another society I could scarcely venture. Many are so full of levity, that those of us who are inclined the same way can scarcely look them in the face without feeling our besetting sin set a-going; and others are so somber, that if they meet a brother of like mould, they are pretty sure between them to invent an evil report of the goodly land. Satan knows where to overtake you in a place where you lie open to his attacks; he will pounce upon you, swoop like a bird of prey from the sky, where he has been watching for the time to make his descent with a prospect of

success.

How too, will he consider our condition in the world! He looks at one man, and says, "That man has property: it is of no use my trying such-and-such arts with him; but here is another man who is very poor, I will catch him in that net." Then, again, he looks at the poor man, and says, "Now, I cannot tempt him to this folly, but I will lead the rich man into it." As the sportsman has a gun for wild fowl, and another for deer and game, so has Satan a different temptation for various orders of men. I do not suppose that the Queen's temptation ever will annoy Mary the kitchen-maid. I do not suppose, on the other hand, that Mary's temptation will ever be very serious to me. Probably you could escape from mine—I do not think you could; and I sometimes fancy I could bear yours—though I question if I could. Satan knows, however, just where to smite us, and our position, our capabilities, our education, our standing in society, our calling, may all be doors through which he may attack us. You who have no calling at all, are in peculiar peril—I wonder the devil does not swallow you outright. The most likely man to go to hell is the man who has nothing to do on earth. I say that seriously. I believe that there cannot happen a much worse evil to a person than to be placed where he has no work; and if I should ever be in such a state, I would get employment at once, for fear I should be carried off, body and soul, by the evil one. Idle people tempt the devil to tempt them. Let us have something to do, let us keep our minds occupied, for, if not, we make room for the devil. Industry will not make us gracious, but the want of industry may make us vicious. Have always something on the anvil or in the fire.

"In books, or work, or healthful play,  
I would be busy too,  
For Satan finds some mischief still  
For idle hands to do."

So Watts taught us in our childhood; and so let us believe in our manhood. Books, or works, or such recreations as are necessary for health, should occupy our time; for if I throw myself down in indolence, like an old piece of iron, I must not wonder that I grow rusty with sin.

Nor have I done yet. Satan, when he makes his investigations, notices all the objects of our affection. I doubt not when he went round Job's house, he observed it as carefully as thieves do a jeweller's premises when they mean to break into them. They very cunningly take account of every door, window, and fastening: they fail not to look at the next-door house; for they may have to reach the treasure through the building which adjoins it. So, when the devil went round, jotting down in his mind all Job's position, he thought to himself, "There are the camels and the oxen, the asses, and the servants—yes, I can use all these very admirably." "Then," he thought, "there are the three daughters! There are the ten sons, and they go feasting—I shall know where to catch them, and if I can just blow the house down when they are feasting, that will afflict the father's mind the more severely, for he will say 'O that they had died when they had been praying, rather than when they had been feasting and drinking wine.' I will put down too in the inventory," says the devil I shall want her," and accordingly it came to that. Nobody could have done what Job's wife did—none of the servants could have said that sad sentence so stingingly—or, if she meant it very kindly, none could have said it with such a fascinating air as Job's own wife, "Bless God and die," as it may be read, or "Curse God and die." Ah, Satan, thou hast ploughed with Job's heifer, but thou hast not succeeded; Job's strength lies in his God, not in his hair, or else thou mightest have shorn him as Samson was shorn! Perhaps the evil one had even inspected Job's personal sensibilities, and so selected that form of bodily affliction which he knew to be most dreaded by his victim. He brought upon him a disease which Job may have seen and shuddered at in poor men outside the city gates. Brethren, Satan knows quite as much in regard to you. You have a child, and Satan knows that you idolize it. "Ah," says he, "there is a place for my wounding him." Even the partner of your bosom may be made a quiver in which hell's arrows shall be stored till the time may come, and then she may prove the bow from which Satan will shoot them. Watch even your neighbour and her that lieth in your bosom, for you know not how Satan may get an advantage over you. Our habits, our joys, our sorrows, our retirements, our public positions, all may be made weapons of attack by this desperate foe of the Lord's people. We have snares everywhere; in our bed and at our table, in our house and in the street. There are gins



and trap-falls in company; there are pits when we are alone. We may find temptations in the house of God as well as in the world; traps in our high estate, and deadly poisons in our abasement. We must not expect to be rid of temptations till we have crossed the Jordan, and then, thank God, we are beyond gunshot of the enemy. The last howling of the dog of hell will be heard as we descend into the chill waters of the black stream, but when we hear the hallelujah of the glorified, we shall have done with the black prince for ever and ever.

### III. Satan considered, but THERE WAS A HIGHER CONSIDERATION WHICH OVERRODE HIS CONSIDERATION.

In times of war, the sappers and miners of one party will make a mine, and it is a very common counteractive for the sappers and miners of the other party to countermine by undermining the first mine. This is just what God does with Satan. Satan is mining, and he thinks to light the fuse and to blow up God's building, but all the while God is undermining him, and he blows up Satan's mine before he can do any mischief. The devil is the greatest of all fools. He has more knowledge but less wisdom than any other creature, he is more subtle than all the beasts of the field, but it is well called subtlety, not wisdom. It is not true wisdom; it is only another shape of folly. All the while that Satan was tempting Job, he little knew that he was answering God's purpose, for God was looking on and considering the whole of it, and holding the enemy as a man holds a horse by its bridle. The Lord had considered exactly how far he would let Satan go. He did not the first time permit him to touch his flesh—perhaps that was more than Job at that time could have borne. Have you never noticed that if you are in good strong bodily health you can bear losses and crosses, and even bereavements with something like equanimity? Now that was the case with Job. Perhaps if the disease had come first and the rest had followed, it might have been a temptation too heavy for him, but God who knows just how far to let the enemy go, will say to him, "Thus far, and no farther." By degrees he became accustomed to his poverty; in fact, the trial had lost all its sting the moment Job said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." That enemy was slain—nay it was buried and this was the funeral oration, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." When the second trial came, the first trial had qualified Job to

bear the second. It may be a more severe trial for a man in the possession of great worldly wealth suddenly to be deprived of the bodily power of enjoying it, than to lose all first, and then lose the health necessary to its enjoyment. Having already lost all, he might almost say, "I thank God that now I have nothing to enjoy, and therefore the loss of the power to enjoy it is not so wearisome. I have not to say, "How I wish I could go out in my fields, and see to my servants, for they are all dead. I do not wish to see my children—they are all dead and gone—I am thankful that they are; better so, than that they should see their poor father sit on a dunghill like this." He might have been almost glad if his wife had gone too, for certainly she was not a very particular mercy when she was spared; and possibly, if he had all his children about him, it might have been a harder trial than it was. The Lord who weighs mountains in scales, had meted out his servant's woe.

Did not the Lord also consider how he should sustain his servant under his trial? Beloved, you do not know how blessedly our God poured the secret oil upon Job's fire of grace while the devil was throwing buckets of water on it. He saith to himself, "If Satan shall do much, I will do more; if he takes away much, I will give more; if he tempts the man to curse, I will fill him so full of love to me that he shall bless me. I will help him; I will strengthen him; yea, I will uphold him with the right hand of my righteousness." Christian, take those two thoughts and put them under your tongue as a wafer made with honey—you will never be tempted without express license from the throne where Jesus pleads, and, on the other hand, when he permits it, he will with the temptation make a way of escape, or give you grace to stand under it.

In the next place, the Lord considered how to sanctify Job by this trial. Job was a much better man at the end of the story than he was at the beginning. He was "an incredible disgrace upon Satan. If you want perfect and an upright man" at first, but there was a little pride about him. We are poor creatures to criticize such a man as Job—but still there was in him just a sprinkling of self-righteousness. I think, and his friends brought it out, Eliphaz and Zophar said such irritating things that poor Job could not help replying in strong terms about himself that were rather too strong, one thinks; there was a little too much self-justification.

He was not proud as some of us are, of a very little—he had much to be proud of, as the world would allow—but yet there was the tendency to be exalted with it; and though the devil did not know it, perhaps if he had left Job alone, that pride might have run to seed, and Job might have sinned; but he was in such a hurry, that he would not let the ill seed ripen, but hastened to cut it up, and so was the Lord's tool to bring Job into a more humble, and consequently a more safe and blessed state of mind. Moreover, observe how Satan was a lacquey to the Almighty! Job all this while was being enabled to earn a greater reward. All his prosperity is not enough; God loves Job so much, that he intends to give him twice the property; he intends to give him his children again; he means to make him a more famous man than ever; a man whose name shall ring down the ages; a man who shall be talked of through all generations. He is not to be the man of Uz, but of the whole world. He is not to be heard of by a handful in one neighbourhood, but all men are to hear of Job's patience in the hour of trial. Who is to do this? Who is to fashion the trump of fame through which Job's name is to be blown? The devil goes to the forge, and works away with all his might, to make Job illustrious! Foolish devil! he is piling up a pedestal on which God will set his servant Job, that he may be looked upon with wonder by all ages.

To conclude, Job's afflictions and Job's patience have been a lasting blessing to the Church of God, and they have inflicted incredible disgrace upon Satan. If you want to make the devil angry, throw the story of Job in his teeth. If you desire to have your own confidence sustained, may God the Holy Ghost lead you into the patience of Job. Oh! how many saints have been comforted in their distress by this history of patience! How many have been saved out of the jaw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear by the dark experiences of the patriarch of Uz. Oh arch fiend, how art thou taken in thine own net! Thou hast thrown a stone which has fallen on thine own head. Thou madest a pit for Job, and hast fallen into it thyself; thou art taken in thine own craftiness. Jehovah has made fools of the wise and driven the diviners mad. Brethren, let us commit ourselves in faith to the care and keeping of God—come poverty, come sickness, come death, we will in all things through Jesus Christ's blood be conquerors, and by the power of his Spirit we shall overcome at the last. I would God we were all trusting in Jesus. May those who have not trusted

him be led to begin this very morning, and God shall have all the praise in us all, evermore. Amen.

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## **Saving Faith**

Thy faith hath saved thee. - Luke 7:50; Luke 18:42

I do not remember that this expression is found anywhere else in the Word of God. It is found in these two places in the Gospel by Luke, but not in any other Gospel. Luke also gives us in two other places a kindred, and almost identical expression, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." This you will find used in reference to the woman whose issue of blood had been stanch'd (Luke 8:48), and in connection with that one of the ten lepers who returned to praise the Saviour for the cure he had received (Luke 17:19). You will find the expression, "Thy faith hath made thee whole" once in Matthew and twice in Mark, but you find it twice in Luke, and together therewith the twice repeated words of our text, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Are we wrong in supposing that the long intercourse of Luke with the apostle Paul led him not only to receive the great doctrine of justification by faith which Paul so plainly taught, and to attach to faith that high importance which Paul always did, but also to have a peculiar memory for those expressions which were used by the Saviour, in which faith was manifestly honoured to a very high degree. Albeit Luke would not have written anything which was not true for the sake of maintaining the grand doctrine so clearly taught by the apostle, yet I think his full conviction of it would help to recall to his memory more vividly those words of the Lord Jesus from which it could be more clearly learned or illustrated. Be that as it may, we know that Luke was inspired, and that he has written neither more nor less than what the Saviour actually said, and hence we may be quite sure that the expression, "Thy faith hath saved

thee," fell from the Redeemer's lips, and we are bound to accept it as pure unquestionable truth, and we may repeat it ourselves without fear of misleading others, or trenching upon any other truth. I mention this because the other day I heard an earnest friend say that faith did not save us, at which announcement I was rather surprised. The brother, it is true, qualified the expression, and showed that he meant to make it clear that Jesus saved us, and not our own act of faith. I agreed with what he meant, but not with what he said, for he had no right to use an expression which was in flat contradiction to the distinct declaration of the Saviour, "Thy faith hath saved thee." We are not to strain any expression to make it mean more than the speaker intended, and it is well to guard words from being misunderstood; but on the other hand, we may not quite go so far as absolutely to negative a declaration of the Lord himself, however we may mean to qualify it. It is to be qualified if you like, but it is not to be contradicted, for there it stands, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Now we shall this morning, by God's help, inquire what was it that saved the two persons whose history will come before us? It was their faith. Our second inquiry will be what kind of faith was it which saved them? and then thirdly, what does this teach us in reference to faith?

I. WHAT WAS IT THAT SAVED the two persons whose history we are about to consider?

In the penitent woman's case, her great sins were forgiven her and she became a woman of extraordinary love: she loved much, for she had much forgiven. I feel, in thinking of her, something like an eminent father of the church who said, "This narrative is not one which I can well preach upon; I had far rather weep over it in secret." That woman's tears, that woman's unbraided tresses wiping the Saviour's feet, her coming so near to her Lord in such company, facing such proud cavillers, with such fond and resolute intent of doing honour to Jesus; verily, among those that have loved the Saviour, there hath not lived a greater than this woman who was a sinner. Yet for all that Jesus did not say to her, "Thy love hath saved thee." Love is a golden apple of the tree of which faith is the root, and the Saviour took care not to ascribe to the fruit that which belongs only to the root. This loving woman was also right notable for her repentance. Mark ye well those tears. Those were no tears of sentimental

emotion, but a rain of holy heart-sorrow for sin. She had been a sinner and she knew it; she remembered well her multitude of iniquities, and she felt each sin deserved a tear, and there she stood weeping herself away, because she had offended her dear Lord. Yet it is not said, "Thy repentance hath saved thee." Her being saved caused her repentance, but repentance did not save her. Sorrow for sin is an early token of grace within the heart, yet it is nowhere said, "Thy sorrow for sin hath saved thee." She was a woman of great humility. She came behind the Lord and washed his feet, as though she felt herself only able to be a menial servant to perform works of drudgery, and to find a pleasure in so serving her Lord. Her reverence for him had reached a very high point; she regarded him as a king, and she did what has sometimes been done for monarchs by zealous subjects - she kissed the feet of her heart's Lord, who well deserved the homage. Her loyal reverence led her to kiss the feet of her Lord, the Sovereign of her soul, but I do not find that Jesus said, "Thy humility hath saved thee;" or that he said, "Thy reverence hath saved thee;" but he put the crown upon the head of her faith, and said expressly, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

In the case of the blind man to whom my second text refers - this man was notable for his earnestness; he cried, and cried aloud, "Son of David, have mercy on me." He was notable for his importunity, for they who would have silenced him rebuked him in vain; he cried so much the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me." But I do not discover that Christ attributed his salvation to his prayers, earnest and importunate though they were. It is not written, "Thy prayers have saved thee"; it is written, "Thy faith hath saved thee." He was a man of considerable and clear knowledge, and he had a distinct apprehension of the true character of Christ: he scorned to call him Jesus of Nazareth, as the crowd did, but he proclaimed him "Son of David," and in the presence of that throng he dared avow his full conviction that the humble man, dressed in a peasant's garb, who was threading his way through the throng, was none other than the royal heir of the royal line of Judah, and was indeed the fulfiller of the type of David, the expected Messiah, the King of the Jews, the Son of David. Yet I do not find that Jesus attributed his salvation to his knowledge, to his clear apprehension, or to his distinct avowal of his Messiahship; but he said to him, "Thy faith hath saved thee," laying the

entire stress of his salvation upon his faith.

This being so in both cases, we are led to ask, what is the reason for it? What is the reason why in every case, in every man that is saved, faith is the great instrument of salvation? Is it not first because God has a right to choose what way of salvation he pleases, and he has chosen that men should be saved, not by their works, but by their faith in his dear Son? God has a right to give his mercy to whom he pleases; he has a right to give it when he pleases; he has a right to give it in what mode he pleases; and know ye this, O sons of men, that the decree of heaven is immutable, and standeth fast forever - "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." To this there shall be no exception; Jehovah has made the rule and it shall stand. If thou wouldst have salvation, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"; but if not, salvation is utterly impossible to thee. This is the appointed way; follow it, and it leads to heaven; refuse it, and thou must perish. This is God's sovereign determination, "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." Jehovah's will be done. If this be his method of grace, let us not kick against it. If he determines that faith shall save, so let it be; only, Good Master, create and increase our faith.

But while I attribute this to the sovereign choice of God, I do see, for Scripture plainly indicates it, a reason in the nature of things why faith should thus have been selected. The apostle tells us it is of faith that it might be of grace. If the condition of salvation had been either feeling or working, then, such is the depravity of our nature, that we should inevitably have attributed the merit of salvation to the working or the feeling. We should have claimed something whereof to glory. It matters not how low the condition may have been, man would have still considered that there was something required of him, that something came from him, and that, therefore, he might take some credit to himself. But no man, unless he be demented, ever claims credit for believing the truth. If he hears that which convinces him, he is convinced; and if he be persuaded, he is persuaded; but he feels that it could not well be otherwise. He attributes the effect to the truth and the influence used. He

does not go about and boast because he believes what is so clear to him that he cannot doubt it. If he did so boast of spiritual faith, all thinking men would say at once, "Wherefore dost thou boast in the fact of having believed, and especially when this believing would never have been thine if it had not been for the force of the truth which convinced thee, and the working of the Spirit of God which constrained thee to believe?" Faith is chosen by Christ to wear the crown of salvation because - let me contradict myself - it refuses to wear the crown. It was Christ that saved the penitent woman, it was Christ that saved that blind beggar, but he takes the crown from off his own head, so dear is faith to him, and he puts the diadem upon the head of faith and says, "Thy faith hath saved thee," because he is absolutely certain that faith will never take the glory to herself, but will again lay the crown at the pierced feet, and say, "Not unto myself be glory, for thou hast done it; thou art the Saviour, and thou alone." In order, then, to illustrate and to protect the interests of sovereign grace, and to shut out all vain glorying, God has been pleased to make the way of salvation to be by faith, and by no other means.

Nor is this all. It is clear to every one who chooses to think that in order to the renewal of the heart, which is the chief part of salvation, it is well to begin with the faith; because faith once rightly exercised becomes the mainspring of the entire nature. The man believes that he is forgiven. What then? He feels gratitude to him who has pardoned him. Feeling gratitude, it is but natural that he should hate that which displeases his Saviour, and should love intensely that which is pleasing to him who saved him, so that faith operates upon the entire nature, and becomes the instrument in the hand of the regenerating Spirit by which all the faculties of the soul are put into the right condition. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he, but his thinkings come out of his believings; if he be put right in his believings, then his understanding will operate upon his affections, and all the other powers of his manhood, and old things will pass away, all things will become new through the wonderful effect of the faith, which is of the operation of God. Faith works by love, and through love it purifies the soul, and the man becomes a new creature. See ye then the wisdom of God? He may choose what way he will, but he chooses a way which at once guards his grace from our felonious boastings, and on the other hand produces in us a holiness which other wise never would



have been there.

Faith in salvation, however, is not the meritorious cause; nor is it in any sense the salvation itself. Faith saves us just as the mouth saves from hunger. If we be hungry, bread is the real cure for hunger, but still it would be right to say that eating removes hunger, seeing that the bread itself could not benefit us, unless the mouth should eat it. Faith is the soul's mouth, whereby the hunger of the heart is removed. Christ also is the brazen serpent lifted up; all the healing virtue is in him; yet no healing virtue comes out of the brazen serpent to any who will not look; so that the looking is rightly considered to be the act which saves. True, in the deepest sense it is Christ uplifted who saves, to him be all the glory; but without looking to him ye cannot be saved, so that

"There is life in a look,"

as well as life in the Saviour to whom you look. Nothing is yours until you appropriate it. If you be enriched, the thing appropriated enriches you; yet it is not incorrect but strictly right to say it is the appropriation of the blessing which makes you rich. Faith is the hand of the soul. Stretched out, it lays hold of the salvation of Christ, and so by faith we are saved. "Thy faith hath saved thee." I need not dwell longer on that point. It is self-evident from the text that faith is the great means of salvation.

II. WHAT KIND OF FAITH WAS IT that saved these people? I will mention, first, the essential agreements; and then, secondly, the differentia, or the points in which this faith differed in its external manifestations in the two cases.

In the instances of the penitent woman and the blind beggar, their faith was fixed alone in Jesus. You cannot discover anything floating in their faith in Jesus which adulterated it; it was unmixed faith in him. the woman pressed forward to him, her tears fell on him; her ointment was for him; her unloosed tresses were a towel for his; feet she cared for no one else, not even for the disciples whom she respected for his sake; her whole spirit and soul were absorbed in him. He could save her; he could blot out her sins. She believed him; she did it unto him. The same was the

case with that blind man. He had no thought of any ceremonies to be performed by priests; he had no idea of any medicine which might be given him by physicians. His cry was, "Son of David, Son of David." The only notice he took of others was to disregard them, and still to cry, "Son of David, Son of David." "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" was the Lord's question, and it answered to the desire of his soul, for he knew that if anything were done it must be done by the Son of David. It is essential that our faith must rest alone on Jesus. Mix anything with Christ, and you are undone. If your faith shall stand with one foot upon the rock of his merits, and the other foot upon the sand of your own duties, it will fall, and great will be the fall thereof. Build wholly on the rock, for if so much as a corner of the edifice shall rest on anything beside, it will ensure the ruin of the whole: -

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good."

All true faith is alike in this respect.

The faith of these two was alike in its confession of unworthiness. What meant her standing behind? What meant her tears, her everflowing tears, but that she felt unworthy to draw near to Jesus? And what meant the beggar's cry, "Have mercy on me?" Note the stress he lays upon it. "Have mercy on me." He does not claim the cure by merit, nor ask it as a reward. To mercy he appealed. Now I care not whose faith it is, whether it be that of David in his bitter cries of the fifty-first Psalm, or whether it be that of Paul in his highest exaltation upon being without condemnation through Christ, there is always in connection with true faith a thorough and deep sense that it is mercy, mercy alone, which saves us from the wrath to come. Dear hearer, do not deceive yourself. Faith and boasting are as opposite to one another as the two poles. If you come before Christ with your righteousness in your hand, you come without faith; but if you come with faith you must also come with confession of sin, for true faith always walks hand in hand with a deep sense of guiltiness before the Most High. This is so in every case.

Their faith was alike, moreover, in defying and conquering opposition.

Little do we know the inward struggles of the penitent as she crossed the threshold of Simon's house. "He will repel thee," the stern, cold Pharisee will say, "Get thee gone, thou strumpet; how darest thou defile the doors of honest men." But whatever may happen she passes through the door, she comes to where the feet of the Saviour are stretched out towards the entrance as he is reclining at the table, and there she stands. Simon glanced at her: he thought the glance would wither her, but her love to Christ was too well rooted to be withered by him. No doubt he made many signs of his displeasure, and showed that he was horrified at such a creature being anywhere near him, but she took no notice of him. Her Lord was there, and she felt safe. Timid as a dove, she trembled not while he was near; but she returned no defiant glances for Simon's haughty looks; her eyes were occupied with weeping. She did not turn aside to demand an explanation of his unkind motions, for her lips were all engrossed with kissing those dear feet. Her Lord, her Lord, was all to her. She overcame through faith in him, and held her ground, and did not leave the house till he dismissed her with "Go in peace."

It was the same with the blind man. He said, "Son of David, have mercy on me." They cried, "Hush! Why these clamours, blind beggar? His eloquence is music; do not interrupt him. Never man spake as he is speaking. Every tone rings like the harps of the angels. Hush! How darest thou spoil his discourse?" But over and above them all went up the importunate prayer, "Son of David, have mercy upon me," and he prevailed. All true faith is opposed. If thy faith be never tried it is not born of the race of the church militant. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," but it is indicated in that very declaration that there must be something to overcome, and that faith must wage war for its existence.

Once more, the faith of these two persons was alike in being openly avowed. I will not say that the avowal took the same form in both, for it did not; but still it was equally open. There is the Saviour, and there comes the weeping penitent. She loves him. Is she ashamed to say so? It may bring her reproach; it will certainly rake up the old reproaches against her, for she has been a sinner. Never mind what she has been, nor who may be present to see her. She loves her Lord, and she will show it.

She will bring the ointment and she will anoint his feet, even in the presence of Pharisees, Pharisees who would say, "Is this one of the disciples of Christ? A pretty convert to boast of! A fine conquest this, for his kingdom! A harlot becomes a disciple! What next and what next?" She must have known and felt all that, but still there was no concealment. She loved her Lord, and she would avow it, and so in the very house of the Pharisee, there being no other opportunity so convenient, she comes forward, and without words, but with actions far more eloquent than words, she says, "I love him. These tears shall show it; this ointment shall diffuse the knowledge of it, as its sweet perfume fills the room; and every lock of my hair shall be a witness that I am my Lord's and he is mine." She avowed her faith.

And so did the blind man. He did not sit there and say, "I know he is the Son of David, but I must not say it." They said, some of them contemptuously, and others indifferently, "It is Jesus of Nazareth." But he will not have it so. "Thou Son of David," saith he; and loud above their noise I hear him cry, like a herald proclaiming the King, "Son of David." Why, sirs, it seems to me he was exalted to a high office: he became the herald of the King, and proclaimed him, and this belongs to a high officer of State in our country. The blind beggar showed great decision and courage. He cried in effect, "Son of David thou art; Son of David I proclaim thee; Son of David thou shalt be proclaimed, whoever may gainsay it; only turn thine eyes and have mercy upon me." Are there any of you here who have a faith in Christ which you are ashamed of? I also am ashamed of you, and so also will Christ be ashamed of you when he cometh in the glory of his Father and all his holy angels with him. Ashamed to claim that you are honest? Then methinks you must live in bad company, where to be a rogue is to be famous; and if you are ashamed to say, "I love my Lord," methinks you are courting the friendship of Christ's enemies, and what can you be but an enemy yourself: If you love him, say it. Put on your Master's regimentals, enlist in his army, and come forward and declare, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Their faith was alike then in these four particulars, it was fixed alone on him, it was accompanied with a sense of unworthiness, it struggled and conquered opposition, and it openly declared itself before all comers.

By your patience I shall now try to show the differences between the same faith as to its manifestations. First, the woman's faith acted like a woman's faith. She showed tender love, and the affections are the glory and the strength of women. They were certainly such in her. Her love was intense, womanly love, and she poured it out upon the Saviour. The man's faith acted like a man's in its determination and strength. He persisted in crying, "Thou Son of David." There was as much that was masculine about his faith as there was of the feminine in the penitent's faith, and everything should be in its order and after its season. It would not have been meet for the woman's voice to be heard so boldly above the crowd; it would have seemed out of place for a man's tears to have been falling upon the Saviour's feet. Either one or the other might have been justifiable, but they would not have been equally suitable. But now they are as suitable as they are excellent. The woman acts as a godly woman should. The man like a godly man. Never let us measure ourselves by other people. Do not, my brother, say, "I could not shed tears." Who asked thee to do so? A man's tears are mostly within, and so let them be: it is ours to use other modes of showing our love. And, my sister, do not say, "I could not act as a herald and publicly proclaim the King." I doubt not thou couldst do so if there were need, but thy tears in secret, and those wordless tokens of love to Jesus which thou are rendering, are not less acceptable because they are not the same as a man would give. Nay, they are the better because they are more suitable to thee. Do not think that all the flowers of God's garden must bloom in the same colour or shed the same perfume.

Notice next that the woman acted like a woman who had been a sinner. What more meet than tears? What more fitting place for her than at the Saviour's feet? She had been a sinner, she acts like a sinner; but the man who had been a beggar acted like a beggar. What does a beggar do but clamour for alms? Did he not beg gloriously? Never one plied the trade more earnestly than he. "Son of David," said he, "have mercy on me." I should not have liked to have seen the beggar sitting there weeping; nor to have heard the penitent woman shouting. Neither would have been natural or seemly. Faith works according to the condition, circumstances, sex, or ability of the person in whom it lives, and it best shows itself in its

own form, not in an artificial manner, but in the natural outflow of the heart.

Observe, also, that the woman did not speak. There is something very beautiful in the golden silence of the woman, which was richer than her silver speech would have been. But the man was not silent; he spoke; he spoke out, and his words were excellent. I venture to say that the woman's silence spoke as powerfully as the man's voice. Of the two I think I find more eloquence in the tears bedewing, and unbraided hair wiping the Saviour's feet, than in the cry, "Son of David, have mercy on me." Yet both forms of expression were equally good, the silence best in the woman with her tears, and the speech best in the man with his confident trust in Christ. Do not think it necessary, dear friend, in order to serve, to do other people's work. What thine own hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. If you think you can never honour Christ till you enter a pulpit, it may be just possible that you will afterwards honour him best by getting out of it as quickly as you can. There have been persons well qualified to adorn the religion of Christ with a lapstone on their lap who have thought it necessary to mount a pulpit, and in that position have been a hindrance to Christ and his gospel. Sister, there is a sphere for you; keep to it, let none push you out of it; but do not think there is nothing else to do except the work which some other woman does. God has called her, let her follow God's voice; he calls you in another direction, follow his voice thither. You will be most like that other excellent woman when you are most different from her: I mean, you will be most truly obedient to Christ, as she is, if you pursue quite another path.

There was a difference, again, in this. The woman gave - she brought her ointment. The man did the opposite - he begged. There are various ways of showing love to Christ, which are equally excellent tokens of faith. To give him of her ointment, and give him of her tears, and give him the accommodation of her hair, was well; it showed her faith, which worked by love: to give nothing, for the beggar had nothing to give, but simply to honour Christ by appealing to his bounty and his royal power, was best in the beggar. I can commend neither above the other, for I doubt not that both the penitent and the beggar gave Christ their whole heart, and what

more does Jesus ask for from any one?

The thoughts of the woman and the thoughts of the beggar were different too. Her thoughts were mainly about the past, and her sins - hence her tears. To be forgiven, that was her point. His thoughts were mainly about the present, and did not so much concern his sin as his deficiency, infirmity, and inability, and so he came with different thoughts. I do not doubt that he thought of sin, as I dare say she also thought of infirmity; but in her case the thought of sin was uppermost, and hence the tears; in his the infirmity was uppermost, and hence the prayer, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." Do not, then, compare your experience with that of another. God is a God of wonderful variety. The painter who repeats himself in many pictures has a paucity of conception, but the master artist scarcely ever sketches the same thing a second time. There is a boundless variety in genius, and God who transcends all the genius of men, creates an infinite variety in the works of his grace. Look not, therefore, for likeness everywhere. The woman, it is said, loved much, and she proved her love by her acts; but the man loved much too, and showed his love by actions which were most admirable, for he followed Jesus in the way, glorifying God. Yet they were different actions. I do not find that he brought any box of ointment, or anointed Christ's feet, neither do I find that she literally followed Christ in the way, though no doubt she followed him in the spirit; neither did she with a loud voice glorify God as the restored blind beggar did. There are differences of operation, but the same Lord; there are differences of capacity and differences of calling, and by this reflection I hope you will be enabled to deliver yourselves from the fault of judging one by another, and that you will look for the same faith, but not for the same development of it.

So interesting is this subject that I want you to follow me while I very rapidly sketch the woman's case, and then the man's, not mentioning the differences one by one, but allowing the two pictures to impress themselves separately upon your minds.

Observe this woman. What a strange compound she was. She was consciously unworthy, and therefore she wept, yet she drew very near to Jesus. Her acts were those of nearness and communion; she washed his

feet with her tears, she wiped them with the hairs of her head, and meanwhile she kissed them again and again. "She hath not ceased," said Christ, "to kiss my feet." A sense of unworthiness, and the enjoyment of communion, were mixed together. Oh, divine faith which blends the two! She was shamefaced, yet was she very bold. She dared not look the Master in the face as yet; she approached him from behind; yet she dared face Simon, and remain in his room, whether he frowned or no. I have known some who have blushed in the face of Christ who would not have blushed before a judge, nor at the stake, if they had been dragged there for Christ's sake. Such a woman was Anne Askew, humble before her Master, but like a lioness before the foes of God.

The penitent woman wept, she was a mourner, yet she had a deep joy; I know she had, for every kiss meant joy. Every time she lifted that blessed foot, and kissed it, her heart leaped with the transport of love. Her heart knew bitterness for sin, but it knew also the sweetness of pardon. What a mixture! Faith made the compound. She was humble, never one more so; yet see how she takes upon herself to deal with the King himself. Brethren, you and I are satisfied, and well we may be, if we may wash the saints' feet, but she was not. Oh, the courage of this woman! She will pass through the outer court, and get right to the King's own throne, and there pay her homage, in her own person, to his person, and wash the feet of the wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God. I know not that an angel ever performed such suit and service, and therefore this woman takes preeminence as having done for Jesus what no other being ever did. I have said that she was silent, and yet she spake; I will add, she was despised, but Christ set her high in honour, and made Simon, who despised her, to feel little in her presence. I will also add she was a great sinner, but she was a great saint. Her great sinnership, when pardoned, became the raw stuff out of which great saints are made by the mighty power of God. Finally she was saved by faith, so says the text, but if ever there was a case in which James could not have said, "Shall faith save thee?" and in which he must have said, "Here is one that shows her faith by her works," it was the case of this woman. There she is before you. Imitate her faith itself, though you cannot actually copy her deeds.

Now look at the man. He was blind, but he could see a great deal more



than the Pharisees, who said they could see. Blind, but his inward optics saw the king in his beauty, saw the splendour of his throne, and he confessed it. He was a beggar, but he had a royal soul, and a strong sovereign determination which was not to be put down. He had the kind of mind which dwells in men who are princes among their fellows. He is not to be stopped by disciples, nay, nor by apostles. He has begun to pray, and pray he will till he obtains the boon he seeks. Note well that what he knew he avowed, what he desired he pleaded for, and what he needed he understood. "Lord, that I might receive my sight;" he was clear about his needs, and clear about the only person who could supply them. What he asked for he expected, for when he was bidden to come he evidently expected that his sight would be restored, for we are told by another Evangelist that he cast away his beggar's cloak. He felt he should never want to beg again. He was sure his eyes were about to be opened. Lastly, what he received he was grateful for, for as soon as he could walk without a guide he took Christ to be his guide, and followed him in the way, glorifying him. Look on both pictures. May you have the shadows and the lights of both, as far as they would tend to make you also another and distinct picture by the selfsame artist, whose hand alone can produce such wonders.

III. WHAT DOES THIS TEACH US IN REFERENCE TO FAITH? It teaches us first that faith is all important. Do, I pray you, my hearers, see whether you have the precious faith, the faith of God's elect. Remember there are not many things in Scripture called precious, but there is the precious blood, and there goes with it the precious faith. If you have not that you are lost; if you have not that you are neither fit to live nor fit to die; if you have not that, your eternal destiny will be infinite despair; but if you have faith, though it be as a grain of mustard seed, you are saved. "Thy faith hath saved thee."

Learn next that the main matter in faith is the person whom you believe. I do not say in whom you believe. That would be true, but not quite so scriptural an expression. Paul does not say, as I hear most people quote it, "I know in whom I have believed." Faith believes Christ. Your faith must recognise him as a person, and come to him as a person, and rest not in his teaching merely, or his work only, but in him. "Come unto me,

all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." A personal Saviour for sinners! Are you resting on him alone? Do you believe him? You know the safety of the building depends mainly upon the foundation, and if the foundation be not right, you may build as you will, it will not last. Do you build, then, on Christ alone? Inquire about that as a special point.

Observe next, that we must not expect exactly the same manifestation in each convert. Let not the elders of the church expect it, let not parents require it from their children; let not anxious friends look for it; do not expect it in yourself. Biographies are very useful, but they may become a snare. I must not judge that I am not a child of God because I am not precisely like that good man whose life I have just been reading. Am I resting in Christ? Do I believe him? Then it may be the Lord's grace is striking out quite a different path for me from that which has been trodden by my brother, that it may illustrate other phases of its power, and show to principalities and powers the exceeding riches of divine love.

And, lastly, the matter which sums up all is this, if we have faith in Jesus we are saved, and ought not to talk or act as if there were any question about it. "THY FAITH HATH SAVED THEE." Jesus says it. Granted, you have faith in Christ, and it is certain that faith hath saved you. Do not, therefore, go on talking and acting and feeling as if you were not saved. I know a company of saved people who say every Sabbath, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners"; but they are not miserable sinners if they are saved, and for them to use such words is to throw a slight upon the salvation which Christ has given them. If they are saved sinners they ought to be rejoicing saints. What some say others do not say, but they act as if it were so. They go about asking God to give them the mercy they have already obtained, hoping one day to receive what Christ assures them is already in their possession, talking to others as if it were a matter of question whether they were saved or not, when it cannot be a matter of question. "Thy faith hath saved thee." Fancy the poor penitent woman turning round and saying to the Saviour, "Lord, I humbly hope that it is true." There would have been neither humility nor faith in such an expression. Imagine that blind man, when Christ said, "Thy faith hath saved thee," saying "I trust that in future years it will be found to be so."

It would be a belying at once of his own earnest character and of Christ's honesty of speech. If thou hast believed, thou art saved. Do not talk as if thou wert not, but now down from the willows take thy harp, and sing unto the Lord a new song. I have noticed in many prayers a tendency to avoid speaking as if facts were facts. I have heard this kind of expression, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we desire to be glad." The text is, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad;" and if the Lord has done these great things for us our right is to be glad about them, not to go with an infamous "if" upon our lips before the Lord who cannot lie. If ye are dealing with your fellow creatures, suspect them, for they mostly deserve it; if ye are listening to their promises, doubt them, for their promises go to be broken; but if ye are dealing with your Lord and Master, never suspect him, for he is beyond suspicion; never doubt his promises, for heaven and earth and hell shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of his word shall fail. I claim for Christ that ye cast away forever all the talk which is made up of "buts," and "ifs," and "peradventures," and "I hope," and "I trust." You are in the presence of One who said, "Verily, verily," and meant what he said, who is "the Amen, the faithful and true witness."

You would not spit in his face if he were here, yet your "ifs" and "buts" are so much insult cast upon his truth. You would not scourge him, but what do your doubts do but vex him and put him to shame? If he lies, never believe him; if he speaks the truth, never doubt him. Then shall ye know when ye have cast aside your wicked unbelief, that your faith has saved you, and ye will go in peace.

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## **The Saviour's Many Crowns**

On his head were many crowns. - Revelation 19:12

AH, WELL YE KNOW what head this was, and ye have not forgotten its marvellous history. A head which once in infancy reclined upon the bosom of a woman! A head which was meekly bowed in obedience to a carpenter! A head which became in after years a fountain of water, and a reservoir of tears. A head which "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground!" A head which was spit upon, whose hair was plucked: A head which at the last in the grim agony of death, crowned with thorns, gave utterance to the terrible death-shriek - *lama sabachthani!* A head which afterwards slept in the grave; and - glory be unto him that liveth and was dead, but is alive for evermore - a head which afterwards rose again from the tomb, and looked with radiant eyes of love upon the holy women waiting at the sepulcher. This is the head whereof John speaks in the words of the text. Who would have thought that a head, the visage of which was more marred than that of any other man - a head which suffered more from the tempests of heavenward of earth than ever mortal brow before, should now be surrounded with these many diadems, these star-bestudded crowns!

My brethren, it needs John himself to expound this glorious vision to you. Alas my eye has not yet seen the heavenly glory, nor has my ear heard the celestial song, I am therefore but as a little child among topless mountains, overawed with grandeur, and speechless with awe. Pray for me that I may utter a few words which the Holy Spirit may comfortably apply to your souls, for if he help me not, I am helpless indeed. With his divine aid, I dare to look upon the glorious diadems of our Lord and King. The crowns upon the head of Christ are of three sorts. First, there are the *crowns of dominions*, many of which are on his head. Next, there are the *crowns of victory*, which he has won in many a terrible battle. Then there are the *crowns of thanksgiving* with which his church and all his people have delighted to crown his wondrous head.

I. First, then, let every believing eye look through the thick darkness and behold Jesus as he sits this day upon the throne of his Father, and let every heart rejoice while it sees the many CROWNS OF DOMINION upon his head. First, and foremost, there sparkles about his brow the everlasting diadem of the King of *Heaven*. His are the angels. The

cherubim and seraphim continually bound forth his praise. At his behest the mightiest spirit delights to fly, and carry his commands to the most distant world". He has but to speak, and it is done. Cheerfully is he obeyed, and majestically doth he reign his high courts are thronged with holy spirits, who live upon his smile, who drink light from his eyes, who borrow glory from his majesty. There is no spirit in heaven so pure that it does not bow before him, no angel so bright that it does not veil its face with its wings, when it draweth near to him. Yea, moreover, the many spirits redeemed, delight to bow before him, day without night they circle his throne, singing - "Worthy is he that was slain and hath redeemed us from our sins by his blood, honor, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." To be King of heaven were surely enough! The ancients were accustomed to divide heaven, and earth, and hell, into divers monarchies, and allot each of them to distinct kings; and surely heaven were an empire large enough even for an infinite Spirit. Christ is Lord of all its boundless plains. He laid the precious stones upon which was builded that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; he is the light of that city, he is the joy of its inhabitants, and it is their loving life evermore to pay him honor. Side by side with this bright crown behold another. It is the *iron* crown of hell, for Christ reigneth there supreme. Not only in the dazzling brightness of heaven, but in the black impenetrable darkness of hell is his omnipotence felt, and his sovereignty acknowledged; the chains which bind damned spirits are the chains of his strength; the fires which burn are the fires of his vengeance; the burning rays that scorch through their eyeballs, and melt their very heart, are flashed from his vindictive eye. There is no power in hell besides his. The very devils know his might. He chaineth the great dragon. If he give him a temporary liberty, yet is the chain in his hand, and he can draw him back lest he go beyond his limit. Hell trembles at him. The very howlings of lost spirits are but deep bass notes of his praise. While in heaven the glorious notes shout forth his goodness; in hell the deep growlings resound his justice, and his certain victory over an his foes. Thus his empire is higher than the highest heaven, and deeper than the lowest hell. This earth also is a province of his wide domains. Though small the empire compared with others, yet from this world hath he perhaps derived more glory than from any other part of his

dominions. He reigns on earth. On his head is the crown of *creation*. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." His voice said, "Let there be light," and there was light. It was his strength that piled the mountains, and his wisdom balances the clouds. He is Creator. If you lift your eye to the upper spheres, and behold yon starry worlds - he made them. They are not self-created. He struck them off like sparks from the anvil of his omnipotence; and there they glitter, upheld and supported by his might. He made the earth and all men that be upon it, the cattle an a thousand hills, and the birds that make glad the air. The sea is his, and he made it also. Leviathan he hath formed, and though that monster maketh the deep to be hoary, yet is he but a creature of his power. Together with this crown of creation there is yet another - the crown of *providence*, for he sustaineth all things by the word of his power. Everything must cease to be, if it were not for the continual out-going of his strength. The earth must die, the sun must grow dim with age, and nature sink in years, if Christ supplied it not with perpetual strength. He sends the howling blasts of winter; he, anon, restrains them and breathes the breath of spring; he ripens the fruits of summer, and he makes glad the autumn with his harvest. All things know his will. The heart of the great universe beats by his power; the very sea derives its tide from him. Let him once withdraw his hands, and the pillars of earth must tremble; the stars must fall like fig leaves from the tree, and all things must be quenched in the blackness of annihilation. On his head is the crown of providence. And next to this there glitters also the thrice-glorious crown of grace. He is the King of *grace*: he gives, or he withholds. The river of God's mercy flows from underneath his throne; he sits as Sovereign in the dispensation of mercy. He hath the key of heaven; he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth; he calleth, and the stubborn heart obeys; he willeth, and the rebellious spirit bends its knee; for he is Master of men, and when he wills to bless, none can refuse the benediction. He reigneth in his church amidst willing spirits; and he reigns for his church over all the nations of the world, that he may gather unto himself a people that no man can number who shall bow before the scepter of his love.

I pause here, overcome by the majesty of the subject, and instead of attempting to describe that brow, and those glittering crowns, I shall act

the part of a seraph, and bow before that well-crowned head, and cry, "Holy, holy, holy, art thou Lord God of hosts! The keys of heaven, and death, and hell, hang at thy girdle; thou art supreme, and unto thee be glory for ever and ever."

And now, my brothers, what say you to this? Do not sundry thoughts at once stir in your hearts? Methinks I hear one say, "If this be so, if Christ hath these many crowns of dominion, how vain it is for me to rebel against him." My hearers, it may be, some of you are striving against Christ. Like Saul of Tarsus, you have become "exceeding mad" against him. Your wife frequents the house of God, and you forbid her. You persecute your child because she follows Jesus. You hate the very name of Christ; you curse his servants; you despise his Word. You would if you could, spit upon his ministers; and, perhaps, burn his people. This know, that you have undertaken a battle in which you are certain of defeat. Who ever above against him and prospered? Go O man and do battle against the lightning, and hold the thunder-bolt in thine hand; go and restrain the sea, and hush the billows, and hold the winds in the hollow of thine hand; and when thou hast done this, then lift thy puny hand against the King of kings. For he that was crucified is thy Master, and though thou oppose him thou shalt not succeed. In thy utmost malice thou shalt be defeated, and the vehemence of thy wrath shall but return upon thine own head. Methinks I see this day the multitudes of Christ's enemies. They stand up; they take counsel together - "Let us break his bands in sunder; let us cast away his cords from us." Hear ye, O rebels, yonder deep-sounding laugh? Out of the thick darkness of his tabernacle, Jehovah laughs at you. He hath you in derision. He saith "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Come on, ye enemies of Christ, and be dashed in pieces. Come on in your most vehement force, and fall like the waves that are broken against the immovable rock. He ruleth and he will rule; and you one day shall be made to feel his power. For "At the name of Jesus every knee must bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth."

Another thought, right full of comfort springs up to my mind. Believer, look to Christ's thrice-crowned head this day and be comforted. Is providence against thee? Correct thy speech; thou hast erred, God hath

not become thine enemy. Providence is not against thee, for Jesus is its King; he weighs its trials and counts its storms. Thy enemies may strive, but they shall not prevail against thee - he shall smite them upon the cheek-bone. Art thou passing through the fire? The fire is Christ's dominion. Art thou going through the floods? They shall not drown thee; for even the floods obey the voice of the Omnipotent Messiah. Wherever thou art called, thou canst not go where Jesus's love reigns not. Commit thyself into his hands. However dark thy circumstance, he can make thy pathway clear. Though night surround thee, he shall surely bring the day. Only trust thou in him; leave thy concerns both little and great in his Almighty hands, and thou shalt yet see how kind his heart, how strong his hand to bring thee out and glorify thee. Repose your confidence in him who is the King of kings. Come bring your burdens each one of you to his feet, and take a song away. If your hearts be heavy bring them here; the golden scepter can lighten them. If your griefs be many, tell them into his ear; his loving eyes can scatter them, and through the thick darkness shall there be a bright light shining, and you shall see his face and know that all is well.

I am sure there is no more delightful doctrine to a Christian, than that of Christ's absolute sovereignty. I am glad there is no such thing as chance, that nothing is left to itself, but that Christ everywhere hath sway. If I thought that there was a devil in hell that Christ did not govern, I should be afraid that devil would destroy me, If I thought there was a circumstance on earth, which Christ did not over-rule, I should fear that that circumstance would ruin me. Nay, if there were an angel in heaven that was not one of Jehovah's subjects, I should tremble even at him. But since Christ is King of kings, and I am his poor brother, one whom he loves, I give all my cares to him, for he careth for me; and leaning on his breast, my soul hath full repose, confidence, and security.

II. And now, in the second place, Christ hath many CROWN'S OF VICTORY. The first diadems which I have mentioned are his by right. He is God's only begotten and well-beloved Son, and hence he inherits unlimited dominions. But viewed as the Son of Man, conquest has made him great, and his own right hand and his holy arm have won for him the triumph. In the first place, Christ has a crown which I pray that every one



of you may wear. He has a crown of victory over the world. For thus saith he himself, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Did you ever think of what a stern battle that was which Christ had to fight with the world? The world first said, "I will extinguish him, he shall not be known;" and it threw on Christ heaps of poverty that there he might be smothered. But he shone in his poverty, and the seamless coat shone with greater light than the robe of the rabbi. Then the world attacked him with its threatenings. Sometimes they dragged him to the brow of a hill to cast him down headlong; at another time they took up stones to stone him. But he who was not to be bidden by poverty, was not to be quenched by threatening. And then the world tried its blandishments; it came with a fair face and presented to him a crown. They would have taken Christ and would have made him a king; but he who cared not for their frowns was regardless of their smiles. He put away the crown from him; he came not to be a king but to suffer and to die. "My kingdom is not of this world," said he, "else would my servants fight." Have you never thought how through thirty years the world tempted Christ? That temptation of the devil in the wilderness was not the only one which he had to endure. Trials of every shape and size surrounded him, the world emptied its quiver, and shot all its arrows against the breast of the spotless Redeemer; but all holy, all unharmed was he. Still separate from sinners, he walked among them without defilement; feasted among them, and yet did not sanction their gluttony; drank with them, and yet was not a drunkard, acted as they acted in all innocent things, and was the world's man, and yet not a man of the world. He was in the world, but he was not of it; separate, and yet one of themselves; united to our race by closest ties, and yet evermore separate and distinguished from all mankind. I would, my brethren, that we could imitate Christ in our battle with the world. But alas, the world oftentimes gets the upper hand of us. Sometimes we yield to its smiles, and often do we tremble before its frowns. Have hope and courage, believer; be like your Master, be the world's foe and overcome it, yield not, suffer it never to entrap your watchful feet. Stand upright amid all its pressure, and be not moved by all its enchantments. Christ did this, and therefore around his head is that right royal crown of victory; trophy of triumph over the entire forces of the world.

Furthermore, the next crown he wears is the crown by which he has overcome sin. Sin has been more than a match for creatures of every kind. Sin fought the angels and a third part of the stars of heaven fell. Sin defied the perfect Adam and soon overcame him, for even at the first blow he fell. Sin had a stern contest with Jesus our Lord, but in him it found its master. Sin came with all its temptations, but Christ resisted and overcame. It came with its horror and with its curse; Christ suffered, Christ endured, and so destroyed its power. He took the poisoned darts of the curse into his own heart, and there quenched its poison fires by shedding his own blood. By suffering, Christ has become master over sin. The dragon's neck is now beneath his feet. There is not a temptation which he has not known and therefore not a sin which he has not overcome. He has cast down every shape and form of evil, and now for ever stands he more than a conqueror through his glorious sufferings. Oh, my brethren, how bright that crown which he deserves, who hath for ever put away our sin by the sacrifice of himself. My soul enraptured restrains my voice, and once again I bow before his throne and worship, in spirit, My bleeding Ransomer, my suffering Saviour.

And then again, Christ wears about his head the crown of death. He died, and in that dreadful hour he overcame death, rifled the sepulcher, split the stone which guarded the mouth of the grave, hewed death in pieces and destroyed the arch-destroyer. Christ seized the iron limbs of Death and ground them to powder in his hand. Death swayed his scepter over all the bodies of men, but Christ has opened the gate of resurrection for his redeemed, and in that day when he shall put the trumpet to his lips and blow the resurrection blast, then shall it be seen how Christ is universal monarch over all the domains of death, for as the Lord our Saviour rose, so all his followers must. And then again, Christ is not only Lord of the world, king of sin, and king of death, but he is king of Satan too. He met that arch fiend foot to foot. Fearful was the struggle, for our champion sweat as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground; but he hewed his way to victory through his own body, through the agonies of his own soul. Desperate was the encounter. Head and hands, and feet and heart were wounded, but the Saviour flinched not from the fight. He rent the lion of the pit as though he were a kid, and broke the dragon's head in pieces. Satan was nibbling at Christ's heel, Christ trod on him and

smashed his head. Now hath Jesus led captivity captive, and is master over all the hosts of hell. Glorious is that victory! Angels repeat the triumphant strain, his redeemed take up the song; and you, ye blood-bought sons of Adam, praise him too, for he hath overcome all the evil of hell itself.

And yet, once again, another crown hath Christ, and that is the crown of victory over man. Would to God, my hearers, that he wore a crown for each of you. What hard work it is to fight with the evil heart of man. If you wish him to do evil, you can soon overcome him; but if you would overcome him with good, how hard the struggle! Christ could have man's heart, but man would not give it to him. Christ tried him in many a way; he wooed him, but man's heart was hard and would not melt. Moses came, and said, "My Master, let me try and open man's heart;" and he used the fire, and the whirlwind, and the hammer of God; but the heart would not break, and the spirit would not open to Christ. Then Christ came, and he said, "Hard-heart, I will win thee; O, icy Soul, I will melt thee." And the Soul said, "No, Jesus, I defy thee." But Christ said, "I will do it." And he came once upon a time to the poor Hard-heart, and brought his cross with him. "See, Hard-heart," said he, "I love thee; though thou lovest not me, yet I love thee, and in proof of this, see here; I will hang upon this cross." And as Hard-heart looked on, suddenly fierce men nailed the Saviour to the tree. His hands were pierced; his soul was rent in agony, and looking down on the Hard-heart, Jesus said, "Hard-heart, wilt thou not love *me*? I love *thee*; I have redeemed thee from death; though thou me, yet do I die for thee; though thou kickest against me yet will I surely carry thee to my throne." And the Hard-heart said, "Jesus, I can bear it no longer, I yield to thee. thy love has overcome me; oh, I would be thy subject for ever, only remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom, and let me be numbered with thy subjects both now and for ever." My hearers, has Christ ever overcome you? Say, has his love been too much for you? Have you been compelled to give up your sins, wooed by his love divine? Have your eyes been made to run with tears at the thought of his affection for you, and of your own ingratitude? Have you ever thought this over? - "I, the blackest of sinners, have despised him; his Bible I have left unread; his blood I have trampled under foot, and yet he died for me, and loved me with an everlasting love." Surely, this has made you bow

your knee; this has made your spirit cry -  
"Oh, sovereign grace my heart subdue;  
I will be led in triumph, too,  
A willing captive to my Lord  
To sing the triumphs of his Word."

If this be the case with you, then you may yourself recognize one of the many crowns that are on his head.

III. Now, this brings me to the third point, and may I very earnestly ask your prayers, that, feeble as I am this morning, I may be helped while I endeavor to dwell upon this sweet subject.

I am preaching in my own spirit against wind and tide. There are times when one preaches with pleasure and delight, enjoying the Word, but now I can get nothing for myself, even if I am giving you anything. Pray for me, that nevertheless the Word may be blessed, that in my weakness God's strength may appear.

The third head deals with the CROWNS OF THANKSGIVING. Surely, concerning these we may well say, "On his head are many crowns." In the first place, all the mighty doers in Christ's church ascribe their crown to him. What a glorious crown is that which Elijah will wear - the man who went to Ahab, and when Ahab said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" reprov'd him to his very face - the man who took the prophets of Baal, and let not one of them escape, but hewed them in pieces and made them a sacrifice to God. What a crown will *he* wear who ascended into heaven in a chariot of fire! What a crown, again, belongs to Daniel, saved from the lion's den - Daniel, the earnest prophet of God. What a crown will be that which shall glitter on the head of the weeping Jeremy, and the eloquent Esaias! What crowns are those which shall begirt the heads of the apostles! What a weighty diadem is that which Paul shall receive for his many years of service! And then, my friends, how shall the crown of Luther glitter, and the crown of Calvin; and what a noble diadem shall that be which Whitfield shall wear, and all those men who have so valiantly served God, and who by his might have put to flight the armies of the Aliens, and have maintained the gospel banner erect in

troubled times! Nay, but let me point to you a scene. Elijah enters heaven, and where goes he with that crown which is instantly put upon his head? See, he flies to the throne, and stooping there, he uncrowns himself; "Not unto me, not unto me but unto thy name be all the glory!" See the prophets as they stream in one by one; without exception, they put their crowns upon the head of Christ. And mark the apostles, and all the mighty teachers of the church; they all bow there and cast their crowns at his feet, who, by his grace, enabled them to win them.

"I ask them whence their victory came;  
They, with united breath,  
Ascribe their triumph to the Lamb,  
Their conquest to HIS DEATH."

Not only the mighty doers but the mighty sufferers do this. How brilliant are the ruby crowns of the martyred saints. From the stake, from the gibbet, from the fire, they ascended up to God; and among the bright ones they are doubly bright, fairest of the mighty host that surrounds the throne of the Blessed One. What crowns they wear! I must confess that I have often envied them. It is a happy thing to live in peaceful days; but while happy, it is not honorable. How much more honorable to have died the death of Lawrence, grilled to death upon that fiery gridiron, or to die pierced with spears, with every bone dislocated on the rack! A noble way of serving Christ, to have stood calmly in the midst of the fires, and have clapped one's hands, and cried. "I can do all things, even give my body to be burned for his dear names sake!" What crowns are those which martyr's wear! An angel might blush to think that his dignity was so small compared with that of those riders in chariots of fire. Where are all those crowns? They are on the head of Christ. Not a martyr wears his crown; they all take their blood-red crowns, and then they place them on his brow - the fire crown, the rack crown, there I see them all glitter. For it was his love that helped them to endure; it was by his blood that they overcame.

And then, brethren, think of another list of crowns. They who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. There are a few men whom God has enabled to do much for the church and much for the world. They spend and are spent. Their bodies know no rest, their souls

no ease. Like chariots instinct with life, or dragged by unseen but resistless coursers, they fly from duty to duty, from labor to labor. What crowns shall theirs be when they come before God, when the souls they have saved shall enter paradise with them, and when they shall say, "Here am I and the children which thou hast given me! "What shouts of acclamation, what honors, what rewards shall then be given to the winners of souls! What will they do with their crowns? Why, they will take them from their heads and lay them there where sits the Lamb in the midst of the throne. There will they bow and cry, "Jesus, we were not saviours, thou didst it all; we were but thy servants. The victory belongs not to us but to our Master. We did reap, but thou didst sow, we did cast in the net, but thou didst fill it full. An our success is accomplished through thy strength, and by the power of thy grace." Well may it be said of Christ, "On his head are many crowns."

But see, another host approaches. I see a company of cherubic spirits flying upwards to Christ; and who are these? I know them not. They are not numbered among the martyrs; I read not their names among the apostles; I do not even distinguish them as having been written amongst the saints of the living God. Who are these? I ask one of them, "Who are you, ye bright and sparkling spirits?" The leader replies, "We are the glorious myriad of *infants*, who compose the family above. We from our mother's breasts fled straight to heaven, redeemed by the blood of Christ. We were washed from original depravity, and we have entered heaven. From every nation of the earth have we come; from the days of the first infant even to the winding up of earth's history, we in flocks have sped hither like doves to their windows." "How came ye here, ye little ones?" They reply, "through the blood of Christ, and we come to crown him Lord of all." I see the countless multitude surround the Saviour, and flying to him, each one puts its crown upon his head, and then begins to sing again louder than before. But yonder I see another company following them. "And who are ye?" The reply is, "Our history on earth is the very opposite of the story of those bright spirits that have gone before. We lived on earth for sixty, or seventy, or eighty years, until we tottered into our graves from very weakness; when we died there was no marrow in our bones, our hair had grown grey, and we were crisp and dry with age." "How came ye here?" They reply - "After many years of strife with the

world, of trials and of troubles, we entered heaven at last." "And ye have crowns I see." "Yes," they say, "but we intend not to wear them." "Whither are ye going then?" "We are going to yonder throne for our crowns have been surely given us by grace, for nothing but grace could have helped us to weather the storm so many, many years." I see the grave and reverend sires pass one by one before the throne, and there they lay their crowns at his blessed feet, and then shouting with the infant throng, they cry, "Salvation unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

And then I see following behind them another class. *And who are ye?* Their answer is "We are the chief of sinners, saved by grace." And here they come - Saul of Tarsus, and Manasseh, and Rahab, and many of the same class. And how came ye here? They reply, "We have had much forgiven, we were grievous sinners, but the love of Christ reclaimed us, the blood of Christ washed us, and whiter than snow are we, though once we were black as hell." And whither are ye going? They reply, "We are going to cast our crowns at his feet, and 'Crown him Lord of all.'" Among that throng, my dear hearers, I hope it may be my lot to stand. Washed from many sins, redeemed by precious blood, happy thou that moment be, when I shall take my crown from off my head, and put it on the head of him whom having not seen I love, but in whom believing, I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And it is a happy thought for me, this morning, that many of you will go with me there. Come brother and sisters; in a few more years, many of us who have met Sunday after Sunday in this Music Hall, will walk up in one hand; and without exception, ye saints of God, I am persuaded we shall be prepared there to lay all our honors down, and to ascribe unto him the glory for ever and ever. "Ah, but" says Little-Faith, "I fear I shall never get into heaven, and therefore I shall never crown him." Yes, but Little-Faith, do you know that one of the richest crowns Christ ever wears, and one of the brightest which adorns his brow, is the crown which Little-Faith puts on his head? For Little-Faith when it gets to heaven will say, "O what grace has been shown to me, that though the meanest of the family, I have still been kept - though least of all the saints, yet hell has not prevailed against me - though weaker than the weakest, yet as my days so has my strength been." Will not your gratitude be great? Will not your song be loud, when

approaching his dear feet, you lay your honors there and cry, "Blessed be Jesus who has kept my poor soul in all its dangers, and brought me safely at last to himself?" *"On his head were many crowns."*

I cannot preach any longer, but I must ask you this question, my dear hearers: Have you a crown to put on the head of Jesus Christ to-day? "Yes," says one, "I have. I must crown him for having delivered me out of my last great trouble." "I must crown him," says another, "for he has kept up my spirits when I was well nigh despairing." "I must crown him," says another, "for he has crowned me with lovingkindness and tender mercy." Methinks I see one standing yonder who says, "Would that I could crown him. If he would but save me, I would crown him. Ah, if he would but give himself to me, I would gladly give myself to him. I am too worthless and too vile." Nay, my brother, but does your heart say, "Lord have mercy upon me?" Does your soul now crave pardon and forgiveness through the blood of Christ? Then go boldly near him this day and say to him, "Jesus, I the chief of sinners am, but I rely upon thee;" and in so saying thou put a crown upon his head which shall make glad his heart, even as in the day when his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals. Make this the day of your espousals to him. Take him to be thy all in all, and then mayest thou look at this text with pleasure and say, "Yes, on his head are many crowns, and I have put one there, and I shall put another there ere long."

God add his blessing, for Jesus sake! Amen.

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## The Scales Of Judgment

Tekel; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. - Daniel 5:27

THERE IS A WEIGHING TIME for kings and emperors, and all the monarchs of earth, albeit some of them have exalted themselves to a position in which they appear to be irresponsible to man. Though they escape the scales on earth, they must surely be tried at the bar of God. For nations there is a weighing time. National sins demand national punishments. The whole history of God's dealings with mankind proves that though a nation may go on in wickedness it may multiply its oppressions; it may abound in bloodshed, tyranny, and war, but an hour of retribution draweth nigh. When it shall have filled up its measure of iniquity, then shall the angel of vengeance execute its doom. There cannot be an eternal damnation for nations as nations; the destruction of men at last will be that of individuals, and at the bar of God each man must be tried for himself. The punishment, therefore, of nations, is national. The guilt they incur must receive its awful recompense in this present time state. It was so with the great nation of the Chaldeans. They had been guilty of blood. The monuments which still remain, and which we have lately explored, prove them to have been a cruel and ferocious race. A people of a strange language they were, and stranger than their language were their deeds. God allowed that nation for a certain period to grow and thrive, till it became God's hammer, breaking in pieces many nations. It was the axe of the Almighty - his battle axe, and his weapon of war. By it he smote the loins of kings, yea, and slew mighty kings. But its time came at last. She sat alone as a queen, and said, "I shall see no sorrow," nevertheless, the Lord brought her low, and made her grind in the dust of captivity, and gave her riches to the spoiler, and her pomp to the destroyer. Even so must it be with every nation of the earth that is guilty of oppression. Humbling itself before God, when his wrath is kindled but a little, it may for awhile arrest its fate; but if it still continue in its bold unrighteousness, it shall certainly reap the harvest of its own sowing. So likewise shall it be with the nations that now abide on the face of the

earth. There is no God in heaven if the iniquity of slavery go unpunished. There is no God existing in heaven above if the cry of the negro do not bring down a red hail of blood upon the nation that still holds the black man in slavery. Nor is there a God anywhere if the nations of Europe that still oppress each other and are oppressed by tyrants do not find out to their dismay that he executes vengeance. The Lord God is the avenger of every one that is oppressed, and the executor of every one that oppresseth. I see, this very moment, glancing at the page of the world's present history, a marvellous proof that God will take vengeance. Piedmont, the land which is at this time sodden with blood, is only at this hour suffering the vengeance that has long been hanging over it. The snows of its mountains were once red with the blood of martyrs. It is not yet forgotten how there the children of God were hunted like partridges on the mountains; and so has God directed it, that the nations that performed that frightful act upon his children, shall there meet, rend, and devour each other in the slaughter, and both sides shall be almost equal, and nothing shall be seen but that God will punish those who lift their hands against his anointed.

There has never been a deed of persecution - there has never been a drop of martyr's blood shed yet, but shall be avenged, and every land guilty of it shall yet drink the cup of the wine of the wrath of God. And especially certain is there gathering an awful storm over the head of the empire of Rome - that spiritual despotism of the firstborn of hell. All the clouds of God's vengeance are gathering into one - the firmament is big with thunder, God's right arm is lifted up even now, and ere long the nations of the earth shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire. They that have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication, shall soon also have to drink with her of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath; and they shall reel to and fro, their loins shall be loose, their knees shall smite together, when God fulfils the old handwriting on the rock of Patmos.

Our duty at this time is to take heed to ourselves as a nation that we purge ourselves of our great sins. Although God has given so much light, and kindly favored us with the dew of his Spirit, yet England is a hoary sinner. Favourably with mercy does God regard her, so much the rather then let each Christian try to shake off the sins of his nation from his own

skirt, and let each one to the utmost of his ability labor and strive to purify this land of blood and oppression, and of everything evil that still clingeth to her. So may God preserve this land; and may its monarchy endure till he shall come, before whom both kings and princes shall lose their power right cheerfully even as the stars fade when the king of light - the sun - lifteth up his golden head.

With this brief preface, I will leave nations and kings all to themselves, and consider the text principally as it has relation to each one of us; and may God grant that when we go out of this hall most of us may be able to say, "I thank God I have a good hope that when weighed in the scales at last I shall not be found wanting." Or, if that is too much to expect, may I yet trust some will go away convinced of sin, crying in their own spirits, "I am wanting now, but if God in his mercy meet with me, I shall not be wanting long."

I shall notice, first, that *there are certain preliminary weighings which God would have us put ourselves to in this world, and which indeed he has set up as kind, of tests whereby we may be able to discover what shall be the result of the last decisive weighing.* After I have mentioned these, I shall then come to speak of the *last tremendous weighing of the judgment day.*

I. LET US JUDGE OURSELVES THAT WE THAT WE MAY NOT BE JUDGED. It is for us now to put ourselves through the various tests by which we may be able to discover, whether we are, at this present time, short weight or not.

The first test I would suggest is that of *human opinion.* Now understand me. I do believe that the opinion of man is utterly valueless when that opinion is based upon false premises, and, therefore, draws wrong conclusions. I would not trust the world to judge God's servants, and it is a mercy to know that the world shall not have the judging of the church, but rather, the saints shall judge the world. There is a sense in which I would say with the apostle, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea. I judge not myself." Human opinion is not to be put in competition with divine revelation. But I speak

now of judging ourselves, and I do not think it safe, when weighing our own character, to prefer our own and exclude our neighbour's judgment. The esteem or contempt of honest men, which is instinctively shown without reference to party or prejudice, is not by any means to be despised. When a man knows that he is right he may snap his fingers in the face of all men but when a man's conscience tells him that he is wrong - if at the judgment bar of men he is found guilty, he must not despise it, he must rather look on the judgment of men as being the first intimation of what shall be the judgment of God. Are you, my hearer, at this time in the estimation of all your fellow-creatures condemned as one who should be avoided? Do you clearly perceive that the righteous shun you, because your example would contaminate them? Have you discovered that your character is not held to be estimable amongst honest and respectable men? Let me assure you, that you have good reason to be afraid for if you cannot stand the trial of an honest fellow-creature - if the law of your country condemn you - if the very laws of society exclude you - if the imperfect judgments of earth pronounce you too vile for its association, how fearful must be your condemnation when you are put into the far more rigid scale of God's justice, and terrible must be your fate when the perfect community of the first-born in heaven shall rise as one man, and demand that you shall never behold their society? When a man is so bad that his fellow-creatures themselves, imperfect though they be, are able to see in him, not the mere seeds, but the very flower, the full bloom of iniquity, he should tremble. If you cannot pass that test, if human opinion condemn - if your own conscience declare that opinion to be just, you have good need to tremble indeed, for you are put into the balances and are found wanting.

I have thought it right to mention this balance. There may be some present to whom it may be pertinent, but at the same time, there are far better tests for men, tests which are not so easily to be misunderstood. And I would go through some of these. One of the scales into which I would have every man put himself, at least once in his life - I say at least once, because, if not, heaven is to him a place, the gates of which are shut for ever - I would have every man put himself into the scales of the *divine law*. There stands the law of God. This law is a balance which will turn, even were there but a grain of sand in it. It is true to a hair. It moves upon

the diamond of God's eternal immutable truth. I put but one weight into the scale; it is this: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength," and I invite any man who thinks himself to be of the right stamp, and flatters himself that he has no need of mercy no need of washing in the blood of Jesus Christ, no need of any atonement - I invite him to put himself into the scales, and see whether he be full weight, when there be but so much as this one commandment in the other scale. Oh, my friends, if we did but try ourselves by the very first commandment of the law, we must acknowledge that we are guilty. But when we drop in weight after weight, till the whole sacred ten are there, there is not a man under the cope of heaven who has one grain of wit left, but must confess that he is short of the mark, - that he falls below the standard which the law of God requires. Mrs. Too-good has often declared that she herself has done all her duty, and perhaps a little more; that she has been even more kind to the poor than there was any occasion for; that she has gone to church more frequently than even her religion requireth; that she has been more attentive to the sacraments than the best of her neighbors, and if *she* does not enter heaven she does not know who will. "If I have not a portion amongst the saints, who can possibly hope to see God's face in light?" Nay, madam, but I am sorry for thee; thou art light as a feather when thou goest into the scales. In these wooden balances of thine own ceremonies thou mayest, perhaps, be found right enough, but in those eternal scales, with those tremendous weights - the ten commandments of the law - the declaration is suspended over thy poor foolish head. "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting,"

There may, perhaps, in congregations like this, be some extremely respectable body who has from his youth up, as he imagines, kept God's law; his country, family, or associates can bring no charge against him, and so he wraps himself up and considers that really he is the man, and that when he appears at the gate of heaven, he will be received as a rightful owner and proprietor of the reward of the righteous. Ah, my friend if thou wouldest take the trouble just to sit down and weigh thyself in the scales of the law - if thou wouldest take but one command, the one in which thou thinkest thyself least guilty, the one that thou imagines thou hast kept best, and really look at its intent, and spirit, and view it in

all its length and breadth in truth I know thou wouldst keep out of the scale and say, "Alas, when I hoped to have gone down with a sound of congratulation, I find myself hurled up, light as the dust of the balance, while the tremendous law of God comes sounding down and shakes the house." Let each man do this, and every one of us must retire from this place saying, "I am weighed in the balances and I am found wanting."

And now the true believer comes forward and he claimed to be weighed in another balance, for saith he, according to this balance, if I be what I profess to be, I am not found wanting, for I can bring with me the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and that is full weight, even though the ten commandments of the law be weighed against it. I bring with me the full atonement, the perfect satisfaction of Jesus, blood, and the perfect righteousness of a divine being, the spotless righteousness of Jesus the Son of God. I can be weighed against the law, and yet sit securely, knowing that now and for ever, I am equal to the law. It hath nought against me since Christ is mine, Its terrors have no power to affright me, and as for its demands they can exact nothing of me for they are fulfilled to the utmost in Christ. Well, I propose now to take professors and put them into the scales and try them. Let each one of us put ourselves into the scale of *conscience*. Many make a profession of religion in this age. It is the time of shams There were never so many liars in the world since the days of Adam, as there are now. The Father of Lies has been more prolific of children at this than at any other period. There is such an abundance of newspapers, and of talkers, and of readers: and consequently flying reports, wrong news, and evil tales, are far more numerous than ever. So, too, there is a great deal of vain shew with religion. I sometimes fear we have not a grain more religion in England now than we had in the time of the Puritans. Then, though the stream in which it ran was narrow, it did run very deep indeed; now, the banks have been burst; a great extent of country is covered with religious profession; but I tremble lest we should find at last, that the flood was not deep enough to float our souls to heaven. Will each one now in this congregation, put himself into the scale of conscience, sit down and ask, "Is my profession true? Do I feel that before God I am an heir of the promises? When I sit at my Saviour's table, have I any right to be a guest? Can I truly say, that when I profess to be converted, I only profess what I have actually proved? When I talk

experimentally about the things of the kingdom of God, is that experience a borrowed tale, or have I felt what I say in my own breast? When I stand up to preach, do I preach that which I have really tasted and handled, or do I only repeat that which I have learned to utter with the lip, though it has never been fused in the crucible of my own heart?" Conscience is not very readily cheated. There are some men whose consciences are not a safe balance; they have by degrees become so hardened in sin that conscience refuses to work; but still I will hope that most of us may abide by the test of our own conscience, if we let it freely work. Dear friends, I would that you would often retire to your chambers alone; shut the door and shut out all the world, and then sit and review your past life; scan carefully your present character and your present position; and do, I beseech you try to get an honest answer from your own conscience. Bring up everything that you can think of that might lead you to doubt. You need be under no difficulty here; for are there not enough sins committed by us every day, to warrant our suspicions that we are not God's children? Well, let all these black accusers for death, let them all have their say. Do not cloak your sins. Head your diary through, let all your iniquities come up before you; (this is the pith of confession) and then, ask conscience whether you can truly say, "I have repented of all these. God is my witness, I hate these things with a perfect hatred. God also heareth me witness, that my trust is fixed alone in him who is the Saviour of sinners, for salvation and justification. If I be not awfully deceived, I am a partaker of divine grace, having been regenerated and begotten again unto a lively hope." Oh that conscience may help each of us to say, "I am not a mere painted image of life, but I trust I have the life of Jesus made manifest in my body." My profession is not the pompous pageantry with which dead souls are carried respectably to perdition; but it is the joy, the hope, the confidence of one who is being borne along in the chariot of mercy, to his Father's home above. "Ah! how many people are really afraid to look their religion in the face! They know it to be so bad, they dare not examine it. They are like bankrupts that keep no books. They would be very glad for a fire to consume their books, if they ever kept any, for they know the balance is all on the wrong side. They are losing, breaking up, and they would not wish to keep an account of their losses or villainies. A man who is afraid to examine himself, may rest assured that his ship is rotten, and that it will not be long before it founders in the

sea, to his eternal shipwreck. Call up conscience; put yourself in the scale, and God help you, that the verdict may not be against you - that it may not be said of you, "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting."

I would have every man also weigh himself in the scales of *God's Word* - not merely in that part of it which we call legal, and which has respect to us in our fallen state; but let us weigh ourselves in the scale of the gospel. You will find it sometimes a holy exercise, to read some psalm of David, when his soul was most full of grace; and if you were to put questions as you read each verse, saying to yourself, "Can I say this? Have I felt as David felt? Have my bones ever been broken with sin as his were when he penned his penitential psalms? Has my soul ever been full of true confidence, in the hour of difficulty, as his was when he sang of God's mercies in the cave of Adullam, or the holds of Engedi? Can I take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord? Can I pay my vows now unto the Lord, in the courts of his house, in the presence of all his people?" I am afraid that the book of Psalms itself would be enough to convince some of you that your religion is but superficial, that it is but a vain show, and not a vital reality. God help you often to try yourselves in that scale. Then read over the life of Christ, and as you read, ask yourselves whether you are conformed to him, such as he describes a true disciple. Endeavour to see whether you have any of the meekness, any of the humility, any of the lovely spirit which he constantly inculcated and displayed. Try yourselves by the sermon on the mount, you will find it a good scale in which to weigh your spirits. Take then the epistles, and see whether you can go with the apostle in what he said of his experience. Have you ever cried out like him: - "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Have you ever felt like him, that this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners?" Have you ever known his self-abasement? Could you say that you seemed to yourself the chief of sinners, and always accounted yourself less than the least of all saints? And have you known anything of his devotion? Could you join with him and say, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain?" Oh, brethren! the best of us - if we put the Bible into the scales for the proof of our state, if we read God's Word as a test of our spiritual condition - the very best of



us has cause to tremble. Before Almighty God, on our bended knees, with our Bible before us, we have good reason to stop many a time and say, "Lord, I feel I have never yet been here, oh, bring me here! give me true penitence, such as this I read of Give me real faith. oh, let me not have a counterfeit religion! give me that which is the current coin of the realm of heaven - thine own sterling grace, which shall pass in the great day, when the gates of heaven shall be opened, and alas! the gates of hell wide open too." Try yourselves by God's Word, and I fear there are some who will love to rise from it, and say, "I am weighed in the balances and found wanting."

Yet again, God has been pleased to set another means of trial before us. When God puts us into the scales I am about to mention, namely, the scales of *providence*, it behoves us very carefully to watch ourselves and see whether or not, we be found wanting. Some men are tried in the scales of adversity. Some of you, my dear friends, may have come here very sorrowful. Your business fails, your earthly prospects are growing dark; it is midnight with you in this world; you have sickness in the house; the wife of your bosom languishes before your weeping eyes; your children perhaps, by their ingratitude, have wounded your spirits. But you are a professor of religion, you know what God is doing with you now; he is testing and trying you. He knows you, and he would have you know that a summer-time religion is not sufficient; he would have you see whether your faith can stand the test of trial and trouble. Remember Job; what a scale was that in which he was put! What weights of affliction were those east in one after another, very mountains of sore trouble; and yet he could bear them all, and he came out of the scales proof against all the weight that even Satanic strength could hurl into the scale. And is it so with you? Can you now say - "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord?" Can you submit to his will without murmuring? Or if you cannot master such a phase of religion as this, are you able still to feel that you cannot complain against God? Do you still say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him?" Oh, my friends, remember that if your religion will not stand the day of adversity, if it afford you no comfort in the time of storms, you would be better in that ease without it than with it; for with it you are deceived, but without it you might discover your true condition, and seek the Lord as a penitent

sinner. If thou art now broken in pieces by a little adversity, what will become of thee in the day when all the tempests of God shall be let loose on your soul? If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan? If thou canst not endure the open grave, how canst thou endure the trump of the archangel, and the terrific thunders of the last great day? If thy burning house is too much for thee, what wilt thou do in a burning world? If thunder and lightning alarm thee, what wilt thou do when the world is in a blaze, and when all the thunders of God leave their hiding-place, and rush pealing through the world? If mere trial distress thee and grieve thee, oh, what wilt thou do when all the hurricanes of divine vengeance shall sweep across the earth and shake its very pillars, till they reel and reel again? Yes, friends, I would have you, as often as you are tried and troubled, see how you bear it - whether your faith then stance and whether you could see God's right hand, even when it is wrapped in clouds, whether you can discover the silver lining to the black clouds of tribulation. God help you to come out of the scales, for many are weighed in them and have been found wanting.

Another set of scales there is, too, of an opposite color. Those I have described are painted black; these are of golden hue. They are the scales of *prosperity*. Many a man has endured the chills of poverty who could not endure sunny weather. Some meets religion is very much like the palace of the queen of Russia, which had been built out of solid slabs of ice. It could stand the frost. the roughest breeze could not destroy it; the sharp touch of winter could not devour it; they but strengthened and made it more lasting. But summer melted it all away, and where once were the halls of revelry, nothing remained but the black rolling river. How many have been destroyed by prosperity? The fumes of popularity have turned the brains of many a man. The adulation of multitudes has laid thousands low. Popular applause hath its foot in the sand, even when it hath its head among the stars. Many have I known who in a cottage seemed to fear God but in a mansion have forgotten him. When their daily bread was earned with the sweat of their brow, then it was they served the Lord, and went; up to his house with gladness. But their seeming religion all departed when their flocks and herds increased, and their gold and silver was multiplied. It is no easy thing to stand the trial of

prosperity. You know the old fable, I will just put it in a Christian light. When the winds of affliction blow on a Christian's head, he just pulls around him the cloak of heavenly consolation, and girds his religion about him all the tighter for the fury of the storm. But when the sun of prosperity shines on him, the traveler grows warm, and full of delight and pleasure, he ungirds his cloak, and lays it aside; so that what the storms of affliction never could accomplish, the soft hand and the witchery of prosperity has been able to perform. It has loosed the loins of many a mighty man. It has been the Delilah that has shorn the locks and taken away the strength of many a Samson. This rock has witnessed the most fatal wrecks.

"More the treacherous calm I dread,  
Than tempests rolling over head."

But shall we be able to say after passing through prosperity, "this is not my rest, this is not my God. Let him give me what he may, I will thank him for it, yet will I rejoice in the giver rather than the gift; I will say unto the Lord thou only art my rest." It is well if you can come out of these scales enabled honestly to hope that you are not found wanting.

There are again the scales of *temptation*. Many and many a man seemeth for a time to run well; but it is temptation that tries the Christian. In your business you are now honest and upright, but suppose a speculation cross your path, which involve but a very slight departure from the high standard of Christianity, and indeed would not involve any departure from the low standard which your fellow tradesmen follow. Do you think you would be able to say "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God." Could you say, "Should such a man as I do this? Shall I haste to be rich, for if I do I shall not be innocent?" How has it been with you? You have had your trial-time. There has been an opportunity of making a little: have you taken it? Has God enabled you to endure when tempted, whether to unlawful gain, or to lustful pleasure, or to pride and vanity? Have you been enabled to stand proof against all these, and to say, "Get thee behind me Satan for thou savourest not the things which be of God, but those which be of man and of sin?" How have you stood the test of temptation? If you have never been tempted you know nothing about this. How can we tell the worthiness of the ship till she has been at

sea in the storm? You cannot know what you are till you have been through the practical test of every day life. How then has it been with you? Have you been weighed in the balance, and have you been enabled to say, "I know through grace I have been kept in the hour of temptation, and with the temptation the Lord has always sent a way of escape. And here I am glorying in his grace; I cannot rest in myself, but still I can say, 'I am truly his.' The work within me is not of man, neither by man: it is the work of the Spirit. I have found succor and support when my heart and my flesh have failed me."

It is probable, my hearers, that most of you are professors of religion; let me ask you again very earnestly to test and try yourselves, whether your religion be real or not. If there be many false prophets in the world, and those prophets have followers, must there not be many false men who are fatally deceived? Do not suppose, I beseech you, because you are a deacon, or have been baptized, or are a member of the church, or are professors, you are therefore safe. The bleaching bones of the skeletons of self-deceived ones should warn you. On the rock of presumption thousands have been split that once sailed merrily enough. Take care, O mariner! though thy bark may be gaily trimmed and may be brightly painted, yet it is none the surer after all. Take heed, lest the rocks be seen beneath the keel, lest they pierce thee through, and lest the waters of destruction overwhelm thee. Oh! do not, I entreat you, say, "Why make this stir? I dare say I shall be all right at last." Do not let your eternal state be a matter of suspicion or doubt. Decide now, I beseech you, decide now in your conscience whether you are Christ's or not. Of all the most miserable men in the world, and the most hopeless, I think those are most to be pitied who are indifferent and careless about religion. There are some men whose feelings never run deeper than their skin; they either have no heart, or else it is so set round with fatness that you can never touch them. I like to see a man either desponding or rejoicing; either anxious about his eternal state or else confident about it. But you who never will question yourselves - you are just like the bullock going to the slaughter, or like the sheep that will enter the very slaughter-house and lick the knife that is about to take its blood. I wish I could speak this morning somewhat more earnestly. Oh that some sparks from the Divine fire could now light up my soul, I think I could speak to you like some of

the prophets of old, when they stood in the midst of a professing generation, to warn them. Oh that the very voice of God would speak to each heart this morning! While God is thundering on high may he thunder below in your souls! Be warned, my hearers, against self deception. Be true to yourselves. If God be God, serve him, and do it truly; if the devil be God, serve him, and serve him honestly, and serve him faithfully. But do not pretend to be serving God, while you are really indifferent and careless about it.

II. I must now close by endeavoring to speak of THE LAST GREAT BALANCE; and here would I speak very solemnly, and may the Spirit of God be with us. Time shall soon be over; eternity must soon begin, death is hurrying onward; the pale horse at his utmost speed is coming to every inhabitant of this earth. The arrow of death is fitted to the string, and soon shall it be sent home. Man's heart is the target. Then, after death, cometh the judgment; the dread assize shall soon commence. The trump of the archangel shall awake the sleeping myriads, and, standing on their feet, they shall confront the God against whom they have sinned. Methinks I see the scales hanging in heaven, so massive that none but the hand of Deity can uphold them. Let me cast my eye upward, and bethink me of that hour when I must myself enter those scales and be weighed once for all. Come, let me speak for each man present. Those scales yonder are exact; I may deceive my fellows here, but deceive God I cannot then. I may be weighed in the balances of earth, which shall give but a partial verdict, and so commit myself to a false idea that I am what I am not, that I am hopeful when I am hopeless. But *those* scales are true. There is no means whatever of flattering them into a false declaration; they will cry aloud and spare not. When I get there, the voice of flattery shall be changed into the voice of honesty. Here I may go daily on crying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace;" but there the naked truth shall startle me, and not a single word of consolation shall be given me that is not true. Let me therefore ponder the fact, that those scales are exactly true and cannot be deceived. Let me remember also, that whether I will or not, into those scales I must go. God will not take me on my profession. I may bring my witnesses with me; I may bring my minister and the deacons of the church to give me a character, which might be thought all-sufficient among men, but God will tolerate no subterfuge.

Into the scales he will put me do what I may; whatever the opinion of others may be of me, and whatever my own profession. And let me remember, too, that I must be altogether weighed in the scales. I cannot hope that God will weigh my head and pass over my heart - that because I have correct notions of doctrine, therefore he will forget that my heart is impure, or my hands guilty of iniquity. My all must be cast into the scales. Come, let me stretch my imagination, and picture myself about to be put into those scales. Shall I be able to walk boldly up and enter them, knowing whom I have believed, and being persuaded that the blood of Christ and his perfect righteousness shall bear me harmless through it all; or shall I be dragged with terror and dismay? Shall the angel come and say, "Thou must enter?" Shall I bend my knee and cry, "Oh, it is all right," or shall I seek to escape? Now, thrust into the scale, do I see myself waiting for one solemn moment. My feet have touched the bottom of the scales, and there stand those everlasting weights and now which way are they turned? Which way shall it be? Do I descend in the scale with joy and delight, being found through Jesus' righteousness to be full weight, and so accepted; or must I rise, light, frivolous, unsound in all my fancied hopes, and kick the beam? Oh, shall it be, that I must go where the rough hand of vengeance shall seize, and drag me downward, into fell despair? Can you picture the moments of suspense? I can see a poor man standing on the drop with the rope round his neck, and oh, what an instant of apprehension must that be; what thoughts of horror must float through his soul! How must a world of misery be compressed into a second? But O, my hearers, there is a far more terrible moment still for you that are Godless, Christless, careless: that have made a profession of religion, and yet have it not in your hearts. I see you in the scales. but what shall we say? The wailings of hell seem not sufficient to express your misery, In the scales without Christ! Not long ere you shall be in the jaws of hell, without pity and without compassion. O, my dear hearers! if you could hope to get to heaven without being weighed - if God would believe what you say without testing you, I would not care admit asking you this morning to ascertain the state of your own hearts. But if God will try you, try yourselves; if he will judge you, judge your own hearts. Don't say that because you profess to be religious therefore you are right - that because others imagine you to be safe that therefore you are so. Weigh yourselves put your hearts into the balance. Do not be deceived. Pull the bandage

from your eyes, that your blindness may be removed, and that you may pass a just opinion upon yourselves as to what you are. I would have you not only see yourselves as others see you, but I would have you see yourselves as God sees you; for that after all, is your real state; his eye is not to be mistaken; he is the God of but;, and just and right is he. How fearful a thing will it be, if any of us who are members of Christ's church shall be cast into hell at last. The higher we ascend, the greater will be our fall, like Icarus in the old parable, who flew aloft with waxen wings, till the sun did melt them and he fell. And some of you are flying like that: you are flying up with waxen wings. what if the terrible heat of the judgement day should melt them! I sometimes try to picture, how terrible the reverse to me if found to be rejected at last. Let what I shall say for myself suit for all. Nay, and must it be, if I live in this world and think I am a Christian and am not - must it be that I must go from the songs of the sanctuary to the cursings of the synagogue of Satan? Must I go from the cup of the Eucharist to the cup of devils? Must I go from the table of the Lord to the feast of fiends? Shall these lips that now proclaim the word of Jesus, one day utter the wailings of perdition? Shall this tongue that has sung the praises of the Redeemer be moved with blasphemy? Shall it be that this body which has been the receptacle of so many a mercy - shall it become the very house and home of every misery that vengeance can invent? Shall these eyes that now look on God's people one day behold the frightful sights of spirits destroyed in that all-consuming fire? And must it be that the ears that have heard the hallelujahs of this morning, shall one day hear the shrieks, and groans, and howls, of the lost and damned spirits? It must be so if we be not Christ's. Oh how frightful will it be! Methinks I see some grave professor at last condemned to hell. There are multitudes of sinners, lying in their irons, and tossing on their beds of flame; lifting themselves upon their elbows for a moment, then seem to forget their tortures as they see the professor come in, and they cry - "Art thou become like one of us? Is the preacher himself damned? What! is the deacon of the church below, come to sit with drunkards, and with swearers? "Ah," they cry, "aha, aha, art thou bound up in the same bundle with us after all?" Surely the mockery of hell must be itself a most fearful torture; professing sinners mocked by those who never professed religion.

But mortal life can ne'er describe the miseries of a disappointed blasted hope, when that hope is lost - it involves the loss of mercy, the loss of Christ, the loss of life - and it involves moreover, the terrible destruction and the awful vengeance of Almighty God. Let us one and all go home this day, when yet God's sky is heavy, and let us bend ourselves at his altar, and cry for mercy. Every man apart - husband apart from wife. Apart, let us seek our chambers of praying again and again, "Lord renew me: Lord forgive me: Lord accept me." And whilst, mayhap, the tempest which is now lowering over the sky, and ere another tempest direr still shall fall on us with its fearful terrors, may you find peace. May we not then find ourselves lost, lost for ever, where hope can never comet It shall be my duty to search myself. I hope I shall be enabled to put myself into the scale; promise me my hearers, that each of you will do the same.

I was told one day this week by some one, that having preached for several Sabbaths lately upon the comforting doctrines of God's Word, he was afraid that some of you would begin to console yourselves with the idea that you were God's elect when perhaps you were not. Well, at least, such a thing shall not happen, if I have done what I hoped to do this morning. God bless you, for Jesus sake.

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## **The Search For Faith**

Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? - Luke 18:8

It is absolutely certain that God will hear the prayers of his people. From beneath the altar souls cry unto him day and night to vindicate the cause of Christ, the cause of truth and righteousness, and to cast down his adversary: these shall be answered speedily. Here on earth, scant though the supplication may be, yet there is a remnant according to the election of grace, who cease not to importune the Almighty God to make bare his arm, and display the majesty of his Word. Though for wise and gracious



purposes the answer to those prayers may be delayed, yet it is absolutely certain. Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he keep their case long in hand? Assuredly he will; for those prayers are inspired by the Spirit, who knows the mind of God; they are for the glory of God and of his Christ, and they are presented by our great High Priest. Longsuffering keeps back the advent and the judgment for a while; for the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; but he will not for ever delay the long-expected end. The Lord Jesus himself gives us this personal assurance, "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." No doubt remains when Jesus says, "I tell you." The Lord will come, and, according to his own reckoning, he will come quickly. His reckoning is according to the chronology of heaven, and this the heirs of heaven ought gladly to accept: it is meet that we keep celestial time even now.

Brethren, let not your hearts fail you as to the ultimate issue of the present conflict. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever hallelujah." The idols he shall utterly abolish. Antichrist shall be overthrown; like a millstone cast into the sea, it shall fall and be no more. The heathen shall be our Lord's inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth shall be his possession. He must reign until all enemies shall be put under his feet. If the present contest should be continued century after century, be not weary. It is only long to your impatience; it is a short work unto God. So grand a volume of the book as this, which contains the history of redemption, may well require a long time for its unrolling, and to such poor readers as we are the spelling of it out word by word may seem an endless task; but we shall yet come to its close, and then we shall find that, like the Book of Psalms, it ends in hallelujahs.

The matter to be questioned is not what God will do, but what men will do. Faithfulness is established in the very heavens: but what of faithfulness upon the earth? The part that God allots to us is that we believe his word, for so shall we be established: it is the child's part to trust his father, it is the disciple's part to accept the teaching of his Master. Alas! how little there is of it at this moment! Knowing the feebleness of the faith of those around him, and foreseeing that future generations would partake of the same folly, the Savior gave utterance to

this memorable question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" God is faithful; but are men faithful? God is true; but do we believe him? This is the point: and it is upon this that I shall speak this morning as the Holy Ghost shall help me.

I. I notice with regard to our text, first, that IT IS REMARKABLE IF WE CONSIDER THE PERSON MENTIONED AS SEARCHING FOR FAITH: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

When Jesus comes he will look for precious faith. He has more regard for faith than for all else that earth can yield him. Our returning Lord will care nothing for the treasures of the rich or the honors of the great. He will not look for the abilities we have manifested, nor the influence we have acquired; but he will look for our faith. It is his glory that he is "believed on in the world," and to that he will have respect. This is the jewel for which he is searching. This heavenly merchantman counts faith to be the pearl of great price -- faith is precious to Jesus as well as to us. The last day will be occupied with a great scrutiny, and that scrutiny will be made upon the essential point -- where is there faith, and where is there no faith? He that believeth is saved; he that believeth not is condemned. A search-warrant will be issued for our houses and our hearts, and the enquiry will be: Where is your faith? Did you honor Christ by trusting his word and his blood, or did you not? Did you glorify God by believing his revelation and depending upon his promise, or did you not? The fact that our Lord at his coming, will seek for faith should cause us to think very highly of faith. It is no mere act of the intellect; it is a grace of the Holy Spirit which brings glory to God and produces obedience in the heart. Jesus looks for it because he is the proper object of it, and it is by means of it that his great end in his first advent is carried out. Dear hearers, conceive for a minute that our Savior is searching for faith now. "His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men." This is the gold he seeks after amid the quartz of our humanity. This is the object of his royal quest -- Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

When our Lord comes and looks for faith, he will do so in his most sympathetic character. Our text saith not, When the Son of God cometh, but "When the Son of man cometh, will he find faith on the earth?" It is

peculiarly as the Son of man that Jesus will sit as a refiner, to discover whether we have true faith or not. He also as the Son of man displayed faith in God. In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is mentioned as one of the points in which he is made like unto his brethren, that he said, "I will put my trust in him." The life of Jesus was a life of faith -- faith which cried, "My God, my God," even when he was forsaken. His was, on a grander scale than ours, the battle of faith in the great Father, waged against all the rebellions influences which were in array against him. He knows what fierce temptations men experience, for he has felt the same. He knows how want tries the faithful, and what faith is needed to be able to say, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live." He knows how elevation tests the soul; for he once stood on the pinnacle of the temple, and heard the infernal whisper, "Cast thyself down: for he shall give his angels charge over thee." He knows what faith means in contradistinction to a false confidence which misreads the promise, and forgets the precept altogether. He will not err in judgment, and accept brass for gold. He knows what it is to be tempted with the proffer of honor and gain: "All these things will I give thee," said the fiend, "if thou wilt fall down and worship me." He knows how faith puts all the glory of the world away with its one brave and prompt utterance, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Beloved, when Jesus comes as the Son of man he will recognize our weaknesses, he will remember our trials; he will know the struggle of our hearts, and the sorrow which an honest faith has cost us. He is best qualified to put the true price upon tried faith, self-denying faith, long-enduring faith. He will discern between the men who presume and the men who believe; the men who dote upon vain delusions, and those who follow the plain path of God's own word.

Further, I would have you note well that the Son of man is the most likely person to discover faith if it is to be found. Not a grain of faith exists in all the world except that which he has himself created. If thou hast faith, my brother, the Lord has dealt with thee; this is the mark of his hand upon thee. By faith he has brought thee out of thy death in sin, and the natural darkness of thy mind. "Thy faith hath saved thee," for it is the candlestick which holds the candle by which the chamber of thy heart is enlightened.

Thy God and Savior has put this faith in thee. Now, if faith in every instance is our Lord's gift, he knows where he has given it. If it is the work of God, he knows where he has produced it; for he never forsakes the work of his own hands. If that faith be only as a grain of mustard seed, and if it be hidden away in the obscurest corner of the earth, yet the loving Jesus spies it out, for he has an intimate concern in it, since he is its author and finisher. Our Lord is also the sustainer of faith, for faith is never independent of him upon whom it relies. The greatest believer would not believe for another moment unless grace were constantly given him to keep the flame of faith burning. Beloved friend, if thou hast had any experience of the inner life at all, thou knowest that he that first made thee live, must keep thee alive, or else thou wilt go back to thy natural death. Since faith from day to day feeds at the table of Jesus, then he knows where it is. It is well for us that we have one looking for faith who, on account of his having created and sustained it will be at no loss to discern it.

Besides, faith always looks to Christ. There is no faith in the world worth having, but what looks to him, and through him to God, for everything. On the other hand, Christ always looks to faith; there never yet was an eye of faith but what it met the eye of Christ. He delights in faith: it is his joy to be trusted: it is a great part of the reward of his death that the sons of men should come and shelter in him. If faith looks to Christ, and Christ looks to faith, he is sure to find it out when he comes, and that makes the text so very striking. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

The Son of man will give a wise and generous judgment in the matter. Some brethren judge so harshly that they would tread out the sparks of faith; but it is never so with our gracious Lord; he does not quench the smoking flax, nor despise the most trembling faith. The question becomes most emphatic when it is put thus. The tender and gentle Savior, who never judges too severely, when he comes, shall even he find faith on the earth? What a sad and humbling question it is! He who is no morose critic but a kind interpreter of character, he who makes great allowances for feebleness, he that carrieth the lambs of faith in his bosom and gently leads the weak ones -- when even he shall come to make a kindly search,

will he be able to find faith on the earth? Unbelief is rampant indeed, when he who is omniscient can scarce find a grain of faith amid the mass of doubt and denial! Ah me! that ever I should have to explain the question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

Once more: I want to put this question into a striking light by dwelling on the time of the scrutiny. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Look ye, brethren, the ages are accumulating proofs of the truth of Christianity, and the search takes place when this process has reached its climax. Whatever may be said about the present torrent of doubt, which no doubt is exceedingly strong, yet the reason for doubt grows weaker and weaker every year. Every mound of earth in the East contributes a fresh testimony to the accuracy of the Word of God. Stones are crying out against the incredulity of sceptics. Moreover, all the experiences of all the saints, year after year, are swelling the stream of testimony to the faithfulness of God. You that are growing grey in his service know how every year confirms your confidence in the eternal verities of your God and Savior. I know not how long this dispensation of longsuffering will last; but certainly the longer it continues the more wantonly wicked does unbelief become. The more God reveals himself to man in ways of providence, the more base is it on man's part to belie his solemn witness. But yet, my brethren, at the winding-up of all things, when revelation shall have received its utmost confirmation, even then faith will be such a rarity on the earth that it is a question if the Lord himself will find it. You have, perhaps, a notion that faith will go on increasing in the world; that the church will grow purer and brighter, and that there will be a wonderful degree of faith among men in the day of our Lord's appearing. Our Savior does not tell us so; but he puts the question of our text about it. Even concerning the dawn of the golden age he asks, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

I want you to notice the breadth of the region of search. He does not say, shall he find faith among philosophers? When had they any? He does not confine his scrutiny to an ordained ministry or a visible church; but he takes a wider sweep -- "Shall he find faith on the earth?" As if he would search from throne to cottage, among the learned and among the ignorant, among public men and obscure individuals; and, after all, it

would be a question whether among them all, from the pole to the equator, and again from the equator to the other pole, he would find faith at all. Alas, poor earth, to be so void of faith! Is there none in her vast continents, or on the lone islets of the sea? May it not be found in some of the countless ships upon the deep? What! not upon the earth? Not with Jesus himself to look for it?

I have tried to set forth the question as distinctly as I can, that it may have due effect upon your minds. It sounds through the chambers of my soul like the knell of many a gay hope and pleasant imagination. Lord, what is man, that centuries of mercy can scarce produce a single fruit of faith among a whole world of the sons of Adam? When thousands of summers and autumns have come and gone, shall there be no harvest of faith upon the earth, except a few ears of corn, thin and withered by the east wind?

II. Let us somewhat change the run of our thoughts: having introduced the question as a remarkable one, we will next notice that IT IS EXCEEDINGLY INSTRUCTIVE IN CONNECTION WITH THE PARABLE OF WHICH IT IS PART. It is wrong to use the Bible as if it were a box full of separate links, and not a chain of connected truth. Some pick sentences out of it as a crow picks worms out of a ploughed field. If you tear words from their connection, they may not express the mind of the Spirit at all. No book, whether written by God or man, will bear to be torn limb from limb without being horribly mutilated. Public speakers know the unfairness of this to themselves, and Holy Scripture suffers even more. The connection settles the drift and directs us to the true meaning -- a meaning which may be very different from that which it seems to bear when rent from its surroundings. Let us carefully note that this passage occurs in connection with the parable of the importunate widow pleading with the unjust judge; for it is to be interpreted in connection with it.

Hence, it means, first of all: When the Son of man cometh, shall he find upon the earth the faith which prays importunately, as this widow did? Now, the meaning is dawning upon us. We have many upon the earth who pray; but where are those whose continual coming is sure to prevail?

I thank God that the prayer-meetings of this church are well sustained by praying men and women; but where are the Jacob-like wrestlers? I am afraid it cannot even be said of many churches that their prayer-meetings are at all what they should be; for among many the gathering for prayer is despised, and men say, "It is only a prayer-meeting!" As if that were not the very crown and queen of all the assemblies of the church, with the sole exception of that for the breaking of bread. Brethren, I will not judge with severity, but where are those who offer effectual, fervent, much-prevailing prayer? I know that there are many here who do not neglect private and family devotion, and who pray constantly for the prosperity of the Church of Jesus Christ, and for the salvation of souls. But even to you I put the question: If the Son of man were now to come, how many would he find among us that pray with a distinct, vehement, irresistible importunity of faith? In the olden days, there was a John Knox, whose prayers were more terrible to the adversary than whole armies, because he pleaded in faith; but where shall we find a Knox at this hour? Every age of revival has had its men mighty in prayer -- where are ours? Where is the Elias on the top of Carmel who will bring down the rain upon these parched fields? Where is the church that will pray down a Pentecost? I will not decry my brethren in the ministry, nor speak little of deacons and elders, and other distinguished servants of my Lord; but still, my brothers and sisters, taking us all round, how few of us know what it is to pray the heaven-overcoming prayer which is needful for this crisis! How few of us go again, and again, and again to God, with tears, and cries, and heart-break, pleading as for our own lives for the increase of Zion, and the saving of the ungodly! If the Son of man cometh, will he find much of such praying faith among our own churches? Ah me! that I should have to ask such a question; but I do ask it, hanging my head for shame.

The importunate widow waited with strong resolve, and never ceased through sullen doubt. If the judge had not yet heard her, she was sure he must hear her, for she had made up her mind that she would plead until he did. A waiting faith is rare. Men can believe for a time, but to hold out through the long darkness is another matter. Some soldiers are good at a rush, but they cannot form a square, and stand fast hour after hour. When the Son of man cometh, will he find many who can believe in a delaying God, and plead a long-dated promise -- waiting, but never

wearying? When we have a revival, and everybody is crying "Hosannah!" certain eager folk are sure to be in the front; but when the popular voice growls out its "Crucify him!" where are they? Where are even Peter, and John, and the rest of the disciples? Go, learn to plead on when no answer comes, and to press on when repulsed: this is the test of faith. It is so easy to be a believer when everybody believes; but to be a believer when nobody believes, and to be none the less a firm believer because nobody believes with you, this is the mark of the man valiant for truth, and loyal to Jesus. Brethren, is it, after all, a matter of counting heads? Can you not dare to be in the right with two or three? Can you not be like rocks which defy the raging waves? Can you not let the billows of popular misbelief wash over you, and break and crash, and break and crash in vain? If these things move you, where is your faith? When the Son of man cometh, how many will he find on the earth whose faith stands not in men, but in the witness of God?

The widow staked her all upon the result of her pleading with the judge. She had not two strings to her bow, she had but one resort in her trouble: the judge must hear her. She would lose her little property, and her children would die of starvation, if he did not hear her. He must hear her; about that she had no two opinions. What we want at the present moment is the man that believes God, and believes the gospel, and believes Christ, and does not care two pins about anything else. We need those who will stake reputation, hope, and life itself upon the veracity of God and the certainty of the everlasting gospel. To such the revelation of God is not one among many truths: it is the one and only saving truth. Alas! we have nowadays to deal with foxes with holes to run to in case they are too closely hunted. Oh, to have done with all glory but glorying in the cross! For my part, I am content to be a fool if the old gospel be folly. What is more, I am content to be lost if faith in the atoning sacrifice will not bring salvation. I am so sure about the whole matter, that if I were left alone in the world as the last believer in the doctrines of grace, I would not think of abandoning them, nor even toning them down to win a convert. My all is staked on the veracity of God: "Let God be true, but every man a liar." "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth," such as he deserves at our hands? Do we believe in Jesus practically, in matter-of-fact style? Is our faith fact, and not fiction? If we



have the truth of faith, have we the degree of faith which we might have? Just think of this: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove." What does this mean? Brethren, are we not off the rails? Do we even know what faith means? I begin sometimes to question whether we believe at all. What signs follow our believing? When we think what wonders faith could have done; when we consider what marvels our Lord might have wrought among us if it had not been for our unbelief; are we not humiliated? Have we ever cut ourselves clear of the hamper of self-trustfulness? Have we ever launched out into the deep in clear reliance upon the eternal God? Have we ever quitted the visible for the invisible? Have we clung to the naked promise of God and rested upon the bare arm of omnipotence, which in and of itself is more than sufficient for the fulfillment of every promise? O Lord, where are we? Where shall we find an oasis of faith amid this wilderness of doubt? Where shall we find an Abraham? Is not the question an instructive one when set in connection with the parable which teaches us the power of importunate prayer?

III. In the next place, our text seems to me to be SUGGESTIVE IN VIEW OF ITS VERY FORM. It is put as a question: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" I think it warns us not to dogmatize about what the latter days will be. Jesus puts it as a question. Shall he find faith on the earth? If you say, "No," my dear friend, I shall be very much inclined to take the other side, and warmly plead the affirmative. I remember how Elias said that he only was left, and yet the Lord had reserved unto himself seven thousand men that had not bowed the knee to Baal. Nations that know not Christ shall run unto him, and the kings of Sheba and Sheba shall offer gifts. I venture to hope that when the Son of man comes he will find faith on the earth: but if you vehemently assert that it will be so, I shall be driven to advance the negative side with much apprehension that it may prove true. When our Lord was here before, he found little enough of faith; and he has distinctly told us that when he shall come the second time, men will be as they were in the days of Noah: "they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark." I am inclined to take neither side. Let it remain a question, as our Lord has put it.

This question leads us to much holy fear as to the matter of faith. If our gracious Lord raises the question, the question ought to be raised. They say that some of us are old fogies, because we are jealous for the Lord of hosts. They say that we are nervous and fidgety, and that our fears are the result of advancing age. Yes, at fifty-three I am supposed to be semi-imbecile with years. If I were of their way of thinking, I do not suppose that this would occur to them. We fall into a pessimism -- I think that is the word they use: I do not know much about such terms. Surely the Savior was not nervous. None will dare to accuse him of foolish anxiety; but yet he puts it, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" As far as my observation goes, it is a question which might suggest itself to the most hopeful persons at this time; for many processes are in vigorous action which tend to destroy faith. The Scriptures are being criticized with a familiarity which shocks all reverence, and their very foundation is being assailed by persons who call themselves Christians. A chilling criticism has taken the place of a warm, childlike, loving confidence. As one has truly said, "We have now a temple without a sanctuary." Mystery is discarded that reason may reign. Men have eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil till they think themselves gods. Revealed truth is not now a doctrine to be believed, but a proposition to be discussed. The loving woman at Jesus' feet is cast out to make room for the traitor kissing Christ's cheek. Like Belshazzar, our men of modern thought are drinking out of the vessels of Jehovah's sanctuary in honor of their own deities. The idea of child-like faith is scouted, and he is regarded as the most honest man that can doubt the most, and pour most contempt upon the authority of the divine word. If this continues we may well say, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" In some places the greatest fountain of infidelity is the Christian pulpit. If this is the case -- and I am sure it is so -- what must become of the churches, and what must come to the outlying world? Will Jesus find faith in the earth when he comes?

In addition to many processes which are in action to exterminate faith, are there not influences which dwarf and stunt it? Where do you find great faith? Where is the preaching or the teaching that is done in full faith in what is preached and taught? It is no use dogging other people;

let us come home to ourselves. My brothers and sisters, where is our own faith? It seemed almost a novelty in the church when it was stated long ago that Mr. George Miller walked by faith in regard to temporal things. To feed children by faith in God was looked upon as a pious freak. We have come to a pretty pass, have we not, when God is not to be trusted about common things? Abraham walked with God about daily life; but, nowadays, if you meet with a man who walks with God as to his business, trusts God as to every item and detail of his domestic affairs, persons look at him with a degree of suspicious wonder. They think he has grace in his heart, but they also suspect that he has a bee in his bonnet, or he would not act in that sort of way. Oh yes, we have a fancied faith; but when it comes to the stern realities of life where is our faith?

My brethren, why are you so full of worldly care? Why are you so anxious, if you have faith in God? Why do you display in worldly things almost as much distrust as worldly men? Whence this fear? this murmuring? this worry? O my Savior, if thou wert to come, we could not defend ourselves for our wretched mistrust, our foolish apprehension, our want of loving reliance upon thee. We do not trust thee as thou oughtest to be trusted; and if this be the case among those who are such great debtors to thy loving faithfulness, where wilt thou find faith on earth? Where is that unstaggering faith which betakes itself to prevailing prayer, and so rises above the petty miseries of the hour, and the fears of a threatening future?

Do you not think that this, put in a question as it is, invites us to intense watchfulness over ourselves? Do you not think it should set us scrutinizing ourselves as our Lord will scrutinize us when he comes? You have been looking for a great many things in yourself; my brother; let me entreat you to look to your faith. What if love grow cold! I am sorry for it; but, after all, the frost must have begun in your faith. You are not so active as you used to be; that is to be greatly regretted; but the streams run low because the well-head is not so full as it was wont to be; your faith is failing. Oh that your soul were fed upon divine realities! Oh that you had a vivid consciousness of the certainty of God's presence and power! When faith is strong, all the other graces are vigorous. The branches flourish when the root sucks up abundant nutriment; and when

faith is in a healthy state, all the rest of the spiritual man will be vigorous also. Brethren, guard well your faith. My fear is that when Christ comes, if he delays much longer, he will find many of us faint because of our long waiting, and because of the disappointments which arise out of the slow spread of the gospel. The nations continue in unbelief. O Lord, how long I because we have not accomplished all that we hoped to have done, we are apt to grow weary. Or perhaps when he comes he will find us sleeping for sorrow, like the disciples in the garden when he came to them thrice and found them very heavy. We may get to feel so sad that the gospel does not conquer all mankind, that we may fall into a swoon of sadness, a torpor of despair, and so be asleep when the Bridegroom cometh. I fear, most of all, that when Jesus comes he may find that the love of many has waxed cold because iniquity abounds. Warm-hearted saints keep each other warm, but cold also is contagious. When sin abounds saints may be able to stand against it; and yet it has a sad tendency to chill their faith. If the Master comes and finds us lukewarm, it will be a calamity indeed. The question stirs a bitter anguish in my soul. I trust it moves you also.

It is a question. I cannot answer it, but I open wide the doors of my heart to let it enter and try me. It acts like a fan in the Lord's hand to purge the floor. It sweeps away my self-confidence and leads me to watch and pray, that I enter not into the temptation of giving up my faith. I pray that we may stand fast when others slide, so that when the Lord cometh- we may be found accepted of him.

IV. I will close with this remark: my text is very IMPRESSIVE IN RESPECT TO PERSONAL DUTY. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth." Let faith have a home in our hearts, if it is denied a lodging everywhere else. If we do not trust our Lord, and trust him much more than we have ever done, we shall deserve his gravest displeasure. It will be a superfluity of naughtiness for us to doubt; for to some of us conversion was a clear, sharp, and distinct fact. The change made in our characters was so manifest that the devil himself could not make us doubt it. We know that the misery we suffered under a sense of sin was no fiction, and that the peace we received through faith in Jesus was no dream. Wherefore do we doubt? Since conversion some of us have been led in a strange way, and every step of it has shown us that the Lord

is good and true, and ought to be trusted without stint. We have been sore sick, and full of pain, and anguish, and depression of spirit, and yet we have been upheld, and sustained, and brought through. In great labors we have been strengthened, in great undertakings we have been supported. Some of you have been very poor, or your business has been declining, and emergencies have been frequent, and yet all these have proved the truth of God. Do not these things make it the more incumbent upon you to trust him? Others of you have suffered sad bereavements: you have lost, one after another, the props of your comfort; but when you have gone to God he has heard your prayers, and been better to you than father, husband, or friend. It is down in your diary in black and white that his mercy endureth for ever; and you have said to yourself many times, "I shall never doubt again after this." Brethren, it ought to us to be impossible to mistrust, and natural to confide; and yet I fear it is not so. If after all this watering we grow so little faith, we may not wonder that our Lord said, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

Some of us have been so familiar with dying beds, we have seen so many pass away in holy calm, and even with transporting triumph, that for us to doubt is disrespect to the memories of the saints. For us to doubt would be treachery to the Lord who has favored ourselves also with visits of his love. We may doubt the dearest ones we have, and that would be cruel; but we had better do that than cast any suspicion upon him who has manifested himself to us as he does not to the world. I speak not to you all, but I speak to those whom the Lord has specially favored, to whom he has revealed his secrets, and made known his covenant; for these to question his faithfulness is wickedness. What shall I say of his own elect, if they do not believe him? If it were possible for you to quit your faith, you would crucify your Lord afresh. He must not be thus wounded in the house of his friends. Go, go where thou wilt, O unbelief, thou shalt not find willing lodgment in my heart. From my spirit thou shalt be banished as a detested traitor; for my Beloved is true, and I will lean upon him.

I think I hear you say, "We are resolved upon it; we are called to have faith in our Lord, even if none else believe him." Then look to it that you

do not fail in these evil times. If you would keep your faith, settle it in your minds that the Holy Scriptures are inspired of the Holy Ghost, and so are our infallible rule of faith. If you give up that foundation you cannot exhibit faith worthy of the name. It is as clear as the sun in the heavens that a childlike faith in God as he is revealed is not possible to the man who doubts the revelation. You must accept the revelation as infallible, or you cannot unquestioningly believe in the God therein revealed. If you once give up inspiration, the foundations are removed, and all building is laborious trifling. How are the promises the support of faith if they are themselves questionable? God can only be known by his own light, and if we cannot trust the light, where are we? Next, settle it in your soul as to the Holy Spirit's dealings with yourself. He has renewed you in the spirit of your mind. At least, I ask the question -- Has he or has he not? You were converted by a divine agency from your lost estate of sin, and brought by the same divine agency into newness of life: were you or were you not? Unless you are quite certain about this, it is not possible for you to rise to any height of faith. You must know that God has come into contact with your soul, or else what have you to believe? Next to that belief you must know your full pardon and sure justification through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ your Lord. Believe in the precious blood: whatever else you doubt, believe in the merit of the great sacrifice of Calvary. Rejoice in your own acceptance through the sacrifice, seeing your whole faith rests therein. O brothers, our eternal hopes cannot be built on speculation, we need revelation. We cannot fight the battles of life with probabilities; we need certainties for such a conflict. If God has not revealed fixed truth, you may go and think and dream; but if he has given us a clear revelation, let us believe it, and cease to imagine and invent. O sirs, if you must speculate, risk your silver and your gold; but I beseech you to lay aside all idea of speculating in reference to your souls. I want absolute certainties and unquestionable verities to bear me up when death's cold flood is rising up to my loins. Divine truths, as they are written in the Book, and brought home to the heart by the Holy Ghost, are sure standing ground for that faith which Jesus looks for. He looks for it in vain when men no longer accept his work as undoubted fact. Again, if you would have strong faith, never relax your confidence in the efficacy of prayer. This is essential to my text; for the widow used no other weapon than prayer in her importunity with the judge. She would

not have persevered as she did in her pleadings if she had not felt morally certain that in the long run she would prevail. Brethren, believe that God hears your prayers, and that he will answer them. As for me, I do not want any argument to prove the influence of prayer with God. I have tried it, and do try it, till it is no longer an experiment. The man that habitually eats bread knows that he is nourished by it: the man that habitually lives by prayer to God knows that God hears him. It would be absurd to offer him evidence for or against the statement. If a person were to argue with me that there was no sun in the heavens, I am afraid I should laugh outright. If anyone said that he did not believe me to be alive, I do not know in what way I could prove it to him. Would it be lawful to kick him, by way of argument? When a man says, "I do not believe in prayer," I answer, "What if you do not? You are the only loser." That God answers prayer is a living certainty to me, and I can say no more and no less. If you do not believe in prayer, assuredly the Lord will not find in you the faith of which our text speaks. If you regard it as a pious exercise which refreshes the devout but has no power whatever with God -- well then, if all are of your mind, the Son of man will find no faith on the earth. Do not talk about believing, you know nothing of the matter.

If you do believe, believe up to the hilt. Plunge into this sea of holy confidence in God, and you shall find waters to swim in. He that believes what he believes shall see what he shall see. No man was ever yet found guilty of believing in God too much. Among the high intelligences of heaven no creature was ever censured for being too credulous when dealing with the word of the Most High. Let us believe implicitly and explicitly. Let us believe without measure and without reserve. Let us hang our all upon the truth of God. Let us aspire also to walk with God in the heavenlies, and become the King's Remembrancers. Let us seek grace to become importunate pleaders of a sort that cannot be denied, since their faith overcomes heaven by prayer. Oh, that I might have in my church many a prevailing Israel! Some here know what it is to be up early in the morning to besiege the throne of grace with all the power of believing prayer. How much I owe to these dear ones, eternity alone will declare! Oh, that we had many more intercessors, who would bear sinners on their hearts day and night, before the Lord, and, like their Savior, would never rest till the Lord built up his church! Alas, for the

rarity of such conquering faith! I question whether there are not Christian people here who have never heard a certain text which I am about to quote; and I am sure there are others who will shudder when they hear it. "thus saith the Lord, concerning the work of my hands command ye me." "Surely that cannot be Scripture!" cries one. But it is so. Turn to Isaiah 45:11, and read it both in the Authorized and the Revised Versions. Can a man command the Lord? Yes, to believing men he puts himself at their call; he bids them command his help, and use it as they will. Oh that we could rise to this! Is there such faith among us? If there be not, may our Lord Jesus, by his Spirit, work it in us for his own glory! Amen.

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## **Search The Scriptures**

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

When men will not learn of God, how huge their folly grows! If they despise the wisdom that is from above, how grievously does God allow them to prove their own ignorance! When a man will not bow down before God the Most High, immediately he buildeth for himself an idol; he maketh an image of wood or stone, and he degradeth himself by bowing before the work of his own hands. When men will not receive the Scripture testimony concerning God's creation, straightway they begin to form theories that are a thousand times more ridiculous than they have ever endeavoured to make the Bible account of it, for God leaveth them, if they will not accept his solution of the problem, to grope for another, and their own solution is so absurd, that all the world except themselves hath sense enough to laugh at it. And when men leave the Sacred Book of Revelation, ah! my friends, where do they go? We find that in Isaiah's time they went to strange places; for he says in the 19th verse, that they sought unto familiar spirits, unto wizards that did peep and mutter; yea, they sought for things concerning the living, amongst the dead, and



became the dupes of necromancers. It is marvellous that the men who most of all rail at faith are remarkable for credulity. One of the greatest unbelievers in the world, who has called himself a free-thinker from his birth, is to be found now tottering into his tomb, believing the veriest absurdity that a child might confute. Not caring to have God in their hearts, forsaking the living foundation, they have hewn out to themselves cisterns which are broken, and hold no water. Oh! that we may each of us be more wise, that we may not forsake the good old path, nor leave the way that God hath prepared for us. What wonder we should travel amongst thorns and briars, and rend our own flesh, or worse than that, fall among dark mountains, and be lost amongst the chasms thereof, if we despise the guidance of an unerring Father. Seek ye in the word of God, and read, Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they that testify of Jesus Christ.

I feel at this particular crisis of religious affairs, it is imperative upon the Christian minister to urge his people to hold fast the doctrines of the truth - the words of God. This seems likely to become the age of preaching, rather than the age of praying. We now see everywhere large congregations assembling in halls and abbeys to listen to the Word preached; and it is an ominous sign of the times, that these preachings are not only espoused by the orthodox, but even by those whom we have considered to be at least somewhat heretical from the old faith of the Protestant Church. It becomes, therefore, a serious thing; for it is most probable - and may not every wise man see it? - that whosoever may now arise who hath some powers of oratory and some graces of eloquence, will be likely to attract the multitude, preach he what he may, though the word that he should utter be as false as God's Word is true, and as contrary to the gospel as hell is opposed to heaven. Doth it not seem probable that in this age he would attract a multitude of followers? and is it not also very likely that through that spurious charity which is now growing upon us, which would gag the mouths of honest reprovers, we shall find it hard to rebuke the impostor when he arises, and difficult to expose the falsehood, even though it may be apparent unto us. We are now happily so well commingled together, the Dissenter and the Churchman have now become so friendly with each other, that we have less to dread the effects of bigotry, than the effects of latitudinarianism.

We have some reason now to be upon the watchtower, lest haply some should arise in our midst, the spurious offspring of these happy times of evangelical alliance, who will claim our charity, whilst they are preaching that which we in our hearts do totally condemn. And what better advice can the minister give in such times as these? To what book shall he commend his hearers? How shall he keep them fast? Where is the anchor which he shall give them to cast into the rocks? or where the rocks into which they should cast their anchor? Our text is a solution to that question. We are here furnished with a great answer to the inquiry - "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

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

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

1. First, I would have you bring the ideas engendered in you by your early training, to the test of the Book of God. It is very much the custom of people to say, "Was I not born in the Church of England? Ought I not therefore to continue in it?" Or, on the other hand, "Was not my grandmother an Immersionist? Ought not I, therefore, to continue in the Baptist denomination?" God forbid that I should say aught against your venerable and pious relatives; or that you should pay any disrespect to their teaching! We always respect their advice, even when we cannot receive it, for the sake of the person who offers it to us; knowing that their training, even should it have been mistaken, was nevertheless well meant. But we claim for ourselves, as men, that we should not be fed with doctrines as we were fed in our helpless infancy, with food chosen for us: we claim that we should have the right of judging whether the things

which we have received and heard, are according to this Sacred Book; and if we find that in aught our training has been erroneous, we do not consider that we are violating any principle of affection, if we dare to come forth from our families, and join a denomination holding tenets far different from those which our parents had espoused. Let us each recollect that as God has given every man a head on his shoulders, every man is bound to use his own head, and not his father's. God gave your father judgment. Well and good: he judged for himself. He has given you a judgment: judge for yourself too. Say, concerning all that you have received in your early childhood, "Well, I will not lightly part with this, for it may be sterling gold; but at the same time, I will not blindly hoard it, for it may be counterfeit coin. I will sit down to the study of the Sacred Book, and I will endeavour, as far as I can, to unprejudice myself. I will read the Bible, just as if I had never heard any preacher, or had never been taught by a parent; and I will there endeavour to find out what God saith, and what God saith, be it what it may, I will believe and espouse, hoping that by his grace I may also feel the power of it in my own soul.

2. Remember, also, to bring the preachers of the gospel to this standard. A great many of you know but very little about what gospel is. The general notion of the mass is, that we are everyone of us right; that though to-day I may contradict some one else, and some one else may contradict me, yet we are all right; and though it is treason to common sense to believe such a thing, yet this is a common idea. Some men always believe like the last speaker. Should they hear the most hyper of hyper-Calvinists, they believe with him the fulness of the doctrine of reprobation; should they hear on the morrow the lowest of Arminians, they believe with him the most universal of redemptions and the most powerful of free-wills. Should they then hear the genuine Calvinist, who preaches that man hath destroyed himself, but in God is his help found, perhaps then they think the man contradicts himself, and for once they rebel against their teachers. But it is probable that should they hear such a person again, they will be easily reconciled to seeming contradictions; for to them it is just the man's appearance, just the man's way of saying the thing, that they like, and not the thing that he says. Just as I have heard of holy Mr. Durham, the writer of that sweet book on Solomon's Song. If I had lived in his time, I should never, I think, have wanted to hear any other

preacher; I would have sat, both by night and day, to receive the sweet droppings of his honied lips. But in his time there was a young preacher, whose name is totally forgotten, whose church was crowded to the door, and Mr. Durham's meeting-house hard by forsaken. The reason of that is, because the mass of people do not lay hold upon what is said, but upon how it is said: and if it is said smartly, said prettily, and said forcibly, that is enough for them, though it be a lie; but if the truth be spoken, that they will not receive, unless it be attended by some graces of oratory and eloquence. Now, the Christian that has got above his babyhood, does not care about how the man says it; it is the thing that is said that he cares about. All he asks is, "Did he speak the truth?" He just gets hold of the corn. To him the straw is nothing, and the chaff less. He cares not for the trimming of the feast, nor for the exquisite workmanship of the dish; he only cares for that which is solid food for himself.

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

3. There is another class of men quite contrary to those I have referred to. These men are their own preachers; they believe no one but themselves, and without knowing it, there is every reason for them to hate the Pope, because "two of a trade never agree," they being Popes themselves. These persons, if they hear a truth preached, judge of it not by the Bible, but by what they think the truth ought to be. I have heard a person, for instance, say, when he has heard the doctrine of Election, or of particular

Redemption, "Well, now the doctrine does not please me, I do not like it." And then he begins to urge some objection which he has forged upon his own anvil, yet never trying to quote a Scripture text to refute it, if he can; never turning to some old saying of the Prophets, and endeavouring to find out that the doctrine was an error, but only judging of it by his own opinion, by his wishes as to what the truth ought to be. What would you think of a man who should say to an astronomer, "Now, it is of no use your telling me that the constellation of Scorpio of such-and-such a shape; I tell you, I do not like the look of it. My dear fellow, I don't think that the constellation of Scorpio ought to have been made that shape; and I think this star ought to have been put just here, instead of there: and then all would be well." The astronomer would simply smile at him, and say, "Your opinion does not signify, because it does not alter facts. If you think I am wrong, your right way to disprove me is not to say where you think the stars ought to be, but just come and take a look through my telescope and see where the stars *are*." now, it is just the same with the truth. People say, "I do not like such a truth." That is no refutation of it. The question is, - Is it in the Bible? Because if it is there, like it or not like it, it is a fact, and all the minister has to do is to report the facts that he finds there. Why, the astronomer cannot put the stars in a row, like a row of gas lights, to please you; and the minister cannot put the doctrines into a shape in which you would wish to have them cast. All the astronomer does is to map them out, and say, "That is how they are in the sky:" you must then look at the sky, and see whether it is so. All I have to do is to tell you what I find in the Bible; if you do not like it, remember, that is no refutation of it, nor do I care for your liking it or not liking it; the only thing is, Is it in the Bible? If it is there I shall not stop to prove it. I do not come here to prove a doctrine at all. If it is in the Bible, it is true: there it is; I tell it out; reject it, and you do so to your own condemnation; for you yourself believe the Bible to be true, and I prove it to be there, and therefore it must be true.

Should it be according to thy mind? Wouldst thou like to have a Bible made for the devices of thine own heart? If it were, it would be a worthless thing. Wouldst thou desire to have a Gospel according to thy wishes? Then with some of you it would be a Gospel that allowed lasciviousness. Wouldst thou wish to have a revelation made that should

pamper thee in thy lusts, and indulge thee in thy pride? If so, this know, God will never stoop to feed thy haughtiness or wantonness. The Bible is a God-like book; he demands thy faith in it; and though thou kickest against it, this stone can never be broken; but, mark thee, thou mayest be broken upon it, yea, it may fall upon thee and bruise thee to powder. Bring, then, I beseech thee, your own thoughts and your own sentiments to the touchstone of the truth; for "if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

4. And just do the same with all books that you read. This is the age of book-making and book-writing. Now-a-days, what with periodical literature and the books upon our shelves, our Bibles do not get much read. I will tell you a truthful story as it was told to me yesterday. There was a young man, who is now a student for the ministry, so extraordinarily ignorant was he of his own Bible, that upon hearing a young minister mention the story of Nebuchadnezzar's being driven out from men, until his nails did grow like birds' claws, and his hair like eagles' feathers, he said to the minister at the close of the sermon, "Well, that was a queer story you told the people, certainly: where did you fish that up?" "Why," said the minister, "have you never read your Bible? Can you not find it in the Book of Daniel?" The young man had read a great many other things, but never read his Bible through, and yet was going to be a teacher of it! Now, I fear that the same ignorance is very current in many persons. They do not know what is in the Bible: they could tell you what is in the *Churchman's Penny*, or the *Christian's Penny*, or the *Churchman's Magazine*, or the *Wesleyan Magazine*, or the Baptist Magazine, or the *Evangelical Magazine*, and all that; but there is one old magazine, a magazine of arms, a magazine of wealth, that they forget to read - that old-fashioned book called the Bible. "Ah!" said one, when he came to die, who had been a great classic, "I would to God I had spent as much time in reading my Bible as I have spent in reading Livy! Would to God I had been exact in my criticisms of Holy Scripture as I was in criticisms upon Horace!" Oh! that we were wise, to give the Bible the largest share of our time, and ever to continue reading it, both by day and night, that we might be as trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth our fruit in our season! Let us remember, as ministers of the Gospel, what M'Cheyne beautifully said; "Depend upon it," said he, "it is God's

Word, not man's comment upon God's Word, that saves souls;" and I have marked, that if ever we have a conversion at any time, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the conversion is rather traceable to the text, or to some Scripture quoted in the sermon, than to any trite or original by the preacher. It is God's Word that breaks the fetters and sets the prisoner free; it is God's Word instrumentally that saves souls; and therefore let us bring everything to the touchstone. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

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

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

But I hear some one say, that the Bible is so difficult a book that he is sure he never could understand it. Mark thee, man, the Bible is so plain a book that he that is willing to understand it may do so; it is so plain that he that runs may read, and read while he runs; yea, it is so plain, that the simpler a man is, the more easily he can understand it. All the learning that man ever received is rather a hindrance than a benefit when he comes for the first time to read the Word. Learning may untie many a knot afterwards; it may unravel many a mystery in after times; but we have heard deep-minded critics say, that at first they would have given all the world, if they could have thrown their learning aside, just to read the Bible as the humble cottager reads it, and believe it as God's Word, without any quibbles of criticism. You know how Mrs. Beecher Stowe represents

Uncle Tom reading it. He could not read it fast; so he just spelt it over letter by letter, and word by word; and the Bible is one of the books, she says, that always gains by that way of reading. You recollect how he read it. "Let - not - your - hearts - be - - ;" and then he stopped at the long word; and he fumbled it out at last, and it was, "*troubled*. Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Why, it gets sweeter from your being a long time reading it; and so far from your want of learning disqualifying you from understanding the Bible, the mass of it is all the more understandable from the simplicity of your heart. Come ye, and search the Scriptures; they are no such mysterious fables or learned volumes of hard words as some men say. This is no closed book, as the priest would tell us; it is a volume which the Sunday School child may understand, if the Spirit of God rests upon his heart. It is a book which the horny-handed workman may comprehend as well as the learned divine, and many such have become exceedingly wise therein. I say again, read your Bibles, that you may be qualified to detect error.

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



doubt, but it is a great thing to hold your tongue while you are doubting, and not to open your mouth till you believe, and then, when you do open your mouth, to say the thing you know is true, and stick to it, not as an opinion, but as an incontrovertible fact. No man will ever do much amongst his fellows till he can speak confidently what he knows to be revealed.

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

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

3. Furthermore, search the Scriptures, and bring everything you hear to this great test, because in so doing you will get a rich harvest of blessing to your own soul. I suppose there is scarce a text in Holy that has not been the instrument of the salvation of a soul. Now, "he that walketh among wise men will be wise;" and he that walks amongst the wise men that wrote Holy Scripture stands at least the highest probability of being made wise unto salvation. If I desired to put myself into the most likely place for the Lord to meet with me, I should prefer the house of prayer, for it is in preaching, that the Word is most blessed; but still I think I should equally desire the reading of the Scriptures; for I might pause over every verse, and say, "Such a verse was blessed to so many souls; then, why not to me? I am at least in the pool of Bethesda; I am walking amongst its porches, and who can tell but that the angel will stir the pool of the Word, whilst I lie helplessly by the side of it, waiting for the blessing?" Yea, the truth is so great, that God has blessed every word of Scripture, that I remember a striking anecdote of the conversion of a man by a passage of Scripture that did not seem adapted for any such purpose. You know that chapter in Genesis, that very dull chapter, where we read, "and Methusaleh lived 969 years, and he died," and such a one lived so

many years and he died? We have heard of its being read once in public; and a man who stood there, when he heard the words often repeated, "and he died," thought, "Ah! and I shall die!" And it was the first note of warning that had ever struck his seared conscience, and was the means under God of bringing him to Jesus. Now, read the Scriptures for this reason. If you desire salvation, and if you are panting after mercy, if you feel your sin and want salvation, come ye to this sea of love, to this treasury of light, to this wardrobe of rich clothing, to this fountain of bliss; come ye, and have your wants supplied out of the fulness of the riches of Jesus, who is "evidently set forth" in this Word, "crucified among you."

III. And now let me endeavour as briefly as I can, to urge upon you yet again the constant and perpetual reading of the Word of God, not only for the reasons that I have now propounded, but for others more important. Many false prophets have gone forth into the world: I beseech you, then, if ye would not be led astray, be diligent in the study of the Word of God. In certain parts of Dr. Livingstone's travels, he tells us, that his guides were either so ignorant or so determined to deceive him, that he could have done far better without them than with them; and he had constantly to refer to his compass, lest he should be led astray. Now, I would not say a hard thing if I did not believe it true; but I do solemnly think that there are some professed teachers of the Word, who are either so ignorant of spiritual things in their own hearts, or else so determined to preach anything but Christ, that you might do better without them than with them; and hence you have an absolute necessity to turn perpetually to this great compass by which alone you can steer your way. I scorn a charity that after all is not charity. I must tell you what I believe. Some would have me now stand here and say, "All that are eminent preachers are most certainly truthful preachers." now, I cannot say it. If at any time I hear a man preach the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone, through the merits of Christ, I give him my hand, and call him my brother, because he is right in the main thing; but when I do that I am long way from endorsing many other of his sentiments. It may be that he denies the effectual power of the Spirit in conversion; it may be he does not hold the doctrine of the entire depravity of the human race - does not insist upon free sovereign grace - does not hold forth and teach the doctrine of

substitution and satisfaction through Christ. Now, I will not so befool myself as to tell you that wherein that man differs from the Word of God he is true. No doubt that man may be blessed for your salvation; but there may be a curse upon his ministry notwithstanding; so that while you may be saved by it, you may be all your lifetime subject to bondage through it, and you may go groaning, where you ought to have gone singing - crying, where you might have had a sacred burst of joy. You sit under such-and-such a man who has been made the means of your conversion; but he tells you that your salvation depends upon yourself, and not upon the power of Christ. He insists upon it that you may, after all, fall from grace and be a cast-away; he tells you that although you are saved, God did no more love you than he loved Judas; that there is no such thing as special love, no such thing, in fact, as Election. He tells you that others might have come to Christ, as well as yourself - that there was no extraordinary power put out in your case, more than in any others. Well, if he does not lead you to glory in man, to magnify the flesh, and sometimes to trust in yourself, or else lead you to distress yourself where there is no need for distress, I should marvel indeed, inasmuch as his doctrine is false, and must mislead you. It may be the means of your salvation, and yet it may fail in many points to minister to your edification and comfort. Therefore, if ye would not be thus misled, search ye the Scriptures.

But ah! there is a solemn danger of being absolutely misled. Ye may hear all that the minister says, but he may forget to tell you the vital part of the truth; he may be one who delights in ceremonies, but does not insist upon the grace therein; he may hold forth to you the rubric and sacrament, and tell you there is efficacy in obedience to the one, and attention to the other, and he may forget to tell you that "Except a man be born again of the Spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now, under such a ministry you may not only be misled, but alas! you may be destroyed altogether. He may be one who insists much upon morality of life; he may tell you to be honest, just, and sober; but mayhap he may forget to tell you that there is a deeper work required than mere morality; he may film the surface over, and never send the lancet into the deep ulcer of your heart's corruption. He may give you some palliating dose, some medicine that may still your conscience; he may never say to you, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" he may be one of those that prophesy

smooth things, that does not like to disturb you. And oh! remember that your minister may be the instrument in the hands of Satan of blindfolding your eyes and leading you to hell, while all the while you thought you were going to heaven. Ah! and hear me yet: I do not exclude myself from my own censure. It may be possible - I pray God it may not be so - that I myself may have mistaken the reading of the Holy Scripture, that I may have preached to you "another gospel which is not another;" and therefore I demand of you that my own teaching, and the teaching of every other man, whether by pen or lip, should be always brought "to the law and to the testimony," lest we should deceive you and lead you astray. Ah! my hearers, it would be an awful thing, if I should be the means of leading any of you into the gulf. Although in some measure your blood must be upon my head, if I deceive you, yet I beseech you, remember that I am not further responsible for your souls than my power can carry me. If you are misled by me, after this solemn declaration of mine, you shall be as verily guilty as if I had not misguided you; for I charge you, as ye love your own souls, as ye would make sure work for eternity, put no more trust in me than you would in any other man, only so far as I can prove, by infallible testimony of God's Word, that what I have said is true. Stand ye always to this. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." I heard a story once that I remember to have told before, of some young person going out of the place, and saying, "Well, I don't like Mr. Spurgeon at all; he is so high in doctrine; he said so-and-so." And then the young body quoted a text out of the Bible as a very wicked thing that I had said - something about the potter having power over the clay. So the friend who was with her said, "It was Paul said that, not Mr. Spurgeon." "Ah!" said she, "and I think the Apostle Paul was a great deal too high too." Well, we are very glad to incur censure of that sort, and will not at all object to go with Paul wherever he may go; but we do beseech you never at any time to take our bare saying for a thing, but always to turn to your Bible and see whether it is so. That is a good habit some Christian fathers have; when the boys and girls come home, they say, "Well, now, what was the text?" And then the father wants them to tell over what the minister has said; and even the small boy knows something, and tells something or other that the minister said from the pulpit. Then the fathers turns to his Bible to see whether these things are so. Then he endeavours to explain

the hard things; so that they become like those noble Bereans, who were more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they searched the Scriptures, whether those things were so.

And now I may just hint at one or two peculiarities in that which I have ever preached to you, which peculiarities I desire you most anxiously to inquire into. Now, take nothing at second hand from me, but try all of it by the written Word. I believe, and I teach that all men by nature are lost by Adam's fall. See whether that be true or not. I hold that men have so gone astray that no man either will or can come to Christ except the Father draw him. If I be wrong, find me out. I believe that God, before all worlds, chose to himself a people, whom no man can number, for whom the Saviour died, to whom the Holy Spirit is given, and who will infallibly be saved. You may dislike that doctrine; I do not care: see if it is not in the Bible. See if it does not there declare that we are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," and so on. I believe that every elect child of God must assuredly be brought by converting grace from the ruins of the fall, and must assuredly be "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation," beyond the hazard of ever totally falling away. If I be wrong there, get your Bibles out, and refute me in your own houses. I hold it to be a fact that every man who is converted will lead a holy life, and yet at the same time will put no dependence on his holy life, but trust only in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. And I hold, that every man that believes, is in duty bound to be immersed. I hold the baptism of infants to be a lie and a heresy; but I claim for that great ordinance of God, Believer's Baptism, that it should have the examination of Scripture. I hold, that to none but believers may immersion be given, and that all believers are in duty bound to be immersed. If I am wrong, well and good; do not believe me; but if I am right, obey the Word with reverence. I will have no error, even upon a point which some men think to be unimportant; for a grain of truth is a diamond, and a grain of error may be of serious consequence to us, to our injury and hurt. I hold then, that none but believers have any right to the Lord's Supper; that it is wrong to give the Lord's Supper indiscriminately to all, and that none but Christians have a right either to the doctrines, the benefits, or the ordinances of God's house. If these things be not so, condemn me as you please; but if the Bible is with me, your condemnation is of no avail.

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

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## Seasons Of Darkness

Night appears to be a time peculiarly favourable to devotion. Its solemn stillness helps to free the mind from that perpetual din which the cares of the world will bring around it; and the stars looking down from heaven upon us shine as if they would attract us up to God. I know not how you may be affected by the solemnities of midnight, but when I have sat alone musing on the great God and mighty universe, I have felt that indeed I could worship Him: for night seemed to be spread abroad as a very temple for adoration, while the moon walked as high priest, amid the stars, the worshippers, and I myself joined in that silent song which they sang unto God: "Great art Thou, O God! great are Thy works. When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visiteth him?" I find that this sense of the power of midnight not only acts upon religious men, but there is a certain poet, whose character, perhaps, I could scarcely too much reprobate: a man very far from understanding true religion; one whom I may, I suppose, justly style an infidel, a libertine of the worst order, and yet he says concerning night in one of his poems: -

Tis midnight on the mountains' brown,  
The cold round moon shines deeply down;  
Blue roll the waters, blue the sky  
Spreads like an ocean hung on high  
Bespangled with those isles of light,  
So wildly, spiritually bright;  
Who ever gazed upon them shining,  
And turning to earth without repining,  
Nor wish'd for wings to flee away,  
And mix with their eternal ray.

Even with the most irreligious person, a man farthest from spiritual thought, it seems that there is some power in the grandeur and stillness

of night to draw him up to God. I trust many of us can say, like David, "I have thought upon Thee continually; I have mused upon Thy name in the night watches, and with desire have I desired Thee in the night."

The Christian man has not always a bright shining sun: *he has his seasons of darkness and of night*. True, it is written in God's Word: "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" and it is a great truth that religion—the true religion of the living God—is calculated to give a man happiness below as well as bliss above. But, notwithstanding, experience tells us that if the course of the just be "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," yet sometimes that light is eclipsed. At certain periods clouds and darkness cover the sun, and he beholds no clear shining of the daylight, but walks in darkness and sees no light.

Now there are many who have rejoiced in the presence of God for a season; they have basked in the sunshine God has been pleased to give them in the earlier stages of their Christian career; they have walked along the "green pastures," by the side of the "still waters," and suddenly—in a month or two—they find that glorious sky is clouded; instead of "green pastures," they have to tread the sandy desert; in the place of "still waters," they find streams brackish to their taste and bitter to their spirits, and they say, "surely, if I were a child of God this would not happen." Oh, say not so, thou who art walking in darkness! The best of God's saints have their nights; the dearest of His children have to walk through a weary wilderness. There is not a Christian who has enjoyed perpetual happiness; there is no believer who can always sing a song of joy. It is not every lark that can always carol. It is not every star that can always be seen. And not every Christian is always happy. Perhaps the King of saints gave you a season of great joy at first because you were a raw recruit, and He would not put you into the roughest part of the battle when you had first enlisted. You were a tender plant, and He nursed you in the hothouse till you could stand severe weather. You were a young child, and therefore He wrapped you in furs and clothed you in the softest mantle. But now you have become strong, and the case is different. Capuan holidays do not suit Roman soldiers; and they would not agree with Christians. We need clouds and darkness to exercise our faith; to cut



off self-dependence, and make us put more faith in Christ, and less in evidence, less in experience, less in frames and feelings. The best of God's children—I repeat it again for the comfort of those who are suffering depression of spirits—have their nights. Sometimes it is a night over the whole Church at once. There are times when Zion is under a cloud; when the whole fine gold becomes dim, and the glory of Zion is departed. There are seasons when we do not hear the clear preaching of the Word; when the doctrines are withheld; when the glory of the Lord God of Jacob is dim; when His name is not exalted; when the traditions of men are taught, instead of the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. And such a season is that when the whole Church is dark. Of course, each Christian participates in it. He goes about and weeps, and cries, "O God, how long shall poor Zion be depressed? How long shall her shepherds be 'dumb dogs that cannot bark?' Shall her watchmen be always blind? Shall the silver trumpet sound no more? Shall not the voice of the gospel be heard in her streets?" Oh, there are seasons of darkness to the entire Church! God grant we may not have to pass through another, but that, starting from this period, the sun may rise ne'er to set, till, like a sea of glory, the fight of brilliance shall spread from pole to pole!

At other times, this darkness over the soul of the Christian rises from *temporal distresses*. He may have had a misfortune as it is called—something has gone wrong in his business, or an enemy has done somewhat against him; death has struck down a favorite child—bereavement has snatched away the darling of his bosom; the crops are blighted; the winds refuse to bear his ships homeward; a vessel strikes upon a rock, another founders; all goes ill with him, and, like a gentleman who called to see me, he may be able to say, "Sir, I prospered far more when I was a worldly man than I have done since I have become a Christian: for, since then, everything has appeared to go wrong with me. I thought," he said, "that religion had the promise of this life as well as that which is to come." I told him, Yes, it had; and so it should be in the end. But he must remember there was one great legacy which Christ left His people; and I was glad he had come in for a share of it—"In the world ye shall have tribulation; in Me ye shall have peace." Yes! you may be troubled about this, you may be saying, "Look at so-and-so: see how he spreads himself like a green bay-tree. He is an extortioner and wicked

man, yet everything he does prospers. You may even observe his death, and say, there are no bands in his death." "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men." God hath set them in slippery places, but he casteth them down to destruction. Better to have a Christian's days of sorrow, than a worldling's days of mirth. Better to have a Christian's sorrows than a worldling's joys. Ah! happier to be chained in a dungeon with a Paul than reign in the palace with an Ahab. Better to be a child of God in poverty than a child of Satan in riches. Cheer up, then, thou downcast spirit, if this be thy trial. Remember that many saints have passed through the same; and the best and most eminent believers have had their nights.

Christian men very frequently have their nights; but a Christian man's religion will keep its colour in the night. "With my soul have I desired Thee in the night." What a mighty deal of silver-slipper religion we have in this world. Men will follow Christ whenever one cries, "Hosanna! Hosanna!" The multitude will crowd around the Man then, and they will take Him by force and make Him a king when the sun shines, when the soft wind blows. They are like the plants upon the rocks, which sprang up and for a little while were green; but when the sun had risen with fervent heat straightway withered away. Demas and Mr. Hold-the-world, and the great many others, are very pious people in easy times. They will always go with Christ by daylight, and will keep in company as long as fashion gives religion the doubtful benefit of its patronage. But they will not go with Him in the night. There are some goods whose colour you can only see by daylight—and there are many professors the colour of whom you can only see by daylight. If they were in the night of trouble and persecutions you would find that there was very little in them. They are good by daylight, but they are bad by night.

Do you not know that the best test of a Christian is the night? The nightingale, if she would sing by day when every goose is cackling, would be reckoned no better a musician than the wren. A Christian if he only remained steadfast by daylight, when every coward is bold, what would he be? There would be no beauty in his courage, no glory in his bravery. But it is because he can sing at night—sing in trouble—sing when he is driven well-nigh to despair; it is this which proves his sincerity. It has its

glory in the night. The stars are not visible by daylight, but they become apparent when the sun is set. There is full many a Christian whose piety did not burn much when he was in prosperity; but it will be known in adversity.

I have marked it in some of my brethren when they were in deep trial. I had not heard them discourse much about Christ before, but when God's hand had robbed them of their comfort, I remember that I could discern their religion infinitely better than I could before. Nothing can bring our religion out better than that. Grind the diamond a little and you shall see it glisten. Do but put a trouble on the Christian, and his endurance of it will prove him to be of the true seed of Israel.

All that the Christian wants in the night is his God "With *desire* have I desired *Thee* in the night. " By day there are many things that a Christian will desire besides His Lord; but in the night he wants nothing but his God. I cannot understand how it is unless it is to be accounted for by the corruption of our spirit, that when everything goes well with us we are setting our affection first on this object and then on another, and then on another; and that desire which is as insatiable as death and as deep as hell never rests satisfied. We are always wanting something, always desiring a yet-beyond. But if you place a Christian in trouble you will find that he does not want gold then—that he does not want carnal honour—then he only wants his God. I suppose he is like a sailor, when he sails along smoothly he loves to have fair weather, and wants this and that to amuse himself on the deck. But when the winds blow all he wants is the haven. He does not desire anything else. The biscuit may be moldy, but he does not care. The water may be brackish, but he does not care. He does not think of it in the storm. He only thinks about the haven then. It is just so with the Christian; when he is going along smoothly he wants this and that comfort; he is aspiring after this position, or is wanting to obtain this and that elevation. But let him once doubt his interest in Christ—let him once get into some soul-distress and trouble so that it is very dark—and all he will feel then is, "With desire have I desired Thee in the night. " When the child is put upstairs to bed it may lie while the light is there, and look at the trees that shake against the window, and admire the stars that are coming out; but when it gets dark and the child is still

awake it cries for its parent. It cannot be amused by aught else. So in daylight will the Christian look at anything. He will cast his eyes round on this pleasure and on that; but, when the darkness gathers, it is, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me!" "O why art Thou so far from me and from the word of my roaring?"

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## **Secret Sins**

Cleanse thou me from secret faults. - Psalm 19:12

Self-righteousness arises partly from pride but mainly from ignorance of God's law. It is because men know little or nothing concerning the terrible character of the divine law, that they foolishly imagine themselves to be righteous. They are not aware of the deep spirituality, and the stern severity of the law, or they would have other and wiser notions. Once let them know how strictly the law deals with the thoughts, how it brings itself to bear upon every emotion of the inner man, and there is not one creature beneath God's heaven who would dare to think himself righteous in God's sight in virtue of his own deeds and thoughts. Only let the law be revealed to a man; let him know how strict the law is, and how infinitely just, and his self-righteousness will shrivel into nothing—it will become a filthy rag in his sight, whereas before he thought it to be a goodly garment.

Now, David, having seen God's law, and having praised it in this Psalm, which I have read in your hearing, he is brought, by reflecting on its excellency, to utter this thought, "Who can understand his errors?" and then to offer this prayer, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

In the Lateran Council of the Church of Rome, a decree was passed that every true believer must confess his sins, all of them, once a year to the priest, and they affixed to it this declaration, that there is no hope of

pardon but in complying with that decree. What can equal the absurdity of such a decree as that? Do they suppose that they can tell their sins as easily as they can count their fingers? Why, if we could receive pardon for all our sins by telling every sin we have committed in one hour, there is not one of us who would be able to enter heaven, since, besides the sins that are known to us and that we may be able to confess, there are a vast mass of sins, which are as truly sins as those which we do observe, but which are secret, and come not beneath our eye. Oh! if we had eyes like those of God, we should think very differently of ourselves. The sins that we see and confess are but like the farmer's small samples which he brings to market, when he has left his granary full at home. We have but a very few sins which we can observe and detect, compared with those which are hidden to ourselves and unseen by our fellow creatures. I doubt not it is true of all of us who are here, that in every hour of our existence in which we are active, we commit tens of thousands of unholinesses for which conscience has never reproved us, because we have never seen them to be wrong, seeing we have not studied God's laws as we ought to have done. Now, be it known to us all that sin is sin, whether we see it or not—that a sin secret to us is a sin as truly as if we knew it to be a sin, though not so great a sin in the sight of God as if it had been committed presumptuously, seeing that it lacks the aggravation of willfulness. Let all of us who know our sins, offer this prayer after all our confessions: "Lord, I have confessed as many as I know, but I must add an etcetera after them, and say, 'Cleanse thou me from secret faults.'"

That, however, will not be the pith of my sermon this morning. I am going after a certain class of men who have sins not unknown to themselves, but secret to their fellow creatures. Every now and then we turn up a fair stone which lies upon the green sward of the professing church, surrounded with the verdure of apparent goodness, and to our astonishment we find beneath it all kinds of filthy insects and loathsome reptiles, and in our disgust as such hypocrisy, we are driven to exclaim, "All men are liars; there are none in whom we can put any trust at all." It is not fair to say so of all; but really, the discoveries which are made of the insincerity of our fellow-creatures are enough to make us despise our kind, because they can go so far in appearances, and yet have so little soundness of heart. To you, sirs, who sin secretly, and yet make a

profession; you break God's covenants in the dark and wear a mask of goodness in the light—to you, sirs, who shut the doors and commit wickedness in secret—to you I shall speak this morning. O may God also be pleased to speak to you, and make you pray this prayer: "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

I shall endeavour to urge upon all pretenders present to give up, to renounce, to detest, to hate, to abhor all their secret sins. And, first, I shall endeavour to show *the folly of secret sins*; secondly, *the misery of secret sins*; thirdly, *the guilt of secret sins*; fourthly, *the danger of secret sins*; and then I shall try to apply some words by way of remedy, that we may all of us be enabled to avoid secret sins.

#### I. First, then, THE FOLLY OF SECRET SINS.

Pretender, thou art fair to look upon; thy conduct outwardly upright, amiable, liberal, generous and Christian; but thou dost indulge in some sin which the eye of man has not yet detected. Perhaps it is private drunkenness. Thou dost revile the drunkard when he staggers through the street; but thou canst thyself indulge in the same habit in private. It may be some other lust or vice; it is not for me just now to mention what it is. But, pretender, we say unto thee, thou art a fool to think of harbouring a secret sin; and thou art a fool for this one reason, that thy sin is not a secret sin; *it is known*, and shall one day be revealed; perhaps very soon. Thy sin is not a secret; the eye of God hath seen it; thou hast sinned before his face. Thou hast shut-to the door, and drawn the curtains, and kept out the eye of the sun, but God's eye pierceth through the darkness; the brick walls which surrounded thee were as transparent as glass to the eye of the Almighty; the darkness which did gird thee was as bright as the summer's noon to the eye of him who beholdeth all things. Knowest thou not, O man, that "all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do?" As the priest ran his knife into the entrails of his victim, discovered the heart and liver, and what else did lie within, so art thou, O man, seen by God, cut open by the Almighty; thou hast no secret chamber where thou canst hide thyself; thou hast no dark cellar where thou canst conceal thy soul. Dig deep, ay, deep as hell, but thou canst not find earth enough upon the globe to cover thy sin; if

thou shouldst heap the mountains on its grave, those mountains would tell the tale of what was buried in their bowels. If thou couldst cast thy sin into the sea, a thousand babbling waves would tell the secret out. There is no hiding it from God. Thy sin is photographed in high heaven; the deed when it was done was photographed upon the sky, and there it shall remain, and thou shalt see thyself one day revealed to the gazing eyes of all men, a hypocrite, a pretender, who didst sin in fancied secret, observed in all thine acts by the all-seeing Jehovah. O what fools men are, to think they can do anything in secret. This world is like the glass hives wherein bees sometimes work: we look down upon them, and we see all the operations of the little creatures. So God looketh down and seeth all. Our eyes are weak; we cannot look through the darkness; but his eye, like an orb of fire, penetrateth the blackness; and readeth the thoughts of man, and seeth his acts when he thinks himself most concealed. Oh; it were a thought enough to curb us from all sin, if it were truly applied to us—"Thou, God, seest me!" Stop thief! Drop thou that which thou hast taken to thyself. God seeth thee! No eye of detection on earth hath discovered thee, but God's eyes are now looking through the clouds upon thee. Swearer! scarce any for whom thou carest heard thy oath; but God heard it; it entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabbaoth. Ah! thou who ledest a filthy life, and yet art a respectable merchant bearing among men a fair and goodly character; thy vices are all known; written in God's book. He keepeth a diary of all thine acts; and what wilt thou think on that day when a crowd shall be assembled, compared with which this immense multitude is but a drop of a bucket, and God shall read out the story of thy secret life, and men and angels shall hear it. Certain I am there are none of us who would like to have all our secrets read, especially our secret thoughts. If I should select out of this congregation the most holy man, should bring him forward and say, "Now, sir, I know all your thoughts, and am about to tell them," I am sure he would offer me the largest bribe that he could gather if I would be pleased to conceal at least some of them. "Tell," He would say, "of my acts; of them I am not ashamed; but do not tell my thoughts and imaginations—of them I must ever stand ashamed before God." What, then, sinner, will be thy shame when thy privy lusts, thy closet transgressions, thy secret crimes shall be gazetted from God's throne, published by his own mouth, and with a voice louder than a thousand thunders preached in the ears of an

assembled world? What will be thy terror and confusion then, when all the deeds thou hast done shall be published in the face of the sun, in the ears of all mankind. O renounce the foolish hope of secrecy, for thy sin is this day recorded, and shall one day be advertised upon the walls of heaven.

II. In the next place, let us notice THE MISERY OF SECRET SINS.

Of all sinners the man who makes a profession of religion, and yet lives in iniquity, is the most miserable. A downright wicked man, who takes a glass in his hand, and says, "I am a drunkard, I am not ashamed of it," he shall be unutterably miserable in worlds to come, but brief though it be, he has his hour of pleasure. A man who curses and swears, and says, "That is my habit, I am a profane man," and makes a profession of it, he has, at least, some peace in his soul; but the man who walks with God's minister, who is united with God's Church, who comes out before God's people, and unites with them, and then lives in sin, what a miserable existence he must have of it! Why, he has a worse existence than the mouse that is in the parlour, running out now and then to pick up the crumbs, and then back again to his hole. Such men must run out now and then to sin; and oh! how fearful they are to be discovered! One day, perhaps, their character turns up; with wonderful cunning they manage to conceal and gloss it over; but the next day something else comes, and they live in constant fear, telling lie after lie, to make the last lie appear truthful, adding deception to deception, in order that they may not be discovered.

"Oh! 'tis a tangled web we weave,  
When once we venture to deceive."

If I must be a wicked man, give me the life of a roystering sinner, who sins before the face of day; but, if I must sin, let me not act as a hypocrite and a coward; let me not profess to be God's, and spend my life for the devil. That way of cheating the devil is a thing which every honest sinner will be ashamed of. He will say, "Now, if I do serve my master I will serve him out and out, I will have no sham about it; if I make a profession, I will carry it out; but if I do not, if I live in sin, I am not going to gloss it



over by cant and hypocrisy." One thing which has hamstrung the church, and cut her very sinews in twain, has been this most damnable hypocrisy. Oh! in how many places have we men whom you might praise to the very skies, if you could believe their words, but whom you might cast into the nethermost pit if you could see their secret actions. God forgive any of you who are so acting! I had almost said, I can scarce forgive you. I can forgive the man who riots openly, and makes no profession of being better, but the man who fawns, and cants, and pretends, and prays, and then lives in sin, that man I hate, I cannot bear him, I abhor him from my very soul. If he will turn from his ways, I will love him, but in his hypocrisy he is to me the most loathsome of all creatures. 'Tis said the toad doth wear a jewel in her head, but this man hath none, but beareth filthiness about him, while he pretends to be in love with righteousness. A mere profession, my hearers, is but painted pageantry to go to hell in; it is like the plumes upon the hearse and the trappings upon the black horses which drag men to their graves, the funeral array of dead souls. Take heed above everything of a waxen profession that will not stand the sun; take care of a life that needs to have two faces to carry it out; be one thing, or else the other. If you make up your mind to serve Satan, do not pretend to serve God; and if you serve God, serve him with all your heart. "No man can serve two *masters*;" do not try it, do not endeavour to do it, for no life will be more miserable than that. Above all, beware of committing acts which it will be necessary to conceal. There is a singular poem by Hood, called "The Dream of Eugene Aram"—a most remarkable piece it is indeed, illustrating the point on which I am now dwelling. Aram has murdered a man and cast his body into the river—"a sluggish water, black as ink, the depth was so extreme." The next morning he visited the scene of his guilt:

"And sought the black accursed pool,  
With a wild misgiving eye;  
And he saw the dead in the river bed,  
For the faithless stream was dry."

Next he covered the corpse with heaps of leaves, but a mighty wind swept through the wood and left the secret bare before the sun:

"Then down I cast me on my face,  
And first began to weep,  
For I knew my secret then was one  
The earth refused to keep;  
On land or sea though it should be  
Ten thousand fathoms deep."

In plaintive notes he prophesies his own discovery. He buried his victim in a cave, and trod him down with stones, but when years had run their weary round the foul deed was discovered and the murderer put to death.

Guilt is a "grim chamberlain," even when his fingers are not bloody red. Secret sins bring fevered eyes and sleepless nights, until men burn out their consciences, and become in very deed ripe for the pit. Hypocrisy is a hard game to play at, for it is one deceiver against many observers; and for certain it is a miserable trade, which will earn at last, as its certain climax, a tremendous bankruptcy. Ah! ye who have sinned without discovery, "Be sure your sin will find you out;" and bethink you, it may find you out ere long. Sin, like murder, will come out; men will even tell tales about themselves in their dreams. God has sometimes made men so pricked in their consciences that they have been obliged to stand forth and confess the story. Secret sinner! If thou wantest the foretaste of damnation upon earth, continue in thy secret sins; for no man is more miserable than he who sinneth secretly, and yet trieth to preserve a character. Yon stag, followed by the hungry hounds, with open mouths, is far more happy than the man who is followed by his sins. Yon bird, taken in the fowler's net, and labouring to escape, is far more happy than he who hath weaved around himself a web of deception, and labours to escape from it day by day by making the toils more thick and the web more strong. Oh! the misery of secret sins! Truly, one may pray, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

III. But now, next, the guilt THE SOLEMN GUILT OF SECRET SIN.

Now, John, you do not think there is any evil in a thing unless somebody sees it, do you? You feel that it is a very great sin if your master finds you out in robbing the till—but there is no sin if he should not discover it—

none at all. And you, sir, you fancy it to be very great sin to play a trick in trade, in case you should be discovered and brought before the court; but to play a trick and never be discovered, that is all fair—do not say a word about it Mr. Spurgeon, it is all business; you must not touch business; tricks that are not discovered, of course you are not to find fault with them. The common measure of sin is the notoriety of it. But I do not believe in that. A sin is a sin, whether done in private or before the wide world. It is singular how men will measure guilt. A railway servant puts up a wrong signal, there is an accident; the man is tried, and severely reprimanded. The day before he put up the wrong signal, but there was no accident, and therefore no one accused him for his neglect. But it was just the same, accident or no accident, the accident did not make the guilt, it was the deed which made the guilt, not the notoriety nor yet the consequence of it. It was his business to have taken care; and he was as guilty the first time as he was the second, for he negligently exposed the lives of men. Do not measure sin by what other people say of it; but measure sin by what God says of it, and what your own conscience says of it.

Now, I hold that secret sin, if anything, is the worst of sin; because secret sin implies that the man who commits it has Atheism in his heart. You will ask how that can be. I reply, he may be a professing Christian, but I shall tell him to his face that he is a practical Atheist, if he labours to keep up a respectable profession before man, and then secretly transgresses. Why, is he not an Atheist, who will say there is a God, yet at the same time thinks more of man than he does of God? Is it not the very essence of Atheism—is it not a denial of the divinity of the Most High when men lightly esteem him and think more of the eye of a creature than of the observation of their Creator? There are some who would not for the life of them say a wicked word in the presence of their minister, but they can do it, knowing God is looking at them. They are Atheists. There are some who would not trick in trade for all the world if they thought they would be discovered, but they can do it while God is with them; that is, they think more of the eye of man than of the eye of God; and they think it worse to be condemned by man than to be condemned by God. Call it by what name you will, the proper name of that is practical Atheism. It is dishonoring God; it is dethroning him; putting him down below his own

creatures; and what is that, but to take away his divinity? Brethren, do not, I beseech you, incur the fearful guilt of secret sins. No man can sin a little in secret, it will certainly engender more sin; no man can be a hypocrite and yet be moderate in guilt; he will go from bad to worse, and still proceed, until when his guilt shall be published, he shall be found to be the very worst and most hardened of men. Take heed of the guilt of secret sin. AH, now if could I preach as Rowland Hill did, I would make some people look to themselves at home, and tremble too! It is said that when he preached, there was not a man in the window, or standing in the crowd, or perched up anywhere, but said, "There, he is preaching at me; he is telling me about my secret sins." And when he proclaimed God's omniscience, it is said men would almost think they saw God bodily present in the midst of them looking at them. And when he had done his sermon, they would hear a voice in their ears, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I cannot see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." I would I could do that; that I could make every man look to himself, and find out his secret sin. Come my hearer, what is it? Bring it forth to the daylight; perhaps it will die in the light of the sun. These things love not to be discovered. Tell thine own conscience, now, what it is. Look it in the face; confess it before God, and may he give thee grace to remove that sin and every other, and turn to him with full purpose of heart! But this know—that thy guilt is guilt discovered or undiscovered, and that if there be any difference it is worse, because it has been secret. God save us from the guilt of secret sin! "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

IV. And note, next, THE DANGER OF SECRET SIN. One danger is, that a man cannot commit a little sin in secret, without being by-and-by betrayed into a public sin. You cannot, sir, though you may think you can preserve a moderation in sin. If you commit one sin, it is like the melting of the lower glacier upon the Alps; the others must follow in time. As certainly as you heap one stone upon the cairn to-day, the next day you will cast another, until the heap, reared stone by stone, shall become a very pyramid. See the coral insect at work, you cannot decree where it shall stay its work. It will not build its rock just as high as you please, it will not stay until it shall be covered with weeds, until the weeds shall decay; and there shall be soil upon it, and an island shall be created by

tiny creatures. Sin cannot be held in with bit and bridle. "But I am going to have a little drink now and then, I am only going to be intoxicated once a week or so. Nobody will see it; I shall be in bed directly." You will be drunk in the streets soon. "I am only just going to read one lascivious book; I will put it under the sofa-cover when any one comes in." You will keep it in your library yet, sir. "I am only going into that company now and then." You will go there every day, such is the bewitching character of it; you cannot help it. You may as well ask the lion to let you put your head into his mouth. You cannot regulate his jaws: neither can you regulate sin. Once go into it, you cannot tell when you will be destroyed. You may be such a fortunate individual, that like Van Amburgh you may put your head in and out a great many times; reset assured that one of these days it will be a costly venture. Again, you may labour to conceal your vicious habit, but it will come out, you cannot help it. You keep your little pet sin at home; but mark this, when the door is ajar the dog will be out in the street. Wrap him up in your bosom, put over him fold after fold of hypocrisy to keep him secret, the wretch will be singing some day when you are in company; you cannot keep the evil bird still. Your sin will gad abroad; and what is more, you will not mind it some of these days. A man who indulges in sin privately, by degrees gets his forehead as hard as brass. The first time he sinned, the drops of sweat stood on his brow at the recollection of what he had done; the second time, no hot sweat on his brow, only an agitation of the muscle; the third time there was the sly, sneaky look, but no agitation; the next time, he sinned a little further; and by degrees he became the bold blasphemer of his God, who exclaimed, "Who am I that I should fear Jehovah, and who is he that I should serve him?" Men go from bad to worse. Launch your boat in the current—it must go where the current takes it. Put yourself in the whirlwind—you are but a straw in the wind: you must go which way the wind carries you—you cannot control yourself. The balloon can mount, but it cannot direct its course; it must go whichever way the wind blows. If you once mount into sin there is no stopping. Take heed if you would not become the worst of characters, take heed of the little sins, they, mounting one upon another, may at last heave you from the summit and destroy your soul for ever. There is a great danger in secret sins.

But I have here some true Christians who indulge in secret sins. They say

it is but a little one, and therefore do they spare it. Dear brethren, I speak to you, and I speak to myself, when I say this—let us destroy all our little secret sins. They are called little and if they be, let us remember that it is the foxes, even the little foxes, that spoil our vines; for our vines have tender shoots. Let us take heed of our little sins. A little sin, like a little pebble in the shoe, will make a traveller to heaven walk very wearily. Little sins, like little thieves, may open the door to greater ones outside. Christians, recollect that little sins will spoil your communion with Christ. Little sins, like little stains in silk, may damage the fine texture of fellowship; little sins, like little irregularities in the machinery, may spoil the whole fabric of your religion. The one dead fly spoileth the whole pot of ointment. That one thistle may seed a continent with noxious weeds. Let us, brethren, kill our sins as often as we can find them. One said—"The heart is full of unclean birds; it is a cage of them." "Ah, but," said another divine, "you must not make that an apology, for a Christian's business is to wring their necks." And so it is; if there be evil things, it is our business to kill them. Christians must not tolerate secret sins. We must not harbour traitors; it is high treason against the King of Heaven. Let us drag them out to light, and offer them upon the altar, giving up the dearest of our secret sins at the will and bidding of God. There is a great danger in a little secret sin; therefore avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and shun it; and God give thee grace to overcome it!

V. And now I come, in finishing up, to plead with all my might with some of you whom God has pricked in your consciences. I have come to intreat you, if it be possible, even to tears, that you will give up your secret sins. I have one here for whom I bless God; I love him, though I know him not. He is almost persuaded to be a Christian; he halteth between two opinions; he intendeth to serve God, he striveth to give up sin, but he findeth it a hard struggle, and as yet he knoweth not what shall become of him. I speak to him with all love: my friend, will you have your sin and go to hell, or leave your sin and go to heaven? This is the solemn alternative: to all awakened sinners I put it; may God choose for you, otherwise I tremble as to which you may choose. The pleasures of this life are so intoxicating, the joys of it so ensnaring, that did I not believe that God worketh in us to will and to do, I should despair of you. But I have confidence that God will decide the matter. Let me lay the alternative

before you:—on the one hand there is a hour's merriment, a short life of bliss, and that a poor, poor bliss; on the other hand, there is everlasting life and eternal glory. On the one hand, there is a transient happiness, and afterwards overwhelming woe; in this case there is a solid peace and everlasting joy, and after it overflowing bliss. I shall not fear to be called an Arminian, when I say, as Elijah did, "Choose you this day whom you will serve. If God be God, serve him; if Baal be God serve him." But, now, make your choice deliberately; and may God help you to do it! Do not say you will take up with religion, without first counting the cost of it; remember, there is your lust to be given up, your pleasure to be renounced; can you do it for Christ's sake? Can you? I know you cannot, unless God's grace shall assist you in making such a choice. But can you say, "Yes, by the help of God, earth's gaudy toys, its pomps, pageantries, gewgaws, all these I renounce? -

"These can never satisfy,  
Give me Christ or else I die."

Sinner, thou wilt never regret that choice, if God help thee to make it; thou wilt find thyself a happy man here, and thrice happy throughout eternity.

"But," says one, "Sir, I intend to be religious, but I do not hold with your strictness." I do not ask you to do so; I hope, however, you will hold with *God's* strictness, and God's strictness is ten thousand times greater than mine. You may say that I am puritanical in my preaching; God will be puritanical in judging in that great day. I may appear severe, but I can never be so severe as God will be. I may draw the harrow with sharp teeth across your conscience, but God shall drag harrows of eternal fire across you one day. I may speak thundering things! God will not speak them, but hurl them from his hands. Remember, men may laugh at hell, and say there is none; but they must reject their Bibles before they can believe the lie. Men's consciences tell them that

"There is a dreadful hell,  
And everlasting pains;  
Where sinners must with devils dwell,

In darkness, fire and chains."

Sirs, will ye keep your secret sins, and have eternal fire for them? Remember it is of no use, they must all be given up, or else you cannot be God's child. You cannot by any means have both; it cannot be God and the world, it cannot be Christ and the devil; it must be one or the other. Oh! that God would give you grace to resign all; for what are they worth? They are your deceivers now, and will be your tormentors for ever. Oh! that your eyes were open to see the rottenness, the emptiness and trickery of iniquity. Oh! that God would turn you to himself. Oh! may God give you grace to cross the Rubicon of repentance at this very hour; to say, "Henceforth it is war to the knife with my sins; not one of them will I willingly keep, but down with them, down with them; Canaanite, Hittite, Jebusite, they shall all be driven out."

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

"But oh! sir, I cannot do it; it would be like pulling my eyes out." Ay, but hear what Christ says: "It were better for thee to enter into life with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." "But it would be like cutting my arms off." Ay, and it would be better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, than to be cast into hell fire for ever. Oh! when the sinner comes before God at last, do you think he will speak as he does now? God will reveal his secret sins: the sinner will not then say, "Lord, I thought my secret sins so sweet, I could not give them up." I think I see how changed it will be then. "*Sir*" you say now, "*you are too strict*;" will you say that when the eyes of the Almighty are glowering on you? You say now, "*Sir, you are too precise*;" will you say that to God Almighty's face? "*Sir, I mean to keep such-and-such a sin*." Can you say it at God's bar at last? You will not dare to do it then. Ah! when Christ comes a second time, there will be a marvellous change in the way men talk. Methinks I see him; there he sits upon his throne. Now, Caiaphas, come and condemn him now! Judas! comes and kiss him now! What do you stick at, man? Are you afraid of him? Now, Barrabbas! go; see whether they



will prefer you to Christ now. Swearer, now is your time; you have been a bold man; curse him to his face now. Now drunkard; stagger up to him now. Now infidel; tell him there is no Christ now—now that the world is lit with lightning and the earth is shaken with thunder till the solid pillars thereof do bow themselves—tell God there is no God now; now laugh at the Bible; now scoff at the minister. Why men, what is the matter with you? Why, can't you do it? Ah! there you are; you have fled to the hills and to the rocks—"Rocks hide us! mountains fall on us; hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne." Ah! where are now your boasts, your vauntings, and your glories? Alas! alas! for you, in that dread day of wonders.

Secret sinner, what will then become of thee? Go out of this place unmasked; go out to examine thyself, go out to bend thy knee, go out to weep, go out to pray. God give thee grace to believe! And oh, how sweet and pleasant the thought, that this day sinners have fled to Christ, and men have been born again to Jesus! Brethren, ere I finish, I repeat the words at which so many have cavilled—it is now, or never, it is *turn or burn*. Solemnly in God's sight I say it; if it be not God's truth I must answer for it in the great day of account. Your consciences tell you it is true. Take it home, and mock me if you will; this morning I am clear of your blood: if any seek not God, but live in sin, I shall be clear of your blood in that day when the watchman shall have your souls demanded of him; oh, may God grant that you may be cleared in a blessed manner! When I went down those pulpit stairs a Sabbath or two ago, a friend said to me words which have been in my mind ever since—"Sir, there are nine thousand people this day without excuse in the day of judgment." It is true of you this morning. If you are damned, it will be not for want of preaching to you, and it shall not be for want of praying for you. God knoweth that if my heart could break of itself, it would, for your souls, for God is my witness, how earnestly I long for you in the bowels of Christ Jesus. Oh, that he might touch your hearts and bring you to him! For death is a solemn thing, damnation is a horrible thing, to be out of Christ is a dreadful thing, to be dead in sin is a terrific thing. May God lead you to view these things as they are, and save you, for his mercy's sake! "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved."

"Lord, search my soul, try every thought;  
Though my own heart accuse me not  
Of walking in a false disguise,  
I beg the trial of thine eyes.

Doth secret mischief lurk within?  
Do I indulge some unknown sin?  
O turn my feet whene'er I stray,  
And lead me in thy perfect way."

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## **The Security Of The Church**

As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever. - Psalm 125:2

The changes of society may well illustrate the immutability of God. In the days of David, Jerusalem was looked upon as an impregnable fortress. It is surrounded by a natural rampart of hills; and appears to lie in the center of an amphitheatre raised purposely for its defense. By the ancient Jew it was considered to be an impregnable citadel. How changed now are the manners of war! A small troop could easily take the city, and it must indeed be a strong army that would be able to garrison it in its present condition. Yet whilst Jerusalem is changed, and the figure has become inappropriate, Jerusalem's God remains, for with him is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." We must this morning consider the text, not as we should understand it in our day, but as we should have

understood it in David's time. David looked upon the city of Jerusalem, and he thought within himself, "No army can ever be able to surprise this city, and however numerous may be the invading hosts, my people will always be able to hold their own in the midst of a city so firmly fortified both by nature and by art." In his time, indeed, and in the time of his son Solomon, I suppose it would have been utterly impossible for any enemy, possessed only of the tactics of ancient warfare, to have scaled those mighty ramparts of earth which God had piled about the city. And therefore, when David said in his day, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people;" he meant this—"As Jerusalem is fortified by the mountains, so are God's people castled in the covenant, fortified in the Omnipotence of God, and therefore they are impregnablely secure. We shall thus understand the text, and endeavor this morning to work out the great thought of the security of God's people in the arms of Jehovah their Lord.

We shall consider the text, first, *as relating to the Church as a whole*, and then we shall endeavor to note *how it applies to every individual in particular*.

I. FIRST, THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE is secured by God beyond the reach of harm. She is ably garrisoned by Omnipotence, and she is castled within the faithful engagements of the covenant. How often has the Church been attacked; but how often has she been victorious? The number of her battles is just the number of her victories. Foes have come against her; they have compassed her about, they have compassed her about like bees, but in the name of God she has destroyed them. The bull of Bashan and the dog of Belial, the mighty and the insignificant, have all conspired to overthrow the Church; but he that sitteth in heaven hath laughed at them, the Lord hath had them in derision, and his church hath been as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but which abideth for ever. Turn ye now to the roll of history and read how the Church has been fortified by God, when fiercely attacked by men.

1. *Persecution* has unsheathed its bloody sword, and sought to rend up the Church by its roots, or fell it with its axe. Tyrants have heated their furnaces, have prepared their racks, have erected their stakes, the

martyrs of Christ have been dragged by thousands to a terrible death, the confessors have had to stand forth at the risk of their lives, protesting the gospel of God against the dominant of the times. The little flock has been scattered hither and thither, and the dogs of persecution have worried them in every corner whither they have fled. Into every nation of the earth have they wandered; in sheepskins and goatskins have they been clothed; their houses have been in the rocks and their sleeping places in the caves of the earth. Like the stag pursued by the hounds, they have not had a moment's space for so much as to take their breath. But has the Church been subdued? Has she ever been overcome? O God, thou hast proved the invincibility of thy truth; thou hast manifested the power of thy Word, for thou hast not only preserved thy Church in the time of greatest trouble, but, blessed be thy name thou hast made the hour of her peril the hour of her greatest triumph. You will find that whenever the Church has been the most persecuted she has been the most successful. The heathen Pro-consuls wondered when they saw the many who were prepared to die. They said, "Surely a madness must have seized upon mankind, that they cannot be content to commit suicide, but are so fond of death that they must come to our bar and plead that they are lovers of Christ as if they sought to compel us to execute them." God gave grace for the moment and in the day of persecution he braced the nerves of his people, and made them mighty to do or die, as God would have it. But, surely, had not Christ's Church been surrounded by the mountains of God's Omnipotence, she must have fallen a prey to her numerous enemies.

2. But by-and-bye the devil grew wiser. He saw that overt persecution would not suffice for the putting down of God's Church, and he therefore adopted another measure not less cruel but more crafty. "I will not only slay them," said he, "I will *malign* them." Did you ever read in history the horrible reports which were set afloat in the early ages of Christianity concerning the Christians. I dare not tell you with what vices the early Christians were charged in their private assemblies. It is certain that they were the purest and most virtuous of men, but never were men so fearfully belied. The very heathens who revelled in vice, despised the followers of Jesus on account of crimes which the voice of the liar had laid to their charge. A few years elapsed and the mud which had been cast

upon the snow-white garments of Christ's Church fell off from them, leaving them whiter than before, the clouds that sought to obscure the light of the heaven of the gospel were blown away, and "fair as the moon and clear as the sun" the innocence of Christ's Church shone forth again. But the devil has adopted the same plan in every period. He has always sought to slander any race of Christians who are the means of revival. I would not believe any minister to be eminently successful, if I were informed that everybody praised him. I am certain that such a case would be an exception, a glaring exception to all the rules of history. You remember what was said of Whitfield in his day. He was charged with crimes that Sodom never knew; and yet a more pure and heavenly man God never sent to tread this wicked earth. And it ever must be so. The Church struggling with sin and wickedness, must through the enmity of the evil one find herself bespattered and besmeared with slander. The wicked when they can do nothing else against the righteous, will spit falsehood on them. But has the Church suffered through their slander, or hath ever a solitary Christian lost aught by it? No, the Lord God who set the mountains round about Jerusalem has so put himself about his people, that no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against us in judgment we shall condemn. This is the heritage of the people of the Lord. Fear not, O Church of Christ, the slimy serpent of slander for even in thy cradle, like Hercules, when the snakes of slander came against thee thou didst slay them in thine infantile grasp, more than a conqueror through him that loved thee. And now that God is with thee, and the shout of a king in thy midst, fear not, though all men should speak against thee, thy Master will yet honor thee, and thou wilt come up from the pool of slander like a sheep from the washing, the fairer for thy black baptism, the more admired, the more lovely for all the scorn and ignominy that men have cast upon thee.

3. Again, Satan learned wisdom, and he said, "Now inasmuch as I cannot destroy this people, neither by sword nor slander, lo, this will I do, I will send into their midst wolves in sheeps clothing, I will inspire divers *heretics*, carried away with their own lusts, who shall in the midst of the church promulgate lies and prophecy smooth things in the name of the Lord. And Satan has done all this with a vengeance. In every era of the church there have been numberless bands of heretics. Only a small

company have in certain times adhered to the truth, whilst the mass of professing Christians have gone aside and have perished in the gainsaying of Korah. Look at the earliest days of Christianity. Scarcely were the apostles in their graves, and their souls in paradise, than there sprang up men who denied the Lord that bought them—some who did evil that good might come, whose damnation was just. Heresies of all kinds began to spring up, even in the first fifty years after the departure of our Master. Since that time the world has been very prolific of every shape and form of doctrine except the truth, and down to these modern times heresies have prevailed. Now behold how Satan seeks to quench the light of Israel. There is the heresy of Rome, she that sitteth upon many waters seeketh as far as she can to delude the Church, and to draw the rest of the world aside from the truth of God. She, with all the craft of hell, seeketh to proselyte where'er she may from those who are the professed followers of the truth; she will change her shape in every land; in her own dominions she will build the dungeon, and practice intolerance—in a land of freedom she can plead for liberty, and pretend to be its warmest friend. Base harlot that she is, her whoredoms have not yet ceased, nor is the cup of her fornications full. She seeketh still to devour the nations and swallow them up quick. There is her sister the Puseyism of the Church of England, I speak nothing now concerning my evangelical brethren. God Almighty shield them and bless them! My only marvel is, that they do not come out altogether, and touch not the unclean thing. But, alas, Puseyism is seeking to eat out the very vitals of our godliness, telling the masses that the priest is everything—putting down Christ and exalting the man, putting baptismal water in the place of the influences of the Divine Spirit, and exalting sacraments into the place which is only to be held by the Lord our God. Truly this dangerous and deceptive, beautiful and foolish system of religion is much to be feared, although we know that the true Church of God must ever be safe, for against her the gates of hell shall not prevail.

Alas! that we should have to say something else! and this concerning those who are commonly called evangelical, who have a form of error more insidious and evil still. Alas that I should have to "cry aloud and spare not," concerning these matters. These are days when a false charity would have us hold our tongues against the evils that we hate. My

brethren, in the midst of our dissenting churches especially there is a system which does not deserve the name of system, except from its systematic desire to crush every system. There is a system springing up which takes out of the Gospel every truth that makes it precious plucks every jewel out of the crown of the Redeemer, and tramples it under the foot of men. In a large number of our pulpits at this time you will not hear the Gospel preached by a month together. Anything else you like you may hear preached: Anti-state Churchism, political affairs—these are the current staple of the day; Christ and him crucified may go to the dogs for them. Politics fill up the pulpits, and philosophy stands in the place of theology. And when there is a little theology, what say they? Instead of exalting the Holy Spirit as the first and prime agent, they are ever exhorting men to do what only God's Spirit can do for them, and not reminding them that the effectual grace of God is necessary; the covenant, the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure" is sneered at the banner once held so manfully by Calvin, who took it from the hand of Augustine leaping over centuries to grasp it, who again received it from the hand of the apostle Paul—the banner of the old fashioned truth is to a great degree furled, and we are told that these old doctrines are effete and out of date. Puritanical divinity, they say, is not the divinity for these times; we must have a new gospel for a go-a-head era. We must have sermons preached which, if they be not absolute denial of every doctrine of the gospel, are at least sneers at them all. The man effects to be so supremely wise, that he in his own brain can devise a gospel better, fairer than the ancient gospel of the blessed God, Now, this is one of the attempts of the enemy to put down the truth, but he will never be able to do it, for "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever."

I will not be hard, but I must say a word to many of my brethren of the denomination to which I belong. There are many of you call yourselves Particular Baptists, by which you mean that you are Calvinists, and yet, gentlemen, your consciences are easy, and some of you have never preached upon election since you were ordained. The peculiarities of "the five points" are concealed. These things, you say, are offensive. And so, gentlemen, you would rather offend God than you would offend man. But you reply, "These things, you know, are high doctrines; they had better

not be preached: they will not be practical." I do think that the climax of all man's blasphemy is centred in that utterance. Will you dare to say, "There are some parts of God's truth that we do not want to preach to the people." Tell me that God put a thing in the Bible that I am not to preach! You are finding fault with my God. But you say, "It will be dangerous." What! God's truth dangerous? I should not like to stand in your shoes when you have to face your Maker on the day of judgment after such an utterance as that. If it be not God's truth, let it alone; but if you believe the thing, out with it. The world will like you just as well for being honest, and if the world does not your Master will. Keep back nothing; tell the whole gospel out. Tell out man's responsibility: do not stutter at it. Tell out divine sovereignty: do not refuse to talk of election, use the word, even if they sneer, tell men that if they believe not the blood is on their own heads, and then if the high people turn against you, snap your finger in their face; tell them you do not care—that to you it is *nothing, nothing* at all to please man; your Master is in heaven, and him will you please, come fair, come foul. This done, Satan would be balked and defeated; but at the present moment, he is mightily striving thus to overthrow the church by ill doctrine.

4. The craftiest invention of the devil, with which he seeks, in the last place to put out the church, is a device which has amazed me above every other. "Now;" says Satan, "If I can quench the church, neither by persecution, nor slander, nor heresy, I will invent another mode of destroying her." And I have often marveled at the depths of deceit which are centred in this last invention of Satan. Satan seeks to divide the church, to set us apart from one another, and not allow those who love the same truth to meet with each other and to work together in love, and peace, and harmony. "Now," says the devil, "I have it. Here is one body of good men—they are very fond of one part of God's truth. Now, there are two sets of truths in the Bible. One set deals with man as responsible creature, the other class of truths deals with God as the infinite Sovereign, dispensing his mercy as he pleases. Now these dear brethren are very fond of man's responsibility: they will preach it, and they will preach it so that if they hear the brother over the other side of the street preach God's sovereignty, they will be very wroth with him. And then I will make the brethren who preach divine sovereignty forget the other



part of the truth, and hate the brethren that preach it." Do you not see the craft of the enemy? Both of these good men are right; they both preach parts of truth; but they each so set their part of truth at the top of the other that a rivalry commences. Why, I have stepped in and heard a godly brother preach a sermon that sent my blood through my veins at a most rapid rate, whilst he earnestly preached of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come but he spoilt all his sermon by indirectly hinting—"Now, take care you don't hear Mr. So-and-so, because he will contradict all this, and tell you that you are saved by grace, and that it is not of yourself but it is the gift of God." I went, of course, and heard the good man, because I was told not to go. Well, he was preaching that "it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," and I thought he handled the text very manfully, when he showed that God was the author of all salvation; only in a parenthesis he told us not to go to that work-mongering shop on the other side of the road. Why, they were both right, but they had each got different parts of the truth; one, that truth which dealt with man as responsible; the other, that which deals with God as a Sovereign; and the devil had so perverted their judgment that they could not see that both things were true, but they must go fighting each other just to make sport for Satan. Now, I wonder that the church has not been utterly destroyed by this last device, for it is the craftiest thing, I believe, that Satan has yet brought under our notice, though without doubt his depths are too deep for our understanding. But, brethren, despite all this, let bigotry rave, let intolerance rail till it goes mad, the church is just as secure, for God hath set himself round about her, "even as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, from henceforth even for evermore."

And now just notice, before we leave this point, that as the Church always has been preserved, the text assures us she always will be, *henceforth even for ever*. There is a nervous old woman here. Last Saturday night she read the newspaper, and she saw something about five or six clergymen going over to Rome: she laid down her spectacles, and she began crying, "Oh! the Church is in danger, the Church is in danger." Ah! put your spectacles on; that is all right; never mind about the loss of those fellows. Better gone; we did not want them; do not cry if fifty more follow them, do not be at all alarmed. Some church may be in danger, but God's

Church is not. That is safe enough, that shall stand secure, even to the end. I remember with what alarm some of my friends received the tidings of the geological discoveries of modern times, which did not quite agree with their interpretation of the Mosaic history of the creation. They thought it an awful thing that science should discover something which seemed to contradict the Scriptures. Well, we lived over the geological difficulty, after all. And since then there have been different sets of philosophic infidels, who have risen up and made wonderful discoveries, and poor timid Christians have thought, "What a terrible thing! This surely will be the end of all true religion; when science can bring *facts* against us, how shall we be able to stand?" They just waited about another week, and on a sudden they found that science was not their enemy, but their friend, for the Truth though tried in a furnace like silver seven times, is ever a gainer by the trial. Ah! ye that hate the church, she shall ever be a thorn in your side! Oh! ye that would batter her walls to pieces, know this, that she is impregnable, not one of her stakes shall be removed, not one of her cords shall be broken. God hath fixed her where she is, and by divine decree established her on a rock. Do you hate the Church? Hate on: it will never be moved by all your hate. Do you threaten to crush it? It shall crush you, but you shall never injure it. Do ye despise and laugh at it? Ah! the day is coming when the laugh shall be on the other side. Wait a little while, and when her Master shall suddenly come in his glory, then shall it be seen on whose side is the victory, and who were the fools that laughed.

Thus we have disposed of the first point; THE CHURCH impreguably secure, fortified, and castled by God.

II. What is true of the mass is true of the unit. The fact which relates to the Church includes in it EVERY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH. God has fortified his people; so that every believer is infallibly secure. There are in the world certain people who teach that Christ gives grace to men, and tells them, "Now, you shall be saved if you will persevere; but this must be left to yourself." This reminds me of an old Puritanical illustration, "The Duke of Alva having given some prisoners their lives, they afterwards petitioned him for some food. His answer was, that, 'he would grant them life but no meat.' And they were famished to death." The

deniers of final perseverance represent the Deity in a similar view. 'God promises eternal life to the saints if they endure to the end,' but he will not secure to them the continuance of that grace without which eternal life cannot be had! Oh! surely if that were true, eternal life were not worth a fig to any of us. Unless our God who first saves us did engage to keep us alive and to provide for all our necessities, of what use were eternal life at all? But we bless his name,

"Whom once he loves he never leaves,  
But loves them to the end."

Once in Christ, in Christ for ever,  
Nothing from his love can sever."

The Christian is fortified and secured from all harm. And yet, O child of God, there be many that will seek to destroy thee, and thy fears will often tell thee that thou art in the jaws of the enemy. *Providence* will often seem against thee, thine eyes shall be seldom dry; it may be funeral shall follow funeral. Loss shall follow loss; a burning house shall be succeeded by a blasted crop. The Christian in this world is not secured against the perils which happen to manhood. Oh! child of God, it may seem that all things are against thee; perhaps all God's waves and billows will go over thee; thou mayest know what hunger, and nakedness, and thirst do mean; thou mayest be found in this world houseless, friendless, fatherless, motherless, but oh! remember, that neither famine, nor hunger, nor poverty, nor sickness, nor weakness, nor contempt, can separate thee from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus thy Lord. Thou mayest sink ever so low, but thou canst never sink lower than the arm of God can reach. Thy poor ship may be drifted before the gale, but it shall never go so fast but God can keep her off the rocks. Be of good cheer, the trials of this mortal life shall work out for thee "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Again, you may be *tempted* by the world! traps may be set for you on every hand, you may be tempted by your flesh, your corruptions may have great power over you, and often stagger your faith, and make you tremble, lest you should be utterly overthrown, and the devil may set

upon you with fiery darts, he may pierce you with foul insinuations, he may almost make you blaspheme, and with terrible suggestions he may drive you well-nigh to despair. But oh! remember,

"Hell and thy sins obstruct thy course,  
But hell and sin are vanquished foes;  
Thy Jesus nailed them to his cross  
And sang the triumph when he rose."

And thou mayest, too, be overcome by *sin*. Thou mayest fall God grant thou mayest not; but though thou be kept eminently consistent and extremely virtuous, thou wilt sin and sometimes that sin will get such a head against thee that thou canst scarcely stem the torrent. Conscience will whisper, "How couldst thou be a child of God, and yet sin thus?" And Satan will howl in thine ears, "He that sinneth knoweth not God." And so thou wilt be ready to be destroyed by thy sin. But do thou then, in the hour of thy dark distress, read this verse—"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever." Be thou confident in this, that even sin itself shall not be able to cut the golden link which joins thee to thy Saviour.

Have you never heard the sermons of those people who believe in the apostacy of the saints? Have you not heard them very pathetically enlarge on the dangers of Christians? They say, "Yes, you may serve God all your life, but perhaps in the last article of death your faith may faint, sin may prevail, and you may be destroyed." And they illustrate their very beautiful and comfortable idea by the figure of a ship foundering just as she reaches the harbour. Now, many wooden ships, I doubt not, do founder, and many ships built in free-will dockyards founder too; but the chosen vessels of mercy are insured against perishing, and were never known to be shipwrecked yet. As an old divine says, there are no wrecks to be seen on the sea which rolls between Jerusalem on earth and Jerusalem above. There are many tempests, but never any shipwrecks. Bishop Hooker sweetly says "Blessed for ever and ever, be that mother's child whose faith hath made him the child of God. The earth may shake, the pillars thereof may tremble under us, the countenance of the heavens may be appalled, the sun may lose his light, the moon her beauty, the

stars their glory, but concerning the man that trusted in God, if the fire have proclaimed itself unable as much as to singe a hair of his head; if lions, beasts ravenous by nature and keen by hunger, being set to devour, have, as it were, religiously adored the very flesh of a faithful man; what is there in the world that shall change his heart, overthrow his faith, alter his affections towards God, or the affection of God to him?" Oh, when we once believe this doctrine and receive it in our hearts as true, what a tendency it has to make the spirit buoyant in the deep waters, to enable us to sing in the midst of the fierce billows. Who need fear, if our salvation is made secure by the covenant of God?

And now for a few moments, without detaining you too long, I will try to show some reasons why it is quite certain that the believer cannot by any possibility perish. I want to do this, because I have a multitude of letters from this large congregation every week, and I have to say to the glory of God, there are many of those letters that make me so glad I can scarcely contain myself, whilst others arouse all the anxiety of my heart. Among them is one something like this. "Sir, I know that I was once a child of God; many years ago I had such delightful feelings, and such ecstacies, that I cannot doubt but what if I had died then I should have gone to heaven; but now, sir, I am in such distress that I am quite sure if I were to die now I should be lost." Now, my brother, I know you are here. You may take it to yourself. There are only two solutions to your mystery. If you were a child of God *then*, you are a child of God *now*, and if you would have gone to heaven then you will go to heaven now, be you what you may; if you ever were regenerated, regeneration is a work that is never done but once, and if it has been done once for you, it has not lost its efficacy—you are a child of God yet. But I am inclined to think you never were a child of God: you had a few fine ecstacies; but you never knew the plague of your own heart; I am afraid, young man, you were never taken into God's stripping room, never were tied up to the halberts, and never had the ten-thonged whip of law on your back. But, anyhow, do not tell me any more that you were converted once but not now, because if you were converted to God, God would have kept you. "The righteous *shall* hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger."

And now shall I tell you why it is certain a believer cannot perish? In the first place, how can a believer perish if that Scripture be true, which saith, that every believer is a member of Christ's body! If you will only grant me my head afloat above the water I will give you leave to drown my fingers. Try it: you cannot do it. As long as a man's head is above the flood you cannot drown him—it is clean impossible—nor yet drown any part of his body. Now, a Christian is a part of Christ, the Head. Christ, the head of the body, is in heaven, and until you can drown the head of the body, you cannot drown the body, and if the head be in heaven, beyond the reach of harm, then every member of the body is alive and secure, and shall at last be in heaven too. Dost thou imagine, O heretic, that Christ will lose a member of his body! Will Christ dwell in heaven with a mangled frame? God forbid! If Christ hath taken us into union with himself, though we be the meanest members of his heavenly body, he will not allow us to be cut away. Will a man lose a arm, or a leg, or an hand, whilst he can help himself? Ah! no, and whilst Christ is omnipotent, nought shall pluck his children from his body, for they are of "his flesh and his bones."

But again: how can a believer perish, and yet God be true? God has said "When thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee, and the floods shall not overflow thee." Now, if they should overflow us, how can God be true? "When thou passest through the fires thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Then if we could ever find a believer consumed, we could prove God's promise broken. But we cannot do that. God is with his children, and ever will be. Besides has he not said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands?" Ay, beloved, how can God be God, and yet his people plucked out of his hand? Surely he were no God to us, if he were unfaithful to a promise so oft repented and so solemnly confirmed. Besides, mark ye this. If one saint should fall away and perish, God would not only break his word, but his oath, for he hath sworn by himself, because he could swear by no greater, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." No, an oath-breaking God, a promise-despising Jehovah, were an impossibility; and therefore a perished child of God is alike impossible.

But we need not fear, beloved, that we shall ever perish, if we love the Saviour for the last reason is all potent. Will Christ lose that which he has bought with his own blood? Yes, there are men with judgments so perverted, that they believe Christ died for those that are damned, and bought with his own blood men that perish. Well, if they choose to believe that, I do not envy them the elasticity of their intellects; but this I conceive to be but an axiom, that what Christ has paid for so dearly with his own heart's blood he will have. If he loved us well enough to bear the excruciating agonies of the cross, I know he loves "well enough to keep us to the end." If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life." For I am persuaded that he that spared not his own life, but delivered it up for his people, will not withhold aught that Omnipotence can "ire.

And now I close by addressing myself for a moment or two to ungodly persons present. Thinking persons they must be, or else what I say will not be likely to be noticed by them. When I was a boy I remember having a meditation something like this: "Now, I should not like to be a thief or a murderer, or an unclean person." I had such a training that I had an abhorrence of sin of that sort. "And yet," thought I to myself, "I may be hung yet; there is no reason why I should not turn out a thief," because I recollected there were some of my schoolfellows, older than I was, who had already become very eminent in dishonesty; and I thought, "why may not I?" No one can tell the rapture of my spirit, when I thought I saw in my Bible the doctrine that if I gave my heart to Christ he would keep me from sin and preserve me as long as I lived. I was not quite sure of it—not quite certain that was the truth of the Bible, though I thought so; but I remember when I heard the minister of some small hyper chapel utter the same truth. Oh! my heart was full of rapture; I panted after that gospel. "Oh!" I thought, if God would but love me, if I might but know myself to be his!" For the enchanting part of it was, that if I were so he would keep me to the end. That made me so in love with the gospel, that boy as I was, knowing nothing savingly about the gospel, it made me love the thought of being saved, because, if saved, God would never turn me out of doors. That made the gospel very precious to me in my childhood; so that when the Holy Spirit showed me my guilt and led me to seek a

Saviour, that doctrine was like a bright star to my spirit. I always looked forward to that. I thought, "Well, if I can once look to Christ, and cast myself on him, then he will grant me grace that I shall to the end endure." And oh! that doctrine is so precious to me now, that I do think if anybody could possibly convince me that final perseverance is not a truth of the Bible, I should never preach again, for I feel I should have nothing worth preaching. If you could once make me believe that the regeneration of God might fail of its effect, and that the love of God might be separated from his own chosen people, you might keep that Bible to yourself; between its cover there is nothing that I love, nothing that I wish for, no gospel that is suitable for me. I count it to be a gospel beneath the dignity of God, and beneath the dignity of even fallen manhood, unless it be everlasting, "ordered in all things and sure."

And now poor trembling sinner, thou that knowest thy sins, believe on Christ this morning, and thou art saved, and saved for ever. Do but this moment look to him that died upon the tree, and, my brother, my sister, give me thine hand, and let us weep for joy that thou believest, and let our joy accumulate when we remember that the pillars of the heavens may totter, the solid foundations of the earth may reel, the countenance of the heavens may be astonished, the sun may be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, but nought shall pluck thee from the strength of Israel's hands. Thou art, thou shalt be infallibly secure. Come, O Holy Spirit, bless these words; for Jesus sake. Amen.

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## **Seeking For Jesus**

Seeking for Jesus. - John 6:24

The persons who are here described as seeking for Jesus, were looking



after him from a very mean and selfish motive, not because of the gracious words which he spake, nor to render him thanks for benefits received at his hands, but merely because they had eaten of the loaves and fishes, and hoped to do so again. From such sordid motives let us flee. May we all shun with detestation the very idea of making a profession of religion for the sake of worldly advantage; it is detestable to the last degree. Those who seek Jesus Christ with the grovelling desire to make a gain of godliness are hypocrites of the meanest order; like Judas they will follow the Lord while they can filch from the bag, and like that "son of perdition," they will sell him when the twenty pieces of silver are the reward of treachery. Let them know that such gain will involve their souls' eternal loss.

I shall apply the words before us to those who really and spiritually seek Jesus, seek him as Jesus—the Savior who saves his people from their sins. Last Sabbath morning I tried to speak concerning maturity in grace, giving the advanced believer a word; and as we are bound to give a portion of meat in due season to all classes, I will now deal with those who are but babes in grace, if indeed they be babes at all; I shall speak to those who cannot say, "We have found him," but who are earnestly "seeking for Jesus."

I. First, let us notice THE CHARACTER OF THE STATE described as "seeking for Jesus." In it there is a mingling of good and evil. We see in it much of light, but too much of darkness. It is neither day nor night, a dim twilight, hopeful but overclouded. I may call it "not light, but darkness visible." It is one of those miry places, a marsh, not altogether sea, and certainly not land. Like the brackish water of the river's mouth, not altogether salt, but assuredly not sweet.

"Seeking for Jesus" has a large amount of hopefulness in it; it is as the almond tree in blossom, though as yet fruit there is not. The seeker at any rate is not indifferent now; he is not a careless sluggard, demanding yet more sleep and folding of the hands; he is not a defiant rebel, daring the wrath of God with blasphemous audacity; he is no longer a denier of revelation; he would not be seeking for Jesus unless he had some kind of faith—at any rate, a theoretical faith—in a Savior, and in his need of him.

Now it is a very encouraging sign when we see men aroused and willing to hear. When we can bring men to think, we are very grateful, for thoughtfulness lies on the road to conviction of sin, and conviction is on the way to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I am glad, my dear friend, that you are now no longer deaf to the appeals of God's word; it is well that your ear is open, and though as yet what you hear is far from bringing you any comfort, rest assured it is a great blessing to you to hear the truth, even when it condemns you. I rejoice to see you under concern, and I hope that something may come of it.

Your face is now turned in the right direction, now that you are it seeking for Jesus." When you sought sinful pleasure you were facing the pit of hell, now your face is heavenward. I am glad that Jesus is the object of your search, for depend upon it, nothing else is worth seeking for: salvation from sin and hell should be the first object of your soul's desire. For an alarmed and awakened sinner to seek rest in ceremonies, will be a search for bread among ashes; to labor for salvation by thine own righteousness, will be looking for substance among dreams. Thy seeking after Jesus shows that thou art on the right tack, and though as yet thou hast not reached the haven, the helm is set in the right direction, and I am grateful to God for it, and encouraged concerning thee. I regard thy present state as the little cloud which foretells the coming rain; but, alas! I may be disappointed, and the early cloud may melt into nothingness. Hope tells a flattering tale, but she may be deceived. What a pleasing sight it is to see a man who has formerly been prayerless, casting himself upon his knees in secret! How gratifying to see the unread Bible brought out from the dust and carefully studied! Methinks an angel must look on with holy interest when he sees the fresh tear fall in the solitary chamber, and the unaccustomed suppliant bow before his God. Glad are those blessed spirits when they hear the seeker say, "O God, I will seek thee until I find thee; I will cry unto thee till I receive an answer of peace." Intelligence of such a vow would make a church rejoice in hope; trusting that the time for newborn children of God to be found in her midst was fully come. A heart that turns itself to Christ if haply it may find him, is evidently in a hopeful condition.

Yet in the state of "seeking for Jesus" there is much that is doubtful; for,

my brethren, the seeker after Christ remains disobedient to the great command of the gospel. If he were obedient to the great gospel precept, he would at once cease to be a seeker, and become a happy finder. What is the command of the gospel? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Properly speaking, Christ is not an object for seeking, he is not far from any of us; like the brazen serpent uplifted by Moses, he is not so much to be looked for as looked at. We have neither to clamber to heaven to find him in the loftiness of his Deity, and bring him down; nor dive into the chambers of Hades, to bring him up again from the dead. Thus saith the Lord, "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. A prayer will reach him, a wish will find him, a groan will pierce his heart—do but confide in him, and he is yours. The first command of the gospel to guilty sinners is not to pray, to search the Scriptures, to attend upon sermons—all these are natural duties, and woe unto the man who neglects any of them; but the command, the special command of the gospel is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!" Now, the seeking sinner is disobedient to the command. He is going about hither and thither seeking, but he declines trusting; he is eagerly looking abroad for that which is at home; he is seeking for peace afar off when it is nigh him. He looks east and west to behold a wonder, while the Wonderful, the Savior, stands at his right hand ready to forgive. The way of salvation for me as a sinner is simply this, that I, being a sinner, do now put my trust in Christ Jesus the substitute for sinners. God has set forth his crucified Son as the accepted propitiation for sin: the way of salvation is that I accept him for what God has set him forth, namely, as the atonement for my sin, in which I place my sole reliance. Seeing he is God, seeing he took upon himself the nature of man, seeing that as mediator he suffered in the stead of as many as trust in him, I trust him, and I obtain thereby the blessed result of his sufferings—I am in fact thereby saved. Now, it is some good thing certainly to be a seeker, but it is also an ill thing if I follow my seeking and refuse God's way of salvation. Hear what the apostle John saith: "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." This is no small sin to be guilty of, and it entails no small punishment, for "he that

believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Suppose that I have been told of a remedy for my disease. Well, it is so far good that I desire to be cured of my deadly malady, it is so far hopeful that I have sent for a physician. But after being informed that there is the one specific for my disease, and that it alone will certainly heal me—if I were still to continue seeking a remedy, or to say I am seeking this one true remedy, I shall remain sick, and ultimately die. I shall never be healed unless I take that which is prescribed: to seek it is not enough, I must actually take it. In seeking, then, there is some good, but oh, how much of evil! Here are gleams and flashes of light, but oh, how dense is the darkness! Here is a little smoke in the flax, but I dare scarcely call it a spark. O seeker for Jesus, think of this, for while I would not discourage thee, yet would I encourage thee to end thy seeking by becoming a believer. Look not at salvation's cup, but drink of it. Stand not by the fountain's brim, but wash in it and be clean. O may the Holy Spirit lead thee to cease thy search for goodly pearls, for the pearl of great price is before thee. Jesus is not to be discovered as a secret, he stands before thee openly. Behold his hands and his feet, mark well his riven side, and as thou lookest, trust, and henceforth he is all thine own.

Hear, dear friend, your true position. It is the case of a soldier on the battle field, wounded, bleeding, life oozing away from him, he is perishing, but he is sufficiently sensible to know it and to call for help. The surgeon is on the field within hearing, the sufferer pleads for relief with many cries and entreaties. So far well; but I pray you remember that crying and weeping will not of themselves heal the sick man—the surgeon must actually come and bind up his wounds; and if he refuses to receive him, he may cry as he wills, but he will bleed to death. So remember that your prayers and seekings of themselves cannot save you, Jesus must come to you, and it is madness on your part to refuse him by your unbelief. To give another similitude: you are to-day like the manslayer of old, you have done the murderous deed, vengeance is armed against you; swift as lightning judgment pursues you; you are not now slumbering in foolish security, or presumptuously defying the avenger, but happily you are so aroused that you are running towards the city of refuge. I delight to mark your earnest running, but run as you may, you are not safe until you

are within the city gate; the most vigorous running will not save you if it do not end within the walls of refuge. To enter that open gate, to dwell within that sheltering wall, to enjoy the privilege of sanctuary—this is safety; all else is but hope of escape, and not deliverance itself. To pray, to hear, to desire, to seek—all this is the roadway and the running, but Christ himself must be laid hold upon by faith, or we are not saved. Run, man, but oh! take care that thou run in God's way, by faith in Jesus, and not by trusting in thy resolves and feelings. Thou must have Christ to be thine by personal faith, or thou must die eternally. Let me give yet another picture. You are like one who has been asleep in a burning house. At last you are awakened; the cries of those who would fain save you have broken your deadly slumbers. You start up in horror. I think I see you now at the upper window, with the flames drawing near to you. You clearly perceive your danger, you passionately clamor for aid; all your energies are aroused. So far, good; but, man, all this will not rescue thee; thou must get into the fire escape which is now uplifted to the window. Art thou unwilling to take the one and only way of escape? It is close to thee; it is suitable, it is efficient; why seek another? There it is, and precisely what thou needest. Thy present alarm will only be the prelude of thy despair, if thou dost put from thee the way of escape. I put these figures before you that you may see that while you are only seeking for Jesus, your best friends dare not altogether hope for you, but are led to tremble too. We wonder which way the scale will turn, your future quivers in the balances. As anxious eyes watch a laboring barque making with difficulty for port, and in imminent danger of the rocks, so watch we you. We see you like Lot and his family, ready to leave the City of Destruction, but you have not yet reached the mountain, and our heart asks concerning you, "Will he linger in the plain? Will he look back? Or will he altogether be delivered?" If you remain as you are, there is no hope of you. All the supposed good which is now in you, is vanity itself if it leaves you short of Christ. Remember well this verse, and I will pass on:

—

"Why those fears, poor seeking sinner?  
Why those anxious, gloomy fears?  
Sighs and sorrowings cannot save thee,  
Healing dwells not in thy tears;

'Tis BELIEVING  
Which the soul to Christ endears."

## II. The second part of our discourse shall deal with THE PERPLEXITIES OF THIS STATE.

"Seeking for Jesus" is a state of heart in which the poor soul is usually very much put to it—"tumbled up and down in his thoughts," as John Bunyan would say; for first seekers are very often much perplexed, as the result of their ignorance of the way of salvation. Too often, awakened souls, though they may have heard the gospel, do not in their hearts understand it. Many enquirers do not know what faith is. I am persuaded millions of our fellow country-men do not know what believing in Jesus means. Though every Sabbath-day they are told, yet do they not catch the thought, for the Spirit of God has not illuminated their minds. To believe in Jesus, as we say again, and again, and again, is simply to trust in Jesus—to take God at his word, to take Christ for what God says he is, namely, the atonement, the satisfaction for sin, the Savior of sinners. But poor, troubled consciences think faith is a deep mystery, and they go about like blind men groping for the wall; they wander like travelers in a dense fog, not knowing which way leads to their homes; hoping, but hoping against hope, by reason of ignorance. Many, though desirous to be saved, do not understand the work of Christ, or know what atonement is. Though the doctrine of substitution, which is the very marrow of the gospel, is to believers so very plain, yet many seekers have not learned it. That Jesus bore the sin of his people; that "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" that he was made a sin for us; that justice received its due at his hands; this precious fact many penitent sinners have not grasped. They still think there is so much repentance to do, so much feeling to endure, so much praying to go through, so much mystery to be experienced; but the plain, simple precept, "Believe and live," trust and be accepted, hide under the shadow of the cross and be safe—this, through ignorance, they do not understand, and this involves them in trouble upon trouble, till their way is hedged up with thorns.

At such times, too, to increase their perplexity, they are usually distracted

with fear. Persons in a panic act generally in the worst conceivable manner for their own safety, and an awakened sinner is in much the same condition; a terrible sound is in his ears, he hears the rumbling of the everlasting tempest, he sees the gathering storm. He knows not what to do, nor whither to flee. His sins, which once appeared such trifles, now rise before him like mountains of blackness; the wrath of God, which once he defied, makes him exceeding fear and quake. He sees the dark record of his transgressions, and anticipates the hour when all his sins shall be read before the assembled universe, and the sentence of wrath shall go forth against him. Whither shall he flee! He scarce knows how or where to fly. A spirit distracted with dread is never a wise spirit, and often is goaded on to madness. Pressed out of measure with forebodings of heart, and threatenings of conscience, many a man refusing to believe in Jesus, has laid violent hands upon himself. Do you wonder, then, that souls under a sense of sin and fear of wrath, are far from being calm and collected, but rather are like mariners in a storm, who "reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man"? How soon would their bewilderment end in sweet repose, if they would obey the divine mandate and accept the great salvation!

During these struggles for life, the mind is usually harassed with a thousand questions. The newly-awakened mind is very apt to lose itself in the many spiritual problems which lie before it. The man cared nothing for these matters before, but now he has even a morbid craving after knowledge; he seems as if he could not learn too much or too fast. How many an enquirer instead of turning to the cross, worries himself with intricacies of doctrine, vexed points which belong rather to metaphysics than to divinity! They are fascinated by the "things hard to be understood," and forget the truths which a wayfaring man, though a fool, may readily comprehend. How many ask themselves, "Are we elect?" when their enquiry should be, "How can a man be cleansed from iniquity?" Forsooth, they must learn Latin and Greek before they know their letters, and must fathom the doctrine of election before they will believe in the redemption of Jesus. They would come to the Father before they have come to the Son, and learn their predestination before their pardon. That which has perplexed the wisest of men, namely, how to reconcile divine ordination with the free agency of man, they attempt to

grapple with while they are in danger of the unquenchable fire. They philosophise at hell's mouth, and debate in the jaws of perdition. You may show them how absurd it is, as absurd as for a drowning man to wish to quibble about hydraulics, and refuse to lay hold on the friendly rope until he understands some mystery in hydrostatics; or, as if a person sorely sick refused all surgery until he understood anatomy, and comprehended the secret influences of drugs upon the divers portions of the body. Yet some enquirers will abide in this folly. I do not wonder at it, when I remember how foolish man is by nature. Men who have left the whole spiritual realms untrodden are very apt, when they see it open up suddenly before their eyes, to aspire in their hearts' pride to stand upon its loftiest peaks, to climb its Himalayas, to swim its Bosphorus, to fathom its Atlantic, and from this cause they forget its green pastures and still waters. I would have every convinced sinner here listen to my word this morning. Friend, thou hast to do with the plain truth of the gospel—namely, this, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"—sinners such as thou art, and faith links thee to that Savior. When thou hast learned that lesson, then shalt thou discover that God hath chosen thee from the beginning, that he hath ordained thee unto eternal life; but as yet thou canst not unriddle that matter. Leave thou that glorious doctrine till first thy soul be saved by faith in Jesus Christ. It is plain, however, that this appetite for strong meat takes off the babe from the unadulterated milk of the word. These questions help to confuse, trouble, worry, and distract the seeker for Jesus.

At this hour too, to make confusion more confounded, Satan is quite sure to assail the soul with his diabolical insinuations and suggestions, with strong temptations and despairing thoughts. No king will willingly lose his subjects, and Satan when he sees his captives about to turn runaways, sets extra guards around them. He will set others on to tempt them, or he will come himself personally and inject into the soul the most horrible thoughts, the most blasphemous suggestions, and the most despairing forebodings that can be conceived of. Having felt this, I speak tenderly to such as may now be exercised with them. Marvel not at them, neither be dismayed. If thou canst, by the Holy Spirit's help, resist Satan, he will flee from thee; if thou canst assail him with "it is written," he will leave thee; but be not astonished if now for awhile the fiery darts fly thick as hail. He



has his mitrailleuses from which he can vomit ten thousand shots at once upon a poor lost soul, and make it feel as though it were broken in pieces all asunder with horror and dismay. Thou wilt triumph over him yet if thou believest: the Lord will bruise Satan under thy feet shortly. Be thou of good courage! Though thou fall, thou shalt rise again; faith will lift thee up in the power of Jesus. I marvel not that when that dog of hell howls in thine ears, thy spirit is sorely put to it for comfort.

It may be also that when the soul is seeking for Jesus, it is at the same time much grieved to find it cannot even now cease from sin. "My old sins," saith the heart, "I would be rid of them, but how can I hope for forgiveness, for I have sinned this very day? I went to my chamber, and I bowed my knee, and said, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner!' and I came down stairs resolved to be watchful, but something vexed me, and I spoke unadvisedly. How can I think God will have mercy on me?" Or saith another, "I was seeking the Savior this morning; but I went out to my business, and I met with worldly company, and I forgot my Lord: I am afraid I mingled with them so closely as to participate in their sinful mirth, and now how can the Lord have any pity upon such a hypocritical seeker as I have been?" As if that poor heart expected to be perfect before it had even found pardon! As if a patient expected to be perfectly well before he had followed the advice of his physician! My dear hearer, if you were able to cease from all sin for a single day, I am sure you would be out of place on earth, for heaven is the place for perfect people, and not this sinful earth. If a fountain sent forth nothing but pure water for one whole day, we might conclude that it was completely purified. The bearing of good fruit for one season would prove the tree to be good. If your heart abstained from sin of itself throughout one day, it might for another, and so on for ever, and where would be the need of a Savior? What, dost thou not know that Christ came to save thee from thy new sins as well as from thine old transgressions? Is his arm too short to reach thy daily needs? His blood of too little power to wash away thy fresh pollutions? Hast thou still some hope of bettering thyself? Have done with this trifling. Confess thyself a helpless sinner, shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, depraved in heart, and, therefore, needing the never-ceasing mercy of the Lord thy God. Come, wash now in the fountain filled with blood, and if sin returneth, ask Jesus to wash thy feet again. Make

Jesus your sole reliance. Cry to him, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Nothing else can end your perplexities; you cannot untie the Gordian knot of your difficulties, cut it, then, by leaving all to Jesus. You cannot overcome your sins except by the blood of the Lamb. You cannot be what you should be, nor what you would be, except by taking Jesus to be your all in all. Here is a song for you—

"At last I own it cannot be  
That I should fit myself for thee:  
Here, then, to thee I all resign;  
Thine is the work, and only thine.

What shall I say thy grace to move?  
I give up every plea beside,  
Lord I am sin, but thou art love:  
Lord, I am lost—but thou hast died!"

III. And now, in the third place, let me warn you of THE DANGERS OF THE STATE of "seeking for Jesus."

I have already told you that there is much of hopefulness, but there is much of peril in your condition. Dear seeker, what a sad thing it is that you should be wasting so much time, and losing so much comfort, by this long-continued seeking, when it might all end so happily even now at this present hour. Hadst thou believed in Jesus at the very first, thou hadst had light at once. How often would he have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but you would not! If you will trust him now, the day star shall shine in your heart. You are like Hopeful and Christian in Giant Despair's Castle. They lamented and bemoaned their common sorrow, and planned divers unavailable methods of escape; but at last Christian, as one half amazed, broke out into this passionate speech: "What a fool, quoth he, am I to lie in this stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." Then said Hopeful, "That's good news: good brother, pluck it out of thy bosom, and

try." My awakened hearer, this is your condition. You have in your bosom, and you have in God's word, that which will unlock every door in your prison-house. Up, man, and try it now. Canst thou not believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that God has sent Jesus to bear thy sin? Canst thou not trust in him? If thou canst, thou art free; thy sins are forgiven thee, thou art saved. You have perhaps heard the incident of a dove pursued by a hawk, which flew into the bosom of a man who was walking in the fields, and you remember that it was safely protected by him whom it had trusted. The dove would not of itself have flown there, but under the terror of the hawk it sought a shelter. You have been afraid of Jesus, you have thought he would not receive you. But now that hell pursues you, be venturesome, and fly to him. Say as our hymn puts it:—

"I can but perish if I go  
I am resolved to try;  
For if I stay away, I know  
I must for ever die."

If Christ stood with a drawn sword in his hand, you had better run on the point of his sword than perish without him. O come thou to him, driven by desperation itself, if by nothing else, come into his bosom! Thou shalt have peace at once. But all the while thou remainest seeking, I know not in what distracted manner, thou art wasting time, thou art missing comfort, thou art losing opportunities of happiness. Cease thy seeking, for there is the Man whom you seek. He stands revealed before thee. Reach hither thy finger and put it into the print of the nails; or if that be too bold, touch but the hem of his garment, and thou shalt be made whole.

Another evil is not only the losing present peace and comfort, but the danger of being driven to despair. I do not doubt that some persons who were once sincere but unrenewed seekers, have now given up all thought of seeking Christ, because they continued to seek when he was near them, to look for him instead of looking to him; and they have waited so long in prayer and Bible reading, and so on, that now they utterly despair, and give all up as hopeless. It is no wonder. If you will try to do a thing in a wrong way, you cannot hope to succeed. If a man will not plough and

sow, neither shall he reap. If ye will not believe, neither shall ye be established. A person may be very industrious indeed in what he does, but if he follows a method which never can produce the result he desires, he must not be surprised when he is disappointed. You are a seeker, and I am glad you are; but if you will not put your trust in Jesus, and lay your burden down at the cross where he offered the great sacrifice, it is no marvel if you continue to seek in vain. It will be a great sorrow, but it will not be a great wonder, if you become at last despairing, and are shut up in the iron cage. O man, O woman, break away from this. May God's Holy Spirit come to your rescue now! Give up thine own ideas of how to get peace, take God's method of salvation, and lay hold on eternal life by trusting in the Savior slain.

Another danger is that in some cases, seeking at length dies out in indifference. Having sought after a fashion by prayer, and failing to find peace at once, temptations to go back to the world's pleasure attack the soul, and too often it becomes henceforth impervious to exhortations and expostulations. The unbroken, unrenewed heart grows sullen, and declares, "I tried, but I did not succeed. I may as well have what pleasure I can have, for spiritual joys are denied me. If the world to come cannot be mine, I will have this world and take my fill of it." I pray you may never be driven to that, but my fear is that if you tarry long in this border land, seeking but yet halting between two opinions, undecided and unbelieving, at last you will relapse into your former state of spiritual slumber, and your last end will be worse than the first.

Another danger is lest you should take up with something short of Jesus Christ. I have known persons who have been content to remain seekers all their days. They have felt comforted by the thought that they are seekers. Now, such comfort is daubing with untempered mortar. A man out of employment has been walking up and down the London streets to find something to do. His family is in need, and he must find a situation. He is quite right to seek, but he will not be satisfied with seeking, he wants to find. Tramping the street will not feed his children. He is not contented with having called at many shops; he will not rest till he finds what he is after—and he would be very foolish if he did. So to be a seeker after Christ, walking up and down the streets as it were, will not fill your

hungry soul; you must get Christ himself. If any unemployed father of a family were to say, "Well, I walk about so many days in the week, and so many hours in the day, and I am quite satisfied, though I do not find anything to do," you would think him a great simpleton. And so with you. It is a good sign when there is an appetite; but a mere appetite does not satisfy a man—he must eat the food provided. Your seeking Christ will not save you, except it leads you in very deed to believe in Jesus. It is an ill sign when a man says, "Well, I am doing my best, I am always at a place of worship, I am a Bible reader, I practice prayer at home, I do my best." My dear friend, if you settle down in that idea, you are self-righteous, and are off the road altogether; besides, you are lying to your own heart, for after all you are at enmity with God, and the sign of that enmity is this, that you refuse to believe on his dear Son. If you were reconciled to God you would love Jesus Christ, and trust in him. I see what it is—you have resolved, after all, to be your own saviour; you still think that there is something in outward religion to produce salvation; whereas, I solemnly assure you that, if you stand out against believing in Christ, if you will not fly to those dear wounds of his, if you will not hide beneath the shelter of the atonement, you will go to hell as well from a place of worship as from the haunts of sin, and will perish as certainly with a Bible read as with a Bible burned.

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,  
Can do helpless sinners good."

"Oh, but," you say, "I feel my sins so much!" Yes, but if you trust in your feelings you will perish in them as much as though you wallowed in your sins. O soul, resolve with Toplady—

"He that suffer'd in my stead,  
Shall my Physician be  
I will not be comforted  
Till Jesus comforts me."

Never hope to be saved except by God's way of salvation. O that the Holy Ghost would enable you in your heart to say, "Now I come to thee, O Jesus; guilty as I am, I lift my eye to thee, and this is my prayer: 'Help me

for thy mercy's sake; have pity upon me and cleanse me in thy blood, for I put all my trust in thee." Resolve, O seeker, to have no refuge of lies, no Savior but the Lamb of God.

I will confess to you, dear seeker, that often and often I am myself personally driven to do what I trust you may be led to do to-day. I look back upon my past life, and while I have much to thank God for, much in which to see his Spirit's hand, yet when I feel my responsibilities and my shortcomings, my heart sinks within me. When I think of my transgressions, better known to myself than to any one else, and remember too that they are not known even to me as they are to God, I feel all hope swept away and my soul left in utter despair, until I come anew to the cross, and bethink me of who it was that died there, and why he died, and what designs of infinite mercy are answered by his death. It is so sweet to look up to the Crucified One again, and say, "I have nought but thee, my Lord, no confidence but thee. If thou be not accepted as my substitute I must perish, if God's appointed Savior be not enough I have no other, but I know thou art the Father's Wellbeloved, and I am accepted in thee. Thou art all I want, and all I have." How I desire, with intense longing, that you may do the same; it would be a blessed day for you, and for me a joyful occasion. The Jews in the present chapter asked our Savior, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" and he said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The greatest of all works, the most Godlike work, is to leave off self-righteous seeking, and trust in Jesus.

IV. Now I will conclude by delivering one or two DIRECTIONS TO THOSE WHO ARE "SEEKING FOR JESUS." Very brief shall these be.

The first direction is—give attention, dear friend, to the object of faith. The only way by which you can be saved is by faith. Take that to be settled. Now if a man says, "I cannot believe such a thing"—what then? What is his wisest course? Suppose you find a difficulty in believing a report—what do you do? why, you consider the probabilities of it. Suppose it, had been rumoured that the Emperor Napoleon had shot himself. Shall I believe the report? I will ask whence the rumor comes, what intelligence corroborates it, upon what authority it is stated, and

soon; by that means I arrive at a conclusion whether it is probably true, or is a mere idle tale. Now if you earnestly desire to believe, faith is the gift of God, and a work of the Spirit, but God works according to the laws of mind, and faith in Christ will most readily come to you in conformity with those laws. "Faith cometh by hearing," how by hearing? Why, because by hearing I learn the truth concerning Christ, and what I hear commends itself to my judgment and understanding, and so I come to believe. Faith comes to us by reading which is another form of hearing. Read what the Scripture has to say about the Messiah and his work, and you will be helped to believe God's testimony, by knowing what it is and on what authority it comes to you. Let your hearing and your reading be accompanied with meditation; like the Virgin Mary, ponder these things in your heart. "Incline your ear," saith the Spirit, "and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." Now, that inclining of the ear means a devout and diligent attention to the good news, and a weighing of it in your inmost heart. Now look at it, you have sinned, and God must punish sin. These two facts are clear enough to your conscience. Is it not a marvellous system that God should be pleased to put away sin through an atonement, by laying the sin upon another, and punishing it in the person of his Son? Do you know of any other system that would meet the case so well, that would be so suitable to you? I believe that the authenticity of Scripture is better proved by the very existence of this doctrine than by anything else, for no human mind could ever have contrived or conceived of a way so just to God, and yet so infinitely gracious. I feel sure it is true, I am certain of it. Then I find it promised over and over again by God himself, that if I trust Christ I shall have the benefit of all his work. I therefore believe the thing is reasonable, it is proclaimed by divine authority. I have God's promise for it, I know that the Almighty One cannot lie; I cheerfully accept what he provides for me, and I am saved. My dear hearer, if thou findest it hard to believe, shut thyself up this afternoon in thy room, and come not out again till thou hast pictured to thy mind's eye the everlasting God unveiling himself of his ineffable splendours, and taking upon himself the nature of man; behold that glorious one nailed to Calvary's tree, forsaken of God, crying out in anguish, and dying without a friend, and all to make an atonement to the law of God! As thou art fixing thine eyes upon this, and bowing in humble prayer, faith will come to thee, the Holy Ghost will over-shadow thee and

beget it in thy soul; faith will drop in thy soul like the dew from heaven; thou wilt wonder to find the hardness of thine heart all gone, and thine unbelief all departed, and thou wilt say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Another direction, however, is—take care, my dear friend, to clear away as far as possible, everything that would hinder your believing. Now you may depend upon it that going into sin binders believing. You cannot continue in wilful sin and yet become a believer; sin cherished in the heart is an effectual hindrance. A man cannot be tied to a post and yet run away at the same time; if you bind yourself to your sin, you cannot escape. Withdraw at once from evil company—it is a very deadly mischief to young seekers. You hear an impressive sermon, but then you go away talking with idle gossips, and you fall into frivolous chit-chat on the Sabbath afternoon; you cannot expect your soul to grow in the right direction under such influences. Get you to your knees, get you to solitude, get you to your God, get, you to Jesus Christ; this it is that will roll away the stone which blocks the door.

And, once again, do remember that till you have believed, your danger is of the most imminent kind. You are not in danger of something future only, you are in peril even now, for the wrath of God abideth on you. You are not like a city which is to be attacked by troops yet at a distance: the Judge is even at the door. You are actually besieged. The foes have encompassed you round about; they lift the scaling ladders, they will soon scale the walls. Beware, O sinner, beware, for thy present state is terrible; thy future state will be hopeless. To-day is the accepted time. Now or never it is with some of you—now escape for your lives: now seek, but seek in the right way, by believing in him who is the Savior of the sons of men.

How I have longed, this morning, for a tongue like the pen of a ready writer; how I have opened my mouth and panted to speak these things in passionate earnest, for I hunger for your salvation. Speak from my soul I do, but I cannot preach as I would, else would I saturate this sermon with my tears. O that the Master might bless even my weakness of speech to carry home the truth to your hearts and consciences. I do not like to let



one of you go unless you have thought over these things, and have given your hearts to Jesus. I shall probably never address many of you again, certainly not all of you. You have come across the sea and you are going to the ends of the earth, some of you. I speak in God's name. O now, ere yet thou hast gone from under the sound of the word, now let the believing look be given: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." It is the cry of the crucified Savior. Turn not away from that dear voice so full of anguish, hide not your eyes from that brow still marked with the thorn-crown, despise not those nailed hands and feet, but yield to him as again he cries in agony of love, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." O Lord, do thou turn them, and they shall be turned. Amen.

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## **Seeking Richly Rewarded**

The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. - Psalm 34:10

The young lions are very strong; they are as yet in the freshness of their youth, and yet their strength does not always suffice to keep them supplied. The young lions are very crafty; they understand how to waylay their game and leap upon them with a sudden spring at unawares, and yet, with all their craftiness, they howl for hunger in the wood. The young lions are very bold and furious, very unscrupulous; they are not stayed from any deed of depredation, and yet for all that, free-booters as they are, they sometimes lack, and suffer hunger. These are just the type of many men in the world; they are strong men, they are cunning men, they are thoroughly up to the times—smart, sharp men. If anybody could be

well supplied, one would think they should be. But how many of them go to bankruptcy and ruin, and, with all their cunning, they are too cunning, and, with all their unscrupulousness, they manage at last full often, to come to an ill end. They do lack and suffer hunger. But here are the people of God—they are regarded as simpletons, such simpletons as to seek the Lord instead of adopting the maxims of universal worldly wisdom namely, "Seek yourself"; they have given up what is called the first law of human nature, namely, self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-serving, and have come to seek the Lord, to seek to magnify him. And what comes of their simplicity? "They shall not want any good thing." Notwithstanding their want of power, their want of cunning, and the check which conscience often puts upon them so that they cannot do what others can to enrich themselves, yet for all that, they have a fortune ensured to them: they "shall not want any good thing."

Let us look at this text now, and together consider it thus: first, the seeking of the Lord which is here intended; and then following upon that, the promise that is given upon such seeking.

#### 1. THE SEEKING OF THE LORD HERE INTENDED.

We must be particular and very precise about this. The promise is so rich that we wish to win it fully, but we do not wish to be dishonest. We would not take a word of God that does not belong to us, lest we should deceive ourselves, and be guilty of robbing God. We must go carefully and jealously here, and must search ourselves to see if in very deed and truth we are such as really seek the Lord.

Now, the term to "seek the Lord," I may say, is the description of the life of the Christian. When he lives as he should, his whole life is seeking the Lord. It is with this he begins. "Behold, he prayeth," that is, he seeks the Lord. He has begun to be conscious of his sin; he is seeking pardon of the Lord. He has begun to be aware of his danger; he is seeking salvation in the Lord. He is now aware of his powerlessness, and he is looking for strength to the Lord. Those deep convictions, those cries and tears, those repentings and humblings, and, above all, those acts of simple confidence in which he casts himself upon the great atonement made upon Calvary's

bloody tree—those are all acts of seeking the Lord. Now, perhaps, some of you have got no farther than this. Well, you shall have your proportion of blessing, according to your strength. You shall have your share in it, little as you are. He will give to his children at the table their portion, as well as to those who have grown to manhood.

After a man has attained unto eternal life by confiding in the Lord Jesus, he then goes on to seek the Lord in quite another way. No wonder; since he has found the Lord, or rather has been found of him, and yet he still presses on to apprehend him of whom he has been already apprehended. He still presses forward, seeking the Lord, and he seeks the Lord thus. He seeks now to know the Lord's mind, the Lord's law and will. "Show me what thou wouldest have me to do," saith he. "Lord, I went by my own wit once, and I brought myself into a dark wood: I lost myself: I was at hell's brink, and thou didst save me: now, Lord, guide and direct me: be pleased to teach me: open my lips when I speak: guide my hands when I act: I wait at thy feet, feeling that:—

"For holiness no strength have I;  
My strength is at thy feet to lie."

The man now seeks the Lord by daily and constant prayer, seeking that he may be upheld, guided, constrained in paths of righteousness, and restrained from the ways of sin. He becomes a seeker of the Lord after sanctification as once he was after justification. And then he becomes a seeker of the Lord in a further sense. He seeks to enjoy the Lord's love, and his gracious fellowship and communion. He seeks to get near in reverent friendship to his Lord. He now longs to grow up in the likeness of Christ, that his intercourse with the Father and the Son may be more close, more sweet, more continuous. He feels that God is his Father, and that he is no longer at a distance from him in one sense, for he is made nigh by the blood of the cross. Yet sometimes he is oppressed with a sense of his old evil heart of unbelief and in departure from the living God, and he cries out, "Draw me nearer to thyself." In fact, his prayer always is:

"Nearer my God to thee,  
Nearer to thee:

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

He seeks the Lord's company. He delights to be in God's house, and at God's mercy-seat, and at the foot of the cross, where God reveals himself in all his glory. He is constantly crying for a larger capacity to receive more of God, and the longing of his soul is, "When shall I come and appear before God?" He feels that he never shall be satisfied till he awakes up in the Lord's likeness. Now, all this, which may be private within him, and scarce known to any, operates practically in an outward seeking of the Lord which makes the man's life to be sublime. The genuine Christian lives for God. He makes the first object of all that he does the glory of God, the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, the showing forth of his praise, who has brought him out of darkness into marvellous light. He is a young man, an apprentice; he has been converted, and he says, "Now, what can I do while I am in this house to make it better, to make it happier and holier, that men may see what the religion of Jesus is? How can I recommend my Lord and Master to those among whom I dwell—to my master and my mistress, and my fellow-servants?" He becomes a tradesman on his own account, and when he opens that shop-door he says, "I do not mean to trade for myself, I will make this to be my object, that this shall be God's shop; God has got to keep me; he has promised that he will; therefore, I may take what I want for the daily subsistence of myself and my children; but I will keep the shop for God for all that, and if he prospers me, I will give him of my substance; but whatever comes of it, I will so trade across my counter, so keep those books, and manage those bills, that I will let the world see what a Christian trader is, and I will seek thus to recommend my Lord and my God, and my object shall be to make him famous."

He seeks the Lord on Sundays. He desires at the Sunday-school, or the preaching-station, or anywhere he may serve, to be glorifying God. But he equally seeks him on Mondays and other weekdays, for he believes there is a way of turning over calicoes, weighing pounds of tea, ploughing acres of land, driving a cart, or whatever else he may be called to do, by which he can honour God, and cause others to honour him.

Now, I say very solemnly—I hope I am mistaken in what I say but I fear I am not—I am afraid there are many professors who would tell a lie if they said that they sought God always in their business, for though they are the members of a church, and you would not find them out in anything seriously inconsistent, yet their whole life is inconsistent because for a Christian to live for anything but the Lord Jesus Christ is inconsistent. It is inconsistent to the very root and core, to the tenour and aim, the supreme object of life, altogether inconsistent. A man has a right to live, to bring up his family, to educate them and see them comfortably settled in life; but that ought to be only for God's glory. That, he, acting as a father, is expected to do—for if a man careth not for his own household, he is worse than a heathen man and a publican—that God may be glorified by his doing his duty. But when I see some people putting by their thousands, and getting rich for no sort of reason that I know of, except that people may say, "How much did he leave behind him?" how can I believe that those professors, as they take the sacramental cup, are doing anything but drinking condemnation unto themselves? When I see some Christian men who profess to be living for nothing, but to be respectable, and to be known, and honoured, and noticed, but never seem to care about the souls of men, nor about Christ's glory, never shedding a tear over a dying sinner, nor heaving a sigh over this huge and wicked city which is like a millstone upon the neck of some of us, like a nightmare perpetually upon our hearts—when I see these men so cold, so indifferent, so wrapped up in themselves, what can I think but that their religion is but a cloak, a painted pageantry, for them to go to hell in, which shall be discovered at the last, and be a theme for the laughter of the fiends. Oh! may God grant that we may all be able truly to say, "I seek the Lord; I am sure, I am certain that I seek him," for if we can feel that that is true, then we can take the promise of the text; if not, we may not touch it. If we, as professing Christians, fire not at top and bottom, in heart, and soul, and spirit, and in all that we do, really seeking the glory of God, the promise does not belong to us; but if we can from our very souls declare, "Notwithstanding a thousand infirmities, yet, Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee, and that I seek thine honour," then this is true of us, and no one of us shall want any good thing.

Just a word or two more about this, for one must discriminate thoroughly well before we come to the promise. It is too rich and precious to be bestowed upon the wrong persons, and there are some who hope to get this promise, who feel that they must not take it. We must be among those who seek the Lord heartily, not merely saying that we do, or wishing that we did, but, filled with the Holy Spirit, and in the power of his blessed residence in our souls, we must be panting after God's glory heartily, otherwise I do not see that we can put our hands on the promise without presumption. We must be seeking it honestly, too, for there is a way of seeking God's good and your own at the same time— I mean having a sinister and selfish motive. We may preach, and not be preaching only for God at all. A man may live in the Sanctuary, in holy engagements from morning until nights and yet may never ardently, intensely seek the Lord. A man may be a great giver to charities, a great attender at prayer-meetings, a great doer of all kinds of Christian work, and yet he may never seek the Lord, but may yet be seeking to have his name known, to be noted as a generous man, or be merely seeking to get merit to himself, or self-complacency to his own conscience. It is a downright honest desire to serve and glorify God while we are here that is meant in the text. If we have got it—and I think we may readily see whether we have or not—then is the word of the Psalmist true to us.

We must seek God's glory heartily, honestly, and we must seek it most obediently. A man cannot say, "I am seeking God's glory," when he knows he is disobeying God's command in what he is doing. How can I say that I am desiring to glorify God by following a pursuit which is sinful, by giving loose to my anger, and speaking rashly; by giving rein to my passions, by indulging my own desires, by being proud and domineering over my fellow-Christians, or by being pliant, fearful, timid after an unholy sort, and not being bold for God and for his truth? No, we must watch ourselves very narrowly and cautiously. We must be very careful of our own spirits. We soon get off the line. Even when we are keeping correct outwardly, we may be getting very inconsistent inwardly by forgetting that the first, last, midst, and sole object of a bloodbought spirit is to live for Christ, and that if saints on earth were what they should be, they would be as constantly God's servants as the angels are in heaven; they

would be as much messengers of God in their daily calling as the seraphs are before the eternal throne. Oh! when will the Spirit of God lift us up to anything like this? The most of us are still hunting after things that will melt beneath the sun, or rot beneath the moon. We are gathering up shadows to ourselves; things which have no abiding substance: seeking self, seeking anything rather than the blessed God. Lord! forgive us this sin wherein we have fallen into it, and make us truly such as truly seek the Lord! Now, let us be prepared to behold:—

## II. THE PROMISE OF THE REWARD OF SUCH SEEKING.

"They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." That is, not one of them. They that first stepped into Bethesda's pool were healed, and no others; but here everybody that steps into this pool is healed; that is to say, everyone that seeks the Lord has this promise—the least, as well as the greatest: the Little-faiths and the Much-afraids as much as the Great-hearts and the Stand-fasts. They that seek the Lord, whether they are chimney-sweeps or princes, whether they are tender children, or seasoned veterans in the Master's great army—they shall want no good thing. "Well, but" somebody says, "there are some of them that are in want." They are in want? Yes, that may be, but they are not in want of any good thing. They cannot be. God's word against anything you say, or I say. If they seek the Lord, they shall not, they cannot, they must not want any good thing. "Well, at any rate, they want what appears to be a good thing." That is very likely; the text does not say they shall not be. "Well, but they want what they once found to be a good thing; they want health—is not that a good thing? It was a good thing to them when they had it before, yet they want health; does not that go against the text?" No, it does not in any way whatever. The text means this, that anything which is absolutely good for him, all circumstances being considered, no child of God shall ever want. I met with this statement in a work by that good old Puritan, Mr. Clarkson, which stuck by me when I read it some time ago. I think the words were these, "If it were a good thing for God's people for sin, Satan, sorrow, and affliction to be abolished, Christ would blot them out within five minutes, and if it were a good thing for the seeker of the Lord to have all the kingdoms of this world put at his feet and for him to be made a prince, Jesus would make him a prince before the sun rose

again." If it were absolutely to him, all things being considered, a good thing, he must have it, for Christ would be sure to keep his word. He has said he shall not want it, and he would not let his child want it, whatever it might be, if it were really, absolutely, and in itself, all things considered, a good thing. Now, taking God's Word and walking by faith towards it, what a light it sheds on your history and mine! There are many things for which I wish, and which I sincerely think to be good, but I say at once, "If I have not got them, they are not good, for if they were good, good for me, and I am truly seeking God, I should have them: if they were good things, my heavenly Father would not deny them to me: he has said he would not, and I believe his pledged word." I think sometimes it would be a good thing for me if I had more talents, but if it were a good thing I should have more, I should have them. You think it were a good thing, if you were to have more money. Well, if he saw it to be good, you would have it. "Oh!" say you, "but it would have been a good thing if my poor mother had been spared to me: if she had been alive now, it would have been a good thing, and it would be a good thing certainly for us to be in the position I was five years ago before these terrible panic times came." Well, if it had been a good thing for you to have been there, you would have been there. "I don't see it." says one. Well, do not expect to see it, but believe it. We walk by faith, not by sight. But the text says so. It says not that every man shall have every good thing, but it does say that every man that seeks the Lord shall have every good thing. He shall not want any good thing, be it what it may. "Well, I doubt it," says one. Very well; I do not wonder that you do, for your father Adam doubted it, and that is how the whole race fell. Adam and Eve were In the garden, and they might have felt quite sure that their heavenly Father would not deny them any good thing, but the devil came and whispered, and said to them, "God doth know that in the day you eat of the fruit of that tree you will be as gods; that fruit is very good for you, a wonderfully good thing; never anything like it, and that one good thing God has kept away from you." "Oh!" said Eve, "then I will get it," and down we all fell. The race was ruined through their doubting the promise. If they had continued to seek the Lord, they would not have wanted any good thing. That fruit was not a good thing to them; it might have been good in itself, but it was not good to them, or else God would have given it to them, and their doubting it brought all this terrible sorrow on us. So it will upon you, for let me



show you—you say, perhaps, "It would be a very good thing for me to be rich." God has stopped you up many times. You have never prospered when you thought you were going to. You will put out your hand, perhaps, to do a wrong thing to be rich, but if you say, "No, I will work, and toil, and do what I can, but if I am not prospered, it is not a good thing for me to be prospered, and I would not do a wrong thing, if it would bring me all the prosperity that heart could desire," then you will walk uprightly and God will bless you; but if you begin to doubt it and say, "That is a good thing, and my heavenly Father does not give it to me," you will, first of all, get hard and bitter thoughts against your heavenly Father, and then you will get wicked thoughts and wrong desires, and these will lead you to do wrong things, and God's name will be greatly dishonoured thereby. How do you know what is a good thing for you? "Oh! I know," says one. That is just what your child said last Christmas. He was sure it was a good thing for him to have all those sweets: he thought you very hard that you denied them to him, and yet you knew better. You had seen him before so made ill through those very things he now longed for. And your heavenly Father knows, perhaps, that you could not bear to be strong in body; you would never be holy if you had too robust health. He knows you could not endure to be wealthy: you would be proud, vain, perhaps wicked: you do not know how bad you might be if you had this, perhaps. He has put you in the best place for you. He has given you not only some of the things that are good for you, but all that is good for you, and there is nothing in the world that is really, solidly, abidingly good for you, but you either have it now, or you shall have it ere long. God your Father is dealing with you in perfect wisdom and perfect love, and though your reason may begin to cavil and question, yet, your faith should sit still at his feet, and say "I believe it; I believe it, even though my heart is wrung with sorrow; I am a seeker of God; I do seek his glory, and I shall not want any good thing."

Methinks someone in the congregation might say to me, "Look at the martyrs; did not they seek the Lord above all men?" Truly so, but what were you about to object? "Why, that they wanted many good things; they were in prison, sometimes in cold, and nakedness, and hunger; they were on the rack tormented, many of them went to heaven from the fiery stake." Yes, but they never wanted any good thing. It would not have been

a good thing to them as God's martyrs to have suffered less, for now read their history. The more they suffered, the brighter they shine. Rob them of their sufferings, and you strip their crowns of their gems. Who are the brightest before the eternal throne? Those who suffered most below. If their could speak to you now, they would tell you that that noisome dungeon was, because it enabled them to glorify God, a good thing to them. They would tell you that the rack whereon they did sing sweet hymns of praise was a good thing for them, because it enabled them to show forth the patience of the saints, and to have their names written in the book of the peerage of the skies. They would tell you that the fiery stake was a good thing, because from that pulpit they preached Christ after such a fashion as men could never have heard it from cold lips and stammering tongues. Did not the world perceive that the suffering of the saints were good things, for they were the seed of the Church? They helped to spread the truth, and because God would not deny them any good thing he gave them their dungeons, he gave them their racks, he gave them their stakes, and these were the best things they could have had, and with enlarged reason, and with their mental faculties purged, those blessed spirits would now choose again, could they live over again, to have suffered those things. They would choose, were it possible, to have lived the very life, and to have endured all they braved, to have received so glorious a reward as they now enjoy.

"Ah! well, then," says one, "I see I really have not understood a great deal that has happened to me: I have been in obscurity, lost my friends, been despised, felt quite broken down; do you mean to tell me that that has been a good thing?" I do. God has blessed it to you. He will enable you to say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy law." And if you get more grace, you will say it is a good thing, for is it not a good thing for you to be conformed to the likeness of Christ? How can you be if you have no suffering? If you never suffer with him, how can you expect to reign with him? How are you to be made like him in his humiliation, if you never are humbled? Why, methinks every pain that shoots through the frame and thrills the sensitive soul helps us to understand what Christ suffered, and being sanctified, gives us the power to pass through the rent veil, and to be baptized with his baptism, and in our measure to drink of his cup, and, therefore, it becomes a good thing,

and our Father gives it us, because his promise is that he will not deny or withhold any good thing from those that walk uprightly.

I feel, brethren, as though my text were too full for me to go on with it, there is such a mass in it, and if you will take it home and turn it over at your leisure, you may do with it better than I can, if I attempt wire-drawing and word-spinning. There is the text. It seems to me to speak as plainly as the English tongue can speak. Give yourselves up to God wholly and live for him, and you shall never want anything that is really good for you; your life shall be the best life for you, all things considered in the light of eternity, that a life could have been. Only mind you keep to this—the seeking of the Lord. There is the point of it. Get out of that, and there may be some promise for you, but certainly not this one. You have got out of the line of the promise; but keep to that and seek the Lord, and your life shall be, even if it be a poverty-stricken one, such a life that if you could have the infinite intelligence of your heavenly Father, you would ordain it to be precisely as it now is. "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

Why, how rich this makes the poor! How content this makes the suffering! How grateful this makes the afflicted! How does it make our present state to glow with an unearthly glory! But, brethren, we shall never understand this text fully this side of heaven. There we shall see it in splendour. They that seek the Lord here shall have up yonder all that imagination can picture, all that fancy could conceive, all that desire could create. You shall have more than eye hath seen, or ear hath ever heard. You shall have capacities to receive of the divine fulness, and the fulness of the pleasures that are with God for evermore shall be yours.

But again I come back to that, are you seeking the Lord? That is a question I have asked my own heart many and many a time—Do I seek the Lord's glory in all things? I ask it of you, you young men who are starting in business. Now, you know you can if you like go into business for yourselves; I mean you can make your trade tell for yourselves, and live to yourselves, and the end will be miserable, and the way to it will not be happy. But if God's Spirit shall help you young men and women early in life to give your hearts to Jesus, and to say, "Now, God has made us, we

will serve him that made us; Christ has bought us, we will serve him that bought us; the Spirit of God has given us a new life, we will live for this new and quickening Spirit"—then I do not stand here to promise you ease and comfort, for in the world you shall have tribulation, but I do say in God's name that he will not withhold one good thing from you, and that when you come to be with him for ever and ever you will bless him that he did for you the best that could be done even by infinite wisdom and infinite love. You shall have the best life that could be lived, the best mercies that could be given, and the best of all good things shall be yours here and hereafter.

There may be some here, however, who have long passed the days of youth, and up till now have never had a thought of their Maker. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but they have not known God. If you keep a dog, he fawns on you, and follows at your heels. There is scarcely any creature so ignorant but what it knows its keeper. Go to the Zoological Gardens and see if those animals that are most deficient in brain are not still obedient to those that feed them. Yet here is God, good and kind to a man like you, and you have lived to be forty, and have never had an idea of loving and serving God. Are you lower sunk than the brutes? Think of that! But Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners such as you. Repent! May God's Eternal Spirit lead you to repentance of this great sin of having lived in neglect of God, and from henceforth, seeking pardon for the past through the atoning sacrifice, and strength for the future through the Divine Spirit, seek the Lord, and you shall find that you shall not want any good thing. The Lord bring you there, and save and bless you eternally! Amen.

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## **Self-Examination**

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be

reprobates. - 2 Corinthians 13:5

I had intended to address you this morning from the third title given to our blessed Redeemer, in the verse we have considered twice before—"Wonderful, Counsellor, *the mighty God*;" but owing to excruciating pain and continual sickness, I have been unable to gather my thoughts together, and therefore I feel constrained to address you on a subject which has often been upon my heart and not unfrequently upon my lips, and concerning which, I dare say, I have admonished a very large proportion of this audience before. You will find the text in the thirteenth chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, at the fifth verse—"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"—a solemn text, that we cannot preach too impressively, or too frequently meditate.

The Corinthians were the critics of the apostles' age. They took to themselves great credit for skill in learning and in language, and as most men do who are wise in their own esteem, they made a wrong use of their wisdom and learning—they began to criticise the apostle Paul. They criticised his style. "His letters," say they, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible." Nay, not content with that, they went so far as to deny his apostleship, and for once in his life, the apostle Paul found himself compelled to "become a fool in glorying; for," says he, "ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing." The apostle wrote two letters to them; in both he is compelled to upbraid them while he defends himself, and when he had fully disarmed his opponents, and wrested the sword of their criticism out of their hands, he pointed it at their own breasts, saying, "'Examine yourselves.' You have disputed my doctrine; examine whether ye be in the faith. You have made me prove my apostleship; 'prove your own selves.' Use the powers which you have been so wrongfully exercising upon me for a little season upon your own characters."

And now, my dear friends, the fault of the Corinthians is the fault of the present age. Let not any one of you, as he goeth out of the house of God,

say unto his neighbour. "How did you like the preacher? What did you think of the sermon this morning?" Is that the question you should ask as you retire from God's house? Do you come here to judge God's servants? I know it is but a small thing unto us to be judged of man's judgment; for our judgment is of the Lord our God; to our own Master we shall stand or fall. But, O men! ye should ask a question more profitable unto yourselves than this. Ye should say, "Did not such-and-such a speech strike me? Did not that exactly consort with my condition? Was that not a rebuke that I deserve, a word of reproof or of exhortation? Let me take unto myself that which I have heard, and let me not judge the preacher, for he is God's messenger to my soul: I came up here to be judged of God's Word, and not to judge God's Word myself." But since there is in all our hearts a great backwardness to self-examination, I shall lay out myself for a few minutes this morning, earnestly to exhort myself, and all of you, to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith.

First, I shall *expound my text*; secondly, I shall *enforce it*; and thirdly, I shall try and help you to *carry it into practice* here and on the spot.

I. First, I shall EXPOUND MY TEXT; though in truth it needs no exposition, for it is very simple, *yet* by studying it, and pondering it, our hearts may become more deeply affected with its touching appeal. "*Examine yourselves.*" Who does not understand that word? And yet, by a few suggestions you may know its meaning more perfectly.

"Examine:" that is a *scholastic idea*. A boy has been to school a certain time, and his master puts him through his paces—questions him, to see whether he has made any progress,—whether he knows anything. Christian, catechise your heart; question it, to see whether it has been growing in grace; question it, to see if it knows anything of vital godliness or not. Examine it: pass your heart through a stern examination as to what it does know and what it does not know, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Again: it is a *military idea*. "Examine yourselves," or renew yourselves. Go through the rank and file of your actions, and examine all your motives. Just as the captain on review-day is not content with merely

surveying the men from a distance, but must look at all their accoutrements, so do you look well to yourselves; examine yourselves with the most scrupulous care.

And once again, this is a *legal idea*. "Examine yourselves." You have seen the witness in the box, when the lawyer has been examining him, or, as we have it, cross-examining him. Now, mark: never was there a rogue less trustworthy or more deceitful than your own heart, and as when you are cross-examining a dishonest person—one that hath bye-ends to serve, you set traps for him to try and find him out in a lie, so do with your own heart. Question it backward and forward, this way and that way; for if there be a loophole for escape, if there be any pretence for self-deception, rest assured your treacherous heart will be ready enough to avail itself of it.

And yet once more: this is a *traveller's idea*. I find in the original, it has this meaning: "Go right through yourselves." As a traveller, if he has to write a book upon a country, is not content to go round its borders merely, but goes, as it were, from Dan to Beersheba, right through the country. He climbs the hill top, where he bathes his forehead in the sunshine: he goes down into the deep valleys, where he can only see the blue sky like a strip between the lofty summits of the mountains. He is not content to gaze upon the broad river unless he trace it to the spring whence it rises. He will not be satisfied with viewing the products of the surface of the earth, but he must discover the minerals that lie within its bowels. Now, do the same with your heart. "Examine yourselves." Go right through yourselves from the beginning to the end. Stand not only on the mountains of your public character, but go into the deep valleys of your private life. Be not content to sail on the broad river of your outward actions, but go follow back the narrow Nile till you discover your secret motive. Look not only at your performance, which is but the product of the soil, but dig into your heart and examine the vital principle. "Examine yourselves." This is a very big word—a word that needs thinking over; and I am afraid there be very few, if any of us, who ever come up to the full weight of this solemn exhortation—"Examine yourselves."

There is another word you will see a little further on, if you will kindly

look at the text. "*Prove* your own selves." That means more than self-examination: let me try to show the difference between the two. A man is about to buy a horse; he examines it; he looks at it; he thinks that possibly he may find out some flaw, and therefore he carefully examines it; but after he has examined it, if he be a prudent man, he says to the person of whom he is about to buy—"I must prove this horse: will you let me have it for a week, for a month, or for some given time, that I may prove the animal before I actually invest in him? You see, there is more in proof than in examination; it is a deeper word, and goes to the very root and quick of the matter. I saw but yesterday an illustration of this. A ship, before she is launched, is examined; when launched she is carefully looked at; and yet before she is allowed to go far out to sea, she takes a trial trip; she is proved and tried, and when she has roughed it a little, and it has been discovered that she will obey the helm, that the engines will work correctly, and that all is in right order, she goes out on her long voyages. Now, "*prove yourselves.*" Do not merely sit in your closet and look at yourselves alone, but go out into this busy world and see what kind of piety you have. Remember, many a man's religion will stand examination that will not stand proof. We may sit at home and look at our religion, and say, "Well, I think this will do!" It is like cotton prints that you can buy in sundry shops; they are warranted fast colours, and so they seem when you look at them, but they are not washable when you get them home. There is many a man's religion like that. It is good enough to look at, and it has got the "warranted" stamped upon it; but when it comes out into actual daily life, the colours soon begin to run, and the man discovers that the thing was not what he took it to be. You know, in Scripture we have an account of certain very foolish men that would not go to a great supper; but, foolish as they were, there was one of them who said, "I have bought a yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." Thus he had at least worldly wisdom, enough to prove his oxen. So do you prove yourselves. Try to plough in the furrows of duty: see whether you can be accustomed to the yoke of gospel servitude; be not ashamed to put yourselves through your paces; try yourself in the furnace of daily life, est haply the mere examination of the chamber should detect you to be a cheat, and you should after all prove to be a castaway. "Examine yourselves; prove your own selves."



There is a sentence which I omitted, namely, this one: "Examine yourselves, *whether ye be in the faith.*" Oh! says one, "You may examine me whether I am in the faith; I am an orthodox Christian, fully up to the standard, good genuine weight; there is no fear whatever of my coming up to the mark, and going a little beyond it too." Ah! but, my friend, that is not the question; I would have you orthodox, for a man who is heterodox in his opinions, will most likely be heterodox in his actions; but the question now is not whether you believe the truth—but whether you are *in* the truth? Just to give you an illustration of what I mean. There is the ark; and a number of men around it. "Ah!" says one, I believe that ark will swim." "Oh!" says another, "I believe that ark is made of gopher-wood, and is strong from stem to stern; I am quite sure that ark will float, come what may; I am a firm believer in that ark." Ay, but when the rain descended, and the flood came, it was not believing the ark as a matter of fact—it was being in the ark that saved men, and only those that were in it escaped in that dread day of deluge. So there may be some of you that say of the gospel of Christ, "I believe it to be of a particular character," and you may be quite correct in your judgment; you may say, "I think it to be that which honours God, and casts down the pride of man;" herein too you may think quite right; but mark, it is not having an orthodox faith, but it is being in the faith, being in Christ, taking refuge in Him as in the ark; for he that only has the faith as a thing *ab extra*, and without being in the faith, shall perish in the day of God's anger; but he that lives by faith, he who feels that faith operates upon him, and is to him a living principle; he who realises that faith is his dwelling place, that there he can abide, that it is the very atmosphere he breathes and the very girdle of his loins to strengthen him,—such a man is in the faith. But, we repeat again, all the orthodoxy in the world, apart from its effect upon the heart as a vital principle, will not save a man. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."

"Know ye not your own selves?" If you do not, you have neglected your proper study. What avails all else that you do know, if you know not yourself? You have been roaming abroad, while the richest treasure was lying at home; you have been busying yourself with irrelevant affairs, while the main business has been neglected and ruined. "Know ye not your own selves?" And especially know ye not this fact, that Jesus Christ

must be in your heart, formed and living there, or else ye are reprobates? That is, ye are worthless persons, vain pretenders, spurious professors; your religion is but a vanity and a show. "Reprobate silver shall men call you, because the Lord hath rejected you."

Now, what is it to have Jesus Christ in you? The Roman Catholic hangs the cross on his bosom; the true Christian carries the cross in his heart; and a cross inside the heart, my friends, is one of the sweetest cares for a cross on the back. If you have a cross in your heart—Christ crucified in you, the hope of glory—all the cross of this world's troubles will seem to you light enough, and you will easily be able to sustain it. Christ in the heart means Christ believed in, Christ beloved, Christ trusted, Christ espoused, Christ communed with, Christ as our daily food, and ourselves as the temple and palace wherein Jesus Christ daily walks. Ah! there are many here that are total strangers to the meaning of this phrase. They do not know what it is to have Jesus Christ in them. Though ye know a little about Christ on Calvary, ye know nothing about Christ in the heart. Now, remember, that Christ on Calvary will save no man, unless Christ be in the heart. The Son of Mary, born in the manger, will not save a soul, unless he be also born in your hearts, and live there—your joy, your strength, and your consolation. "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

II. The second point was to ENFORCE THE TEXT. I have proved it; now I am to enforce it; and here is the tug of war. May the Spirit of the living God drive the sword in up to its very hilt this morning, that now the power of God may be felt in every heart, searching and trying the reins. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith."

"Examine yourselves," first, *because it is a matter of the very highest importance*. Small tradesmen may take coppers over the counter without much examination; but when it comes to gold, they will ring it well, for they could not afford to lose a sovereign out of their little gains; and if it comes to a five pound note, there is an anxious holding it up to the window to see if the water mark be there, and whether all be correct, for it might be ruin to the man if he lost a sum to him so large. Ah! but, merchants and tradesmen, if ye be deceived in the matter of your own

souls, ye are deceived indeed. Look well to the title deeds of your estate; look well to your life policies, and to all the business that you do; but, remember, all the gold and silver you have, are but as the rack and scum of the furnace, compared with the matter now in hand. It is your soul, your own soul, your never dying soul! Will you risk that? In times of panic, men will scarcely trust their fellows; I would to God there was a panic this day, so that no man would trust himself. Ye may trust your fellows far more safely than ye may trust yourselves. Will ye think, men and brethren, what your soul is? "The *life* is more than meat, and the body than raiment;" but the soul is as much more to be accounted of than the body, as the body is more important than the raiment. Here are my clothes: let me be robbed of my garments; if my body be secure, what signifies it? And as for my body, what is it, after all, but the rag that enshrines and covers my soul? Let that be sick, let that become like a worn-out vesture, I can afford to lose my body; but, O God, I cannot afford to have my soul cast into hell. What a frightful hazard is that which you and I are running, if we do not examine ourselves! It is an everlasting hazard; it is a hazard of heaven or of hell, of God's eternal favour, or of his everlasting curse. Well might the apostle say, "Examine yourselves."

Again: "Examine yourselves," *because if ye make a mistake ye can never rectify it, except in this world.* A bankrupt may have lost a fortune once, and yet may make another; but make bankruptcy—spiritual bankruptcy in this life, and you will never have an opportunity to trade again for heaven. A great general may lose one battle, but with skill and courage he may retrieve his honour by winning another; but get defeated in the battle of this life, and you can no more gird on your armour, you are defeated for ever; the day is lost, and there is no hope of your being able to gain it again, or so much as to make the attempt. Now, or never, man! remember that. Thy soul's eternal state hangs on the turn of to-day. Loiter thy time away, waste thine abilities, take thy religion at second hand, of thy priest, of thy minister, or of thy friend, and in the next world thou shalt everlastingly rue the error, but thou shalt have no hope of amending it.

"Fix'd is their everlasting state,  
Could man repent, 'tis then too late.

There are no acts of pardon pass'd  
In the cold grave, to which we haste;  
But darkness, death, and long despair,  
Reign in eternal silence there."

"Examine yourselves," again, *because many have been mistaken*. That is a matter which I will undertake to affirm upon my own authority, certain that each one of you can confirm it by your own observation. How many in this world think themselves to be godly when they are not? You have in the circle of your own friends, persons making a profession, of whom you often stand in astonishment, and wonder how they dare to do it. Friend, if others have been mistaken, may not you be? If some here and there fall into an error, may not you also do the same? Are you better than they? No, in nowise. You may be mistaken also. Methinks I see the rocks on which many souls have been lost—the rocks of presumption, and the syren song of self-confidence entices you on to those rocks this morning. Stay, mariner, stay, I beseech thee! Let your bleached bones keep thee back. Many have been lost, many are lost now, and are wailing at this present hour their everlasting ruin, and their loss is to be traced to nothing more than this, that they never examined themselves whether they were in the faith.

And here let me appeal to each person now present. Do not tell me that you are an old church member; I am glad to hear it; but still, I beseech you, examine yourself, for a man may be a professor of religion thirty or forty years, and yet there may come a trial-day, when his religion shall snap after all and prove to be a rotten bough of the forest. Tell me not you are a deacon: that you may be, and yet you may be damnably deceived. Ay, and whisper not to me that you are a minister. My brethren in the ministry,—we may lay aside our cassocks to wear belts of flame in hell; we may go from our pulpit, having preached to others what we never knew ourselves, and have to join the everlasting wailings of souls we have helped to delude. May God save us from such a doom as that! But let no man fold his arms, and say, "I need not examine myself;" for there is not a man here, or anywhere, who has not good cause to test and try himself to-day.

Furthermore: examine yourselves, *because God will examine you*. In the hand of God there is the scale and the balance: you shall not be taken into heaven for what you profess to be; but you shall be weighed—every one of you put into the scale. What a moment will that be with me and with you, when we are in God's great scale; surely where it not for faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and for a certainty that we shall be clothed in his righteousness at last, we might all tremble at the thought of ever being there, lest we should have to come out of the scale with this verdict, "*Tekel*,"—"Mene, mene, tekem, upharsin"—"thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting." God will not take his gold and silver by appearance, but every vessel must be purified in the fire. We must each one of us pass through a most searching test and scrutiny. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us, how much more shall God condemn us? If we are afraid to examine ourselves, what cause have we to tremble at the thought of the dread searching of God? Some of you feel that you are condemned this very day by a poor creature like myself: how much more, then, shall you be condemned when God, in thunder robed, shall summon you and all your fellows to the last infallible judgment. Oh! may God help us now to examine ourselves!

And I have yet one more reason to give. Examine yourselves, my dear friends, *because, if you are in doubt now, the speediest way to get rid of your doubts and fears is by self-examination* I believe that many persons are always doubting their eternal condition, because they do not examine themselves. Self-examination is the safest cure for one half the doubts and fears that vex God's people. Look at the captain over yonder. He is in his ship, and he says to the sailors, "You must sail very warily and carefully, and be upon your watch, for to tell you the truth, I do not know where I am; I do not exactly know my latitude and longitude, and there may be rocks very close ahead, and we may soon have the ship broken up." He goes down into the cabin, he searches the chart, he takes an inspection of the heavens, he comes up again, and he says, "Hoist every sail, and go along as merrily as you please, I have discovered where we are; the water is deep, and there is a wide sea room; there is no need for you to be in any trouble, searching has satisfied me." And how happy will it be with you, if, after having searched yourself you can say, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that

which I have committed unto him." Why, then you will go along merrily and joyfully, because the search has had a good result. And what if it should have a bad result? Better that you should find it out now than find it out too late. One of the prayers I often pray, and desire to pray as long as I live, is this,—"Lord, let me know the worst of my case. If I have been living in a false comfort, Lord, rend it away; let me know just what I am and where I am, and rather let me think too harshly of my condition before thee than think too securely, and so be ruined by presumption." May that be a prayer of each heart, and be heard in heaven!

III. And now HOW ARE YOU TO SEARCH YOURSELVES? I am to try and help you, though it must be very briefly.

First, if you would examine yourselves, *begin with your public life*. Are you dishonest? Can you steal? Can you swear? Are you given to drunkenness, uncleanness, blasphemy, taking God's name in vain, and violation of his holy day? Make short work with yourself; there will be no need to go into any further tests. "He that doeth these things, hath no inheritance in the kingdom of God." You are reprobate; the wrath of God abideth on you. Your state is fearful; you are accursed now, and except you repent you must be accursed for ever.

And yet, Christian, despite thy many sins, canst thou say, "By the grace of God I am what I am; but I seek to live a righteous, godly, and sober life, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." Remember, professor, by thy works thou shalt be judged at last. Thy works cannot save thee, but they can prove that thou art saved; or if they be evil works, they can prove that thou art not saved at all. And here I must say, every one of us has good cause to tremble, for our outward acts are not what we would have them to be. Let us go to our houses, and fall upon our face, and cry again, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and let us seek for more grace, that henceforth our lives may be more consistent, and more in accordance with the spirit of Christ.

Again: another set of tests—*private tests*. *How about your private life?* Do you live without prayer, without searching the Scriptures? Do you live without thoughts of God? Can you live as an habitual stranger to the Most

High, having no love to him, and no fear of him? If so, I make short work of the matter: you are "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity." But if thou art right at heart, thou wilt be able to say, "I could not live without prayer; I have to weep over my prayers, but still I should weep ten times more if I did not pray; I do love God's word, it is my meditation all the day; I love his people; I love his house; and I can say that my hands are often lifted upward towards him; and when my heart is busy with this world's affairs, it is often going up to his throne." A good sign, Christian, a good sign for thee; if thou canst go through this test, thou mayest hope that all is well.

But go a little deeper. Hast thou ever wept over thy lost condition? Hast thou ever bemoaned thy lost estate before God? Say, hast thou ever tried to save thyself, and found it a failure? and hast thou been driven to rely simply, wholly, and entirely on Christ? If so, then thou hast passed the test well enough. And hast thou now faith in Christ—a faith that makes thee love him; a faith that enables thee to trust him in the darkest hour? Canst thou say of a truth that thou hast a secret affection towards the Most High—that thou lovest his Son, that thy desire is after his ways, that thou feelest the influence of the Divine Spirit, and seekest every day to experience the fellowship of the Holy Spirit more and more?

And lastly, canst thou say that Jesus Christ is in thee? If not, thou art reprobate. Sharp though that word be, thou art a reprobate. But if Jesus Christ be in thy heart, though thy heart sometimes be so dark that thou canst scarcely tell he is there, yet thou art accepted in the beloved, and thou mayest "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

I intended to have enlarged; but it is impossible for me to go further; I must therefore dismiss you with a sacred blessing.

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# Self-Humbling And Self-Searching

Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me, they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept. - Song of Solomon 1:6

Whence do I draw my text but from the very fountain of love? And to whom shall I address my discourse but to the friends of the bridegroom? Ye must have warm hearts, quick sensibilities, lively emotions to interpret the sayings and sympathise the tender notes of this most sacred song.

I suppose that the history of the statues in St. Paul's Cathedral, from year to year, would not be remarkably interesting. They are placed upon their pedestals; they stand there quietly; and unless some terrible convulsion should occur, probably that will be the whole of their history for many years to come, as it has been for many years past. During the time in which any one of those statues has stood there, however, the history of any one human person has been checkered with all sorts of incidents, happy and sorrowful. Aches and pains, joys and rejoicings' depressions and exultations, have alternated in the living; but in the cold marble there has been no such change. Many of you in this house know little of what are the experiences of God's people. If you hear of their anxieties and encouragements, their temptations and deliverances, their inward conflicts and spiritual triumphs, their gloomy depressions and cheerful exultations—all those things seem to you as an idle tale. The living, the living, shall know the secret; but unto the mere professor this thing is not revealed.

My subject, which will be mainly addressed to God's working people—to such as are really serving him—will appear to have very little bearing upon any here present who do not understand the spiritual life, and they will probably think that the evening to them is wasted. Just this word on



the outset, however, I would drop in your ears. If you do not know anything of spiritual life, what will you do in the end of your natural life? If there be no work of God's Spirit upon your soul, and you are a stranger to the living experience of God's children, what will be your portion for ever? It must be divided to you with the unbelievers. Are you prepared to receive it? Are you willing that this should be your eternal destiny? Are you not, rather, alarmed? Are you not made anxious and desirous if by any means you may pass into that better, truer, state of life? Considering its boundless interests, notwithstanding all the present struggles and sorrows it may entail on you, do you not wish to know and prove what spiritual life means? I pray God you may. Let me remind you that the gospel preached to you is still available for your quickening; and whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus is born of God, and is possessor of that spiritual life.

Now, in conducting the people of God to a special survey of our text, "Look not upon me, because I am black," our first remark shall be this: the fairest Christians are the most shamefaced with regard to themselves. The person who says, "Look not upon me, because I am black," is described by some one else in the eighth verse as the "fairest among women." Others, who thought her the fairest of the fair, spoke no less than the truth when they affirmed it; but in her own esteem she felt herself to be so little fair, and so much uncomely, that she besought them not even to look upon her. Why is it that the best Christians depreciate themselves the most?

Is it not because they are most accustomed to look within? They keep their books in a better condition than those unsafe tradesmen, the counterpart of mere professors, who think themselves "rich and increased in goods," when they are on the very verge of bankruptcy. The Christian in his right state tests himself to see whether he be in the faith. He values too much his own soul to go on blindly. He knows that Heedless and Toobold are always bad pilots, so he sets Caution and Self-examination at the helm. He cries to God, "Search me, and know my heart." He is accustomed to examine his actions and his motives—to pass his words and his thoughts in review. He does not live the life of one who goes recklessly on; but he stops and considers his ways; and looks well to the

state of everything within him "to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men." Solomon says, "The wise man looks to the state of his flocks and his herds;" and it is no marvel if any one suffer loss who neglects the counsel. But he also says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life;" and it is quite certain that he who fails in this exercise is liable to every kind of moral disorder. In his anxiety to be pure from evil, the godly man will be eager to notice and quick to detect the least particle of defilement; and for this reason he discovers more of his blackness than any other man is likely to see. He is no blacker, but he looks more narrowly, and therefore he sees more distinctly the spots on his own character.

The genuine Christian, also, tries himself by a higher standard. The professor, if he be as good as another professor, is well content. He estimates himself by a comparison with his neighbors. He has no standard but that of ordinary commonplace Christianity. Par otherwise is it with the believer who walks near to God; he asks himself "What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?" He knows the law to be spiritual, and therefore he judges many things to be sinful which others wink at; and he counts some things to be important duties which others regard as trifles. The genuine Christian sets up no lower standard than perfection. He does not judge himself by others, but by the exact measure of the divine requirements, by the law of God, and especially by the example of his Lord and Master; and when he thus sets the brightness of the Savior's character side by side with his own, then it is that he cries out, "Look not upon me, for I am black." The mere professor never does this: he neither scrutinises himself nor observes his Master with close heed and strained attention, desiring to ascertain the truth; but he flatters himself in his own eyes, and goes on presumptuously. Not so the genuine Christian; he hides his face, sighs in secret, and cries before God, because he is not what he wants to be; not what his Lord was; not fully conformed to Christ in all things; and just because these short-comings grieve and vex his righteous soul, he cries, "Look not upon me, for I am black." All the while he may be of the highest type of Christian, yet he is not so in his own esteem. He may be a star to others, but he is a blot, as he thinks, to himself. In God's esteem he is "accepted in the Beloved," but in his own esteem he seems to himself to

be full of all manner of evil, and he cries out against it before his Lord.

Another reason why the fairest Christ are generally those that think themselves the blackest, is that they have more light. A person may seem to be very fair in the dark, very fair in the twilight; but when the light gets strong, and the eye is strengthened to perceive, then it is that spots that were not noticed before are soon discovered. You have, perhaps, a handkerchief that has looked to you extremely white; so it has been in comparison with other linen: but one day, when there has been a fall of snow, you have laid your handkerchief side by side with the snow, and you have seen that it was very far from the whiteness which you imagined. When the light of God comes into the soul, and we see what purity really is, what holiness really is, then it is the contrast strikes us. Though we might have thought we were somewhat clean before, when we see God in his light we see light, and we abhor ourselves in dust and ashes. Our defects so appall our own heart, that we marvel they do not exhaust his patience.

The better Christ a man is, the more abashed he always feels; because to him sin is so exceedingly hateful, that what sin he sees in himself he loathes himself for far more than others do. The ungodly man would condone very great sin in himself; though he might know it to be there; it would not disturb him; but the Christian being another sort, having a love for holiness and a hatred for sin, cannot bear to see the smallest speck of sin upon himself: He knows what it is. There are persons living before the public eye, and jealous of popularity, who appear quite indifferent to the good opinion of the sovereign in whose kingdom they dwell there are other persons favourites at court, who would lie awake at night tossed to and fro in fear if they thought that something had been reported to the sovereign's ear that was disloyal. A man who fears not God, will break all his laws with an easy conscience, but one who is the favorite of heaven, who has been indulged to sit at royal banquets, who knows the eternal love of God to him, cannot bear that there should be any evil way in him that might grieve the Spirit and bring dishonor to the name of Christ. A very little sin, as the world calls it, is a very great sin to a truly awakened Christian. I will ask you now, dear hearers (most of on are members of this or of other churches), do you know what it is to fret because you have

spoken an unadvised word? Do you know what it is to smite upon your breast, because you were angry?—justly provoked, perhaps, but still, being angry, you spoke unadvisedly. Have you ever gone to a sleepless couch, because in business you have let fall a word, or have done an action which, upon mature deliberation, you could not justify? Does the tear never come from your eye because you are not like your Lord, and have failed where you hoped to succeed? I would give little for your godliness, if you know nothing of this. Repentance is as much a mark of a Christian as faith itself. Do not think we have done with repenting when we come to Christ and receive the remission of our sins by the blood that did once atone. No; we shall repent as long as we sin, and as long as we need the precious blood for cleansing. While there is sin, or a proneness to any kind of sin, lurking in us, the grace of God will make us loathe the sin and humble ourselves before the Most High on account of it.

Now, I think our text seems to say just this: there were some that admired the church. They said she was fair. She seemed to say, "Don't say it; you don't know what I am, or you would not praise me." Oh, there is nothing that brings a blush to a genuine Christian's face like praising him; for he feels—"Praise such a heap of dirt as I am? Give any credit to such a worthless worm as I am? No; do not cast admiring glances at me! Do not say, "That man has many virtues and many excellences!" 'Look not upon me, for I am black.'" Are there not some who will imitate any Christian—and be very right in so doing—any Christian who is eminently godly and holy? There will be many who will follow in his footsteps. I think I see such a man turn round to his followers, and say: "Do not look at me; do not copy me. I am black. Copy a better model even Jesus. If I follow in his footsteps, follow me; but inasmuch as I have gone astray like a lost sheep, follow the shepherd; do not follow my example." Every Christian, in proportion as he lives near to God, will feel this self-abasement, this lowliness of heart; and if others talk of admiring or of imitating him, he will say, "Look not upon me, for I am black." And as he thus, in deep humility, begs that he be not exalted, he will often desire others that they would not despise him. It will come into his mind, "Such-and-such a man of God is a Christian indeed; as he sees my weakness, he will contemn me. Such-and-such a disciple of Christ is strong; he will never be able to bear with my weakness. Such-and-such a Christian woman does, indeed,

adorn the doctrine of God her Savior; but as for me, alas! I am not what I ought to be, nor what I would be. Christ of God, do not look upon me with scorn. I will not say that you have motes in your own eyes. I have a beam in mine. Look not upon me too severely. Judge me not harshly. If you do look at me, look to Christ for me, and pray that I may be helped; 'for I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me.'" Still I would have you beware of affecting aught that you do not feel. Humility itself may be counterfeited with much ostentation. Wherever there is anything like cant, as it is practiced by some people who depreciate themselves but do not mean it, it is loathsome to the last degree. I recollect a very proud man, certainly twice as proud as he was high, who used to pray for himself as "God's poor dust." There was nothing, I am sure, about his conduct and conversation that entitled him to use any such expression. I have heard of a monk who said he was full of sin—he was as bad as Judas; and when somebody said, "That is true," he turned round, and said, "What did I ever do that you should say so?" The effrontery of the arrogant is not more odious than the servility of the sycophant. There is a great deal of self-abnegation which is not genuine; it is the offspring of self-conceit, and not of self-knowledge. Much that we say of ourselves would mightily offend our vainglory if anybody else said the same of us. Oh, let us beware of mock humility! At the same time, the more of the genuine article we have the better, and the more truthfully we can cry out to God's people, "Look not upon me, because I am black," the more clear will it be that we are, after all, amongst the fairest.

But I pass on. The most diligent Christian—let this stand for the second observation—the most diligent Christian will be the man most afraid of the evils connected with his work. "Evils connected with his work!" says one. "Does work for God have evils contingent upon it?" Yes; but for every evil connected with the work of God, there are ten evils connected with idleness. Nay, all you professors who are doing, nothing, are wearing yourselves out faster by rust than you could have done by honest wear. But, you see, in the case of our text, there was evil connected with work. She had been made a keeper of the vineyards, and having to trim the vines, the sun had shone upon her; and she says, "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me." The blackness that she confessed was a blackness occasioned by her having to

bear the burden and heat of the day.

And now I speak to such as live in active service, doing the work of God. Dear brethren, there are certain evils connected with our lifework coming of the sun that looks upon us, which we should confess before our heavenly Father. I speak now only to the workers. I have known some whom the sun has looked upon in this respect; their zeal has grown cold through non-success. You went out, first of all, as a Christian, full of fire and life. You intended to push the church before you, and drag the world after you. Peradventure you thought that you were going to work a Reformation almost as great as that of Luther. Well, much of that was of the flesh, though beneath the surface there was an earnest zeal for God which was eating you up. But you have been mixed up with Christians for some years of a very cool sort. Use the thermometer to-night. Has not the spiritual temperature gone down in your own soul? Perhaps you have not seen many conversions under your ministry? or in the class which you conduct you have not seen many children brought to Jesus? Do you feel you are getting cool? Then wrap your face in your mantle to-night! and say: "Look not upon me, for in losing my zeal I am black, for the sun hath looked upon me." Perhaps it has affected you in another way, for the sun does not bring freckles out on all faces in the same place. Perhaps it is your temper that is grown sour? When you joined the church you felt all love, and you expected, as you had a right to do, that everybody would reciprocate the same feeling; it may be that since then you have had to do battle against contentions. You have been in a part of the church where there has been a strife, not altogether for the faith once delivered to the saints, but something of a party feeling was mixed with it, and you have had to take some share in it. And perhaps you have gradually acquired a carping, critical habit, so that where you used to enjoy the word, you are now all for judging the preacher. You are not so much a feeder upon the word, as a mere taster of the dishes, to see if you cannot find some fault with their flavour. Wrap your face again, I beseech you, in your mantle. Again bow before God, and say: "Look not upon me, because I am black; the sun hath looked upon me. In my service for God I have been impaired." Perhaps, dear friend, you have suffered in another way! I sometimes suffer in this respect very materially. The Christian's walk ought to be calm, peaceful, quiet, unruffled. Leaving everything with the

Lord, and waiting his will, our peace should be like a river. But you know that, when there is much to be done in God's service, there is a very strong temptation to want to push this and that thing forward with undue haste. Or if it does not move quickly at the rate you would wish, there is a temptation to be sad, careful, and anxious; to be, in fact, like Martha, cumbered with much service. When you get into that condition it is an injury to yourself and really prejudicial to your own work; for they serve Christ best who commune with him most, and broken fellowship means broken strength. Yet this is often our trouble; our energies are exhausted by worry more than by work. Part of our duty is neglected through unexpected cares that have distracted our thoughts. Pardon me, if I transfer the thing to myself in a figure. Say that this Tabernacle wants all my vigilance concentrated upon its welfare. Then there is another matter that wants instant attention at the same time. Here is a soul seeking Christ; here is another backsliding; here is a brother falling to ears with a brother. Innumerable things crowd upon one's view and clamor for immediate investigation till one gets disturbed and troubled. "Look not upon me, because I am black; because the sun hath looked upon me. The work I have engaged in for thee hath brought me into the sun, and burnt my face." It ought to be bright and fair with fellowship; it is soiled and begrimed with service.

Sometimes this evil of sun-burning will come in the shape of joy taken away from the heart by weariness. I do not think, dear brethren, any of us are weary of God's work. If so, we never were called to it. But we may get weary in it. You recollect, some of you here—I speak to such as often preach the gospel—how happy you were when first you were permitted to open your mouth for Christ! Oh, what a joy it was! What a pleasure! How you threw your whole soul into it! There was no sleepiness and dulness in your sermon then. But now, year after year, year after year, your brain gets weary, and though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak; the joy you once had in the service was your strength, and it has some what gone from you. The toil is more irksome when the spirits are less buoyant. Well, I would advise you to confess this before God, and ask for a medicine to heal you. You had need get your joy back, but first you must acknowledge that you have lost it. Say, "I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me."

On the other hand, it is a bad result of a good work when our humility is injured thereby. Place a Christian man in a position where he has to do much for Christ, and is much thought of and set by: let him have great success: and the tendency will be for him to compliment himself as though he were some great one. You cannot reap great sheaves for the Master without this temptation coming over your soul. What a glorious workman you are, and what a great reward will your soul have for having done so well! It is the sun looking upon you; taking away the fairness of your humility, freckling and blackening your face with a pride that is obnoxious to God. This ought to be confessed at once and heartily repented of.

I do not think I shall attempt to go through the list of all the matters that might come out of Christian service. It will suffice me to say, I am afraid that in many cases our motives get mixed. Pure and simple at first in our service, we may get at last to serve Christ only because it is our office to do so. Woe to the man that preaches only because he is a minister, and does not preach because he loves Christ! We may get also to be self-reliant. It is a great mercy for God's ministers when they tremble on going into the pulpit, even though they have been accustomed to preach for twenty years. Martin Luther declares that he never feared the face of man; and all who knew him could bear witness that it was even so; yet he said he never went up the stairs of the pulpit at Wittenburg but he felt his knees knock together with fear lest he should not be faithful to God and his truth. When we begin to rely upon ourselves' and think we can do it, and our experience and our practice will suffice to bear us safely through the next discourse without help from on high, then the sun has looked upon us, and blackened our face indeed, and the time of our usefulness draws to a close. Come, Christian people, brethren and sisters, thankful though I am that I can address so large a number who are engaged in the Master's work, I beseech you, let us go together to the footstool of the heavenly grace, confess there our blackness, and own that much of it has come upon us even while we were engaged in the service of God.

In the third place, the most watchful Christian is conscious of the danger of self-neglect. That is the next part of our text. "they made me the keeper



of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

Solemnly, let me speak again to my brethren who are seeking to glorify Christ by their lives. I met some time ago with a sermon by that famous divine, Mr. Henry Melvill, which consists all through of one solitary thought, and one only image well worked out. I will give you the pith of what took some eight pages to get through. He supposes a man to be a guide in Switzerland. It is his duty to conduct travelers in that country through the sublime passes, and to point out to them the glories of the scenery, and the beauties of the lakes, and streams, and glaciers, and hills. This man, as he continues in his office, almost inevitably gets to repeat his descriptions as a matter of course; and everybody knows how a guide at last comes to "talk book," and just iterate words which do not awaken any corresponding feeling in his own mind. Yet when he began, perhaps it was a sincere love of the sublime and the beautiful that led him to take up the avocation of a guide; and at first it really was to him a luxury to impart to others what he had felt amidst the glories of nature; but as, year after year, to hundreds of different parties, he had to repeat much the same descriptions, call attention to the same sublimities, and indicate the same beauties, it is almost impossible but that he should get to be at last a mere machine. Through the hardening tendency of custom, and the debasing influence of gain, his aptest descriptions and most exquisite eulogies come to be of no greater account than the mere language of a hireling. This thought I will not work out in extenso as that famous preacher has done, but I give it to you as a cutting, which may germinate if planted in the garden of your heart. Every worker for Christ is deeply concerned in the application of this parable; because the peril of self complacency increases in precisely the same ratio as the zeal of proselytising. When counselling others, you think yourself wise. When warning others, you feel yourself safe. When judging others, you suppose yourself above suspicion. You began the work with a flush of ardor; it may be with a fever of enthusiasm; a sacred instinct prompted, a glowing passion moved you. How will you continue it? Here is the danger—the fearful danger—lest you do it mechanically, fall into a monotony, continue in the same train, and use holy words to others with no corresponding feeling in your own soul. May we not stir others up to devout emotions, and yet our own hearts fail to burn with the sacred fire?

Oh, may it not be easy for one to stand as a signpost on the road to heaven, and never stir himself? Every preacher who judges himself aright knows that this is the risk he incurs; and I believe the same danger in a measure threatens Christ in every form of work in which they occupy themselves for Christ. Dear friends, beware of reading the Bible for other people. Get your own text—your own morsel of marrow and fatness—out of Scripture; and do not be satisfied to be sermon-making or lesson-making for your class in the Sunday-school. Feed on the word yourselves, or else your own vineyard will not be kept. When you are on your knees in prayer, pray for others by all means; but, oh, let private prayer be kept up with a view to your own edification and your own growth in grace as well. Preach not the Savior's blood, and yet be without the blood mark on yourselves. Tell not of the fountain, and yet go unwashed. Do not point to heaven, and then turn your back to it and go down to hell. Fellow-workers, look to yourselves, lest after having preached to others ye yourselves should be cast away. Your neighbors certainly, but yourselves also; the children in your class certainly, your own children at home certainly, but look to yourselves also, oh, ye that are workers in God's house, lest ye keep the vineyards of others and your own vineyards be not kept. It is very possible for a man to get to dislike the very religion which he feels bound still by force of custom to go on teaching to others. "Is that possible?" says one. Alas! that it is. Have you never heard of the flower-girl in the streets? What is her occupation! I dare say some girls like her have passed by and seen her with a great basket full of violets, and said: "What a delightful occupation, to have that fragrant smell for ever near to one!" Yes, but there was one girl who sold them, and said she hated the smell of violets. She had got to loathe them, and to think that there was no smell in the world so offensive, because they were always under her nostrils all day, and taken home to her little scanty room at night, and having nothing but violets around her, she hated them altogether. And I do believe that there are persons without the grace of Christ in their hearts who keep on talking about grace, and mercy, and practicing prayer, and yet in their heart of hearts they hate the very fragrance of the name of Jesus, and need that there should come upon them an awakening out of their sleep of presumption and hypocrisy, to make them know that though they thought they were the friends of God, they were, after all, his enemies. They were mere keepers of other men's vineyards,

but their own vineyards had gone to ruin.

Our last reflection is of the deepest importance. The most conscientious Christian will be the first to enquire for the antidote, and to use the cure.

What is the cure? The cure is found in the verse next to my text. "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me. They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." What next? "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" See, then, you workers, if you want to keep up your freshness, and not to get blackened by the sun under which you labor, go to your Lord again—go and talk to him. Address him again by that dear name, "Thou whom my soul loveth." Ask to have your first love rekindled; strive after the love of your espousals. There are men in married life who seem to have forgotten that they ever loved their wives; but there are others concerning whom the hymn is true -

"And as year rolls after year,  
Each to other still more dear."

So there are some Christians who seem to forget that they ever loved the Savior; but I trow there are others in whom that love deepens and becomes more fervent as each year passes over their heads. If any of you are at fault in this, do not give sleep to your eyelids to-night till you have renewed your espousal love. Thy Lord recollects it, if thou dost not, for he says: "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." You did some wild things in those early days. You were a great deal more zealous than wise; but, though you look back upon that with censure, Christ regards it with delight. He wishes you were now as you were then. Perhaps to-day you are not quite cold to him. Do not flatter yourself on that account; for he has said, "I would thou wert cold or hot." It is just lukewarmness that he loathes most of all, and he has threatened to spue the lukewarm out of his mouth. Oh, to be always full of love to him! You will never get any hurt by working for him then; your

work will do you good. The sweat of labor will even make your face the fairer. The more you do for souls, the purer, and the holier, and the more Christ will you be, if you do it with him. Keep up the habit of sitting at his feet, like Mary, as well as serving him with Martha. You can keep the two together; they will balance each other, and you shall not be barren or unfruitful, neither shall you fall into the blackness which the sun is apt to breed. O for more nearness to Christ, more love to Christ, and closer communion with him! Did you notice what the spouse said: "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest?" I suppose her object was to go and feed with him. Look to the feeding of your own soul, Christian. When a man says, "I have a hard day's work to do, I shall have no time to eat," you know full well that he is losing time where he thinks he gains it; for if he does not keep himself in good repair he will sicken by-and-by, and in the long run he will do less than if he gave himself due pause. So is it with your soul. You cannot give out a vital energy which you have not got in you healthy and vigorous; and if you have not got power from God in your own soul, power cannot come out of you, for it is not there. Do, therefore, feed upon Christ. Or do you feel yourself like that guide of whom we spoke just now? Has the routine of service blunted your sensibilities, till you gaze unmoved on those objects of beauty and marvel that should awaken every passion and thrill every nerve of your being? Ask then in what way he might keep up his interest in the lakes and the mountains? Would it not be well for him, occasionally, at any rate, to take a lonely journey to find out new features in the gorgeous scenery or to stand in solitude, and see the hills in a fresh light, or mark the forest trees in different states of the weather; so that he might again renew his own sensations of admiration, and of gratitude to God for having created such sublimities? Then I can readily believe his enthusiasm would increase rather than abate by an increasing familiarity with the landscape. And you, worker for God, you must go to God alone; feed on precious truth for yourself; dig into the deep things of God and enrich your own spirit. Thus you may serve God as much as ever you will: you will get no hurt therefrom. Did you notice that she also asked: "Tell me where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon?" Rest is what the worker wants. Where is the rest of Christ's flock but in his own dear bosom? Where is there repose, but in his own fidelity, in the two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie—the oath and the promise? Oh, never turn away

from that rest! Turn into it again, to-night, beloved. As for me, I feel I want my Savior more than ever I did. Though I have preached his gospel now these five-and-twenty years and more, I need still to come and cling to his cross as a guilty sinner, and find "life for a look at the crucified One," just as I did at first. O that God's grace may ever keep the most ardent among us always faithful with our own soul, abiding in the Lord, and rejoicing in him!

I have done. This is my word to workers. Let me only say to you for whom there has seemed nothing in the sermon, if you are not workers for Christ, you are workers against him. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." O souls, why should you stand out against the Savior? Why should you resist him? Bleeding out his life for his enemies, the mirror of disinterested love, what is there in him that can make you fight against him? Drop your weapons, man! Drop them to-night, I charge you by the living God! And come now, ask pardon through the precious blood, and it shall be given you. Seek a new heart, and a right spirit. The Holy Ghost will work it. From this night be a worker for Christ. The church wants you. The armies of Christ need recruiting. Take the proffered blessing, and become a soldier of the cross; and may the Lord build up his Zion by many of you who were not his people aforesaid, but of whom it is said: "They were not my people, but they shall be the people of the living God."

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## **A Sense Of Pardoned Sin**

Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back - Isaiah 38:17

Hezekiah here speaks positively on a matter concerning which he had not the remotest shadow of a doubt. He kind trusted his God, he had cast himself upon the merit of the promised Messiah, and as the result of that faith, assurance had been granted to him, and he now sings with unfaltering tongue, "Thou," even thou, O God, Most High and Most Just, "thou hast cast all my sins," great and innumerable though they be, thou hast east them all "behind thy back." Oh, what a joyous thing it is to have a ray of heavenly sunlight in the soul, and to hear the very voice of God as he walks in the garden of our souls in the cool of the day, saying to us, "Son thy sins which are many, are all forgiven thee." The whisper of that heavenly voice may raise our heart to bliss almost divine it confers a joy that is not to be squalled by all the corn and the wine, and all tile pleasures which the riches and the-enjoyments of this world can afford. To have the divine kiss of acceptance to be robed in the best robe, to have the ring on the hand and the shoes on the feet to hear the heavenly music and dancing with which the returning prodigals are returned to their Father's house,—this, indeed, is a bliss worth worlds.

My dear brethren, there are some who choose to dwell to a very large degree in their ministry upon such enjoyments as these, which concern the experience of the child of God; but I fear they make it the main object of their preaching, to advance a system of frames and feelings. On the other hand, there are other brethren who constantly insist upon the doctrine of salvation by faith, and by faith alone, but almost forget to testify to the experience which is the result of faith. Now, both of these men were, doubtless; but nevertheless, their error is founded upon a conscientious desire to advance the truth. The brother who preaches experience, and insists upon it is afraid lest any should possess a fictitious faith which is not the faith of God's elect. He therefore preaches experience as a test and a touchstone by which he may try the spirits

whether they be of God. On the other hand, our other brother who deals with faith, and not with experience, is afraid lest men should make a God of their feelings, and lest they should rest in their experience, and not in the cross of Christ. He is so anxious to maintain in its clearness the fact that we are saved by what Christ felt, and not by what we feel, the great truth that we are redeemed by his most precious blood, and not by any experience of our own that perhaps he overshoots the mark, and forgets that where there is faith there will be experience, and where there is a true experience—there must have been a real faith.

Suffer me, then, just to spend one moment in trying to show how these two truths really meet—a divine experience and a single faith—necessary and joyous feelings and a yet more necessary and unalloyed confidence in Christ. The fact is, that we are saved by faith, and not by feeling. "We walk by faith and not by sight." Yet there is as much connection between faith and hallowed feeling, as there is between the root and the flower. Faith is permanent, just as the root is ever in the ground; feeling is casual, and has its seasons. Just as the bulb does not always shoot up the green stem; far less is it always crowned with the many, many-coloured flower. Faith is the tree, the essential tree; our feelings are like the appearance, of that tree during the different seasons of the year. Sometimes our soul is full of bloom and blossom, and the bees hum pleasantly, and gather honey within our hearts. It is then that our feelings bear witness to the life of our faith, just as the buds of spring bear witness to the life of the tree. And, our feelings gather still greater vigor, and if we come to the summer of our delights, again, perhaps, we begin to wither into the sere and yellow leaf of autumn; nay, sometimes the winter of our despondency and despair will strip away every leaf from the tree and our poor faith stands like a blasted stem without a sign of verdure. And yet, my brethren, so long as the tree of faith is there we are saved. Whether faith blossom or not, whether it bring forth joyous fruit in our experience or not, so long as it be there in all its permanence we are saved. Yet should we have the gravest reason to distrust the life of our faith, if it did not sometimes blossom with joy, and often bring forth fruit unto holiness. Experience, if I may so speak, is like a sun-dial. When I wish to know the time of day with my spirit, I look upon it. But then there must be the sun shining, or else I cannot tell by my sun-dial what and where I am. If a cloud passes

before the face of the sun, my dial is of little service to me, but then my faith comes out in all its excellency, for my faith pierces the cloud, and reads the state of my soul—not by the sunshade on the dial, but by the position of the sun in the heavens themselves. Faith is a greater and grander thing than all experience, less fickle, more stable. It is the root of grace, and these are but the flowers, the germs, the buds. Yet let us not speak against experiences, let us value them, for it is a grand thing to sit in the sunshine of God's presence it is a noble thing to eat the grapes of Eshcol, even while we are in the wilderness. It is true there is a greater grandeur in believing heaven to be mine when I can see no evidence thereof; yet it is a sweeter thing

"To read my title clear  
To mansions in the skies."

I shall now turn to the one point of experience which seems to be brought out prominently in our text, that blessed experience of a consciousness of pardon, a sense of pardoning love shed abroad in the soul. I shall view my text in two ways. There are two sorts of pardon which God gives, and it is very needful to distinguish between them. First, I shall speak of a consciousness of pardon enjoyed by a man as a forgiven sinner. When I have so done, I shall speak of that other consciousness of pardon, more true to my text, more intimately connected with it, a sense of forgiveness enjoyed by man, not as a sinner, but as a child, a pardoned child he knows he has already been forgiven by the Judge, but who now smiles to know that he is pardoned also by the Father.

I. First, then, let me speak of A SENSE OF PARDON AS GIVEN BY GOD TO THE SINNER.

We are not to wait for this sense of pardon before we come to Christ. The soul beholding itself lost. ruined. and naked, is commanded in the Word of God to trust itself, just as it is. in the hands of Christ. Faith obeys that command, and without one glimpse of joy within, commits the soul, all trembling and quivering with fear, into the hand of Christ, as into the hand of an all-loving and all-powerful Redeemer. I repeat it, we are not to stop for a sense of pardon until we do this. Faith is our duty, and the



sense of pardon is our privilege. We must first obey, and then receive the reward. I, feeling that I am utterly undone, and that there is no reason in myself why I should have saved, cast myself at the foot of Christ's cross, and trust him with myself eternally. As the result of that, God afterwards, of his own free grace, by his Spirit, sheds abroad in my soul an infallible witness, which proves to me that I was forgiven in that very hour when I closed in with Christ, and trusted my soul in his hands.

Now, this consciousness of pardon includes many things, although it is not alike comprehensive in all souls. With some uninstructed persons, who know too little of scripture, all the consciousness they enjoy is this, that sin is forgiven. They feel in their souls that every till that ever stood on record in the book of God, has been blotted out once for all. Joined with this they are released from the terror and dread which once weighed upon their spirits. The nightmare bus departed; that huge apparition which haunted them, a consciousness of their guilt, is gone and laid in the Red Sea of Jesus' blood, safely for ever. But, being ignorant and uninstructed, they are not conscious of more than this,—the sum total of their joys lies here—that till is forgiven that the wrath of God is turned away and that they shall not now into the pit of hell. If the Holy Ghost, however, is pleased to slyer them more at this time, they have a consciousness that God loves them. They are sore that Jehovah looks upon them as his favourites, as those to whom he has a special grace unit a peculiar love. They, then, at that very moment, begin to read their title to the blessings of the covenant. They see that all things are theirs because they are Christ's, and that since there is no condemnation, there must be every blessing vouchsafed by the very act which took away the condemning sentence. It sometimes happens too, that this sense of pardon swells till it exceeds the narrow bounds of time, till the spirit is not only sure that it is reconciled to God, and that its life is now secure; but it sees heaven itself as at a little distance, begins to realize its own indefeasible title to the inheritance of the saints in light—nay, in the hour of pardon I have sometimes known the emancipated spirit by faith, walk the golden streets; and lay its finger on the strings of the glorious harp of heavenly praise. There is no telling how comprehensive at times this sense of pardon may become. It may embrace a past eternity—receiving its election, an eternity to come—beholding its glory. It may go into the

depths of hell and see the fires for ever quenched or mount to the glories of heaven and see all these splendours given to it to be its own. And, yet, as I have said before, it is not so in all cases, for with many uninstructed minds, the only sense of pardon they get, is a removal of terror, and an assured conviction that their sins are all forgiven them.

But, saith one, "How does this sense of pardon come? In what manner and forms?" We answer, it comes in different ways and forms. Many men receive their consciousness of pardon in an instant. They were reading the Word of God perhaps, and some one text seemed as if it rose up from its fellows, illuminated with heavenly fire, and they saw that text printed on their own hearts. Such a one as this;—Come now, and let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." Or, such another As this;—"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." The man was doubting before, full of gloom and despondency, in a minute all is light, and life, and joy in his heart. If he could have passed from hell to heaven by a single step, the change in his soul could not have been more manifest and clear. From being heavily burdened, he has suddenly become light of soul; from being black from head to foot, he comes to view himself washed completely white, and standing in the snowy garment of the Savior's righteousness. With others this sense of pardon is of slower growth. It begins with a faint gleam of hope, another ray, and yet another, till at last the morning star arises in their souls; the light increases still, till at last the morning star of hope gives way to the sun of righteousness himself, who was risen with healing beneath his wings. I have known some obtain peace in an instant, and others have been months, if not years. before they could walk with a steady and firm footstep, and say with unquivering lip,—"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him."

This conviction is sometimes conveyed to us in the most extraordinary manner. I have known it brought home to the soul by some singular saying of a minister, by some saying so appropriate to one's own case, that we were compelled to say,—"That is not the voice of man, but the

voice of God, for man could not know my heart. that sentence is surely spoken by one who tries the heart and searches the reins." At other times some strange providence has been the singular means of giving joy and relief. The strangest story I ever remembered to have read, with regard to peace given after a long season of despondency, was the ease of Mrs. Honeywood, whom you may have read of. Living in puritanic times, she had been accustomed to hear the most thundering of its preachers. She became so thoroughly broken in peace with the consciousness of sin, that for, I think, some ten years, if not twenty years, the poor woman was given up to despair—she was absolutely certain that there was no hope for her. It seemed that in this ease, a kind of miracle must be wrought to give her peace of mind. One day an eminent minister of Christ, conversing with her told her there yet was hope that Jesus Christ was able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him. Grasping a Venice glass that stood on the table, made of the thinnest material that can be conceived, the woman dashed it down on the ground, and said,—"I am lost, as sure as that glass is broken into a thousand pieces." To her infinite surprise, the glass suffered no damage whatever, remained without a crack. From that instant she believed that God had spoken to her. She opened her ears to hear the words of the minister, and peace poured into her spirit. I mention that as an extraordinary and singular instance—perhaps the like is not to be found on record anywhere else. But God has his ways and means. He will by some means, by every means, by the strangest and most miraculous means, bring his people to a sense of pardon. If they reject all other ways, he will sooner work a miracle than, that his banished ones shall not be brought home.

Permit me to dwell for another minute or two upon the joy which this sense of pardon creates. I speak now from experience. That happy day when my soul first found a Savior, and learned to cling to his dear feet, was a day never to be forgotten by me. An obscure child, unknown, unheard of, I sat and listened to the Word of God; and that precious text, "Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth," lead me to the cross of Christ. I can testify that the joy of that day is utterly indescribable. I could have leaped, I could have danced. There ergs no expression, however fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of my spirit at that hour. Many days have passed since then of

Christian experience, but there has never been a day which has had that full exhilaration that sparkling delight which that first day had. I thought I could have sprang from the seat on which I sat, and have called out with the wildest of those Methodist brethren who were present "I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of grace! A sinner saved by blood!" Concerning that day all other occurrences are dim in my remembrance. I know nothing of what was said to me, or of what happened but just this, that my spirit save its chains broken to pieces, and that I walked an emancipated man, an heir of heaven, a forgiven one, accepted in Christ Jesus, plucked out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit, with my feet set upon a rock and my goings established. The joy of the heart when it receives pardon may be imagined by some of you who have never tasted it, but if you ever come to know it, you will say with the queen of Sheba, "the half has not been told me." Men when they are in this delightful state, are very communicative. they cannot hold themselves in. They are like John Bunyan who wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land about it. They speak to the very trees. They think the world is in harmony with themselves; they go forth with joy, and they are led forth with peace, the mountains and the hills break forth before them into singing, and the trees of the field do clap their hands. The birds sing, to be in tune with their hearts. The sun shines more brightly that day than he ever did before; or if the rain descends, it is but the very emblem of those showers of mercy which have made glad the spirit. On that day at least, if never before, the man becomes the world's great priest, he stands in the midst of all his fellow priests the great high priest of the world's universe. He walks in his white garments; he wears about him the belle of the music of praise; he offers the sacrifice which is acceptable to God, and his own heart is the chief offering which he presents. Oh! on that day the world seems to be a great organ, and the fingers of the pardoned man run along the keys and wake the music even to thunder, till the eternal sonnets of the ages long past dwindle into mere silence before the hallelujahs of that acclaim of praise, to which the pardoned sinner wakes the worlds.

Do not think I am fanatical in this, I speak but sober sense. In fact, I fall short in my descriptions of the joy of the spirit in which God has shed abroad a glimpse of his love, and a token of his grace. Do I hear some friend whisper, that such feelings are fanatical. Ah! my friend if it were

so, it were a fanaticism devoutly to be roughs for; It were one for which the most sober mind might strain itself for ever. But you tell us this is fanaticism, for a man to be sure that he is pardoned. But pause awhile. Will you venture to say that this book is itself fanatical, that the Bible is a book full of enthusiasm and vain conceits. Oh, no, you believe this to be a book written in sober earnest. Well, then, the feelings of a pardoned man are but the necessary and natural consequence of the truths of this book. Is there each a thing as pardon taught here? there not such-words as these?—"Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven."—"Blessed is he to whom the Lord imputeth not his iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."—"Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." Are there not words here which tell us that Jesus Christ came into the World to seek and to save that which is lost; that there is such a thing as salvation, such a thing as regeneration, such a thing as passing out of darkness marvellous light such all things as being transplanted from the kingdom of darkness, and taken into the kingdom of God's dear Son? If the Bible teaches us that there are such things, and if such things are realities in the experience of Christian men, it were a libel upon that book if men were not happy when they received them. In fact if the experience of a Christian at the time of his conversion were not singularly gay, excessively joyful, it might be a contradiction to the teaching of this word. But, I say it, and say it boldly, all the transports that the most joyous spirit ever knew in the hour of its pardon are warranted by this Word; nay, not only warranted, but they fall short of what this look would warrant us in receiving.

"But," saith one, "I cannot understand that a man can be sure that he is pardoned." That great and excellent man, Dr. Johnson, used to hold the opinion that no man ever could know that he was pardoned: that there was no such thing as assurance of faith. Perhaps, if Dr. Johnson had studied his Bible a little more, and had had a little more of the enlightenment of the Spirit, he, too, might have come to know his own pardon. Certainly, he was no very excellent judge of theology, no more than he was of porcelain, which he once attempted to make, and never succeeded. I think both in theology and porcelain his opinion is of little value. You say, how can a man know that he is pardoned? There is a text which says—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." I

believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; is it irrational to believe that I am saved? "He that believeth hath eternal life," saith Christ, in John's gospel. I believe in Christ; am I absurd in believing that I have eternal life? I find the apostle Paul speaking by the Holy-Ghost, and saying—"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Being justified by faith we have peace with God." If I know that my trust is fixed on Jesus only, and that I have faith in him, were it not ten thousand time more absurd for me not to be at peace than for me to be filled with my unspeakable. It is but taking God at his word, when the soul knows as a necessary consequence of its faith that it is saved. But, besides that, suppose it should be true that God himself, stepping as you think out of the order of nature, absolutely speaks to every individual man, and seals on their hearts the witness that they are forgiven suppose it to be so, however hard you think the supposition to be—would it be unnatural then, that the spirit should rejoice? Now, such is just the fact, literally and positively; for the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are born of God. And I will tell you this, though I be censured for fanaticism in it, there are times with every child of God, when he could not doubt of his acceptance with Christ, when his being saved is a more palpable and sure truth than even the fact that he is in existence; when all the arguments you could possibly bring could not shake him, because he has the infallible witness of the Holy Ghost that he is born of God. Have you never seen some poor servant girl accosted by a clever infidel, who begins to cut her down in all her principles, and laugh at her, and tell her she is a poor deluded thing. She answers him, bears with him, answers him again and again in her own simple style. You can see that her arguments are not conclusive or logical, but wait till she gets to the end, and you hear her say,— "Well, sir, you know a great deal more than I do, and I am not able to speak as you can; I do not wish to think as you think; but, sir, if what you have said be true, you cannot disprove what I feel in here; I feel that I am a child of God; I know I am, and you may as soon reason me out of the fact that what I see does exist, and what I feel has a real cause, as reason me out of this fact, which I know in my inmost soul, namely, that I have passed from death unto life, and am a child of God." Come here, blind man! His eyes are opened; now try and convince that man he does not see. "No," says he, "that is one thing I know. Other things I may be mistaken about; but one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I

see." Here, bring up that sick man who has been in bed this last fifteen years a cripple. A miracle is wrought, he is restored, and he begins to leap. Bring up out friend of the academy, and let him argue against him. —"Your leg is not in a sound state. I tell you, you are not well, you are not cured; you don't feel happy, you don't feel restored and recruited in strength. "Oh," says he, "I don't care for all your arguments, nor for all the Latin phrases that you use. I am cured, that is a matter of consciousness with me, and I am not to be beaten out of it." So it is with the Christian; there are times when he can say,—"I am saved, I am forgiven." The Lord hath said to him,—"I am thy salvation," and no reasoning, however sophistical no argument, however omnipotent it may seem to be, can shake him, or make him renounce his "which hath great recompense of reward."

And, now, my dear hearers, before I leave this point, to dwell for a few minutes on the second part of my subject. I want to ask you a question or two. Have you ever had this consciousness of pardon in your lives? "No," says one, "I never had; I wish I had; I mean to wait for it." You may wait till you are lost before you will ever have it by waiting for it. Your business is to go to Christ as you are, and trust him, and you shall have it. To sit still, and not to obey that great commandment, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," is the very way to make your damnation doubly sure. I hope that you will find this precious pearl unless you sell all that you have and buy that divine field, Christ Jesus, and there find this pearl of great price. "Ay, but" saith another, "I feel I have never had it, and I don't want it." Mark this, my hearer: as God's witness I speak to you to-day, and if you reject my warning now, in that hour when you lie quivering on a dying bell, perhaps this uplifted finger and these eyes may be a vision for you then. If thou shalt never have in thy soul a consciousness of pardon on this side of the grave, I fear that thou shalt come to thy grave full of sin, and after death shall be the judgment, and after the judgment the wrath to come. This which thou thinkest to be enthusiasm and fanatical is essential to thy soul's salvation, Oh, put it not from thee. Despise it not. Long for it. Cry for it Pant after it. And the Lord God give thee yet to know that thou art his child, and that thou art passed from death unto life! A better wish no heart can wish thee. A larger benediction than that, no ministers lips could pronounce on thee. God bring thee out of thy state of

lethargy and slumber, and darkness, and bring thee to seek and find the Savior, whom to know is to receive pardon in the conscience, and joy in the soul!

II. And now I shall want your patient attention but for a few moments while I take the second part of my subject and dwell upon it briefly. I have sometimes heard uninstructed Christians ask how it is that when a man is once pardoned he is nevertheless to ask every day that his sins may be forgiven. We teach, and we are bold to affirm it again and again, and confess the teaching, that the moment a sinner believes all his sins are put away; past, present, and to come, they are all gone so far as God the Judge is concerned; there is not left one sin against any of his people, nor shall there be. "He seeth no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel." And yet our Master tells us to bow our knee and say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." How can we ask for that we already possess? Why seek a pardon which we already enjoy? The difficulty lies in a forgetfulness of the relationship which Christians sustain to God. As a sinner I come to Christ and trust him. God is then a Judge; he takes the great book of the Court, strikes out my sins and acquits me. At the same moment, out of his great love, he adopts me into his family. Now I stand in quite a different relationship to him from what I ever did before. I am not so much his subject as his child. He is no longer to me a Judge but has become to me a Father. And now I have new rules, new laws; now I have a new discipline; now I have new treatment; now I have new obedience. I go and do wrong. What then? Does the Judge come and at once summon me before his throne? No, I have no Judge. He is a Father, and that Father brings me up before his face, and frowns on me—nay, takes the rod and begins to scourge me. He never scourged me when he was a Judge. Then, he only threatened to use the axe; but he has buried the axe now. Now that I am his child, he has no axe to put me to death with—he cannot destroy his own children. But he uses the rod upon me. If I do that which is wrong, as I am doing every day towards him as a father, I am bound to go to him as to a father on a child's knees, and say, "Our Father which art in heaven, forgive me these trespasses as I forgive them that trespass against me." As each day you and I, if we be children of God, are continually sinning, not against him as Judge, but against him as Father, it behoves us to seek daily pardon. If we



do not obtain that pardon daily, at last the Father lays on the rod, as he did in Hezekiah's case. He smote Hezekiah till he was sick even to death. Hezekiah repented; the rod was taken away; and then Hezekiah felt in his soul, "Thou hast east all my sin. behind thy back." This was David's case. David's sin with Bathsheba had been forgiven years ago and put away, through the expected blood of Christ. But when he sinned it, God put him away for awhile; took away his presence from him, and as a father was angry against his child. When David, however, repented, after he had been smitten, the Father took him again to his bosom, and David could sing once again, "Thou hast cast my sins behind thy back."

Now notice that this pardon differs from the first. The first was the pardon of a Judge: this is the pardon of a father. The first quenched the flames of hell: this only removes the paternal rod. The first made the rebel into a pardoned criminal, and reversed the sentence: the second receives the erring child more tenderly to a Father's breast. There are essential differences, because the pardon of the second does not relate so much to the punishment and the guilt, as it does, to the root of iniquity within, and the removing of that from which was only cast upon us in order to make us sick of self and fond of Christ. But when this sense of pardon is obtained by the Christian, it gives him a joy; not so tumultuous as the first one he had; but still, and deep, and unruffled, and calm. He does not, perhaps, partake of that roaring see of rapturous delight on which he sailed when first he was forgiven; but his peace is liken river, and his righteousness like the waves of the sea. And this peace produces in him the most blessed and salutary effects. He becomes grateful to God for the chastisement he has received, which taught him his need of Jesus afresh. He henceforth avoids the sins which made him grieve his God. He walks more cautiously and tenderly than he did before; lives nearer to God; cultivates greater acquaintance with the Holy Spirit; is more in prayer, more humble; and yet the same time more confident than he was before. The light was withdrawn that he might receive a double portion of it by-and-bye. The joy was taken away that his holiness might be increased. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, are you laboring this morning under desertion of soul? Was there a time when you could read your title clear? Have clouds and darkness beset you? Do not doubt your Father's love for all that; do not distrust him; do not go creeping on your

knees as you did when you first went, as one who had never received pardon. Come boldly, yet humbly, to your God. Plead his promise; rely upon the precious blood of Christ, and look up and say, "My Father, my Father, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit" And you shall have back the confidence of your youth, and you shall again feel that the Holy Spirit dwells within you. You shall once again mount above the trials and troubles of this mortal life, and begin to enter into the rest which remaineth for the people of God.

One solitary sentence or so, and I will dismiss the present congregation. Have I a man here who declares that he is pardoned, and yet indulges in the sins which he pretends are forgiven? Sir, you have either deceived yourself, or else you are uttering what you know is untrue. He who is forgiven hate' sin. We cannot be washed clean if we still persist in living up to our neck in filth. It cannot be possible that a man is pardoned while he still continues to wallow in abominable sin. "O yes," but he says, "I am no legalist; I believe the grace of God has made me clean, though I do go on in sin." Sir, it is clear you are a legalist, but I will tell you what else you are: you are no child of God, you are no Christian; for the Christian is a man who uniformly hates sin. There never was a believer who loved iniquity; such a strange thing as a pardoned sinner who still loved to be in rebellion against his God. "Yes," but I hear another say, "Sir, that may be true; but I do not profess to be pardoned in any such way as you speak of. I believe my sins to be so small and little, that I have no need to go seeking mercy; or if I seek it I do not expect that I shall find it here. I dare say I shall fare as well as the best when I go into another world." Poor fool poor fool thou art condemned already. The sentence of God has gone out against you, "Whosoever believeth not on the Son of God is condemned because he believeth not." And yet you, when your sentence is written out, and your death-knell perhaps tolling now, say your ring are little. They are so great, sir, that the fires of hell shall never expiate them, and your own misery, in soul and body for ever, shall never be a full equivalent for the iniquity you have committed against God. And so you don't want to know that you are forgiven, you are consent to take your chance with the rest. A chance, indeed, it is! But know, air, I feel so differently in my heart from you in that respect, that had I a doubt at this time about my sins being forgiven, I could not give sleep to my eyes, nor

slumber to my eyelids, till I was assured that I had received God's love in my heart. If at any time a doubt crosses my soul, I am the most wretched of beings. For sure, this is like light to the eyes, like friendship to the spirit, like drink to the thirsty, and bread to the hungry, to know one's-self forgiven. Go out of this hall, and say, "I am walking over the mouth of hell and may slip in at any moment; I am hanging over perdition by a single hair, and into in flame may be speedily hurled, yet I do not care whether I am damned or not." Say it right out in broad English—say you are in doubt as to whether you shall go to heaven or hell—say, if you must go home to day, and in your upper chamber lie down on your narrow bed to die—say you are not sure whether you shall see the face of your God with acceptance, and yet you are content. Speak like an honest man, and like a fool, for such language is only the raving of a madman and a fool. Oh, I beseech you, never be content until you have sought and found a Savior. Ay, and until you are sure you have found him, do not be happy with a "perhaps," or a "perchance." Do not rest your soul on chances, but make sure work for eternity, I conjure you, ains, by the solemnities of eternity, by the fires of hell, and by the joys of heaven, get your foot on a rock, and know it is there. Do not make guesswork of it; put it beyond all chance. O dying sinner! do not let it be a question with you whether thou shalt be saved or whether thou shalt be damned. O frail man! tottering on the brink of the grave, do not let it be a matter of uncertainty as to whether heaven shall receive thee, or hell engulf thee. Be sure of it one way or the other. If thou canst make thy bed in hell, if thou canst endure the everlasting burning, if thou canst suffer the anger of God when he shall rend thee in pieces like a lion, then go on in thy folly. But if thou wouldst have a portion among them that are sanctified. if thou wouldst see the face of Christ and walk the golden streets, be sure that thou art in Christ, be certain that thou art trusting him, and be not satisfied till that is put beyond all question, beyond all argument and contention.

The Lord add his blessing to my feeble words, for Jesu's sake! Amen.

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## **Separating The Precious From The Vile**

That ye may know how that the Lord hath put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel - Exodus 11:7

The difference between the Egyptians and Israel was exceedingly manifest. At first sight it seemed to be very greatly to the advantage of Egypt. They had the whip in their hand, and poor Israel smarted under the lash. Egypt possessed the toil of the Israelites. the sons of Jacob made bricks, and the subjects of Pharaoh inhabited the houses which the sons of Jacob builded. How soon, however, were the tables turned! God wrought plagues in Egypt. but Goshen was spared. He sent a thick darkness over all the land, even darkness that might be felt; but in all the land of Goshen there was light. He sent all manner of flies and lice in all their borders, but throughout the habitations of Israel not a fly was to be seen, neither were they molested by the living things which crept upward from the quickened dust of the earth. The Lord sent hail and a murrain upon all the cattle of the Egyptians; but the cattle of the children of Israel were spared, and on their fields fell no desolating shower from heaven. At last the destroying angel unsheathed his glittering sword to smite his last decisive blow. In every house throughout the land of Egypt there was weeping and wailing, he smote the firstborn of Egypt, the chief of all their strength; but as for his people, he led them forth like sheep, he led them through the wilderness like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron. They came to the Red Sea, and he divided a path for them they went through the sea on foot, there did they rejoice in Him. The flood; stood upright as a heap land the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. They passed through the depths as through a wilderness, which the Egyptians essaying to do were drowned. The Lord, in all these things, put a glorious difference between Egypt and Israel. The fiery cloudy pillar which gave light to Israel was darkness to the eyes of Egypt. Whenever God blessed Israel, he cursed Egypt, the same moment that he sent the benediction to the one, he sent the malediction to the other, he looked on

Israel and the tribes rejoiced, but when he looked on the Egyptians, their host were troubled.

Now, in your ears this day, Egypt and Israel are declared to be types of two people who dwell upon the face of the earth,—the men that fear the Lord and the men that fear him not. The Egyptians are the pictures of those who are dead in trespasses and sins, enemies to God by wicked works, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. The Israelites, God's ancient people, are set before us as the representatives of those who have through grace believed in Christ, who fear God and who seek to keep his commandments. The task of this morning will be to show you, first, the difference; secondly, when that difference is seen; and thirdly, the reason why it should be seen, upon which last point I shall stir up your minds, urging you to make the difference more and more conspicuous in your daily life.

I. First, then, **THE DIFFERENCE**. The Lord hath put a difference between those who are his people and those who are not.

There are many distinctions among men which will one day be blotted out; but permit me to remind you at the outset that this is an eternal distinction. Between the different classes of men, the rich and the poor, there are channels of intercommunication, and very properly so, for the less class distinctions are maintained, the better for the happiness of all. The social fabric is not to be kept up by maintaining one pillar at the expense of another, or by gilding the roof and neglecting the foundations. The commonwealth is one, and the prosperity of one class is proportionally the prosperity of all. But there distinction so wide that we may truly say of it, "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed," and the broader the line of demarcation, the happier for the church, and the better for the world. There is a distinction of infinite width between the sinner dead in sin, and the child of God quickened by the Spirit, who has been adopted into the family of the Most High. Concerning this distinction, suffer me to make, the following remarks.

First, the distinction between the righteous and wicked is most ancient. It was ordained of God from before the foundation of the world. In the

eternal covenant Jehovah wrote the names of his elect; for them Christ entered into engagements that he would be their surety, and their substitute to suffer in their room and stead. Covenant engagements were made for them, and for them only. Their names were from of old inscribed in the book of God, and engraven upon the precious stones of their great high priest's breastplate. They were then in the covenant set apart: "The Lord hath set apart him that his godly for himself." While the whole world lay in the wicked one, these precious jewels were selected from the dunghill of the fall. Better than other men by nature they certainly were not; yet divine sovereignty, linked arm in arm with divine grace, selected some to be the vessels of mercy, who should be fitted for the Master's use, in whom Jehovah should show forth not his long suffering merely, but the plenitude of his grace and the riches of his love. Other distinctions are merely temporary. they are things that grew up yesterday, and will die to-morrow. but this is older than the everlasting hills. Before the starry sky was spread, or the foundations of the earth were digged, the Lord had made a difference between Israel and Egypt. This, however, is a mighty secret, and though we are to tell it as we find it in the Word, yet we are not intrusively to pry into it.

God has made another distinction, namely a vital one. Between the righteous and the wicked, there is an essential distinction of nature. There are some of you, who imagine that the only difference between the true Christian and another, is just this,—that the one is more attentive to his place of worship—that he is more regular in the practice of ceremonies—that he could not live without private prayer, and the like. Permit me to assure you, that if there is no greater difference than this between you and another man, you are not a child of God. The distinction between the unconverted and the converted, is far wider than this. It is one not of dress or of outward form but of essence and of nature. Bring hither a serpent and an angel: there is a distinction between the two of such a character, that the serpent could not grow into an angel let it do its utmost; the angel could not eat the dust which forms the serpent's food, nor could the serpent lift up its voice and sing the seraphic song of the blessed. As wide a distinction as that is there between the man that fears God, and the man that fears him not. If you are still what you always were by nature, you cannot be a true Christian; and it is utterly impossible for

you to grow into one by all your doings. You may wash and cleanse, you may clothe and dress; you will be the child of nature finely dressed, but not the living child of heaven. You must be born again; there must be a new nature put into you; a spark of divinity must fall into your bosom, and must burn there. Fallen nature can only rise to nature, just as water will only flow up as high as its source; and as you are fallen in nature, so must you remain, unless you are renewed by grace. God by his infinite power has quickened his people: he has brought them out of their old nature, they now love the things which they once hated, and they hate the things they once loved. Old things with them are "passed away; behold all things are become new." The change is not that they speak more solemnly and religiously, or that they have left off going to the theater, or that they do not spend their lives in the frivolities of the world: that is not the change—it is a consequence of it, but the change is deeper and more vital than this; it is a change of the man's very essence. He is no more the man that he once was. he is "renewed in the spirit of his mind," born over again, regenerated, re-created: he is a stranger and a foreigner here below, he no more belongs to this world, but to the world to come. The Lord, then, in this respect, hath put a difference between Israel and Erupt.

We would remark, further, that this difference of nature is followed by a difference in God's judicial treatment of the two men. With both, his dealings are just and right. God forbid that he should be unjust to any man! The Lord is never severe beyond what justice demands, nor gracious beyond what justice allows. Here comes the unrenewed, the ungodly man, he brings up his good works, his prayers, his tears; the Lord will judge him according to his works, and woe worth the day to him; it will be a day of sorrow indeed, for he will soon discover his best perfections are as filthy rags, and that all his good works only seemed to be good because he was in the dark, and could not see the spots that defiled them. Another man approaches, it is the renewed man. God deals with him justly, it is true, but not according to the scale of the law, he looks at that man as accepted in Christ Jesus, justified through Christ's righteousness and washed in his blood' and now he deals with that man, not as a judge with a criminal, nor as a king with a subject, but as a father with a child. That man is taken to Jehovah's bosom; his offense is put

away, his soul constantly renewed by the influence of divine grace, and the dealings of God with him are as different from the dealings of God with another man, as the love of a husband differs from the sternness of an incensed monarch. On the one hand, it is simple justice; on the other hand, fervent love; on the one hand, the inflexible severity of a judge, and on the other hand, the unbounded affection of a parent's heart. The Lord, then, in this also hath put a difference between Israel and Egypt.

This distinction is carried out in providence. It is true, that to the naked eye one event happens to both; the righteous suffer as well as the wicked, and they go to the grave which is appointed for all living; but if we could look more closely into God's providence, we should see lines of light dividing the path of the godly from the lot of the transgressor. To the righteous man every providence is a blessing. A blessing is wrapped up in all our curses and in all our crosses. Our cups are sometimes bitter, but they are always healthful. Our woe is our weal. We are never losers by our losses, but we grow rich towards God when we become poor towards men. To the sinner, however, all things work together for evil. Is he prosperous? He is as the beast that is fattened for the slaughter. Is he healthy? He is as the blooming flower that is ripening for the mower's scythe. Does he suffer? His sufferings are the first drops of the eternal hail-storm-of divine vengeance. Every thing to the sinner, if he could but open his eye, hath a black aspect. The clouds are to him big with thunders, and the whole world is alive with terror. If earth could have its way it would shake off from its bosom the monsters that forget God. But to the righteous all things work together for good. Come foul, or come fair, all shall end well; every wave speeds him to his desired haven, and even the rough blast swells his sails, and drives him the more swiftly towards the port of peace. The Lord hath put a difference between Israel and Egypt in this world.

That difference, however, will come out more distinctly on the judgment-day. Then, when he shall sit upon the throne of his glory, he shall divide them, the one from the other, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. He shall cry unto his angels, and say, "Gather out of my kingdom all things that offend and them that do iniquity." Then, with the sharp sickle in his hand, will the angel fly through the midst of heaven and reap



the tares, and gather them together in bundles to burn. But, stepping from his throne, not delegating the delightful task to an angel, the King himself, the crowned Reaper, shall take his own golden sickle, and shall gather the wheat into his barn. Oh! then, when hell shall open wide its mouth, and swallow up the impenitent, when they shall go down alive into the pit, as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram did of old—then, when they shall see the righteous streaming up to heaven, like a stream of light, in their bright and glistening garments, shout triumphant hymns and choral symphonies, then shall it be seen that the Lord hath put a difference. When across the impassable gulf the rich man shall see Lazarus in Abraham's bosom—when from the lowest pit of hell the condemned one shall see the accepted one glorified in bliss—then shall the truth stand out written in letters of fire—"The Lord hath put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."

## II. We pass on to our second point—WHEN IS THIS DIFFERENCE SEEN?

Our answer is, it is often seen in God's temple. Two men go up to the temple to worship, they take their seats side by side in God's house; the Word is preached to them both; they both hear it, perhaps with like attention; the one goes his way to forget, the other remembers. They come again: the one listens, and the minister is to him as one that playeth a goodly tune upon an instrument: the other listens and weeps; he feels that the word is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. It comes home to his conscience; it pierces him, cuts him to the quick; every word seems to be as an arrow shot from the bow of God and finding a target in his conscience. And now they come again. The one feels the word at last to be his; he has been led to repentance and faith in Christ through It, and now comes up to sing God's praises as his accepted child; while the other remains to sing as a mere formalist—to join in worship in which he feels but little interest—to lift up his voice in a prayer when his heart is far absent. If I had here this morning a heap of steel filings and of ashes mixed together, and I wanted to detect the difference between the two, I should have nothing to do but to thrust in a magnet; the filings would be attracted and the ashes would remain. So with this congregation. If I would know to-day who are those who are of God's

Israel, and who are still the baseborn Egyptians, there is nothing needed but to preach the gospel. The gospel finds out God's people. it has an affinity to them. When it comes to them they receive it, God's Holy Spirit opening their hearts; they lay hold of it and rejoice in it; while those who are not God's, who have no part or interest in the redemption of Christ, hear it in vain and are even hardened by it and go their way to sin with a higher hand, after all the warnings they have received.

Come now, my hearer—to come right home to you—have you ever seen this difference made between you and another man? Do you hear the gospel now as you have never heard it before? This is the age of hearing; there are more people attending our places of worship now than ever there were but still it is not the hearers, but the doers of the Word that are blessed. So, then, have you been made to hear the Word as you never heard before? Do you listen to it, hoping that it may be blessed to you, desiring that your conscience may be subjected to it. just as the gold is subject to the goldsmith's hand? If so, there is the first sign of a difference which God has put between you and the Egyptians.

But it goes further. If the Israelite is consistent with his duty, as I think he must be, in a little while he feels it incumbent upon him to come out from the rest of mankind, and to be united with Christ's Church. "The Lord hath put a difference," saith he; "now I will show this difference. My Master hath said, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' I put no trust in baptism, but I must show that I am no longer what I was. I desire to be obedient to my Lord and Master. I desire to cross the rubicon. To draw my sword against the world, once and for ever to throw away the scabbard. I long to do a something that shall make the world see that I am crucified to it, and that it is crucified to me. Let me then be buried in water, 'in the name of the Father. and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' as the picture of my death to all the world. Let me rise out of the water, as the picture of my resurrection to a new life; and God help me from that blessed hour to go on my way walking as one who is not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world." As often as the table is spread, upon which we celebrate the memorial of the body and the blood of Christ, God again seals that difference. The unconverted, if the minister be faithful, are warned to go their way, or if they eat there, they

will eat and drink damnation to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body. They are invited to come, and they only who are believers in Jesus, who have a hope that they are changed men, and have been renewed by divine grace in the spirit of their minds. Thus do we show to the world in the two outward symbols that the Lord hath put a difference.

But further: the whole of a Christian's life, if he be what he should be, is showing forth to the world that the Lord hath put a difference. Here are two men in trial, the same trouble has befallen them both; they are partners in business; their money is all gone; the house has gone to ruin; they are brought down to beggary, and have to start in the world again. Now, which of these two is the Christian man? There is one ready to tear his hair; he cannot bear that he should have worked all his life and now should be poor as Lazarus. He thinks Providence is unfair. "There is many a vagabond," says he, "getting rich, and here am I, after toiling hard and paying every man his own, brought down to the round, having nothing left." But the Christian man—if he really be a Christian, (mark that, for there are a great many that profess to be Christians and are not, and it is the rough wind that tries them)—says, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." "I know," says he, "that all things work together for good. I will put my shoulder to the wheel, and work up once more;" and so with courage and with confidence in Christ he goes again to his labor, and God blesses him yet once more, nay, blesses him in his trials more than he was ever blessed in his prosperity. Here are two men again: they have both been doing wrong, and when the righteous fall as well as the wicked, who is to know the difference? The next morning one of them rises, and is quite easy about the matter—he knows no wounds in his conscience, or if he be uneasy it is because he is afraid of being found out. He is like one who, having fallen into the mire, lies and rolls there. But here comes the Christian. He feels he has done wrong. "What shall I do?" says he, "to make reparation to man, and to show my repentance towards God?" He would be ready to go down on his knees before any one he has injured and confess how wrong he has been. He hates himself, he loathes himself, because he has done wrong. He would sooner die than sin; and now that he finds he has sinned, he wishes he had died sooner than he should ever have dishonored his Lord and Master. If you see a sheep fall into the mire, it is

quick enough up again; but if the swine falls there, it wallows in it again and again, and nothing but the whip or the stick can make it rise. So that there is an essential difference between the righteous and the wicked, even in their sins. "A righteous man falleth seven times, but he riseth up again;" as for the wicked, he rolls and revels in his sin, abiding and continuing in it. God has set a difference, and even when that difference is obscured it may yet be discerned. There is a ring about the Christian man that is not to be mistaken. Do what you will with him, he is not what the other man is, and you cannot make him so. Here is a new coin which looks amazingly like a sovereign, and I turn it over. it is so clever a counterfeit that I cannot discover whether it is gold or no. Here is another: it is a light sovereign, I find. I look et them both, and at first sight I am inclined to think that my new-minted sovereign is the best of the two; for, say I the other is evidently much worn and light. But there is a ring about the Christian that proves him to be gold, after all, even when he is worn and short in weight. You may deface him so that the king's image is not apparent upon him, but he is gold for all that; he only needs to be tried, and in the hour of trial that golden sound of grace will detect him, and he will prove still to be one in whom God hath made a difference.

This distinction also comes out in a godly man when he is under the pressure of some strong temptation. There are two tradesmen: both seem to trade in the same way; but at last a rare chance occurs to them. If they have no conscience they can make a fortune. Now will be the test. One man looks out for the opportunity, and unscrupulously grasps it. That man is no Christian: put that down as certain. There is another man: he feels a longing for the gain, for he is human, but his heart hates the sin, for it is renewed by divine grace. "No," he says; "better shut up shop than earn my living by dishonesty: better for me to be ruined in this life than that I should be ruined in the world to come." The maxim of the establishment on the other side of the road is, "We must live." The maxim of this shop will be, "We must die." You who are customers soon know in which place you will be dealt with most honestly, and there you discover in some degree that the Lord hath put a difference between Egypt and Israel.

But not to keep you long on this point: that difference shines forth very vividly in the dying hour. Oh! how distinct is that difference sometimes! The last time the cholera visited London with severity, though I had many engagements in the country, I gave them up to remain in London. It is the duty of the minister always to be on the spot in times of visitation and disease. I never saw more conspicuously in my life the difference between the man that feareth God and the man that feareth him not, than I did then. Called up one Monday morning at about half-past three, to go and see a man who was dying, I went to him and entered the place where he was lying. He had been down to Brighton on the Sunday morning on an excursion, and came back ill; and there he lay on the borders of the tomb. I stood by his side, and spoke to him. The only consciousness he had was a foreboding of terror, mingled with the stupor of alarm: soon even that was gone, and I had to stand sighing there with a poor old woman who had watched over him, hopeless altogether about his soul. I went home. I was called away to see a young woman; she was also in the last extremity, but it was a fair, fair sight: she was singing, though she knew she was dying; talking to those round about her, telling her brothers and sisters to follow her to heaven, bidding good-bye to her father, smiling as if it were a marriage-day. She was happy and blessed. I then saw very clearly, that if there is not a difference in the joy of life there is a difference when we come to the dying hour. But the first case I mentioned is not the worst I have ever seen. Many have I seen dying, whose histories it would not do to tell. I have seen them when their eye-balls have been glaring from their sockets—when they have known Christ and have heard the gospel, but yet have rejected it. They have been dying in agonies so extreme, that one could only fly from the room, feeling that it was a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God' and to enter into that all-devouring fire. On the dying bed it will be manifest that the Lord hath put a difference between Israel and Egypt.

III. I have hurried over these first two points because I want to dwell very strongly and very solemnly upon my last. We spoke about the difference being seen between the righteous and the wicked. My last point is, **WHY SHOULD THAT DIFFERENCE BE SEEN?** I have here a practical aim and drift; and I hope that if the rest of the sermon shall fall dead upon you, this, at least, may quicken your conscience.

This is an age which has many hopeful signs in it; but yet, if we judge according to the rule of Scripture, there are some very black marks upon this century. I sometimes fear that the only age to which we can be truly likened is the time before the flood, when the sons of God intermarried with the daughters of men, and when there ceased to be a distinction between the Church and the world. It is but the part of candour to acknowledge, that there is such a mixture now-a-days, such a compromise, such a giving and a taking on both sides of religious questions, that we are like a leavened mass, mingled and united together. All this is wrong; for God has always intended there should be a distinction between the righteous and the wicked, as clear and as palpable as the distinction between the day and the night.

My first argument is this. Whenever the Church has been thoroughly distinct from the world, she has always prospered. During the first three centuries the world hated the Church. The prison, the stake, the heels of the wild horse, these were thought too good for the followers of Christ. When a man became a Christian, he gave up father and mother, house and lands, nay, his own life also. When they met together they must meet in the catacombs, burning candles at high noon, because there was darkness in the depths of the earth. They were despised and rejected of men. "They wandered about in sheeps' skins and goats' skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented." But then was the age of heroes; that was the time of giants. Never did the Church so much prosper and so truly thrive as when she was baptized in blood. The ship of the Church never sails so gloriously along as when the bloody spray of her martyrs falls upon her deck. We must suffer, and we must die, if we are ever to conquer this world for Christ. Was there ever such a surprising miracle as the spread of the gospel during the first two or three centuries? Within fifty years after Christ had ascended to heaven, the gospel was preached in every known part of the world, and there were converts to Christ in the most inhospitable regions. Further than the ships of Tarshish had the gospel flown; the pillars of Hercules had not bounded the industry of the apostles. To wild and uncivilised tribes, to Picts and Scots, and to fierce Britons, was the gospel proclaimed. Churches were founded, some of which have lasted in their purity to this day. And all this, I believe, was

partly the result of that striking, that marked difference between the Church and the world. Certainly, during the period after Constantine professed to be a Christian, changing with the times, because he saw it would strengthen his empire—from the time when the Church began to be linked with the state—the Lord left her, and gave her up to barrenness, and Ichabod was written on her walls. It was a black day for Christendom when Constantine said, "I am a Christian." "By this sign I conquer," said he. Yes, it was the true reason of his pretended conversion, If he could conquer by the cross it was well enough; if he could have conquered by Jupiter he would have I liked it equally as well. From that time the Church began to degenerate. And coming down to the middle ages, when you could not tell a Christian from a worldling, where were you to find piety at all, or life or grace left in the lands Then came Luther, and with a rough grasp he rent away the Church from the world—pulled her away at the risk of rending her in pieces. He would not have her linked in affinity with the world, and then "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed;" but he that sitteth in the heavens did laugh at them; Jehovah had them in derision. The Church went forth conquering and to conquer, and her main weapon was her non-conformity to the world, her coming out from among men. Put your finger on any prosperous page in the Church's history, and I will find a little marginal note reading thus: "In this age men could readily see where the Church began and where the world ended." Never were there good times when the Church and the world were joined in marriage with one another.

But though this were sufficient argument for keeping the Church and the world distinct, there are many others. The more the Church is distinct from the world in her acts and in her maxims, the more true is her testimony for Christ, and the more potent is her witness against sin. We are sent into this world to testify against evils; but if we dabble in them ourselves, where is our testimony? If we ourselves be found faulty, we are false witnesses; we are not sent of God, our testimony is of none effect. I do not hesitate to say there are tens of thousands of professing Christians, whose testimony before the world is rather injurious than beneficial. The world looks at them, and says, "Well, I see: you can be a Christian, and yet remain a rogue." "Ah!" says another, "you can be a Christian, I

perceive; but then you will have to be doleful and miserable." "Ah!" cries another, "these Christians like to drink sin in secret behind the door. Their Christianity lies in not liking to sin openly; but they can devour a widow's house when nobody is looking on; they can be drunkards, only it must be in a very small party; they would not like to be discovered tipsy where there were a hundred eyes to look at them." Now, what is all that? It is just this,—that the world has found out that the Church visible is not the unmixed Church of Christ, since it is not true to its principles, and does not stand up for the uprightness and integrity which are the marks of the genuine church of God. Many Christians forget that they are bearing a testimony: they do not think that anybody notices them. Ay, but they do. There are no people so much watched as Christians. The world reads us up, from the first letter of our lives to the end; and if they can find a flaw—and, God forgive us, they may find very many—they are sure to magnify the flaw as much as ever they can. Let us therefore be very watchful, that we live close to Christ, that we walk in his commandments always that the world may see that the Lord hath put a difference..

But now I have a very sad thing to say—I wish that I could withhold it, but I cannot. Unless, brothers and sisters, you make it your daily business to see that there is a difference between you and the world, you will do more hurt than you can possibly do good. The Church of Christ is at this day accountable for many fearful sins. Let me mention one which is but the type of others. By what means think you were the fetters rivetted on the wrist of our friend who sits there, a man like ourselves, though of a black skin? It is the Church of Christ that keeps his brethren under bondage; if it were not for that Church, the system of slavery would go back to the hell from which it sprung. If there were no slave floggers but men who are fit for so degrading an office; if there were not found Christian ministers (?) who can apologise for slavery from the pulpit, and church members who sell the children of nobler beings than themselves—if it were not for this, Africa would be free. Albert Barnes spoke right truly when he said slavery could not exist for an hour if it were not for the countenance of the Christian Church. But what does the slaveholder say when you tell him that to hold our fellow-creatures in bondage is a sin, and a damnable one, inconsistent with grace? He replies "I do not believe your slanders; look at the Bishop of So-and-so, or the minister of such-and-such a place,



is not he a good man, and does not he whine out 'Cursed be Canaan?' Does not he quote Philemon and Onesimus? Does he not go and talk Bible, and tell his slaves that they ought to feel very grateful for being his slaves, for God Almighty made them on purpose that they might enjoy the rare privilege of being cowhided by a Christian master. Don't tell me," he says, "if the thing were wrong, it would not have the Church on its side." And so Christ's free Church bought with his blood, must bear the shame of cursing Africa, and keeping her sons in bondage. From this evil, good Lord deliver us. If Manchester merchants and Liverpool traders have a share in this guilt, at least let the Church be free of this hell-filling crime. Men have tried hard to make the Bible support this sum of all villainies, but slavery, the thing which defiles the Great Republic such slavery is quite unknown to the Word of God, and by the laws of the Jew; it was impossible that it ever could exist. I have known men quote texts as excuses for being damned, and I do not wonder that men can find Scripture to justify them in buying and selling the souls of men.

And what think you is it, to come home to our own land, that props up the system of trample that is carried on among us? You all know that there are businesses where it is not possible for a young man to be honest in the shop, where, if he spoke the downright truth, he would be discharged. Why is it, think you, that the system of ticketing goods in the window differently from what they are sold indoors, or exhibiting one thing and then giving another article, the system of telling white lies across the counter with the intention of getting a better price, is maintained? Why it would not stamp an hour if it were not for the professing Christians who practice it. They have not the moral courage to say once for all, "We will have nothing to do with these things." If they did, if the Church renounced these unholy customs, business could alter within the next twelve months. The props of felony, and the supports of roguery are these professing Christian men, who bend their backs to do as other men do; who, instead of stemming the torrent, give up, and swim along with it—the dead fish in our churches, that flow with the stream, unlike the living fish which always go against it, and swim upward to the river's source. I would not speak too severely of Christ's Church, for I love her; but because I love her I must therefore utter this. Our being so much like the world, our trading as the world trades, our talking as the world

talks, our always insisting upon it that we must do as other people do, this is doing more mischief to the world, than all our preachers can hope to effect good. "Come ye out from among them, touch not the unclean thing, be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters."

This surely, a stern rough argument, might move us to be separate from the world. But once again, how is it possible for us to honor Jesus Christ, while there is no difference between us and the world? I can imagine that a man may not profess to be a Christian, and yet he may honor his Master, that however is a matter of imagination. I do not know of an instance, but I cannot imagine a man professing to be a Christian, and then acting as the crowd acts, and yet honoring Christ.

Methinks I see my Master now he stands before me. He has more than those five blessed wounds. I see his hands running with blood. "My Master! my Master!" I cry, where didst thou get those wounds? those are not the piercings of the nails, nor the gash of the spear-thrust; whence come those wounds" I hear him mournfully reply, "These are the wounds which I have received in the house of my friends. such-and-such a Christian fell, such-and-such a disciple followed me afar off, and at last Peter-like denied me altogether. Such an one of my children is covetous, such another of them is proud, such another has taken his neighbor by the throat, and saith, 'Pay me what thou owest,' and I have been wounded in the house of my friends." O, blessed Jesus forgive us, forgive us, and give us thy grace that we may do so no more, for we would follow thee whithersoever thou goest; thou knowest Lord we would be thine, we would honor thee and not grieve thee. O give us now then of thine own Spirit, that we may come out from the world and be like thyself,—holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

I have but just these two things to say, and then I have done. To professors of religion this word. There are some of you professors of religion that are base coin. When you come to the Lord's table you lie, and when you say of yourself, "I am a member of such-and-such a church," you say what is a disgrace to you. Now let me remind you, sirs, that you may hold your profession here, but when you come before God's

bar at last you will find it a terrible thing not to have had a reality in your profession. Tremble, sirs, at God's right hand. There hangs the scale and you must be put into it, and if you are found wanting, your portion must be among the deceivers, and you know where that is—it is in the lowest pit of hell. Tremble, Sir Deacon, tremble, Church-member, if you are not what you profess to be there is a doom awaiting you of a fiercer, a direr sort than even for the ungodly and the reprobate. From the height of your profession you shall be plucked down. You have built your nest among the stars, but you must make your bed in hell. You have decked your head with a crown, but you must wear a crown of fire, you must have those fine robes plucked off you, that tinsel and that paint must all be removed. and you, naked to your shame, the hooting-mark of devils, shall become a hissing even to the damned of hell, as they shall point to you and cry, "There goes the man who destroyed himself by deceiving others. There is the wretch who talked of God and talked of Christ, and did not think himself such an one as we are, and now he too is bound up in the bundle to be burnt."

The last word is to those who are not professors at all. God has made a difference between you and the righteous. Oh, my dear friends, I beseech you turn that thought over in your minds! There are no three characters, no intermediate links; there is no border-land between the righteous and the wicked. To-day you are either a friend to God or an enemy to him. You are at this hour either quickened or dead, and oh! remember, when death comes it is either heaven or hell with you,—either angels or fiends must be your companions, and either the flames must be your bed and fiery coverlet, or else the glories of eternity must be your perpetual inheritance. Remember, the way to heaven is open. "He that believeth in the Lord Jesus shall be saved." Believe on him, believe on him, and live. Trust him, and you are saved. Cast your soul's confidence on Jesus, and you are now delivered. God help you to do that now, and there shall be no difference any more between you and the righteous, but you shall be of them, and with them, in the day when Jesus cometh to sit upon the throne of his father David, and to reign among men.

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## **A Sermon For The Time Present**

In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. - Zephaniah 3:16-18

Holy scripture is wonderfully full and abiding in its inner sense. It is a springing well, whereat you may draw, and draw again; for as you draw, it springs up for ever new and fresh. It is a well of water springing up everlastingly. The fulfillment of a divine promise is not the exhaustion of it. When a man gives you a promise, and he keeps it, there is an end of the promise; but it is not so with God. When he keeps his word to the full, he has but begun: he is prepared to keep it, and keep it, and keep it for ever and ever. What would you say of a man who had wheat upon his barn floor, and threshed it until he had beaten out the last golden grain; but the next day he went and threshed again, and brought back as much as the day before; and on the day after, again taking his flail, he went to the same threshing, and again brought back his measure as full as at the first, and so on for all the days of the year? Would it not seem to you as a fairy tale? It would certainly be a surprising miracle. But what should we say if, throughout a long life, this miracle could be prolonged.? Yet we have continued to thresh the promises ever since faith was given us, and we have carried away our full portion every day. What shall we say of the glorious fact that the saints in all generations, from the first day until now, have done the same; and of that equal truth, that as long as there is a needy soul upon earth, there will be upon the threshing floor of the promises the same abundance of the finest of the wheat as when the first man filled his measure and returned rejoicing? I will not dwell upon the

specific application of the text before us: I do not doubt that it was specially fulfilled as it was intended; and if there still remains some special piece of history to which this passage alludes, it will again be fulfilled in due time; but this I know, that those who have lived between whiles have found this promise true to them. Children of God have used these promises under all sorts of circumstances, and have derived the utmost comfort from them; and this morning I feel as if the text had been newly written for the present occasion, for it is in every syllable most suitable to the immediate crisis. If the Lord had fixed his eye upon the condition of his church just now, and had written this passage only for this year of grace 1887, it could scarcely have been more adapted to the occasion. Our business shall be to show this; but I would aim at much more. Let our prayer be that we, may enjoy this marvellous portion of the sacred word, and take intense delight in it. As God rests in his love, so may we rest in it this morning; and as he joys over us with singing, so may we break forth into joyous psalms to the God of our salvation.

I am going to begin with the last verse of the text, and work my way upwards. The first; head is, *a trying day for God's people*. They are sorrowful because a cloud is upon their solemn assembly, and the reproach thereof is a burden. Secondly, we will note *a glorious ground of consolation*. We read in the seventeenth verse, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." And, thirdly, here is *a brave conduct suggested thereby*: "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack."

I. Beginning at the eighteenth verse, we notice A TRYING DAY FOR GOD'S PEOPLE. *The solemn assembly had fallen under reproach*. The solemn assemblies of Israel were her glory: her great days of festival and sacrifice were the gladness of the land. To the faithful their holy days were their holidays. But a reproach had fallen upon the solemn assembly, and I believe it is so now at this present moment. It is a, sad affliction when in our solemn assemblies *the brilliance of the gospel light is dimmed by error*. The clearness of the testimony is spoiled when doubtful voices are scattered among the people, and those who ought to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, are telling

out for doctrines the imaginations of men, and the inventions of the age. Instead of revelation, we have philosophy, falsely so-called; instead of divine infallibility, we have surmises and larger hopes. The gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is taught as the production of progress, a growth, a thing to be amended and corrected year by year. It is an ill day, both for the church and the world, when the trumpet does not give a certain sound; for who shall prepare himself for the battle?

If added to this we should see *creeping over the solemn assembly of the church a lifelessness, an indifference, and a lack of spiritual power*, it is painful to a high degree. When the vitality of religion is despised, and gatherings for prayer are neglected, what are we coming to? The present period of church history is well portrayed by the church of Laodicea, which was neither cold nor hot, and therefore to be spewed out of Christ's mouth. That church gloried that she was rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing, while all the while her Lord was outside, knocking at the door, a door closed against him. That passage is constantly applied to the unconverted, with whom it has nothing to do: it has to do with a lukewarm church, with a church that thought itself to be in an eminently prosperous condition, while her living Lord, in the doctrine of his atoning sacrifice, was denied an entrance. Oh, if he had found admission—and he was eager to find it—she would soon have flung away her imaginary wealth, and he would have given her gold tried in the furnace, and white raiment with which she might be clothed. Alas! she is content without her Lord, for she has education, oratory, science, and a thousand other baubles. Zion's solemn assembly is under a cloud indeed, when the teaching of Jesus and his apostles is of small account with her.

If in addition to this, *worldly conformity spreads in the church*, so that the vain amusements of the world are shared in by the saints, then is there reason enough for lamentation, even as Jeremiah cried: "How is the gold become dim!" Her Nazarites, who were purer than snow and whiter than milk, have become blacker than a coal. "All our enemies have opened their mouths against us." If no longer there is a clear distinction between the church and the world, but professed followers of Jesus have joined hands with unbelievers, then may we mourn indeed! Woe worth

the day! An ill time has happened to the church and to the world also. We may expect great judgments, for the Lord will surely be avenged on such a people as this. Know ye not of old that when the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they were joined unto them, then the flood came and swept them all away? I need not pursue this subject further, lest our burdens take from us the time which is demanded for consolation.

It appears from the text that *there were some to whom the reproach was a burden*. They could not make sport of sin. True, there were many who said that the evil did not exist at all, and others who declared that it was not present in any great degree. Yes, and more hardened spirits declared that what was considered to be a reproach was really a thing to be boasted of, the very glory of the century. Thus they huffed the matter, and made the mourning of the conscientious to be a theme for jest. But there was a remnant to whom the reproach of it was a burden; these could not bear to see such a calamity. To these the Lord God will have respect, as he said by the prophet:—"Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." The many drank wine in bowls and anointed themselves with their chief ointments, but they were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph (Amos 6:6); but these were pressed in spirit and bore the cross, counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. God's people cannot bear that Christ's atoning sacrifice should be dishonored; they cannot endure that his truth should be trodden as mire in the streets. To true believers prosperity means the Holy Ghost blessing the word to the conversion of sinners and the building up of saints; and if they do not see this, they hang their harps upon the willows. True lovers of Jesus fast when the Bridegroom is not with his church: their glow is in his glory, and in nothing else. The wife of Phinehas, the son of Eli, cried out in her dying agony, "The glory has departed," and the reason that she gave was once because of the death of her husband and his father, but twice because "the ark of God is taken." For this she named her new-born child Ichabod—. "The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken." The bitterest pain of this godly woman was for the church, and for the honor of our God. So it is with God's true people: they lay it much to

heart that the truth is rejected.

This burdened spirit, is a token of true love to God: those who love the Lord Jesus are wounded in his woundings, and vexed with the vexings of his Spirit. When Christ is dishonored his disciples are dishonored. Those who have a tender heart towards the church can say with Paul, "Who is offended, and I burn not?" The sins of the church of God are the sorrows of all living members of it. This also marks a healthy sensibility, a vital spirituality. Those who are unspiritual care nothing for truth or grace: they look to finances, and numbers, and respectability. Utterly carnal men care for none of these things; and so long as the political aims of Dissenters are progressing, and there is an advance in social position, it is enough for them. But men whose spirits are of God would sooner see the faithful persecuted than see them desert the truth, sooner see churches in the depths of poverty full of holy zeal than rich churches dead in worldliness. Spiritual men care for the church even when she is in an evil case, and cast down by her adversaries: "thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof." The house of the Lord is to many of us our own house, his family is our family. Unless the Lord Jesus be extolled, and his gospel conquer, we feel that our own personal interests are blighted, and we ourselves are in disgrace. It is no small thing to us: it is our life.

Thus have I dwelt upon the fact that it is an ill day for God's people when the solemn assembly is defiled: the reproach thereof is a burden to those who are truly citizens of the New Jerusalem, and because of this *they are seen to be sorrowful*. The Lord here says, "I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly." They may well be sorrowful when such a burden is laid on their hearts. Moreover, they see in a hundred ways the ill effect of the evil which they deplore. Many are lame and halting; this is hinted at in the promise of the nineteenth verse: "I will save her that halteth." Pilgrims on the road to Zion were made to limp on the road because the prophets were "light and treacherous persons." When the pure gospel is not preached, God's people are robbed of the strength which they need in their life-journey. If you take away the bread, the children hunger. If you give the flock poisonous pastures, or fields which are barren as the desert, they pine and they become lame in their



daily following of the shepherd. The doctrinal soon affects the practical. I know many of the people of God living in different parts of this country to whom the Sabbath is very little of a day of rest, for they hear no truth in which rest is to be found, but they are worried and wearied with novelties which neither glorify God nor benefit the souls of men. In many a place the sheep look up and are not fed. This causes much disquietude and breeds doubts and questionings, and thus strength is turned to weakness, and the work of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope are all kept in a halting state. This is a grievous evil, and it is all around us. Then, alas! many are "driven out," of whom the nineteenth verse says, "I will gather her that was driven out." By false doctrine many are made to wander from the fold. Hopeful ones are made to stray from the path of life, and sinners are left in their natural distance from God. The truth which would convince men of sin is not preached, while other truths which would lead seekers into peace are beclouded, and souls are left in needless sorrow. When the doctrines of grace and the glorious atoning sacrifice are not set clearly before men's minds, so that they may feel their power, all sorts of evils follow. It is terrible to me that this dreadful blight should come upon our churches; for the hesitating are driven to destruction, the weak are staggered, and even the strong are perplexed. The false teachers of these days would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. This makes our hearts very sorrowful. How can we help it?

Yet, beloved, all the time that the people of God are in this evil case, *they are not without hope*; for close upon all this comes the promise of the Lord to restore his wandering ones. We have the sense twice over: "I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame." "I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord. "The adversaries cannot silence the eternal testimony. They hanged our Lord himself upon a tree; they took down his body and buried it in a tomb in the rock; and they set their seal upon the stone which they rolled at the mouth of the sepulcher. Surely now there was an end of the Christ and his cause. Boast not, ye priests and Pharisees! Vain the watch, the stone, the seal! When the appointed time had come, the living Christ came forth. He could not be holden by the cords of death. How idle their dreams! "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord doth have

them in derision." Beloved, the reproach will yet be rolled away from the solemn assembly: the truth of God will yet again be proclaimed as with trumpet tongue, the Spirit of God will revive his church, and converts as many as the sheaves of the harvest shall yet be gathered in. How will the faithful rejoice! Those who were burdened and sorrowful shall then put on their garments of joy and beauty. Then shall the ransomed of the Lord return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. The conflict is not doubtful. The end of the battle is sure and certain. Methinks I even now hear the shout, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

II. Secondly, let us think of something which shines like a star amid the darkness. The second verse of the text presents A GLORIOUS GROUND OF CONSOLATION. Here is a rich text indeed. This passage is like a great sea, while I am as a little child making pools in the sand which skirts its boundless flood. A series of discourses might well be founded on this one verse: I mean the seventeenth.

*Our great consolation in the worst times lies in our God.* The very name of our covenant God—"the Lord thy God"—is full of good cheer. That word, "the Lord," is really JEHOVAH, the self-existent One, the unchangeable One, the ever-living God, who cannot change or be moved from his everlasting purpose. Children of God, whatever you have not got, you have a God in whom you may greatly glory. Having God you have more than all things, for all things come of him; and if all things were blotted out, he could restore all things simply by his will. He speaketh, and it is done; he commandeth, and it stands fast. Blessed is the man that hath the God of Jacob for his trust, and whose hope Jehovah is. In the Lord Jehovah we have righteousness and strength; let us trust in him for ever. Let the times roll on, they cannot affect our God. Let troubles rush upon us like a tempest, but they shall not come nigh unto us now that he is our defense. Jehovah, the God of his church, is also the God of each individual member of it, and each one may therefore rejoice in him. Jehovah is as much your God, my brother, as if no other person in the universe could use that covenant expression. O believer, the Lord God is altogether and wholly your God! All his wisdom, all his foresight, all his power, all his immutability—all himself is yours. As for the church of God, when she is in her lowest estate she is still established and endowed in

the best possible sense—established by the divine decree, and endowed by the possession of God all-sufficient. The gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Let us exult in our possession. Poor as we are, we are infinitely rich in having God; weak as we are, there is no limit to our strength, since the Almighty Jehovah is ours. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" If God be ours, what more can we need? Lift up thy heart, thou sorrowful one, and be of good cheer. If God be thy God, thou hast all thou canst desire: wrapped up within his glorious name we find all things for time and eternity, for earth and heaven. Therefore in the name of Jehovah we will set up our banners, and march onward to the battle. He is our God by his own purpose, covenant, and oath; and this day he is our God by our own choice of him, by our union with Christ Jesus, by our experience of his goodness, and by that spirit of adoption whereby we cry "Abba, Father."

To strengthen this consolation, we notice next, that *this God is in the midst of us*. He is not a long way off, to be sought with difficulty, if haply we may find him. The Lord is a God nigh at hand, and ready to deliver his people. Is it not delightful to think that we cry not to God across the ocean, for he is here? We look not up to him from afar, as though he dwelt beyond the stars, neither do we think of him as hidden in the fathomless abyss; but the Lord is very near. Our God is "Jehovah in the midst of thee." Since that bright night in which a babe was born at Bethlehem, and unto us a Son was given, we know God as "Emmanuel, God with us." God is in our nature, and therefore very near unto us. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Though his bodily presence is gone, yet we have his spiritual presence with us evermore; for he saith, "Lo, I am with you alway." He walketh among the golden candlesticks. We have also the immediate presence of God the Holy Spirit. He is in the midst of the church to enlighten, convince, quicken, endow, comfort, and clothe with spiritual power. The Lord still works in the minds of men for the accomplishment of his purposes of grace. Let us think of this when we are going forth to Christian service: "The Lord of hosts is with us." When you call your class together in the Sabbath school, say to your Lord, "If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." Ah, friends! if we have God with us, we can bear to be deserted by men. What a word that is, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in

the midst of them!" Shall not the army shout when the King himself is in their ranks! Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered! When he is with us they that hate him must flee before him. Be it our concern so to live that we may never grieve away the Spirit of God. Beloved, there is such abundant consolation in the fact of the presence of God with us, that if we could only feel the power of it at this moment, we should enter into rest, and our heaven would begin below.

Let us go a step further, and note that our consolation is largely to be found in the fact that *this God in the midst of us is full of power to save*. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save." That is to say, "Jehovah, thy God, is mighty to save." His arm is not shortened, he is still "a just God and a Saviour." Nor is he merely able to save, but he will display that ability; "he will save." Come, my brother, we see around us this and that to discourage us; let us, like David, encourage ourselves in the Lord our God. We may very well forget all difficulties, since the God who is in the midst of us is mighty to save. Let us pray, then, that he will save; that he will save his own church from lukewarmness and from deadly error; that he will save her from her worldliness and formalism; save her from unconverted ministers and ungodly members. Let us lift up our eyes and behold the power which is ready to save; and let us go on to pray that the Lord may save the unconverted by thousands and millions. Oh, that we might see a great revival of religion! This is what we want before all things. This would smite the enemy upon the cheek-bone, and break the teeth of the adversary. If tens of thousands of souls were immediately saved by the sovereign grace of God, what a rebuke it would be to those who deny the faith! Oh, for times such as our fathers saw when first Whitefield and his helpers began to preach the life-giving word! When one sweet voice was heard clear and loud, all the birds of paradise began to sing in concert with him, and the morning of a glorious day was heralded. Oh, if that were to happen again, I should feel like Simeon when he embraced the heavenly babe! Then would the virgin daughter of Zion shake her head at the foe, and laugh him to scorn. It may happen; yea, if we are importunate in prayer it must happen: "God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." Let us not seek power of rhetoric, much less of wealth; but let us look for the power which saves. This is the one thing I crave. Oh, that God would save souls!

I say to myself, after being badgered and worried through the week by the men of modern thought: "I will go my way and preach Christ's gospel, and win souls." One lifting up of Jesus Christ crucified is more to me than all the cavillings of the men who are wise above what is written. Converts are our unanswerable arguments. "Happy is the man," saith the Psalm, "that hath his quiver full of them: they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." Blessed is the man who has many spiritual children born to God under his ministry; for his converts are his defense. Beholding the man who was healed standing with Peter and John, they could say nothing against them. If souls are saved by the gospel, the gospel is proved in the surest manner. Let us care more about conversions than about organizations. If souls are brought into union with Christ, we may let other unions go.

We go yet further, and we come to great deeps: behold *God's joy in his people*. "He will rejoice over thee with joy." Think of this! Jehovah, the living God, is described as brooding over his church with pleasure. He looks upon souls redeemed by the blood of his dear Son, quickened by his Holy Spirit, and his heart is glad. Even the infinite heart of God is filled with an extraordinary joy at the sight of his chosen. His delight is in his church, his Hephzibah. I can understand a minister rejoicing over a soul that he has brought to Christ; I can also understand believers rejoicing to see others saved from sin and hell; but what shall I say of the infinitely-happy and eternally-blessed God finding, as it were, a new joy in souls redeemed? This is another of those great wonders which cluster around the work of divine grace! "He will rejoice over thee with joy." Oh, you are trembling for the ark of the Lord; the Lord is not trembling, but rejoicing. Faulty as the church is, the Lord rejoices in her. While we mourn, as well we may, yet we do not sorrow as those that are without hope; for God does not sorrow, his heart is glad, and he is said to rejoice with joy—a highly emphatic expression. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, imperfect though they be. He sees them as they are to be, and so he rejoices over them, even when they cannot rejoice in themselves. When your face is blurred with tears, your eyes red with weeping, and your heart heavy with sorrow for sin, the great Father is rejoicing over you. The prodigal son wept in his Father's bosom, but the Father rejoiced over his son. We are questioning, doubting, sorrowing, trembling; and all the

while he who sees the end from the beginning knows what will come out of the present disquietude, and therefore rejoices. Let us rise in faith to share the joy of God. Let no man's heart fail him because of the taunts of the enemy. Rather let the chosen of God rouse themselves to courage, and participate in that joy of God which never ceaseth, even though the solemn assembly has become a reproach. Shall we not rejoice in him when he, in his boundless condescension, deigns to rejoice in us? Whoever despairs for the cause, he does not; wherefore let us be of good courage.

It is added, "*He will rest in his love.*" I do not know any Scripture which is more full of wonderful meaning than this. "He shall rest in his love," as if our God had in his people found satisfaction. He comes to an anchorage: he has reached his desire. As when a Jacob, full of love to Rachel, has at length ended the years of his service, and is married to his well-beloved, and his heart is at rest; so is it spoken in parable of the Lord our God. Jesus sees of the travail of his soul when his people are won to him; he has been baptized with his baptism for his church, and he is no longer straitened, for his desire is fulfilled. The Lord is content with his eternal choice, content with his loving purposes, satisfied with the love which went forth from everlasting. He is well pleased in Jesus—well pleased with all the glorious purposes which are connected with his dear Son, and with those who are in him. He has a calm content in the people of his choice, as he sees them in Christ. This is a good ground for our having a deep satisfaction of heart also. We are not what we would be; but then we are not what we shall be. We advance slowly; but then we advance surely. The end is secured by omnipotent grace. It is right that we should be discontented with ourselves, yet this holy restlessness should not rob us of our perfect peace in Christ Jesus. If the Lord hath rest in us, shall we not have rest in him? If he rests in his love, cannot we rest in it?

My heart is comforted as I plainly see in these words love unchanging, love abiding, love eternal: "he will rest in his love." Jehovah changes not. Being married to his people, "he hateth putting away." Immutability is written on his heart. The turtle-dove, when he has once chosen his mate, remains faithful throughout life, and if the beloved dies, he will, in many

cases, pine away with grief for her, for his life is wrapped up in hers. Even so our Lord hath made his choice of his beloved, and he will never change it: he died for his church, and so long as he lives he will remember his own love, and what it cost him: "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" "He will rest in his love."

The love of God to us is undisturbed: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding," dwells with his love: he is not disquieted about it, but peacefully loves, and is never moved. The calm of God is wonderful to contemplate: his infallible knowledge and infinite power put him beyond fear or question. He sees no cause of alarm as to his redeemed, nor as to the cause of truth and the reign of righteousness. As to his true church, he knows that she is right, or that he will make her right. She is being transformed into the image of Jesus, and he rests in the full assurance that the image will ere long be complete. He can carry out his own purposes in his own way and time. He can see the harvest as well as the sowing; therefore he doth "rest in his love." You have seen a mother wash her child, and as she washes its face the child perhaps is crying, for it does not for the present enjoy the cleansing operation. Does the mother share the child's grief? Does she also cry? Oh, no! she rejoices over her babe, and rests in her love, knowing that the light affliction of the little one will work its real good. Often our griefs are no deeper than the cry of a child because of the soap in its eyes. While the church is being washed with tribulations and persecutions, God is resting in his love. You and I are wearying, but God is resting.

"He shall rest in his love." The Hebrew of this line is, "He shall be silent in his love." His happiness in his love is so great, that he does not express it, but keeps a happy silence. His is a joy too deep for words. No language can express the joy of God in his love; and therefore he uses no words. Silence in this case is infinitely expressive. One of the old commentators says, "He is deaf and dumb in his love," as if he heard no voice of accusation against his chosen, and would not speak a word of upbraiding to her. Remember the silence of Jesus, and expound this text thereby.

Sometimes also the Lord does not speak to his people: we cannot get a cheering word from him; and then we sigh for a promise, and long for a

visit of his love; but if he be thus silent, let us know that, he is only silent in his love. It is not the silence of wrath, but of love. His love is not changed, even though he does not comfort us.

"His thoughts are high, his love is wise,  
His wounds a cure intend;  
And though he does not always smile,  
He loves unto the end."

When he does not answer our prayers with his hand, he yet hears them with his heart. Denials are only another form of the same love which grants our petitions. He loves us, and sometimes shows that love better by not giving us what we ask than he could do if he spoke the sweetest promise which the ear has ever heard. I prize this sentence: "He shall rest in his love." My God, thou art perfectly content with thy church after all, because thou knowest what she is to be. Thou seest how fair she will be when she comes forth from the washing, having put on her beautiful garments. Lo, the sun goes down, and we mortals dread the endless darkness; but thou, great God, seest the morning, and thou knowest that in the hours of darkness dews will fall which shall refresh thy garden. Ours is the measure of an hour, and thine the judgment of eternity, therefore we will correct our short-sighted judgment by thine infallible knowledge, and rest with thee.

The last word is, however, the most wonderful of all: "*He will joy over thee with singing.*" Think of the great Jehovah singing! Can you imagine it? Is it possible to conceive of the Deity breaking into a song: Father, Son and Holy Ghost together singing over the redeemed? God is so happy in the love which he bears to his people that he breaks the eternal silence, and sun and moon and stars with astonishment hear God chanting a hymn of joy. Among Orientals a certain song is sung by the bridegroom when he receives his bride: it is intended to declare his joy in her, and in the fact that his marriage has come. Here, by the pen of inspiration, the God of love is pictured as married to his church, and so rejoicing in her that he rejoices over her with singing. If God sings, shall not we sing? He did not sing when he made the world. No; he looked upon it, and simply said that it was good. The angels sang, the sons of God shouted for joy:



creation was very wonderful to them, but it was not much to God, who could have made thousands of worlds by his mere will. Creation could not make him sing; and I do not even know that Providence ever brought a note of joy from him, for he could arrange a thousand kingdoms of providence with ease. But when it came to redemption, that cost him dear. Here he spent; eternal thought, and drew up a covenant with infinite wisdom. Here he gave his Only-begotten Son, and put him to grief to ransom his beloved ones. When all was done, and the Lord saw what became of it in the salvation of his redeemed, then he rejoiced after a divine manner. What must the joy be which recompenses Gethsemane and Calvary! Here we are among the Atlantic waves. The Lord God receives an accession to the infinity of his joy in the thought of his redeemed people. "He shall rejoice over thee with singing." I tremble while I speak of such themes, lest I should say a word that should dishonor the matchless mystery; but still we are glad to note what is written, and we are bound to take comfort from it. Let us have sympathy with the joy of the Lord, for this will be our strength.

III. I close with a brief word upon THE BRAVE CONDUCT SUGGESTED THEREBY. Let us not sorrow under the burdens which we bear, but rejoice in God, the great Burden-bearer, upon whom this day we roll our load. Here it is—"In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not; and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack."

There are three things for God's people to do. The first is, to *be happy*. Read verse fourteen—"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem." Any man can sing when his cup is full of delights; the believer alone has songs when waters of a bitter cup are wrung out to him. Any sparrow can chirp in the daylight; it is only the nightingale that can sing in the dark. Children of God, whenever the enemies seem to prevail over you, whenever the serried ranks of the foe appear sure of victory, then begin to sing. Your victory will come with your song. It is a very puzzling thing to the devil to hear saints sing when he sets his foot on them. He cannot make it out: the more he oppresses them, the more they rejoice. Let us resolve to be all the merrier when the enemy dreams that we are utterly routed. The more opposition, the more we will rejoice in the Lord: the more

discouragement, the more confidence. Splendid was the courage of Alexander when they told him that there were hundreds of thousands of Persians. "Yet," he said, "one butcher fears not myriads of sheep." "Ah!" said another, "when the Persians draw their bows, their arrows are so numerous that they darken the sun." "It will be fine to fight in the shade." cried the hero. O friends, we know whom we have believed, and we are sure of triumph! Let us not think for a single second, if the odds against us are ten thousand to one, that this is a hardship; rather let us wish that they were a million to one, that the glory of the Lord might be all the greater in the conquest which is sure. When Athanasius was told that everybody was denying the Deity of Christ, then he said, "I, Athanasius, against the world": *Athanasius contra mundum* became a proverbial expression. Brethren, it is a splendid thing to be quite alone in the warfare of the Lord. Suppose we had half-a-dozen with us. Six men are not much increase to strength, and possibly they may be a cause of weakness, by needing to be looked after. If you are quite alone, so much the better: there is the more room for God. When desertions have cleaned the place out, and left you no friend, now every corner can be filled with Deity. As long as there is so much that is visible to rely upon, and so much to hope in, there is so much the less room for simple trust in God: but now our song is of the Lord alone; "for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

The next duty is *fearlessness*: "Fear thou not." What! not a little? No, "Fear thou not." But surely I may show some measure of trembling? No, "Fear thou not." Tie that knot tight about the throat of unbelief. "Fear thou not": neither this day, nor any day of thy life. When fear comes in, drive it away; give it no space. If God rests in his love, and if God sings, what canst thou have to do with fear? Have you never known passengers on board ship, when the weather was rough, comforted by the calm behavior of the captain? One simple-minded soul said to his friend, "I am sure there is no cause for fear, for I heard the captain whistling." Surely, if the captain is at ease, and with him is all the responsibility, the passenger may be still more at peace. If the Lord Jesus at the helm is singing, let us not be fearing. Let us have done with every timorous accent. O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. "Your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you."

Lastly, let us *be zealous*: "Let not thine hands be slack." Now is the time when every Christian should do more for God than ever. Let us plan great things for God, and let us expect great things from God. "Let not thine hands be slack." Now is the hour for redoubled prayers and labors. Since the adversaries are busy, let us be busy also. If they think they shall make a full end of us, let us resolve to make a full end of their falsehoods and delusions. I think every Christian man should answer the challenge of the adversaries of Christ by working double tides, by giving more of his substance to the cause of God, by living more for the glory of God, by being more exact in his obedience, more earnest in his efforts, and more importunate in his prayers. "Let not thine hands be slack" in any one part of holy service. Fear is a dreadful breeder of idleness; but courage teaches us indomitable perseverance. Let us go on in God's name. I would stir up the members of this church, and all my brethren, to intense zeal for God and the souls of men. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Would God that all were on Christ's side out of this great assembly! Oh, that you would come to Jesus, and trust him, and then live for him in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation! The Lord be with us. Amen.

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## **A Sermon For The Week Of Prayer**

Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving. -  
Colossians 4:2

Those of you who constantly listen to my voice, are aware that on the first Sabbath of the year I always receive of a venerable Clergyman, a veteran warrior in the Lord's hosts, a verse of Scripture which I accept as my New Year's text, and which after being printed becomes the motto of my

congregation for the following year. It is somewhat singular that my venerable friend should have sent me in the envelope about a month ago this text. He knew nothing of the proposition for a week of prayer; I do not know that it had been even determined upon at that date, certainly neither to his knowledge nor to mine, and I could not but help thinking when I opened my envelope, and saw what was to be my text, that he had been directly and specially guided of God, that my text might be in keeping with the engagements of the week. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." How greatly do I rejoice that the Churches are aroused to prayer. My honored and venerable brother, will this morning stand up in his village Church, lift up holy hands, and bid his people join in the common supplication, and I feel but too happy as his younger brother in Christ -- as but a babe compared to so experienced a pastor -- to follow his example in stirring you up that you too as a great host may join with the general company of the faithful, and besiege the throne of grace till you carry the gates of heaven by storm and obtain the mercy which both you and the world so much require.

Without further preface, let me observe that there are three exhortations in the text connected with prayer. The first is continue; the second is watch; and the third is give thanks. "Continuance" sits like Moses on the top of the hill, while Watching and Thanksgiving, like Aaron and Hur, hold up its hands.

I. And first, in regard to prayer, the apostle saith "CONTINUE."

Be ye not, O ye intercessors with God for men -- be ye not as those whose goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew. Do not begin to pray, and then suddenly cease your supplications. That will prove an ignorance as to the value of the mercy which you seek, and a want of earnestness as to your obtaining it. How many there be who, under a powerful sermon or during a trying providence, have bent their knees suddenly in hasty prayer! They have risen from their knees, and they have forgotten what manner of men they were. Take away the whip from them and they have ceased to run, remove from them the tempest and they have ceased to fly before it. They have ceased to pray when God has ceased to smite. O Church of God! imitate not these heathen men and

publicans; wake not thyself up to a sudden fit of prayer and then return again to thy sloth; stir not thyself a moment from thy bed to throw thy heavy head back again upon thy pillow, but continue in supplication; cease not to pray.

There is a great distinction between the prayer of the real convert and the merely convinced sinner. The merely convicted sinner, termed by the law, calls but once; the awakened heart, renewed of the Holy Spirit, never ceases to cry until the mercy comes. A few days ago, by the seaside, on the coast of the Isle of Wight, a woman thought she heard, in the midst of the howling tempest, the voice of a man. She listened; it was repeated; she strained her ear again, and she caught, amid the crack of the blast and the thundering of the winds, another cry for help. She ran at once to the beachmen, who launched their boat, and some three poor mariners who were clinging to the mast were saved. Had that cry been but once, and not again, either she might have doubted as to whether she had heard it at all, or else she would have drawn the melancholy conclusion that they had been swept into the watery waste, and that help would have come too late. So when a man prays but once, either we may think that he cries not at all, or else that his desires are swallowed up in the wild waste of his sins, and he himself is sucked down into the vortex of destruction. If the Church of God shall offer prayer this week, and then shall cease to be in earnest, we shall think her never to have meant her prayers. If she shall but now and then start up and make her supplications, we shall write her down a hypocrite intent for a moment upon keening appearances, but afterwards relapsing into her lukewarm Laodicean condition. The exhortation of my text, I think, stands in contrast, then to the transient prayer which is often offered by ungodly men. Continue in prayer; do not pray once and have done with it, but continue in it.

I think further, that the exhortation to continue may be put in opposition to the common dealings of many with God, who pray and pause, and pray and pause -- are earnest and then cool, earnest and colder still. There is a sharp frost -- a rapid thaw, and then a frost again. Their spiritual state is as variable as our own weather; a shower, sunshine, mist, shower, sunshine again. They are everything by turns, and nothing long. There are too many Churches which are just of this character. See them one

week, you would believe they would carry all before them, and convert the town or village in which they are located. See them next week, and they are "As sound asleep as a church," which is a common proverb, a church being too often the sleepest thing in all the world. Sometimes they ran, and they did run well; what did hinder them? But they stopped, they paused, they looked about them, and after a while they ran again, but they moved not swiftly enough to be able to make up the time lost when they were standing still.

Now I am afraid our Churches have for a considerable period been just in this state; have been sometimes hot and sometimes cold. Look at our revivals everywhere -- the American revival, it is a great wave and then dry sand. Look at the Irish revival; I fear that in the end it will come to the same amount. Almost everywhere there have been great stirrings. As if a holy fire had fallen, and was about to burn up all the stubble, all men stand in wonder at it, but it ceases, and a few ashes remain. The fact is, the Church is not healthy, she has intermittent fits of health, she has starts of energy, she has paroxysms of agony; but she does not agonize for souls, she is not always earnest, she is not always busy. Well did Paul need to say to this age as to his own, "Continue in prayer," not one week, but every week, not for such a season, but at all seasons. Be ye always crying out unto the Lord your God.

In the black country of England, you who have traveled will have observed fires which never in your recollection have been quenched. I believe there are some which have been kept burning for more than fifty years, both night and day, every day in the year. They are never allowed to go out, because, we are informed that the manufacturers would find it amazingly expensive again to get the furnace to its needed red heat. Indeed, the blast furnace, I suppose would all but ruin the proprietor if it were allowed to go out once every week, he would probably never get it up to its right heat until the time came for letting the fire out again. Now, as with these tremendous furnaces which must burn every day, or else they will be useless, they must be kept burning or else. It will be hard to get them up to the proper heat, so ought it to be in all the Churches of God, they should be as flaming fires both night and day, chaldron after chaldron of the coal of earnestness should be put to the furnace, all the

fuel of earnestness which can be gathered from the hearts of men should be cast upon the burning pile. The heavens should be always red with the glorious illumination, and then, then might you expect to see the Church prospering in her divine business, and hard hearts melted before the fire of the Spirit.

Continue, then, in prayer. Never let your fire go out. But why? Why should the Church always be in prayer? Understand, we do not mean by this that men ought to leave their business, forsake their shops and neglect their household, to be always supplicating. There were some fanatics in the early Church who gave up everything that they might be always praying; we know what the apostle would have said to them for did he not say, "If any man will not work, neither let him eat?" There are some lazy people who like praying better than working, let them learn that the Lord accepteth not this at their hands. Did not the Master, even when he was on earth, after he had preached a sermon in Simon Peter's boat -- did he not as soon, as ever he was done, say to Peter, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught?" to show that work, hard work, the hardest of work is quite in keeping with the hearing and the preaching of the Word and that no man has any right to forsake his calling to which God has appointed him in his providence, under pretense of seeking the Lord. Never stain one duty with the blood of another. It is quite possible that you may continue in your labor and yet continue in prayer. You may not always be in the exercise but you may always be in the spirit of prayer. If there shall not always be iron in the furnace to melt, yet let there always be the fire to melt it, if not always shooting the arrow up to heaven, yet always keep the bow well stringed, so shall you always be archers, though not always shooting; so shall you always be men of prayer, though not always in the exercise of praying.

1. But why should the Church -- to come to the question -- why should the Church continue in prayer? For several reasons, and the first is, God will answer her. It is not possible that God should refuse to hear prayer. It is possible for him to bid the sun stand still, and the moon to stay her monthly march, it is possible for him to bid the waves freeze in the sea, possible for him to quench the light of the stars in eternal darkness, but it is not possible for him to refuse to hear prayer which is based upon his

promise and offered in faith. He can reverse nature, but he cannot reverse his own nature, and he must do this before he can forbear to hear and answer prayer. The prayers of God's Church are God's intentions -- you will not misunderstand me -- what God writes in the book of his decree, which no eye can see, that he in process of time writes in the book of Christian hearts where all can see and read. The book of the believer's desire, if those desires be inspired of the Holy Spirit is just an exact copy of the book of the divine decree. And if the Church be determined to-day to lift up her heart in prayer for the conversion of men, it is because God determined from before all worlds that men should be converted; your feeble prayer to-day, believer, can fly to heaven, and awake the echoes of the slumbering decrees of God. Every time you speak to God, your voice resounds beyond the limits of time, the decrees of God speak to your prayer, and cry, "All hail! brother, all hail! thou, too, art a decree!"

Prayer is a decree escaped out of the prison of obscurity, and come to life and liberty among men. Pray, brother, pray, for when God inspires you, your prayer is as potent as the decrees of God. As his decrees bind the universe with spells and make the suns obedient to him -- as every letter of his decree is as a nail, pinning together the pillars of the universe, so are your prayers, they are the pivots on which earth rests; they are the wheels on which providence revolves; your prayers are like God's decrees, struggling to be born, and to become incarnate like their Lord.

God will, God must answer the prayers of his Church. Methinks I can see in vision in the clouds, God's register, his file on which he puts the prayers of his Church. One after another they have been deposited, he has cast none of them away, and consumed none of them in the fire, but he has put them on his file, and smiled as the heap accumulated; and when it shall reach a certain mark which he has set and appointed in his good pleasure, and the last number of the prayers shall be completed, and the blood of Christ shall have bedewed the whole, then will the Eternal speak, and it shall be done he shall command and it shall stand fast. "Let there be light," saith he, and there shall be light at once, "Let the kingdom come;" and the kingdom shall come, he that letteth shall be put out of the way, he that hindereth shall be cast down and trodden as the mire of the streets. Up, Church of God, in all the glory of thy prayer, put on thy



vestments and begin to plead through Jesus Christ thy Great High Priest, enter thou within the vail to-day, for God heareth thee, and he will surely answer thee.

2. There is a second reason why the Church should continue in prayer, namely, that by her prayers the world will most certainly be blessed. The other evening in visiting the sick, I saw at the distance, down a long street, the bright light of a fire. In a moment or so the flames seemed to yield, but again it sprang up and lit the heavens, again it became dim, and dimmer still. As we walked along, we said, "They have got the fire under. The engines have been at work, how soon it is out! "I compare this to the Church's work upon the world. The world is as it were wrapped in flames of the fire of sin, and the Church of God must quench those flames. Whenever we meet together and are more earnest in prayer, angels might well see in the distance the flames dimmed and the fire giving way. Whenever we cease our exertions and become languid in our efforts, the flame gets the upper hand of us, and once more spirits from the far-off world can see the fiery mantle surrounding our globe. Hand up your buckets, sirs, every man to the pump; now strip to it every one of you, work while you have life and strength. Now each man to his knee, for it is on our knees that we overcome; each man to his station and to his work, and let us continue to pass from hand to hand the quenching water, till every spark shall be put out, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. To stop while but one part of the fabric is on fire, would be to condemn the whole; to pause until the last spark shall be extinct, would be to give up the world to the devouring element. Continue, then, in prayer, till the world be wholly saved, and Christ be universal King.

3. Thirdly, continue in prayer, because souls shall be saved as the result of your entreaties. Can you stand on the beach a moment, -- you can scarcely see, but yet you may discern by the lights of lanterns sundry brave men launching the lifeboat. It is out -- they have taken their seats; helmsman and rowers, all strong hearts, determined to save their fellows or to perish. They have gotten far away now into the midst of the billows and we have lost sight of them, but in spirit we will take our stand in the midst of the boat. What a sea rolled in just then! If she were not built for

such weather, she would surely have been overset. See that tremendous wave, and how the boat leaps like a sea-bird over its crest. See now again, it has plunged into a dreary furrow, and the wind, like some great plough, turns up the water on either side as though it were clods of mould. Surely the boat will find her grave, and be buried in the sheet of foam, -- but no, she comes out of it, and the dripping men draw a long breath. But the mariners are discouraged, they have strained themselves bending to yonder oars, and they would turn back, for there is small hope of living in such a sea, and it is hardly possible that they will ever reach the wreck. But the brave captain cries out, "Now, my bold lads, for God's sake, send her on! A few more pulls of the oar and we shall be alongside, the poor fellows will be able to hold on a minute or two longer, now pull as for dear life." See how the boat leaps, see how she springs as though she were a living thing, a messenger of mercy intent to save. Again, he says "Once more, once again, and we will do it," -- no, she has been dashed aside from the ship for a moment, that sea all but stove her in, but the helmsman turns her round, and the captain cries, "Now, my boys, once more," and every man pulls with lusty sinews, and the poor shipwrecked ones are saved. Ay, it is just so with us now. Long have Christ's ministers, long have Christ's Church pulled with the gospel life-boat, let us pull again. Every prayer is a fresh stroke of the oar, and all of you are oarsmen. Yes, ye feeble women, ye confined to your beds, shut up in your chambers, who can do nothing else but pray ye are all oarsmen in this great boat. Pull yet once more, and this week let us drive the boat ahead, and it may be it will be the last tremendous struggle that shall be required, for sinners shall be saved, and the multitude of the redeemed shall be accomplished. Not we, but grace shall do the work, yet is it ours to be workers for God.

4. But continue in prayer once more, because prayer is a great weapon of attack against the error and wickedness of the world. I see before me the strong bastions of the castle of Sin. I mark the host of men who have surrounded it. They have brought the battering-ram, they have dashed it many times against the gate; it has fallen with tremendous force against it, and you would have supposed that the timbers would be split asunder the first time. But they are staunch and strong, he who made them was a cunning architect, he who depends upon them for his protection is one

who knew how to make the gate exceeding massive, -- is one who knew the struggle full well which he would have to endure -- Prince of Darkness as he is. If he knew of his defeat, yet well he knew how to guard against it if it were possible. But I see this ponderous battering-ram as it has been hurled with giant force again and again upon the gate, and has as often seemed to recoil before the massive bars. Many of the saints of God are ready to say, "Let us withdraw the instrument. Let us take away the besieging armament, we shall never be able to storm this castle, we shall never effect an entrance." Oh, be not craven, sirs, be not craven. The last time the battering-ram thundered in its course, I saw the timbers shake. The very gate did reel, and the posts did rock to and fro; see now they have moved the earth around their sockets. Hell is howling from within because it knows how soon its end must come. Now, Christian warriors, use your battering-rams once more, for the gates begin to shake, and the walls are tottering. They will reel, they will fall ere long, -- one more blow, and yet another, and another, and another, and as Israel went up over the walls of Jericho of old, so shall we soon go up over the fallen ruins of the walls of the castle of Sin and Satan. The Church does not know how near her victory is, we do not believe how much God is doing, but let the Holy Spirit for once give us a little more faith, and in confidence that we are nearing the victory, we shall continue in prayer. Turn not back when we have all but overcome, continue still, even till the end shall be, and the voice shall be heard! "Hallelujah, it is done; the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ."

## II. The second exhortation is WATCH.

Watch, for you will soon be drowsy if you watch not. Joshua fought the Amalekites, and I never read that his hand was weary, though the battle occupied a very long day. Moses was on the mountain in prayer, and his hands grew heavy, because prayer is such spiritual work, and we are so un-spiritual that the tendency of prayer upon our nature will be to make us drowsy, unless we watch. It is ill-praying, when we are drowsy. It is ill for a Church that is not half-awake to be in supplication. All eyes must be opened; the judgment, the imagination, the hope, the memory, all must be in full vigor, or else we can scarcely hope that prayer shall be successful. I think I see the Church as I fear she is now. There she is upon

her knees, with hands clasped; she mutters a few words; her head droops, for she is weary; again she pleads, and yet again her head is well nigh fallen on her bosom; she is a sleeping Church in prayer. Am I too severe in this my picture? I believe it is true; I think there are some members of the Church thoroughly awake, but they are few. There are multitudes of professors who do not feel the value of souls. There are many who will meet in the room of this lower hall, and meet in our own chapels also, to pray, who are nevertheless not awake, not awake to the world's necessities, not awake to Christ's glory, not awake to the power of the gospel, nor awake to their own responsibilities, so that they will pray, but pray and sleep. Here, then, we see the value of the exhortation of the apostle -- "Continue in prayer and watch in the same."

But watch for another reason: because as soon as ever you begin to pray there will be enemies who will commence the attack. The Church never was earnest yet without sooner or later discovering that the devil was in earnest too. The devil has had an easy time of it up till the last six or seven years, for the Church has been going on her old-fashioned way, doing nothing at all. There was very little abuse of ministers, ministers were getting to be very respectable men, and very little abuse of any section of Christians -- they were all getting to be very easy and loveable sort of people. But as sure as the Church, or any section of the Church, shall be right-down in earnest, they will be abused. Never think you are good for anything till the world finds fault with you, never reckon that you have got a success unless many begin to cry you down. I always think that an article against you, if you have sought with an honest conscience to discharge your duty in the sight of God, is one of the highest compliments the press can pay you. Consider it as such. Never expect that the world will be friends with the Church. Indeed the world will be friendly enough with the Church, if the Church will not do her duty. If there were a sentinel set to guard a post against surprise, if you knew him to be a very great friend of those who meant to make the attack, I think you would suspect very soon that he was in collusion with the enemy. No, sirs, they who fight Christ's battles, must be men who think as well of the world as the world thinks of them, that is to say, who have no love to the world's esteem, and the world no love to them. Martin Luther used to say, "The world gives me a very bad character, but there is no love lost

between us, I can give to it as bad a character as ever it gives to me." The world says "Mountebank, pretender, fanatic!" Be it so -- be it so, O world, thou hast no power to honor Christ's ministers, except by upbraiding them. There is no power in the wicked to honor Christ's minister, except they are either trembling before him, or else laughing at him. Either way we will gratefully accept the honor, and write it down as being a proof of our success.

But watch, O Church of Christ, watch, a struggle awaits thee as sure as ever thou art earnest in prayer. In riding, along the south coast of England you may have noticed the old Martello towers in constant succession very near to each other. They are the result of an old scheme of protecting our coast from our ancient enemies. It was supposed that as soon as ever a French ship was seen in the distance the beacon would be fired at the Martello tower, and then, across old England, wherever her sons dwelt, there would flash the fiery signal news that the enemy was at hand, and every man would seize the weapon that was next to him to dash the invader from the shore. Now we need that the Church of Christ should be guarded with Martello towers of sacred watchers, who shall day and night look out for the attack of the enemy. For the enemy will come; if he come not when we are prayerless he will surely come when we are prayerful. He will show the cloven hoof as soon as ever we show the bended knee. If our motto be "Prayer," his watchword will be "Fierce attack." Watch, then, while ye continue in prayer.

But yet again; watch while ye pray for propitious events which may help you in the answer to your prayer. I have known sea captains, when they have got their ships loaded with coal, and they have wished to come up to London with their cargo have been unable to get down the Tyne and out to sea; if they could have got to sea, they could make their passage. And I have once or twice known a wary captain, being well upon the watch, manage to sail out of the river just while there was a little change of the wind, and when his fellows have awakened in the morning, they have missed him from his berth, and he has stolen a march upon them. He watched and they did not, and having lost the wind, they have had to lie in port till he has emptied out his cargo and returned. Now, the Church should watch while she prays, to see if she cannot fulfill her own prayers,

look out for opportunities of doing good, and see if she cannot steal a march upon her enemies. While she has one eye to heaven for help, she must have the other eye on earth to look out for opportunities of doing good. God doth not always send the Spirit to blow with the same force. We cannot make the wind blow, but we can spread the sails; so, if we cannot command the Spirit of God, when the Spirit of God does come, we can observe his coming and avail ourselves of the glorious opportunity. Watch, then, while ye pray.

Watch, too, for fresh arguments in prayer. Heaven's gate is not to be stormed by one weapon but by many. Spare no arrows, Christian. Watch and see that none of the arms in thy armoury are rusty. Besiege the throne of God with a hundred hands, and look at the promise with a hundred eyes. You have a great work on hand for you have to move the arm that moves the world; watch, then, for every means of moving that arm. See to it that you ply every promise; that you use every argument; that you wrestle with all might. When you are wrestling with an antagonist, you must keep your eye on him, you must look to see what he means to do next, of where you can get the next grip at him; see where you can get a hold, or plant your foot, so that you can throw him down. So wrestle with the angel of mercy. Watch while you pray. You cannot wrestle with your eyes shut, nor can you prevail with God unless your own soul be in a watchful state. O Spirit of God, arouse the Church, and help her to watch while she prays.

But one other remark; watch for the answers to your prayers. When you post a letter to a friend, requesting a favor, you watch for an answer. When you pray to God for a favor you do not expect him to hear you, some of you. If the Lord were to hear some of your prayers, you would be surprised. I do believe that if God should send to you what you have asked for, you would be quite astonished. Sometimes when I have met with a special answer to prayer and have told it, some have said -- "is it not wonderful!" Not at all, it would be wonderful if it were not so. God says, -- "Ask, and ye shall receive;" if I should ask and not receive, it would be wonderful. "Seek, and ye shall find;" if you seek and do not find, it is not only wonderful, but I think it is contradictory to God's Word. The Church has but to ask, and she shall receive; she has but to knock, and

the door of mercy shall be opened. But we do not believe this. We fritter away God's promises, and clip the edge of them, and then we go to God in prayer, and we think that prayer is a very holy exercise, but we do not think that God really hears us. Too many professors believe it is their duty to pray but really they are not so enthusiastic as to think that God actually listens, and sends them what they ask for. A man who should say that he knew that God heard his prayers, is in some quarters looked upon as an enthusiast. And what is that but a proof that we do not believe this precious Book? For let the most unprejudiced man be a judge, if this Book does not teach that, "Whatsoever we ask in prayer, believing we shall receive," then it does not teach anything at all; and if it be not true that prayer is a power which prevails with God, then shut this Book; it is not worthy of any confidence, for it does plainly say that which you say it does not mean. The fact is, my brothers and sisters, the answers to our prayers are always on the way while we are asking. Sometimes they come while we are yet speaking; sometimes they delay, because we have not prayed as we should. God keeps the mercy back at times, and puts it out at compound interest, because he means to pay it to us interest and all; whereas if we had it at once, we should miss the interest, which comes times doubles and trebles the principal. We are never losers by his delays, but always gainers. We ought never to say, even though providence should tell so, that God forgets or is unmindful, we never ought to believe that God has been deaf to our cries, or refused to answer our petitions. A true believer pleading Christ's name and sacrifice, and asking in faith, must and shall receive that which he asks of God. Now, during the next week, the Churches will meet together to ask for God's blessing, and if that blessing were to come, we should read the Missionary Herald, and it would begin, "There has been a most surprising awakening throughout all the Churches in such-and-such a country." That word "surprising," ought to be struck out. We should say, "God has been as good as his word, we asked him to bless the world, and he has done it; and if he does not do it, it will be because we have not asked aright, for as sure as ever we had asked aright, God would have heard us." I believe this to be as true as a mathematical proposition; if twice two be four, then it is just as true that God hears prayer. I would not look upon it as being a mere notion, a thought, a very fine imagining, or a pretty idea; it is a fact, sirs; it is a fact. It is a fact which I could prove in my own experience by a hundred

instances if this were the time and place to tell them. But I am sure that the people of God universally could prove that God does hear prayer. As certainly as ever when you write to a friend you get your answer, more surely and certainly still if you be pleading the name of Christ, God will hear you. But oh! do open your eyes and look out for the blessing. Do watch for it. Be not so simple as to sow the seed and never to look for harvest; do not be planting and never looking for fruit. Give up your prayers, or else expect them to be successful. When we were little children we had a little plot of garden-ground, and we put our seeds into it. I well recollect how the day after I had put in my seed I went and scraped the soil away to see if it was not growing, as I expected it would have been after a day or so at the very longest, and I thought the time amazingly long before the seed would be able to make its appearance above the ground. "That is childish," you would say. I know it is, but I wish you were childish too with regard to your prayers, that you would, when you have put them in the ground, go and see if they have sprung up; and if not at once -- be not childish in refusing to wait till the appointed time comes, always go back and see if they have begun to sprout. If you believe in prayer at all, do expect God to hear you. If you do not expect, you will not have it. God will not hear you unless you believe he will hear you, but if you believe he will, he will be as good as your faith. He will never allow you to think better of him than he is; he will come up to the mark of your thoughts, and according to your faith so shall it be done unto you.

III. I have a third point, but my time is almost gone, therefore let me dwell on it very briefly. The third point is, GIVE THANKS.

Prayer should be mingled with praise. I have heard that in New England after the Puritans had settled there a long while, they used to have very often a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, till they had so many days of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, that at last a good senator proposed that they should change it for once, and have a day of thanksgiving. It is of little use to be always fasting; we ought sometimes to give thanks for mercies received. Now, during this week, there are to be days of prayer; take care that they are days of praise too. Why should we go to God as mournful beings, who plead piteously with a hard master who loves not



to give? When you give a penny to a beggar in the street, you like to see him smile at you -- do you not? Is he a crossing-sweeper, and you have given him a trifle, he looks extremely grateful and happy, and you think within yourself, "What a small expense has made that man happy! I think I will buy another pennyworth of joy the next time I pass by." So you give him all the more because of his thankfulness to you. Now, go not before God with a rueful face, ye people of God, as though he had never heard you before, and you were about to try a great experiment on one who was exceedingly deaf and did not like to give you mercies. God is as pleased to give you his blessing as ever you are to receive it. It is as much to his honor as it is to your comfort. He takes more pleasure in your prayers than you do in his answers. Come, therefore, boldly, come with thankfulness in your heart and upon your lip, and join the hymn of praise with the cry of prayer. Be thankful for what God has done, Look at the past year; I commend it to your consideration when you meet for prayer. Has there been for the last twenty years such a year as the last? If any man had said seven years ago there would be preaching in St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, we should never have believed him. But it has been, and is to be again. If any friends had said that nearly all the theatres in London would be filled on the Sabbath-day, "Oh," you would have said, "it is ridiculous, it is an absurd notion." But it is done, sirs, it is done. If any had said to you seven years ago there would have been a congregation of many thousands who, without any drawback in numbers, would always assemble every Sabbath day to listen to one minister, you would have said, "Ridiculous! there is no precedent for it; it is impossible; it is not at all possible that the Spirit of God can incline a people's heart so long to listen to one man." It is done, sirs, it is done. And what are we to do but to give God thanks for it? When we come before him to ask him for fresh mercies, let us not be so foolish as to forget the past. "Sing unto him, sing unto him, sing psalms unto him; come into his presence with thanksgivings, and show thyself glad in him with psalms, for the Lord is God and a great King above all gods." So thank him for the past and pray to him for the future. Thank him, too, for the power to pray. Thank him for the privilege of taking the Church's wants before him. And do better still; thank him for the mercy which is to come. Great God, I thank thee for Sinim, the land of China, which shall come unto thee. I praise thee for India, which shall receive thee. I praise

thee for Ethiopia, which shall stretch out her arms unto thee. Great God, today we bless thee for what thou wilt do. Thy promise is, in the estimation of our faith, as good as the performance itself. We extol and glorify thee. For thy right hand, O Lord! thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. Thou hast broken the bow and cut the spear in sunder; thou hast burned the chariot in the fire; thy right hand, O Lord, hath gotten thee the victory. Oh come let us sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. Let us laud and extol him, for he is King for ever and ever! Say unto Zion, "Thy God reigneth." Behold, he cometh; he cometh to judge the world in righteousness and the people with equity. Rejoice before him, O ye hills, clap your hands, O ye cedars! Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof; the world, and all that dwell therein! Praise him, ye heavens; and ye heaven of heavens; ye spirits that stand before his throne, for he is God, and beside him there is no God. The whole earth praises thee, O God, and all thy creatures bless thee for ever and ever!

Thus with the censor of prayer and praise let us be this week like priests of God; and thou great High Priest, take thou our sacrifice and offer it before thy Father's face.

I close my sermon. O that some here present may lay the subject of prayer to heart this week! Get alone, dear friends, get alone this week! Pray for your children this week, and groan with God over your ungodly sons and daughters! Pray for your neighbors this week! Put God to the test! See if he do not open the windows of heaven upon you. Be you much in prayer and you shall be much blessed. And O poor sinner! thou who hast never prayed before, the year of God's redeemed is come; this is the acceptable day of the Lord. If you seek him, he will be found of thee. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." Cry to him now! Say -

"O sovereign grace, my heart subdue!"

Trust Jesus with your soul, and unworthy though you be, your prayer shall he heard, and you shall be able to join with the company of the faithful in praying for others as well as for yourself. God bless you all, for Jesu's sake! Amen.

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## **The Sermon Of The Seasons**

While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. - Genesis 8:22

Our Saviour constantly taught the people by parables, and I think he would have his ministers do the same. The condition of things just now, both as to weather and business, furnishes a very plain and instructive parable which it would not be wise to pass over. Every morning when we wake we hope for a change of wind, a glimpse of the sun, and the end of the frost; but still we moan with the poet -

"Oh, the long and dreary Winter!  
Oh, the cold and cruel Winter!"

We say to ourselves, Will spring-time never come? In addition to this, trade and commerce continue in a state of stagnation; crowds are out of employment, and where business is carried on, it yields little profit. Our watchmen are asked if they discern any signs of returning day, and they answer, "No." Thus we bow our heads in a common affliction, and ask each man comfort of his fellow; for as yet we see not our signs, neither does the eastern sky grow grey with the hopeful light of the long-expected morning. Having faith in God we faint not, but believe that a lesson of love for us is written by his hand in these black characters. Let us spell it out with childlike confidence.

Our text takes us back to the time when the waters of the flood had just assuaged, and God opened the door of the ark and bade Noah and his family come forth into a new world. For a time there had been a confusion: the seasons were mixed up, the perpetual downpour of the rain had almost turned day into night, and whether it was summer or winter could scarcely be told. The frame of nature seemed to be out of joint, her order suspended. And now the Lord, in making a promise to Noah that he would never destroy the earth again with a flood, also

declares that while the earth remaineth there shall be no more of the confusion of the seasons and mingling of day and night which had brought such destruction upon all living things. As there should be no more a general deluge, so should there be no more a serious disarrangement of the course of the seasons and the temperature appropriate thereto. Seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, are to succeed each other in their perpetually unchanging change, so long as the present reign of forbearance shall last. Till comes the close of time, the rolling year, made up of alternate day and night, shall pass through cold and heat in due order. We are grateful to God for thus settling in his mind that so it shall be. We are at ease because we know that he will not lift his hand again to destroy every living thing with a flood of water. He will deal with men in longsuffering, and tender mercy, and forbearance. He will not use the stern weapons of destruction, but will try the tender ministrations of patience and grace, that men may be led to repentance. There will come an end to this dispensation; but while the reign of forbearance lasts, nature shall keep her appointed marches, and we need not fear a disorderly rush or a destructive chaos. "Four seasons fill the measure of the year." In their mysterious round they come and go, and all combined display a moving harmony of wise design most glorifying to our God. Fear not in the day of tempest, for the rain shall not deluge the earth. The Lord setteth his bow in the cloud as the ensign of his covenant with mankind. Fear not in the black midnight: God will rekindle the lamp of day, and chase away the darkness.

It is very singular that when the Lord thus ushers in the reign of forbearance he gives as his reason the following statement:—"I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." This is very singular, because this seems to have been the powerful reason why the Lord had already destroyed the guilty race from off the face of the earth. In the fifth and sixth verses of the sixth chapter we read: "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Here we have almost the same words. Can the reason for judgment become the

argument for mercy? Assuredly it can. God who changeth not absolutely, yet changeth his hand in his dealing with men. He had left them to themselves and permitted them to live through centuries; but the longer they lived, the more wicked they grew, until sin reached to a horrible degree of infamy. Man becomes a bad enough sinner when he lives to be seventy; but what he became at seven hundred or more it is somewhat difficult to guess. We wonder not that there were giants in those days—giants in crime as well as in stature. The Lord saw that however long man lived he only grew a greater adept in sin, for the imagination of his heart remained evil, and even grew to an intolerable height of iniquity; and therefore he said that he would destroy the race and begin anew. But when the Lord looked down upon those whom he had spared, who were to be the parents of a new race, he saw that in them also there was the same fountain of evil, and that their hearts also yielded evil desires and devices continually. Then he resolved to shorten the life of man, so that no individuals might ever arrive at so horrible a ripeness and cleverness of iniquity; but at the same time he said: "I will bear with them. I have dealt sternly with them, but they do not change; the few whom I have snatched from a watery grave are still inclined to sin. This dreadful expedient has not washed away the rebellious tendencies of the human heart. Therefore I will deal leniently and gently with them, manifesting a long forbearance, that man may have space for repentance. I will no more destroy every living thing, because destruction itself does not avail to banish sin." Thus it seems by no means difficult to see how that which to divine holiness was a reason for judgment may be used by divine pity as a reason for mercy.

But what, think you, could have made the reasoning assume this new form? I attribute it to one thing never to be forgotten. Read the verse which precedes our text: "And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl and offered burnt offerings on the altar; and the Lord smelled a sweet savor." The sacrifice is the turning-point. Without a sacrifice sin clamours for vengeance, and God sends a destroying food; but the sacrifice presented by Noah was typical of the coming sacrifice of God's only begotten Son, and of the effectual atonement therein provided for human sin. The very shadow of the one great propitiation changed the state of the world. Now the Lord

pleads with himself for grace as once he argued for doom. He speaketh of course after the manner of men; it is only to our apprehension that these things are so, for Jehovah changeth not, and he is always love and wisdom. For the sake of the sacrifice God resolves to bear with man, as with one who is incurably unwise, or desperately sick. He determines to look upon the evil tendency of man's imagination rather as an inveterate disease than as an unbearable provocation. He deals very patiently with the race, and no more sweeps it away in his wrath. See what the Lord will do when a sacrifice is provided! Methinks I hear him say of the earth, "Deliver it from flood, and bid the seasons keep their round of beneficence; for I have found a ransom."

I. Thus I introduce to you the text, and I would have you notice, dear friends, that in that text there is first of all a hint, A SOLEMN HINT, OF WARNING. It begins thus: "While the earth remaineth." I hear a sound in the bowels of the text like subterranean thunder. The voice of the text is a voice of mercy, but there is an undertone of "terrible things in righteousness." "While the earth remaineth" implies that *the earth will not always remain*. There is an end appointed of the Most High, and it will surely come: then the seasons will melt into the endless age, and time shall be promoted into eternity. The earth hath remained now century after century; alas! it has but little changed towards God. The whole world still lieth in the wicked one; darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the nations. Jehovah hath a people, "a remnant according to the election of grace," and for their sakes the earth remaineth yet a little while; but its end draweth nearer every hour. "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man Christ Jesus." An hour is set when mercy shall no longer hold back the axe from the barren tree, and forbearance shall no more restrain the angel with the sharp sickle from reaping the vintage of the earth. Love now journeys to and fro among the sons of men, with the voice of trembling pathos, pleading with them to be reconciled to God; but her mission will come to an end, the day of grace will be over, and the reign of judgment will come. Let us not reckon too much upon this world's enduring even for a little while; let us not set our love upon anything that is upon it; for here we have no continuing city. "The things which are seen are temporal;" the world therefore shall pass away, and all the works that are therein shall

be burned up: even "The elements shall melt with fervent heat." There is a day coming when floods of fire shall be let loose: they shall fall from above, and burst upward from below, and all material things shall be melted in one common conflagration. Poor world! thou, too, art surely doomed! God is gracious to thee, but thou art as a wreck drifting upon the rocks, or as a tree waiting for the axe. Believers in the testimony of God can joyfully say, "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness:" therefore we are not dismayed.

I would have you notice again, dear friends, that *the time when the earth shall no longer remain is not mentioned*. The warning is left indefinite as to time, though definite enough as to fact. The expression, "While the earth remains," is proof enough that it will remain only for a season; but it is dumb as the tongue of death as to the date when that season shall close. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now;" but when the hour of her deliverance shall come the best instructed cannot tell. Do not attempt to prophesy, and especially do not venture upon dates. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." The uncertainty of the end of all things is intended to keep us continually on the watch. We are to remain upon the tiptoe of expectation, and never to dream that we can reckon upon a certain length of time before the great and terrible day of the Lord. If you knew when Christ would come you might be tempted to spend the interval in neglect and wantonness; but as it is written, "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh," it is the Lord's intent that you should stand with your loins girt and your lamps trimmed, waiting for the midnight cry, "Behold he cometh."

Let me further remark that *the day when the remaining of the earth shall cease cannot be very far off*; for according to the Hebrew, which you have in the margin of your Bibles, the text runs thus: "As yet all the days of the earth, seedtime and harvest shall not cease." The "while" of the earth's remaining is counted by days; not even months or years are mentioned, much less centuries. The earth seems grey with age to us, but in the language of inspiration the present stage of its history is reckoned



by days. There will one day come a last day, and let us not reckon that the time is distant, for Peter saith, "The end of all things is at hand;" and he adds, "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness." One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. If geologists speak correctly concerning the history of the world, it has lasted many myriads of years already, and passed through many periods before it came to that which is described in the first chapter of Genesis. The era of man is that which God describes to us by the inspired penman; and we are led to believe that this era will be a very short one. From the day when God fitted up this earth for the abode of man to the time when he shall consume it with fervent heat, there will be comparatively a very short space of time. God lives by millions of years; therefore, a few thousand years to him are but as a watch in the night. Let it be thus far understood by us that this dispensation is not to be a protracted one, and that the duration of the world in its present state is to be exceedingly brief as compared with preceding and succeeding ages. The life of this present evil world is but a span; it also is of few days and full of trouble. But I must also add that the era of sin and grace is crowded with marvellous manifestations of the glory of God in infinite love and mercy.

II. Thus, then, there is a hint of warning in our text; but secondly, there is A SENTENCE OF PROMISE, rich and full of meaning: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease." It is a promise concerning temporal things, but yet it breathes a spiritual air, and hath about it the smell of a field that the Lord hath blessed.

*This promise has been kept.* It is long since it was written, it is longer still since it was resolved upon in the mind of God; but it has never failed. There have been times when cold has threatened to bind the whole year in the chains of frost; but genial warmth has pushed it aside. Seedtime and harvest have been threatened, but they have come; the harvest may not have been abundant, but yet there has been a harvest sufficient to sustain the race. Days have been dark, and hardly discernible from night, like the gloom of Egypt's plague; but still, taking things as a whole, day and night have divided time between them. The ordinances of heaven

have continued with us as with our fathers. No student of nature can doubt that to this hour, despite occasional extremes of heat and cold, the seasons are unchanged; and notwithstanding occasional absence of sunshine, and diminution of light, day and night have followed the diurnal revolution of the earth. Since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were. One great interruption occurred at the deluge, but the Lord has kept his promise to prevent any other.

So long-continued is the fulfillment of this promise, that *even this race of unbelievers has come to believe in it*. We look for the seasons as a matter of course. I do not suppose that any one in this audience doubts the coming of spring. The boughs are bare, the buds are not eager for their bursting, the crocus and the daffodil are afraid to show themselves; but yet the birds believe in the coming spring, for I hear them in sweet chorus every morning singing their songs of expectancy. Men and brethren, you are expectant also. Long observation has begotten in you an unwavering faith. When the sun goes down at night, not even a little child fears that God has blown out the sun, and that the great candle will never be lighted again. No, we look for the morning. When winter has chilled us a while, we look for the spring and the summer; and when summer has browned our faces, we expect the falling of the leaf and the descent of the snow. I want you to ask yourselves—Why do we not believe God's other promises? Why have we not as solid a conviction of the truth of other statements which our God has made as we have upon this point? Is it that we have experience in this case? O brethren, we have had experience concerning other matters also. If we were to deal with the weather with the same short-sighted doubt which governs us in our thoughts of divine providence, we might be doubtful about summer and winter. We might say, "It really does not look very likely that spring will come. Look at our meadows, and mark how the cold has literally burned the grass; see how our hardy evergreens are many of them dead, and others sadly cut to pieces; see what mischief the cold has wrought. Will there ever be leaf and flower again? Is it possible that I shall ever wipe the sweat from my smoking brow on some blazing noontide? Can these frozen brooks leap into liberty? To-day we crowd around the fire, hardly keeping ourselves alive from the bitter cold: shall we yet bask in the hay-field, or fan ourselves amid the golden sheaves?" Had we less experience, it would

seem highly improbable. Yet we enjoy a full assurance as to the revolution of the seasons and the succession of day and night: do we not? Why this assurance of one promise, and why such frequent distrust of others equally true?

When God's promises appear to be difficult of fulfillment, wherefore do we doubt them? They are fulfilled in due season: which of them has ever failed? They come to pass without difficulty: why should we suspect them? When deliverance looks as though it could not come, it is none the less sure; for the Lord has promised it. The absence of visible means need not enter into the account: he who is Almighty God has infinite resources.

So, too, dear friends, we have to recollect, that if the Lord himself does not send spring and summer we cannot create either of them. Here we are out of the field. When the sun goes down, if the Lord did not cause it to rise again, we could not open the doors of the morning. I love to get into the field of nature on a large scale, for there one is quit of man, and the Lord alone is seen working all things according to his will. The heavens and their ordinances know no presence and power but God alone. As far as we are concerned, we cannot lift a finger to change the seasons. What could all our Parliament—King, Lords, and Commons—do with all their Acts towards bringing on spring-tide or hastening summer and harvest? Nothing at all. These matters are out of man's power; and yet they are none the less sure. So, my brethren, when you get into such a condition that you can by no means help yourself, you are not, therefore, to doubt that God can achieve his purpose and fulfill his promise without your help. When hath he asked your aid? Good men have gone very wrong when they have thought of aiding in the fulfillment of promises and prophecies. See how Rebecca erred in trying to get the promised blessing for Jacob. We had better leave the Lord's decrees in the Lord's hands. When any case comes to its worst, and you can do nothing whatever in it, you may safely stand still and see the salvation of God. At this hour you feel sure that springtime and summer will come, though you cannot move the sun an inch beyond his predestinated course; be as much at ease about the other promises of God as you are concerning the cycle of the year.

Remember, also, that every coming of summer—yes, and every rising of the sun—is a great wonder. Only our familiarity leads us to think of these things without marvelling. A real miracle is every break of day and every set of sun. A world of wonders bursts forth in every spring-tide; each blade of grass and ear of corn is a display of divine omnipotence. We are surrounded with works of almighty power and goodness from morn till eve and through the watches of the night; from the first day of the year until its close the Lord is about us. Unseen by us, his hand propels the silent spheres which no force within human calculation could move in their orbits; that same power sustains and animates and perfects all things. God is in all, and in all wonderful. If God continues thus to work the pleasing changes of the year as he promised to do, why do you doubt him concerning other things, O ye of little faith? Will he not keep his word to his children if he keeps it to the earth? Will he not fulfill his every promise to his own elect if he is true to sun and stars? Seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, have come according to his word without our aid, and, wonderful as these changes are, they have never failed; and will the Lord forget in other things? Will he forswear his covenant and deny his promise to his Only Begotten? God forbid.

Brethren, we have come not only to believe this promise as to the seasons and to make quite sure about it, but *we practically act upon our faith*. The farmers have sown their autumn wheat, and many of them are longing for an opportunity to sow their spring wheat; but what is sowing but a burial of good store? Why do husbandmen hide their grain in the earth? Because they feel sure that seedtime will in due time be followed by harvest. They put their grain into the ground hoping to receive it again multiplied a hundredfold. Why do we not act in an equally practical style in reference to the rest of God's promises? True faith makes the promises of God to be of full effect by viewing them as true and putting them to the test. When faith asks of God, it believes that it has the petition which it has asked of him. Many prepare their thinner garments in prospect of warm weather, or at the close of summer provide household flannels for the winter, because they reckon upon the season; why do we not also prepare ourselves to receive the Lord's blessing in the time appointed? Why do we not reckon upon every word of Scripture being fulfilled? We ought to take the promises into our matter-of-fact estimate, and act

accordingly.

Let me go further:—*If a man did not act upon the declaration of God in our text he would be counted foolish.* Suppose a man said, "I do not feel sure that there will come a harvest, and therefore I shall not sow;" his neighbors would look upon his uncultivated fields, and reckon him out of his mind. If another should say, "I shall lay by no stores for the winter, because I believe that we have arrived at perpetual summer, wherein there will always be corn in the sheaf and fruit on the trees," we should regard him as fit for a lunatic-asylum. Equally mad are they who treat other promises of God as if they were idle words, no more worthy of notice than the prophecies of a charlatan. The masses of our fellow-men never search the Word of God to find a promise suitable to their cases, and even if such a promise were laid before them, they would only regard it as a matter of imagination or meaningless jargon. What shall I say of those who thus trifle with eternal verities, but that madness has carried away the heart of man? What God has promised ought to be a clear indication to us of the future, and a hint as to how we should act. Let us act in faith upon the divine promise. If the Lord says, "Seek ye my face," take care that you do seek his face. If he says, "Ask, and it shall be given you," be sure to ask and expect to receive. If the Lord promises pardon to those who believe on his Son, let us believe on his Son, and receive mercy. He keeps his covenant with day and night; let us, therefore, believe that he will keep covenant with us, and do even as he hath said. Oh that this lesson, simple as it is, may be learnt by every believer, and by every unbeliever too!

Let me close this point by noticing that, *whether men believe this or not it will stand true.* A man says there will be no winter, and provides no garments; he will shiver in the northern blast all the same when December covers the earth with snow. An unbeliever declares that there will be no summer, and therefore he will not sow nor prepare a barn. Will his foolish scepticism prevent the coming of harvest? Miserable farmer that he is! He will secure a harvest of thorns and thistles to reward his own practical unbelief, but a harvest will come to the rest of the land, to his confusion. The year will go on whoever plays the fool; so, too, will the sun arise, whoever prophesies an endless night. God's purpose and God's

promise will stand fast though the hills be removed. If you believe in the Lord Jesus, you shall be saved, but if you believe not, you must perish: in either case, the law will not alter for you. God's great laws in the spiritual world hold good with a certainty as great as those which govern the natural world. We cannot suspend the force of gravitation; and if we could, we should not even then be able to change the veracity of the Most High, who must be true so long as he is God. Hath he said and shall he not do it? Ay, that he shall. Though we believe not, he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself; therefore, ye sons of men, be wise, and take heed to the word of the Lord. As in the summer ye prepare yourselves for winter; and as at spring-tide ye sow your seed that ye may gather your harvest in the Summer, and thus ye obey the voice of God in nature, I pray you also have respect to that voice as it speaks in the pages of his Book, and shape your conduct by that which the Lord has revealed.

III. There is also in the text, I think, A SUGGESTION OF ANALOGIES. Reading these words, not as a philosophical prediction, but as a part of the Word of God, I see in them a moral, spiritual, and mystical meaning. Holy Scripture is intended not to teach us natural but spiritual things: I conclude, therefore, that there is an analogy here well worthy of being worked out. May the good Spirit guide us therein!

While the earth remaineth *there will be changes in the spiritual world*. Read the text laying a stress upon the words of change, and see how it rises and falls like the waves of the sea: "While the earth remaineth, *seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*" No one of these states continues; it comes and goes. The seasons are a perpetual procession, an endless chain, an ever-moving wheel. Cold flies before heat, and anon summer is chased away by winter. Nothing is stable. Such is this life: such are the feelings of spiritual life with most men: such is the history of the church of God. We sorrow and we rejoice: we struggle and we triumph: we labor and we rest. We are not long upon Tabor, neither are we always in the valley of Baca. Let us not be amazed, as though some strange thing happened to us, if our day darkens into night, or our summer chills into winter. From joy to sorrow, from sorrow to joy, from success to defeat, from defeat to success, we pass very rapidly. It is so: it will be so while the earth remaineth, and

we remain partakers of the earth.

Yet, *there will be an order in it all*. Cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, do not come in a giddy dance or tumultuous hurry-burly; but they make up the fair and beautiful year. Chance has no part in these affairs. God compelleth winds and storms, and sun and sea, to keep the order of his house, and none rebelleth against his commandment. So in the spiritual kingdom, in the life of the believer, and in the history of the church of God, all things are made to work for good, and the spiritual is being educated into the heavenly. In our seasons there is an order visible to God, even when we walk in darkness and see no light. We have our winters, in which the sap is prepared in secret to produce the clusters of summer; we have our colds, in which we lose the superfluities bred of our heat. Expect the changes, and believe that they come by rule.

*Great rules will stand while the earth abideth*, in the spiritual as well as in the natural world. For instance, there will be seedtime and harvest, effort and result, labor and success. There will be to you, dear brother, a time in which you will chiefly have to receive; it is your seedtime, and God is sowing you by instruction and sanctification, in order that in due time you may yield him a harvest to his glory. Sometimes we lie passive, like the ploughed fields, and then our divine Sower casts into us the living seed; but soon other days arrive, when we are active, and yield unto God the results of his grace experienced in former days. It ought to be so. To you, beloved workers in the Mission-hall, or the Sunday-school, there will be a time of sowing; not much may be accomplished, though a great deal of effort may be put forth. To me in preaching there are times for sowing, and nothing else but sowing; few seem to be the green blades which spring up around me. Perhaps a year may intervene before the worker shall see any reward for his toil: "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth." The missionary upon his district, the Bible-woman on her round, may see no manifest effect produced by daily teaching; but harvest and seedtime are tied together in a sure knot. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Brethren, believe that, and be of good cheer. "Your labor is not in vain in the Lord." While

the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest will take each one its turn.

So, too, while the earth remaineth there will be the interchanges of cold and heat. Where there is life there must be change; only in death is there monotony. There will be times in your experience when you will feel the awful withering of that convincing Spirit who dries up the glory of the flesh. "Who can stand before his cold?" Anon there will be a melting season of contrition and repentance, and then the Holy Spirit will have warmed your heart into hope and faith and love and joy and delight in God. Cold and heat come to the church. I have noticed oftentimes her bitter cold, and I have cried to God about it. But the heat has come; we have felt the glow of revival; enthusiasm has been kindled, zeal has abounded. I wish we could always keep at one glorious summer heat, walking in the light as God is in the light. It ought to be so with us. Some of us labor to be always zealous and full of fire; but should times come when we or others are not in the fullness of the blessing, we will not despair; but we will the rather cry mightily unto the Lord to send his Word and cause the waters of his grace to flow, and make our winter to be over and gone, while flowers appear on the earth and the time of the singing of birds comes on.

So, too, have I seen in our mortal life summer and winter, prosperity and adversity. Do not expect, dear brother, while you are in this world, always to dwell among the lilies and roses of prosperity. Summer will come, and you will be wise to make hay while the sun shines by using all opportunities for usefulness; but look for winter. I do not know into what trade you can enter to be secure against losses, nor what profession you could follow in which you would escape disappointments. I know no corner of the earth without its night, no land without its stones, no sea without its storms. As to spiritual and mental experience, it seemeth to me within myself that while the earth remaineth I shall have my ebbs and flows, my risings and my sinkings. Do not therefore begin to kick and quarrel with the dispensations of God's providence. When it is summer-time say, "The Lord gave, and blessed be his name." When it is winter say, "The Lord hath taken away, and blessed be his name." Keep to the same music, even though you sometimes have to pitch an octave lower. Still praise and magnify the Lord whether you be sowing or reaping. Let



him do what seemeth him good, but to you let it always seem good to praise.

Beloved, labor will be followed by rest; for while the earth remaineth there will be day and night. In the day man goeth forth to his labor; at night he lieth down. Let him bless God for both. There cometh a night wherein no man can work: to us this is not dreaded, but expected. I do not know for which I thank God most, for day or for night. Our young people praise God for day, with its activities; but we who are older are more inclined to bless the Lord for night, with its repose. The grey beard, the man of many years and sad experiences, looks forward to that night wherein the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. If we regard death as night, we look forward to an endless day, which will follow on, when the sun shall go no more down for ever. Jesus our Lord is the Sun of that glorious country to which we wend our way. While the earth remaineth, there will continually be a variety of benedictions, a change-ringing upon the silver bells of mercy. When thou art on high, my brother, remember thou must descend; and when thou art cast down, expect a cheerful lifting up. When it is broad day, let us travel swiftly, for night comes on; but when it is dark, let us watch hopefully, for the morning cometh. As sojourners in a changeful country, let us spend the days of our pilgrimage in a holy fear, which shall preserve us from love of the world. I need not further work out the analogies of the text; many more will rise before the meditative mind.

IV. Last of all, I want you to regard my text as A TOKEN FOR THE ASSURANCE OF OUR FAITH. "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." And they do not. In this fact we are bidden to see the seal and token of the covenant. Look at the passage we read this morning in the thirty-third chapter of Jeremiah. Here is *the security of the King in whom we rejoice*. "If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, then shall David not have a son to reign upon his throne." God hath promised never to change the royal line; but while the earth remaineth, and day and night are seen, the Son of David shall reign King of kings and Lord of lords. Until all enemies are under his feet he must reign. So, then, as I wrap my garment about me, feeling the cold of

winter, I will say to myself, "God hath, by sending cold, confirmed his covenant with Jesus our Lord and King." Every morning light saluteth my eyes, and declareth that "his name shall be continued as long as the sun;" and when the shades of evening fall, and the stars look forth from their houses, I hear a sound of "abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and of his kingdom there is no end. The Lord Jesus is King in Zion, and head over all things to his church while the earth remaineth.

The abiding of the ordinances of heaven is equally a token of *the continuance of the priesthood*. Under the type of the tribe of Levi the priesthood is vested in the person of our Lord. He is our Melchizedek, who is priest as well as king, and of his priesthood there is no end. While winter chills and summer burns, while day calls to labor and night to rest, our great High-priest abides in his office, still able to cleanse us, to make intercession for us, and to present our offerings unto God. His one sacrifice is perpetually a sweet savor unto God, and shall be till moons shall wax and wane no more. As I tread the soil which seems frozen into iron, and as I shiver in the bitter north-east wind, I say to myself, "The priesthood of our Lord abides; for cold has not ceased to visit us, and heat will come in its appointed months." As I go to my bed, or as I rise from it, day and night are to me a pledge that the Lord Jesus is a priest for ever according to the law of an endless life.

A third thing was also assured by the same token. The Lord said that as long as his covenant with day and night remained *he would not put away the seed of Abraham*. Since a son of David must rule them, they must exist to be ruled. There will for ever be a chosen people—a people for whom Jesus lives as king and priest. The Lord hath not cast away the people whom he did foreknow, nor will he do so, come what may. While seedtime and harvest, cold and heat abide, the Lord will maintain a church, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. What a mercy is this! Alas! men whom I hoped were faithful have turned aside from the truth; ministers who were regarded as pillars have fallen, and persons esteemed to be saints turned out to be hypocrites: yet "there is a remnant according to the election of grace." The Lord hath a reserve of men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Therefore, let us be of good courage,

and never tremble for the ark of the Lord.

To end all, let our prayer be that the Lord would abide with us, and then the heat shall not smite us, nor the cold molest us. The presence of God makes fair weather. Let us sing with quaint John Ryland -

"Rise then, Sun of righteousness,  
Me with thy sweet beamings bless;  
Winter then may stay or flee,  
Lord, 'tis all alike to me."

Oh, you that know not our God, I feel heartily sorry for you! To you all seasons must be blank, for God is not in them. Oh that you knew Jesus. The world is a bleak house, a chill and empty corridor without God; and men are orphans, and life is hopeless, and death is starless night, if Jesus is not known and loved. He who trusts his soul with Jesus has found the key of the great secret, the clue of the maze. Henceforth he shall see, in all that smiles or rages around him in our changeful weather, pledges of the love of the Father, tokens of the grace of the Son, and witnesses of the work of the Holy Ghost. To the one God be glory for ever! Amen.

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## **A Sermon To Open Neglecters And Nominal Followers Of Religion**

But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him,

The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him. - Matthew 21:28-32

The sight of this vast arena, and of this crowded assembly, reminds me of other spectacles which, in days happily long past, were seen in the amphitheatres of the old Roman Empire. Around, tier upon tier, were the assembled multitudes, with their cruel eyes and iron hearts; and in the center stood a solitary, friendless man, waiting till the doors of the lion's den should be uplifted, that he might yield himself up a witness for Christ and a sacrifice to the popular fury. There would have been no difficulty then to have divided the precious from the vile in that audience. The most thoughtless wayfarer who should enter into the amphitheatre, would know at once who was the disciple of Christ and who were the enemies of the Crucified One. There stood the bravely-calm disciple, about to die, but all around, in those mighty tiers of the Colosseum, or of the amphitheatre of some provincial town, as the case might be, there sat matrons and nobles, princes and peasants, plebeians and patricians, senators and soldiers, all gazing downward with the same fierce, unpitying look; all boisterous for their heathen gods, and all vociferous in the joy with which they gazed upon the agonies of the disciple of the hated Galilean, butchered to make a Roman holiday. Another sight is before us to-day, with far more happy associations; but alas! it is a far more difficult task this day to separate the chaff from the wheat, the precious from the vile, than in the day when the apostle fought with beasts at Ephesus. Here, in this arena, I hope there are hundreds, if not thousands, who would be prepared to die for our Lord Jesus; and in yonder crowded seats, we may count by hundreds those who bear the name and accept the gospel of the Man of Nazareth; and yet, I fear me, that both in these living hills on either side, and upon this vast floor, there are many enemies of the Son of God, who are forgetful of his righteous claims—who have cast from them those cords of love which should bind them to his throne, and have never submitted to the mighty love which showed itself in his cross and in his wounds. I cannot attempt the separation. You must grow together until the harvest. To divide you were a task which at this hour angels could not

perform, but which one day they will easily accomplish, when at their Master's bidding, the harvest being come, they shall gather together first the tares in bundles to burn them, and afterwards the wheat into Jehovah's barn. I shall not attempt the division, but I shall ask each man to attempt it for himself in his own case. I say unto you, young men and maidens, old men and fathers, this day examine yourselves whether you be in the faith. Let no man take it for granted that he is a Christian because he has helped to swell the numbers of a Christian assembly. Let no man judge his fellow, but let each man judge himself. To each one of you I say, with deepest earnestness, let a division be made by your conscience, and let your understandings separate between him that feareth God and him that feareth him not. Though no man clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side, shall go through the midst of you to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations of this city, let conscience take the inkhorn and honestly make the mark, or leave the favored sign unmade, and let each man question himself this morning, "Am I on the Lord's side? Am I for Christ, or for his enemies? Do I gather with him, or do I scatter abroad?" "Divide! divide!" they say in the House of Commons; let us say the same in this great congregation this day. Political divisions are but trifles compared with the all-important distinction which I would have you consider. Divide as you will be divided to the right and to the left in the great day when Christ shall judge the world in righteousness. Divide as you will be divided when the bliss of heaven, or the woes of hell, shall be your everlasting portion.

If the whole of us were thus divided into two camps, and we could say these have made a covenant with God by sacrifice, and those on the other hand are still enemies to God by wicked works, looking at the last class we might still feel it necessary by way of personal application to make a division among them; for although all unbelievers are alike unpardoned and unsaved, yet they are not alike in the circumstances of their case and the outward forms of their sins. Alike in being without Christ, they are still very varied in their mental and moral condition. I trust I was guided by the Spirit of God to my text this morning, for it is of such a character, that while it enables me to address the whole mass of the unconverted, it gives me a hopeful opportunity of getting at the conscience of each by

dividing the great company of the unconverted into two distinct classes. O that for each tribe of unbelievers, there may be a blessing in store this day.

First, we shall speak to those who are avowedly disobedient to God; and, secondly, to those who are deceptively submissive to him.

I. First, we have a word for **THOSE WHO ARE AVOWEDLY DISOBEDIENT TO GOD**. There are many such here. God has said to you as he says to all who hear the gospel, "Son, go work to day in my vineyard;" and you have replied, perhaps honestly, but certainly very boldly, very unkindly, very unjustly, "I will not." You have made no bones about it, but given a refusal point-blank to the claims of your Creator. You have spoken your mind right out, not only in words, but in a more forcible and unmistakable manner, for actions speak far more loudly than words. You have said, over and over again, by your actions, "I will not serve God, or believe in his Son Jesus." My dear friend, I am glad to see you here this morning, and trust that matters will change with you ere you leave this hall; but at present you have not yielded even an outward obedience to God, but in all ways have said, "I will not." Practically you have said, "I will not worship God, I will not attend a place of worship on the Sunday—it is a weariness intolerable to me. I shall not sing the praise of my Maker—I will not pretend to bless the God for whom I have no love. In public prayer I shall not join—I have no heart for it. I shall not make a pretense of repeating morning and nightly prayer in private—what is the good of it? I will not pray at all; I do not believe in its efficacy, and I will not be such a hypocrite as to follow a vain practice in which I have no belief whatever. As for what is called sin, I love it and will not give it up." You are proud of being called an honest man, for you own the claims of your fellow men upon you, but you scorn to be thought religious, for you do not admit the rights of your Maker. To the righteous requests of others you yield a cheerful obedience, but to the just and tender requests of God you give a plain and evident denial. As clearly as actions can speak, you say by your neglect of the Sabbath, by your disregard of prayer, by your never reading the Bible, by your perseverance in known sin, and by the whole course of your life, "I will not." Like Pharaoh, you have demanded, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" You are of the same mind

as those of old, who said, "It is vain to serve God, and what profit is there if we keep his ordinances?"

Moreover, my friend, you have not as yet given an assent to the doctrines of God's Word; on the contrary, intellectually as well as practically, you go not at God's bidding. You have set up in your mind the idea that you must understand everything before you will believe it—an idea, let me tell you, which you will never be able to carry out, for you cannot understand your own existence; and there are ten thousand other things around you which you never can comprehend, but which you must believe or remain forever a gigantic fool. Still you cavil at this doctrine and that doctrine, railing at the gospel system in general; and if you were asked at a working man's conference, why you did not go to a place of worship, you would perhaps say that you kept away from worship because you did not like this doctrine or that. Let me say on my own account, that as far as I am personally concerned, it is a very small consideration to me whether you do like my doctrine or do not; for your own sake I am anxious above measure that you should believe the truth as it is in Jesus; but while you live in sin, your dislike of a doctrine will very probably only make me feel the more sure of its truth, and lead me to preach it with more confidence and vehemence. Think you that we are to learn God's truth from the likings or dislikings of those who refuse to worship him, and want an excuse for their sins? O unconverted men and women, it is very long before we shall come to you to learn what you would have us preach, and when we fall so low as to do that, you yourselves will despise us. What! shall the physician ask his patient what kind of medicine he would wish to have prescribed? Then the man needs no physician, he can prescribe for himself. Show the doctor out at the back door directly. What is the use of such a physician? Of what service is a minister who will truckle to depraved tastes and sinful appetites, and say, "How would you like me to preach to you? What smooth things shall I offer you?" Ah souls! we have some higher end to be served than merely pleasing you. We would save you by distasteful truths, for honeyed lies will ruin you. That teaching which the carnal mind most delights in, is the most deadly and delusive. With many of you, your beliefs, and tastes, and likes, must be changed, or else you will never enter heaven. I admit that in a measure I like your honesty in having said outright, "I will not serve God;" but it is an honesty

which makes me shudder, for it betrays a heart hard as the nether millstone.

Again, you have said, "I will not serve God," and up to this time it is very possible that you have never been in the humor to repent of having said it, for the ways of sin are sweet to you, and your heart is fixed in its rebellion. You have never felt that conviction of sin, which the Holy Spirit has wrought in some of us; if you had felt it, you would soon have been shaken out of your "I will not." If God's power of grace, of which thousands of us bear witness that it is as real a power as that which guides the stars or wings the wind--if God's almighty grace should once get a hold of you, you would no longer say, "I do not believe this or that;" for, as tremblingly as any of those whom you now despise, you would cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" Up till now you have never felt that power, and therefore I cannot wonder that you do not acknowledge it, although the testimony of honest witnesses ought to have some weight with you. You are practically, intellectually, and avowedly no Christian; you have never deceived yourself and others by making a profession which you do not honor, but you have gone on in your own chosen path, saying with more or less resolution, in answer to every call of the gospel, "I will not."

We said just now that the answer of the son to his father as recorded in our text was very plain; it was not, however, very genuine, or such as his father might have expected. His father said, "Son, go work to day in my vineyard;" and the son rudely said, "I will not, that is flat;" and without another word of apology or reason went his way. This is not quite as it should be. Is it? Even so, my friend, you may have been too hasty and so have been unjust. Is it not very possible you have denied to God and to his gospel the respect which both really deserve? You have spoken very plainly, but at the same time very thoughtlessly, very harshly to the God who has deserved better things of you. Have you ever given the claims of the Lord Jesus a fair consideration? Have you not dismissed the gospel with a sneer quite unworthy of you? Have you not been afraid to look the matters between God and your soul fairly in the face? I believe it to be the case of hundreds here; I know it to be the case of thousands and tens of thousands in London. They have put their foot down, and they have said,



"None of your religion for me! I have made up my mind and I will never alter; I hate it and will not listen to it." Does no small voice within ever tell them that this is not fair to themselves or to God? Is the matter so easily to be decided? Suppose it should turn out that the religion of Jesus is true, what then? What will be the lot of those who despised him? My hearer, the religion of Jesus is true, and I have proved its truth in my own case; do, I pray you, consider it, and do not trifle away your immortal soul. Thus saith the Lord, "Consider your ways."

It is now time for me to tell the openly ungodly what is his real state. You have been more than a little proud of your honesty; and looking down upon certain professors of religion you have said, "Ah! I make no such pretences as they do, I am honest, I am." Friend, you cannot have a greater abhorrence of hypocrites than I have; if you can find a fair chance of laughing at them, pray do so. If by any means you can stick pins into their wind-bags, and let the gas of their profession out, pray do so. I try to do a little of it in my way, do you do the same! You and I are agreed in this, I hope, in heartily hating anything like sham and falsehood; but if you begin to hold your head up, and think yourself so very superior because you make no profession, I must take you down a little by reminding you that it is no credit to a thief that he makes no profession of being honest, and it is not thought to be exceedingly honorable to a man that he makes no profession of speaking the truth. For the fact is, that a man who does not profess to be honest is a professed thief, and he who does not claim to speak the truth is an acknowledged liar; thus in escaping one horn you are thrown upon another, you miss the rock but run upon the quicksand. You are a confessed and avowed neglecter of God, a professed despiser of the great salvation, an acknowledged disbeliever in the Christ of God. When our Government at any time arrests persons suspected of Fenianism, they have no difficulty about those gentlemen who glory in wearing the green uniform and flaunting the big feather. "Come along," says the constable, "you are the man, for you wear the regimentals of a rebel." Even so when the angel of justice arrests the enemies of the Lord, he will have no difficulty in accusing and arresting you, for, laying his hand upon your shoulder, he will say, "You wear the regimentals of an enemy of God; you plainly, and unblushingly, acknowledge that you do not fear God nor trust in his salvation." No

witnesses need be called concerning you at the last great day; you will stand up, not quite so bravely as you do to-day, for, when the heavens are on a blaze, and the earth is rocking to and fro, and the great white cloud fills the field of vision, and the eyes of the great Judge shall burn like lamps of fire, you will put on a different mien and a different carriage from that which you maintain before a poor preacher of the gospel Ah! my ungodly hearer, with such a case as thine there shall be no need to judge, for out of thine own mouth shalt thou be condemned.

Yet I came not here to tell you of your sins only, but to help you to escape from them. It is necessary that this much should be said, but we now turn to something far more pleasant. I am in hopes this day that some of you will listen to that little word in the text, "afterward." He said, "I will not; but afterward he repented, and went." It is a long lane, which has no turning, let us trust that we have come to the turning now. There is space left you for repentance; though you may have been a drunkard, or a swearer, or unchaste, the die is not yet cast, a change is yet possible. May God grant that you may have reached the time when it shall be said of you, "Afterward he repented; he changed his mind; he believed upon Jesus, and obeyed the word of the Lord, and went." Perhaps the son in the parable thought a little more calmly about it. He said to himself, "I will consider the matter, second thoughts are often best. I growled at my good father, and gave him a sharp answer, and I saw the tear standing in the good man's eye. I am sorry I grieved him. The thought of grieving him makes me change my mind. I said 'No' to him," said he, "but I did not think about it. I forgot that if I go and work in my father's vineyard, I shall be working for myself, for I am his eldest son, and all that he has will belong to me, so that I am very foolish to refuse to work to my own advantage. Ah! now I see my father had my advantage at heart, I will even go as he bade me." See, he shoulders his tools, and away he marches to labor with all his might. He said, "I will not," but he repented and went, and it is admitted by all that he did the will of his father. Oh, I hope that many a man and woman now in this Agricultural Hall will this day cry, "I do retract what I have said. I will go to my Father, and will say to him, 'I will do thy bidding. I will not grieve thy love. I will not lose the opportunity of advancing my soul's best interest; I obey the gospel command.'" I will suppose that I see one such before me, and I will speak

to him. Perhaps he said, "I will not," because he really did not understand what religion was. How few after all know what the way of salvation is; though they go to church, and to chapel, they have not yet learned God's plan of pardoning sinners. Do you know the plan of salvation? Hear it and live by it. You have offended God; God must punish sin; it is a fixed law that sin must be punished; how then can God have mercy upon you? Why, only in this way: Jesus Christ came from heaven and he suffered in the room, place, and stead of all who trust him; suffered what they ought to have suffered, so that God is just, and yet at the same time he is able to forgive the very chief of sinners through the merits of his dear Son. Your debts, if you be a believer in him, Christ has paid on your behalf. If you do but come and rest upon Jesus and upon Jesus only, God cannot punish you for your sins, for he punished Jesus for them, and it would not be just of him to punish Christ and then to punish you, to exact payment first from the Surety and afterwards from the debtor. My dear hearer, whoever thou mayst be, whatever thy past life may have been, if thou wilt trust Christ, thou shalt be saved from all thy sin in a moment, the whole of thy past life shall be blotted out; there shall not remain in God's book so much as a single charge against thy soul, for Christ who died for thee, shall take thy guilt away and leave thee without a blot before the face of God. Read the last verse of my text, and you will see that it was by believing that men entered into the kingdom of God of old, and it is still by believing that men are saved. "Behold the Lamb of God," said John the Baptist, and if you look to that bleeding Lamb, you shall live. Do you understand this? Is it not simple? Is it not suitable to you. Will you still refuse to obey it? Does not the Holy Spirit prompt you to relent? Do you not even now say, "Is it so simple? I will even trust in Jesus:

'Guilty, but with heart relenting,  
To the Savior's wounds I'll fly.'

I will come, by God's help, this morning, lest death should come before the sun sets. I will trust Christ to save me. Precious way of salvation! Why should I not be saved?"

It is possible too, that you may have said, "I will not," because you really thought there was no hope for you. Ah! my friend, let me assure you—and

oh! how glad I am to be able to do it—that there is hope for the vilest through the precious blood of Jesus. No man can have gone too far for the long arm of Christ to reach him. Christ delights to save the biggest sinners. He said to his apostles, "Preach the gospel to every creature, but begin"—where? "begin at Jerusalem. There live the wretches who spat in my face. There live the cruel ones that drove the nails through my hands. Go and preach the gospel to them first. Tell them that I am able to save, not little sinners merely, but the very chief of sinners. Tell them to trust in me and they shall live." Where are you, you despairing one? I know the devil will try to keep the sound of the gospel from your ears if he can, and therefore, I would "cry aloud and spare not." O ye despairing sinners, there is no room for despair this side the gates of hell. If you have gone through the foulest kennels of iniquity, no stain can stand out against the power of the cleansing blood.

"There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose ALL their guilty stains."

Oh, I trust, now that you know there is hope for you, you will say, "I will even come at once, and put my trust in Jesus."

While I would thus encourage you to repent of your neglect of God, let me invite you to come to Jesus, and press it upon you yet again. Ah! my dear friend, you will soon be dying, and though some wicked men, in their stupid insensibility, die very calmly, and as David said, "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men, but their strength is firm," yet, whether they perceive it or not, it is a dreadful thing to die with unpardoned sin hanging about you. What will your guilty soul do when it leaves the body? Think of it a minute. It is a matter worthy of your thought. Some of you, in all probability, will die this week. It is not probable that so many thousands of us will march through a whole week, and be found alive at the other end of it. Well then, as we may some of us go soon, and all of us must go ere long, let us look before us and think a bit. Imagine your soul unclothed of the body. You have left the body behind you, and your disembodied spirit finds itself in a new world. Oh, it

will be a glorious thing if that separated spirit shall see Jesus whom it has loved, and fly at once into his bosom, and drink for ever of the crystal fountain of ever-flowing bliss: but it will be a horrible thing if instead of it, your naked shivering spirit should wake up to find itself friendless, homeless, helpless, hopeless, tormented with remorse, afflicted with despair. What if it should have to cry out forever, "I knew my duty but I did it not, I knew the way of salvation but I would not run in it. I heard the gospel, but I shut my ears to it. I lived and at length left the world without Christ, and here I am, past hope, no repenting now, no believing now, no escaping now, for mercy and love no longer rule the hour." Have pity on thyself, my hearer. I have pity on thee. Oh, if my hand could pluck thee from that flame, how cheerfully would I do it! Shall I pity thee and wilt thou not pity thyself? Oh, if my pleadings should by God's grace persuade you to trust in Christ this morning, I would plead with you while voice, and lungs, and heart, and life held out! But oh, have pity on thyself! Pity that poor naked spirit which so soon will be quivering with utmost agony, a self-caused agony, an agony from which it would not escape, an agony of which it was warned, but which it chose to endure sooner than give up sin and yield to the scepter of sovereign grace.

I would fain hope that you are saying, "I do now repent, and by God's grace I will go." If so, let me tell you there are a great many in heaven who once, like you, said, "I will not," but they afterwards repented and are now saved. I will give you one picture. Yonder, I see a company of men on horseback, and there is one, the proudest of them all, to whom they act as a guard; they are going to Damascus, that he may take Christians to prison and compel them to blaspheme. Saul of Tarsus is the name of that cruel, murderous persecutor. When Stephen was put to death, God said to this man Saul, "Go, work in my vineyard," but Saul said plainly, "I will not," and to prove his enmity, he helped to put Stephen to death. There he is riding in hot haste, upon his evil errand, none more set and determined against the Lord. Yet my Lord Jesus can tame the lion, and even make a lamb of him. As he rides along, a bright light is seen, brighter than the sun at noonday; he falls from his horse, he lies trembling on the ground, and he hears a voice out of heaven, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Lifting up his eyes with astonishment, he sees that he had ignorantly been persecuting the Son of

God. What a change that one discovery wrought in him. That voice, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest," broke his hard heart, and won him to the cause. You know how three days after that, that once proud and bigoted man was baptized upon profession of the faith of Christ, whom he had just now persecuted! and if you want to see an earnest preacher, where can you find a better than the apostle Paul, who, with heart on fire, writes again and again, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." I hope there is a Saul here, who is to be struck down this morning. Lord, strike him down! Eternal Spirit strike him down now! You did not know perhaps, that you had been fighting God, but you thought the religion of Jesus to be a foolish dream. You did not know that you had insulted the dying Savior; now you do know it, may your conscience be affected, and from this day forth may you serve the Lord.

I must leave this second point when I have just said this. If there be one here who after a long refusal, at last relents, and is willing to become a servant of God by faith in Jesus Christ, let me tell him for his encouragement, he shall not be one whit behind those who have been so long making a profession without being true to it, for the text says, "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom;" but what else? "Go into the kingdom" before those who made a profession of serving God, but who were not true to it. You great sinners shall have no back seats in heaven! There shall be no outer court for you. You great sinners shall have as much love as the best, as much joy as the brightest of saints. You shall be near to Christ; you shall sit with him upon his throne; you shall wear the crown; your fingers shall touch the golden harps; you shall rejoice with the joy which is unspeakable and fall of glory. Will ye not come? Christ forgets your past ill manners, and bids ye come to-day. "Come," saith he, "unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Thirty years of sin shall be forgiven, and it shall not take thirty minutes to do it in. Fifty, sixty, seventy years of iniquity shall all disappear as the morning's hoar-frost disappears before the sun. Come and trust my Master, hiding in his bleeding wounds.

"Raise thy downcast eyes, and see  
What throngs His throne surround!  
These, though sinners once like thee,

Have full salvation found.  
Yield not then to unbelief;  
He says, 'There yet is room:'  
Though of sinners thou art chief,  
Since Jesus calls thee, come."

II. Bear with me a little time while I speak to the second character, THE DECEPTIVELY SUBMISSIVE, by far the most numerous everywhere in England, probably the most numerous in this assembly. Oh! you, my own regular hearers, you who have heard my voice these thirteen years many of you are in this class. You have said to the Great Father, "I go, sir!" but you have not gone. Let me sorrowfully sketch your portraits: you have regularly frequented a place of worship, and you would shudder to waste a single Sunday in an excursion, or in any form of Sabbath breaking. Outwardly you have said, "I go, sir." When the hymn is given out, you stand up and sing, and yet you do not sing with the heart. When I say, "Let us pray!" you cover your faces, but you do not pray with real prayer. You utter a polite, respectful "I go, sir," but you do not go. You give a notional assent to the gospel. If I were to mention any doctrine, you would say, "Yes, that is true. I believe that." But your heart does not believe: you do not believe the gospel in the core of your nature, for if you did, it would have an effect upon you. A man may say, "I believe my house is on fire," but if he goes to bed and falls to sleep, it does not look as if he believed it, for when a man's house is on fire he tries to escape. If some of you really believed that there is a hell, and that there is a heaven, as you believe other things, you would act very differently from what you now do. I must add that many of you say, "I go, sir," in a very solemn sense, for when we preach earnestly the tears run down your cheeks, and you go home to your bedrooms, and you pray a little, and everybody thinks that your concern of mind will end in conversion: but your goodness is "like the morning cloud and the early dew." You are like dunghills with snow upon them: while the snow lasts you look white and fair, but when the snow melts the dunghill remains a dunghill still. Oh, how many very impressible hearts are like that! You sin, and yet you come to a place of worship, and tremble under the word; you transgress, and you weep and transgress again; you feel the power of the gospel after a fashion, and yet

you revolt against it more and more. Ah! my friends, I can look some of you in the face and know that I am describing some of your cases to the letter. You have been telling lies to God all these years, by saying, "I go, sir," while you have not gone. You know that to be saved you must believe in Jesus, but you have not believed. You know that you must be born again, but you are still strangers to the new birth. You are as religious as the seats you sit on, but no more; and you are as likely to get to heaven as those seats are, but not one whit more, for you are dead in sin, and death cannot enter heaven. O my dear hearers, I lament that ever I should be called to say such a thing as this, and not be more affected by the fact; and, wonder of wonders, that you, some of you, know it to be true, and yet do not feel alarmed thereby! It is the easiest thing in the world to impress some of you by a sermon, but, I fear me, you never will get beyond mere transient impressions. Like the water when lashed, the wound soon heals. You know, and you know, and you know; and you feel, and feel, and feel again, and yet your sins, your self-righteousness, your carelessness, or your willful wickedness, cause you, after having said, "I go, sir," to forget the promise and lie unto God.

Now, I spoke very honestly to the other class, and must be equally plain with you. You, too, criminate yourselves. There will be no need of witnesses against you. You have admitted that the gospel is true. You did not quarrel with the doctrine of future punishment or future glory. You attended a place of worship, and you said that God was good and worthy to be served; you confessed that you owed allegiance to him, and ought to render it. You have even knelt down and in prayer you have said, "Lord, I deserve thy wrath." The great God has only to turn to some of your formal prayers to find quite enough evidence to secure your condemnation. Those morning prayers of yours, those evening prayers, hypocritical every one of them, will be more than sufficient to condemn you of your own mouth. Take heed! take heed, I pray you, while you are yet in the land of hope.

All this while, as the thirty-second verse reminds me, while you have remained unsaved, you have seen publicans and harlots saved by the very gospel which has had no power upon you. Do not you know it, young man? You, I mean, the son of a godly mother? You know that you are not



saved, and yet you had a drunken workman in your father's employment, and he has been these last few years a sober Christian man, he is saved, and you perhaps have taken to the habits which he has forsaken. You know that there have been picked off of the streets poor fallen women who have been brought to know Christ, who are among the sweetest and fairest flowers in Christ's garden now, though they were once castaways; and yet some of you respectable people who never committed any outward vice in your lives, are still unconverted, and still saying to Christ, "I go, sir," but you have not gone. You are still without God! Without Christ! Lost, lost, lost! Yet fairer outward characters could scarcely be found. I could fain weep for you! Oh! beware, beware of being like the apples of Sodom, which are green to look upon, but when crushed, crumble to ashes. Beware of being like John Bunyan's trees that were green outside, but inwardly rotten, and only fit to be tinder for the devil's tinder-box. Oh! beware of saying as some of you do, "I go, sir," while you go not. I sometimes see sick people who quite alarm and distress me. I say to them, "My dear friend, you are dying; have you a hope?" There is no answer. "Do you know your lost state?" "Yes, sir. "Christ died for sinners." "Yes, sir." "Faith gives us of his grace." "Yes, sir. They say, "Yes, sir; yes, sir; yes, sir; yes, sir; yes, sir; yes, sir." I sometimes wish before God they would contradict me, for if they would but have honesty enough to say, "I do not believe a word of it," I should know how to deal with them. Stubborn oaks are leveled by the gale, but those who bend like the willow before every wind, what wind shall break them? O dear brethren, beware of being gospel hardened; or, what is the same thing, softened but for a season. Beware of being a promising hearer of the word, and nothing more!

I do not mean to close my discourse by speaking to you in this apparently harsh way, which; harsh as it seems, is full of love to your soul. I have a good word for you too. I trust that you, in this Agricultural Hall, will have a change wrought in you by the Holy Ghost, for although these many years you have made false professions before God; there is yet room in his gospel feast for you. Did you notice the text? "The publicans and sinners enter into the kingdom of heaven before you." Then it is clear you may come after them, because it could not be said they entered before you, if you did not come after them. If the Lord shall break your heart, you will

be willing to take the Lord Jesus for your all in all in just the same way as a drunkard must, though you have not been a drunkard. You will be willing to rest in the merit of Jesus just as a harlot must, though you have never been such. There is room for you, young people, yet, though you have broken your vows, and quenched your convictions. Ay, and you grey-headed people may be brought yet, though you have lived so long in the outward means, but have never given up your hearts to Jesus. Oh, come! This twenty-fourth day of March, may the Lord bring you in this very place may the Lord lead you to say silently, "By the grace of God I will not be an open pretender any longer; I will give myself up to those dear hands that bled for me, and that dear heart that was pierced for me, and I will this day submit to Jesus' way.

The fact is, to close the subject, there is, my dear friends, the same gospel to be preached to one class of men as to every other class. I pray God the day may never come when we shall be found in our preaching talking about working classes, and middle classes, and upper classes. I know no difference between you, you are the same to me when I preach the gospel, whether you are kings and queens, or crossing sweepers; satin and cotton, broadcloth and fustian, are alike to the gospel. If you are peers of the realm, we trim not our gospel to suit you, and if you are the basest of thieves, we do not exclude you from the voice of mercy. The gospel comes to men as sinners, all equally fallen in Adam, equally lost and ruined by sin. I have not one gospel for Her Majesty the Queen, and another gospel for the beggar-woman. No, there is but one way of salvation, but one foundation, but one propitiation, but one gospel. Look to the cross of Christ and live. High was the brazen serpent lifted, and all that Moses said was, "Look." Was a prince of the house of Judah bitten, he was told to look; without looking his lion standard of costly emblazonry could not avail him; was some poor wretch in the camp bitten, he must look, and the efficacy was the same for him as for the greatest of the host. Look! look! look to Jesus. Believe in the Son of God and live! One brazen serpent for all the camp, one Christ for all ranks and conditions of men. What a blessing would it be if we were all enabled to trust Christ this morning! My brethren, why not?--He is worthy of the confidence of all. The Spirit of God is able to work faith in all. O poor sinner, look to him! Dear hearers, I may never speak to some of you again, and I would

therefore be pressing with you; by the hour of death, by the solemnities of eternity, I do implore and beseech you accept the only remedy for sin which even God himself will ever offer to the dying sons of men, the remedy of a bleeding Substitute, suffering in your room and stead, believed on and accepted in the heart. Cast yourself flat upon Christ. The way of salvation is just this—rest alone upon Christ! Depend wholly upon him. The negro was asked what he did, and he said, "I jest fall down on de rock, and he dat is down on de rock cannot fall no lower." Down on the rock, sinner! Down on the rock! The everlasting rock of ages! You cannot fall lower than that. I will conclude with a well-known illustration. Your condition is like that of a child in a burning house, who, having escaped to the edge of the window, hung on by the window-sill. The flames were pouring out of the window underneath, and the poor lad would soon be burnt, or falling would be dashed to pieces; he therefore held on with the clutch of death. He did not dare to relax his grasp till a strong man stood underneath, and said, "Boy! drop! drop! I'll catch you." Now, it was no saving faith for the boy to believe that the man was strong—that was a good help towards faith—but he might have known that and yet have perished; it was faith when the boy let go and dropped down into his big friend's arms. There are you, sinner, clinging to your sins or to your good works. The Savior cries, "Drop! drop into my arms!" It is not doing, it is leaving off doing. It is not working, it is trusting in that work which Jesus has already done. Trust! that is the word, simple, solid, hearty, earnest trust. Trust and it will not take an hour to save you, the moment you trust you are saved. You may have come in here as black as hell, but if you trust in Jesus you are wholly forgiven. In an instant, swifter than a flash of lightning the deed of grace is done. O may God the Spirit do it now, bringing you to trust, that you may be saved.

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## **The Servants And The Pounds**

A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a

kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. - Luke 19:12-13

We are told the reason for the Savior's delivering this parable at this particular time. He was going up to Jerusalem, and the ignorant and enthusiastic crowd hoped that he might now set up a temporal sovereignty.

"They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." Their minds were crowded with mistakes, and the Savior would set them right upon this matter. To banish from their minds the idea of a Jewish empire, in which every Hebrew would be a prince, our Lord told them this story: I use the word advisedly, for his parable was also a fact. He would show them that as yet they were not to be partakers in a kingdom, but were soon to be waiters for an absent Lord who had gone to receive a kingdom, and to return. In his absence his disciples were to be in the position of servants put in trust with property while their master was gone far away to receive a kingdom, and then to come again. He was now like a nobleman, who may be one among many citizens; but he was going away to a court where he would be invested with royal authority, and he would come back a king. They were to be put in trust with certain pounds till he should return.

I confess I never thoroughly saw the meaning of this parable till I was directed by an eminent expositor to a passage in Josephus, which, if it be not the key of it, is a wonderfully close example of a class of facts which, no doubt, often occurred in the Roman empire in our Savior's day. Herod, you know, was king over Judaea; but he was only a subordinate king under the Roman emperor. Caesar at Rome made and unmade kings at his pleasure. When Herod died he was followed by his son Archelaus, of whom we read in Matthew's account of our Lord's infancy that when Joseph heard that Archelaus was king in Judea in the room of his father Herod he was afraid to go thither. This Archelaus had no right to the throne till he obtained the sanction of Cæsar, and therefore he took ship with certain attendants, and went to Rome, which in those days was a far country, that he might receive the kingdom, and return. While he was on the way his citizens, who hated him, sent an ambassage after him, so has

the Revised Version correctly worded it; and this ambassage bore this message to Caesar: -- "We will not that this man reign over us." The messengers represented to Caesar that Archelaus was not fit to be king of the Jews. Certain of the pleadings are recorded in Josephus, and they show that barristers nineteen hundred years ago pleaded in much the same style as their brethren of to-day. The people were weary of the Herods, and preferred anything to their cruel rule. They even asked that Judaea might become a Roman province, and be joined to Syria, rather than they should remain under the hated yoke of the Idumean tyrants. It is evident that in the case of Archelaus his citizens hated him, and said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." It pleased Caesar to divide the kingdom, and to put Archelaus on the throne as ethnarch, or a ruler with less power than a king. When he returned he took fierce revenge upon those who had opposed him, and rewarded his faithful adherents most liberally. This story of what had been done thirty years before would, no doubt, rise up in the recollection of the people when Jesus spoke, for Archelaus had built a palace for himself very near to Jericho, and it may be that under the walls of that palace the Savior used the event as the basis of his parable. Those who lived in our Lord's day must have understood his allusions to current facts much better than we do who live nineteen centuries later. The providence of God provided that observant Jew, Josephus, to store up much valuable information for us. Read the passage in his history, and you will see that even the details tally with this parable. There is the story.

The Savior, without excusing Archelaus or commending him in the least degree, simply makes his going to Rome an illustration. Here is a noble personage who is to be a king; but to obtain the throne he must journey to the distant court of a superior power. While he is going, his citizens so hate him that they send an ambassage to oppose his claims; for they will not have him for their king. However, he receives the kingdom, and returns to rule it. When he does so, he rewards those who have been faithful to him, and he punishes with overwhelming destruction those who have tried to prevent his reigning. There is the story: let me further interpret it.

The Savior likens himself to a nobleman. He was here on earth a man

among men, and truly a nobleman in the midst of his fellow citizens. It was his to become king, king of all the earth: indeed, he is such by nature and by right, but he must first go, by death, resurrection, and ascension, away to the highest courts, and there from the great Lord of all he must receive for himself a kingdom. It is written, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance"; and therefore Jesus must plead his claims before the king, and win his suit. The day is coming when he will return, clothed with glory and honor, to take unto himself his great power and reign; for he must reign till all enemies are put under his feet. When he comes his enemies will be destroyed, and his faithful servants will be abundantly rewarded.

Let us now draw near to this feast of divine teaching. May the Spirit of God help us to gather practical lessons from this parable!

I. First, I invite you to notice that **THERE ARE HERE TWO SETS OF PERSONS**. We see the enemies who would not have this man to reign over them, and the servants who had to trade with his money. There are many divisions among men into nationalities, ranks, offices, and characters; but, after all, the deep divisions will always be two -- the enemies and the servants of Christ Jesus. You that are not servants are enemies; you that are not enemies must take care that you are servants. I find no class of persons mentioned in the parable but these two, and I feel certain that there are no others on the face of the earth. You are all either enemies or servants of Jesus.

Consider the enemies! The person hated was a nobleman. He was a man, but a noble man. What a man is the Lord Jesus! Forgetting his Godhead for the moment, regard him only as the man Christ Jesus, and what a man! I need not dwell upon the nobility of his birth, of the seed of David; but I would remind you of the nobility of his character, for that is where true nobility resides. In this respect where is there nobility to be compared to his? Brothers, it would be difficult to find a second to the man Christ within measurable distance of him: even those who copy him most nearly confess, regretfully, that in many things they fall short of his glory. There was nothing petty, mean, or selfish about Jesus of Nazareth. He was altogether the noble man.

He deigned, for gracious purposes, to become a citizen amongst others; for since we read of his being anointed above his fellows, it is implied that some were his fellows. He was a man among men. He was of the society of carpenters; he was also free of the company of itinerant preachers. He associated with men of the sea, with men that handled the net and the oar. He went in and out among the peasantry, and in his dress and style of living there was nothing to distinguish him from the rest of the citizens. Truly, he was separate from them by his holier character, but the separation was not caused by his unwillingness to come down to them, but by their inability to go up to him.

The citizens hated him; but they hated him without a cause. There is always some cause for dislike in us, but there was none in him. In tone, or manner, or spirit, the best give some cause of offense; but in him there was nothing which could excuse their hate: it was a wanton rejection of the fittest to reign. As he claimed to be the King of the Jews, they especially hated his royalty, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us"; and again, "We have no king but Caesar." "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Yet, my brethren, merely regarding Jesus as a man, if we wanted a king, he ought to be elected by the universal suffrages of mankind, openly given by uplifted hands and joyful acclamations. Io triumphe! Mighty conqueror, reign for ever! Prince of the kings of the earth, lover of the sons of men, who didst for our sake pour out thy precious blood, thou deservest to be king of all! The most kingly of men should be king of men. Yet they hated his royal claims, and this also without cause. Which of them had he oppressed? What revenue did he extort from the people? What law of his was hard or cruel? In what case did he ever judge unrighteously? Yet his citizens hated him. There is that same hate of Christ in the world to-day.

Do any of you hate him? "No," say you. Yet are not some of you who do not oppose him treating him with greater contempt than if you did oppose him? You pass him by altogether, he is not in all your thoughts; you act as if he were not worthy even to be opposed: you make nothing of him. He is not among the objects for which you live. Sometimes you may speak with a partial admiration of his character; but earnest admiration

leads to imitation. If Jesus be a Savior, what worse can you do to him than to refuse to be saved by him? I charge you indifferent ones with being, in the core of your hearts, his worst enemies. Oh that you would repent of this, and turn unto him, for he is coming again, and when he comes he will say, "As for these mine enemies, slay them before mine eyes." The expression is full of terror. To be slain before the eyes of injured love is doubly death. The Lord by his grace deliver us from so dread a doom!

The other set of persons were his servants: the original would justify the translation, his bond-servants. Those who were not his enemies were his faithful servants. I suppose that the nobleman had bought them with his money, or that they had been born in his house, or that they had willingly bound themselves by indentures to him. When I said that these were only his slaves you inwardly said, "Then you that believe in Jesus are his bond-servants." Spare us not even the harsher word "slaves." We were never free till we came under bonds to Jesus, and we grow in freedom as we yield to him. Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," as if the hot iron of affliction had branded him with the name of Christ. Yes, we are the property of the Lord Jesus, and not our own. We cannot somehow find words which will in all its fullness express our belonging to Jesus, we wish to sink into Christ, and to become as nothing for his sake. Truly he hath called us friends, but we call ourselves his servants. We take a great delight in owning him as Master: like David, who said, "I am thy servant"; and then again, "I am thy servant"; and then again, "and the son of thine handmaid." He was born a servant, born of a mother who was also herself a servant. After all this he added, "thou hast loosed my bonds." Servitude to Christ is perfect freedom, and in every respect we have found it so. We never expect to know perfect freedom until he has brought every thought, every conception, imagination, desire, into captivity to himself. We have been bought with his money, and we cost him dear. We have also been born in his house by a second birth, and we are bound to him by indentures which we have gladly signed and sealed, and are ready to sign and seal again.

"High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,  
That vow renew'd shall daily hear:



Till in life's latest hour we bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear."

We are truly thus on the opposite side to his enemies, for we are willingly his servants.

I have thus introduced to you the two classes. Before we go any further, may the Holy Spirit operate upon us, to make us discern to which of these two we belong! If we are enemies, may we become servants from this time forth!

II. We now advance a step further, and notice THE ENGAGEMENTS OF THESE SERVANTS.

Their lord was going away, and he left his ten servants in charge with a little capital, with which they were to trade for him till he returned. He did not tell them how long he would be away, perhaps he did not know himself -- I mean the king in the story: even our Master says, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven." "I am going away," he said, "you are my servants, and I leave you as my servants in the midst of my enemies. Be loyal to me; and, to prove your faithfulness, continue to trade in my name. I shall entrust to each of you a very small sum of money, but it will keep you occupied, and your trading on my account will be your daily protest that you are loyal to me, whatever others may be."

Notice, first, that this was honorable work. They were not entrusted with large funds, but the amount was enough to serve as a test. It put them upon their honor. If they were really attached to their master they would feel that he had placed a confidence in them which they must justify. Slaves are not always to be entrusted with money; in fact, the tendency of bondage has been always to take away from men the quality of trustworthiness: our bondage to Christ has the opposite effect, because it is no bondage at all. These servants of the master were treated in some respect as partners, they were to have fellowship with him in his property. They were his confidants and trustees. His eye was not watching them, for he had gone into a far country, and he trusted them to be a law unto

themselves. They were not to render a daily account, but to be left alone until he returned. Now that is just how the Master has treated us: he has put us in trust with the gospel, and he relies upon our honor. He does not call us at once to an audit, for he is not here. I do not think that systems of church government which involve a measure of the spy system are at all after our Lord's mind. If Christians are what they ought to be, they can be trusted: they are a law unto themselves. The Lord puts you not under certain rules and regulations so as to ordain that you shall give a tenth, though I wish you did give as much at least. He does not say, "You shall subscribe so much at such a time, and work in such a way." No; you are not under law, but under grace. If you love your Master you will soon discover what to do for him, and you will do it with delight. The Lord does not lay down rigid rules, and order that at such an hour in the morning you must begin work, and that you must work on for so many hours. No, he says, "Take my pound, and trade therewith." Our version, "Occupy till I come," is a lumbering Latin way of saying, "Trade therewith till I come." The Lord has put us on the footing of confidence, appealing to our honor and love. He will not come and look after us to-day or to-morrow, though he will ultimately have a strict reckoning with us. Meanwhile he has gone, but he has left us here in the midst of his enemies, to show his enemies that he has some friends, and that he must be a good Master, since even those who own themselves to be his vassals rejoice to spend their whole lives in his service. I say he gave them honorable work; and was it not so?

It was work for which he gave them capital. He gave to each of them a pound. "Not much," you will say. No, he did not intend it to be much. They were not capable of managing very much. If he found them faithful in "a very little" he could then raise them to a higher responsibility, I do not read that any one of them complained of the smallness of his capital, or wished to have it doubled. Brothers, we need not ask for more talents, we have quite as many as we shall be able to answer for. Preachers need not seek for larger spheres: let them be faithful in those which they now occupy. A brother said to me, "I cannot do much with a hundred hearers," and I replied, "You will find it hard work to give in a good account for even a hundred people." I confess it very quietly, but I have often wished that I had a little congregation, that I might watch over every soul in it;

but now I am doomed to an everlasting dissatisfaction with my work, for what am I among so many? I can only feel that I have not even begun to do the hundredth part of what needs to be done in such a church as this. Each one had a pound in his hand, and his lord only said, "Trade therewith." He did not expect them to do a wholesale business on so small a stock, but they were to trade as the market would allow. He did not expect them to make more than the pound would fairly bring in; for, after all, he was not "an austere man." "Take that pound," he said, "and do your best. I know the times are bad, for you have to trade among enemies. You could not, perhaps, manage to put out twenty pounds under such circumstances, but you can turn over a pound, and use every shilling of it." Thus he gave them a sufficient capital for his purpose. My friend, have you that pound anywhere about you? "Alas!" says one, "I have no abilities at all." How is that? Your Lord gave you a pound; what has become of it? You are one of his servants, and if you are doing nothing you are in an evil case, and ought to be ashamed. What have you done with that pound? Put your hand in your pocket again. It is not there. Is it in the napkin? -- that napkin with which you ought to have wiped the sweat of labor from your brow! Have you got that pound? You say, "It is not much." The Master did not say it was much, on the contrary, he called it "very little"; but have you used that very little? This should go home to your consciences. You have been treated as confidential servants, and yet you are not true to your Lord. How is this?

What they had to do with the pound was prescribed in general terms. They were to trade with it, not to play with it. I dare say they were inclined to argue, "Our master's cause is assailed, let us fight for him"; yet he did not say, "fight," but trade. Peter drew his sword. Oh, yes, we are eager combatants, but slow merchants. Many manifest a defiant spirit, and are never more satisfied than when they are in noise and strife. The servants in this parable were not to fight, but to trade, which is a much more cool-blooded and ignoble thing in common esteem. We may leave our Lord's enemies to himself; he will end their rebellions one of these days. We are to follow a much lowlier line of things.

No doubt certain of them might have thought that the pound would be useful to purchase them comforts, or even luxuries: one would buy a new

coat, and another would bring home a piece of furniture for his house, and others would solemnly say, "We have our families to think of." Yes, but their lord did not say so; the master said, "Trade therewith until I come." They were neither to fight with it, nor hoard it, nor spend it, nor waste it, but to trade with it for him.

The pound was not put into their hands for display. They were not to glory over others who had not so much as a penny to bless themselves with; for though they were little capitalists, that capital was their lord's. It is a pity when graces or talents are boasted of as if they were our own. A tradesman who is prospering seldom has much money to show; it is all wanted in his business. Sometimes he can scarcely put his hand upon a five-pound note, because his cash is all absorbed: his golden grain is all sown in the field of his trade. Speaking for myself, I cannot find any room for glorying in myself; for if I have either grace or strength, I certainly have none to spare. I have barely enough for the work in hand, and not enough for the service in prospect. Our pound is not to be hung on our watch-chain, but to be traded with.

Trading represents a life which may be called common-place; but it is eminently practical: and it has an exceedingly practical effect upon the person engaged in it. This is owing in part to the fact that it is an occupation in which there is great scope for judgment. They were not tied down to a special kind of trade. The man who made his one pound into ten chose the best form of business. He sought not that which was most pleasant, but that which was most profitable. So you are left, dear friends, to choose your own line of service for your Master, only you must trade for him, and for him everything must be done well. At the present time no trading pays better than the mission to the Congo, or to the hill-tribes of India: large dividends come also from dealings with the poorest of the poor in the slums, and as much from widows and orphans who are in extreme destitution. When men have to lay down their lives for the Lord Jesus, after a life languished away with fever, the returns are amazing. Where the need is greatest our Lord receives most glory. It is left to you to judge what you can do, how you can do it, and where you will do it. Do that which will most surely win souls, and that which will best establish your Lord's kingdom. Exercise your very best judgment, and get into that

line of holy service in which you can bring in the largest revenue for your glorious Master.

The work which he prescribed was one that would bring them out. The man who never succeeds in trade, do you know him? I know him. He complains that he has a small head; and usually the complaint is founded on fact. He needs to follow a business in which the bread and butter will be brought to his door ready spread; and even then, unless it is cut up into dice pieces on his plate, he will get no breakfast. The man that is to succeed in trade in these times must have confidence, look alive, keep his eyes open, and be all there. Our times are hard, but not so hard as those described in the parable when the faithful servants were trading in the midst of traitors; they had need of sharp wits. Trade develops a man's perseverance, patience, and courage: it tests honesty, truthfulness, and firmness. It is a singularly excellent discipline for character. When this nobleman gave his servant the pound, it was that he might see what stuff he was made of. Trade with small capital means personal work and drudgery, long hours and few holidays; plenty of disappointment and small gains. It means working with might and main, and doing the thing with all your heart and mind. In such a manner are we to serve Christ. The word "trade" has a world of meaning in it. I cannot bring it out this morning; but there is no need, for the most of you know more about trade than I do, and you can instruct yourselves. You are to trade for the Lord Jesus Christ in a higher and yet more emphatic sense than that in which you have traded for yourselves. With your physical strength, your mental faculties, your substance, your family, with everything -- you are to bring glory to God, and honor to the name of Jesus. It is to be your life-business to work for Jesus, and with Jesus.

Trading, if it be successfully carried on, is an engrossing concern, calling out the whole man. It is a continuous toil, a varied trial, a remarkable test, a valuable discipline, and this is why the nobleman put his bondsmen to it, that he might afterwards use them in still higher service. Brethren, learn what is meant by trading, and then carry on a spiritual trade with all your heart.

At the same time, let us notice that it was work suitable to their capacity.

Small as the capital was, it was enough for them; for they were no more than bondsmen, not of a high grade of rank or education. Their master gave them only a pound, which did not mean more than £3.10s. of our money. One would not get a large shop, or even a decent stock, with that small amount. They could not complain that they were placed in a business which was too heavy for them to manage. They could any of them buy a few goods, and hawk them. The Lord Jesus Christ does not ask you to do more than you can do; he does not break you down with cares beyond your capacity. We have not yet reached the limit of our powers: we can yet do more. Jesus is no exacting master; it is only a false and lying servant who will call him "an austere man, reaping where he has not sowed." Nothing of the kind. He has given us a light business: our work for him is suited to our limited powers, and he is ready, by his Holy Spirit, to assist us. Let us use well our single pound. Let it be our ambition to make ten of it at the very least; and may the Lord graciously prosper our endeavors, that we may have large interest to present to him when he shall come!

Did you enquire as to how these men were to be supported? Their master did not tell them to live out of his pound. No, they were his servants, and so they lived under his roof, and he provided for all their needs. He had gone on a journey, but his establishment was not given up: the table was still spread, and the children and the servants had bread enough and to spare. "Oh," says one, "that alters the case." Just so, but it does not make it different from yours; or, if it does, I am sorry for you. Are you your own provider? Do you cry, "What shall I eat? What shall I drink?" Do you not know that all these things do the nations of the earth seek after? Whereas Jesus says, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." All I understand my life, I am to do my Lord's work, and he is to provide for me. He may do this through my own industry, but still it is his work to do it, and not mine. If the providence of God is not sufficient to provide for us, then I am sure we cannot provide for ourselves; and if it be sufficient, we shall be wise to cast all our care on the Lord, and live undividedly for his praise. Remember that text, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." You, as a servant, are not to be entangled with carking cares about your own interests, but you are to give your whole thought

and life to your Master's service. He will take care of you now, and reward you when he shall come.

III. Thirdly, to understand this parable, we must remember THE EXPECTANCY WHICH WAS ALWAYS TO INFLUENCE THEM. They were left as trusted servants till he should return, but that return was a main item in the matter.

They were to believe that he would return, and that he would return a king. The citizens did not believe it. They hoped that Caesar would refuse him the throne; but we are to be sure that our noble Master will receive the kingdom. This rebel world does not believe that Jesus ever will be king. The other day we read of the "Eclipse of Christianity." Constantly we see his dominion assailed. They say that it is practically disproved by facts. Is it? Sirs, excuse me, I am desperately prejudiced, for I am his servant. I owe him my life, my all. I am persuaded that he is and must be King of kings. I know him so well that I am sure that he will prevail at the court to which he has gone. He is in very high favor there. The last time I saw the face of the great King I obtained that favor through the use of his name. I receive anything I ask for when I mention his name, and so I am sure that he is in wonderful high repute above. Why, his Father is the sovereign! I am sure he will not deny the kingdom to his only-begotten Son. Jesus will come in his kingdom; I am sure of it. Let us work in the full conviction that our absent Lord will soon be here again, with a glorious diadem upon his brow. When he went away he took with him the scars of one who died a felon's death; and he will come again with them, but the nail-prints will be no memorials of his shame: they will be as jewels to his hands.

His servants were to regard their absent master as already king, and they were so to trade among his enemies that they should never compromise their own loyalty. They were of the king's party, and of no other. It is a very awkward position to be in, to trade among people that are enemies to your king: you need in such a case to be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. This is precisely our position. We have to bring glory to God out of men who hate him: we have to magnify our Lord among men who would, if they could, again crucify him. We have to go in and out among

them in such a manner that they can never say that we side with them in their rebellion, or wink at their disloyalty. We cannot be "Hail fellow: well met!" with those whose life is a practical insult to the crown rights of King Jesus. We must above all things prove ourselves loyal to our absent Lord, lest he appoint us our portion among his enemies.

I find that the original would suggest to any one carefully reading it that they were to regard their master as already returning. This should be our view of our Lord's Advent; he is even now on his way hither. No sooner had he risen from the grave than, practically, our Lord was coming back. Strange paradox! but his ascension into heaven was, in a certain sense, part of his coming back to us; for the way for him, from the cross on earth to the crown of the whole earth, was *vi* the New Jerusalem. He is coming now as fast as wisdom judges it to be right. I am sure our Savior will not delay a moment beyond what is absolutely needful, for he loves the church which is his bride, and as her bridegroom he will not delay the long-expected hour of their meeting, never to part again. He is ready, it is the bride that needs to make herself ready. Jesus desires to come; his heart is responsive to our cry when we say, "Come quickly!" He will come sooner than we think. We are bound to feel that he is at this moment on the road; and we are to live as if he might arrive at any moment.

We must trade on till our Lord has come. There must be no retiring from his business, even if we retire from our own; there must be no ceasing because we fancy we have done enough. Our rest will be when he comes, but till then we must trade on.

Let us labor as in his actual presence. How would you act with Jesus at your elbow? Act just so. He sees us as clearly as if his bodily presence were in our midst. Be aroused and inspired by the Redeemer's eye. Thus will you live in this trial state after the best possible manner.

IV. Now comes the sweet part of the subject. Note well **THE SECRET DESIGN OF THE LORD**. Did it ever strike you that this nobleman had a very kindly design towards his servants? Did this nobleman give these men one pound each with the sole design that they should make money for him? It would be absurd to think so. A few pounds would be no item



to one who was made a king. No, no! It was as Mr. Bruce says, "he was not money-making, but character-making." His design was not to gain by them, but to educate them.

First, their being entrusted with a pound each was a test. This nobleman said to himself, "When I am a king I must have faithful servants in power around me. My going away gives me an opportunity of seeing what my servants are made of. I shall thus test their capacity and their industry, their honesty and their zeal. If they prove faithful over a few things they will be fit to be trusted with greater matters." The test was only a pound; and they could not make much mischief out of that, but it would be quite sufficient to try their capacity and fidelity, for he that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in much. They did not all endure the test, but by its means he revealed their characters.

It was also a preparation of them for future service. He would lift them up from being servants to become rulers. They were, therefore, to be put in a place of measurable responsibility, and to be made men of thereby. They were to be rulers over a very little -- say a pound, and that which came of it, and this would be an education for them. In the process of trading they would be in training to rule. The best way to learn to be a master is to be first a servant, and the reason why some masters are hard and tyrannical is because they do not know the heart of a servant by experience. They know nothing of service, and so they have not the wisdom, and the generosity, and the tenderness, which masters should show towards servants. So this nobleman was wise, he was at the same time testing and training his men. Besides this, I think he was giving them a little anticipation of their future honors. He was about to make them rulers over cities, and so he first made them rulers over pounds. They had been servants, and taken orders from him every morning; but now they have no master to go to, and must use their own discretion. They were in effect, in a small sphere, made into little kings. In all that country the citizens had rebelled, but there was a little kingdom of the nobleman's own servants, and these obeyed him, and did their best to maintain his interest in their little way. They were already made free, placed in a measure of authority, and made to know the sweets and the burdens of personal responsibility. Oh, you that work for God, when you are

overseers of others for him, when you win souls for him, and when you conquer adversaries in his name you are already anticipating your eternal reward. We are fashioning our future position upon the anvil of our lives; for heaven, though it be a state and a place prepared for us by the Lord Jesus, lies also mainly in character. The man is more the source of joy than the streets of gold in which he will walk. If you hide your pound and neglect your Master's service here you are making for yourselves a dim and hazy future in that grand millennial reign of his. You that addict yourselves to your holy trade, and consecrate yourselves entirely to your Lord, shall have large honors when he comes to reign among his ancients gloriously.

For see, when he came to the man who had earned ten pounds, he gave him ten cities. Think of that! There is no proportion between the poor service and the rich reward. A pound is rewarded with a city. The rewards of the millennium will evidently be all of grace, because they are so incomparably beyond anything which the servants' earnings could have deserved. Their Lord was not bound to pay them anything: they were his bond-servants; but what he gave them was of his overflowing grace. I do not think that he who brought five pounds was in the least blamed. He may have been just as diligent as the other, but he had less capacity. But how he must have opened his eyes when his master gave him five cities. Perhaps he wondered more than the first. Fancy if any one of us had been put to trade with a pound upon commission, and had received five cities for reward. The money earned would not buy the smallest house, and yet it brings in to the worker five cities! What surprise filled the heart of the recipient of such bounty! It never entered into his heart to envy the brother who had ten cities, for the five were so vast a recompense. He must have been carried away with rapture with the prospect before him. Though there may be degrees of glory, the only difference will be in the capacity of the blessed to contain it. All the vessels will be full, but they will not be all equally large: the man of the ten pounds will simply be a larger vessel, full to the brim; and the man with the five will be less capacious, but quite as full, to his own glad amazement and joyful bewilderment. However, let us go in for winning the ten pounds if we can. For our Lord's sake let us trade in spiritual things with all our hearts.

"But," saith one, "where and what will these cities be?" It may be that all this will literally happen during the millennial period, but I do not know. When Christ shall come the dead in Christ will rise first, and we read that "the rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished." There may be space during that era for all the special rewards of the gospel dispensation. It may also be, but I do not know, and so I cannot tell you, that we are in future dispensations to fill unto other worlds much the same office as angels fill to ours. Jesus hath made us kings and priests, and we are in training for our thrones. What if in this congregation I am learning to proclaim my Master's glory to myriads of worlds! Possibly the preacher who is faithful here may yet be made to tell forth his Lord's glory to constellations at a time. What if one might stand upon a central star and preach Christ to worlds on worlds instead of preaching him to these two galleries and to this area! Why not? At any rate, if I should ever gain a voice loud enough to be heard for millions of miles, I would speak none other than those glorious truths which the Lord has revealed in Christ Jesus. If we are faithful here, we may expect our Master to entrust us with higher service hereafter; only let us see to it that we are able to endure the test, and that we profit by the training. As our account comes out in the very little, so will it be with us on the grand scale of eternity. This puts another face upon the work of this lower sphere. Rulers over ten cities! Rulers over five cities! Brothers, you are not fit for such dignities if you cannot serve your Lord well in this world with the little he has entrusted to you. If you live wholly to him here, you will be prepared for the glories unspeakable which await all consecrated souls. Let us go in for a devoted life at once! Time is so short, and the things we deal with are comparatively so small! We are soon coming out of the eggshell of time; and when we break loose into eternity, and see the vastness of the divine purposes, we shall be altogether amazed at the service bestowed, which will be the reward of service done. O Lord, make us faithful! Amen.

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## **The Shame And Spitting**

I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. - Isaiah 50:6

Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself or of some other? We cannot doubt but what Isaiah here wrote concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Is not this one of the prophecies to which our Lord Himself referred in the incident recorded in the eighteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel at the thirty-first verse? "Then he took unto him he twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge him and put him to death." Such a remarkable prophecy of scourging and spitting as this which is now before us must surely refer to the Lord Jesus; its highest fulfillment is assuredly found in Him alone.

Of whom else, let me ask, could you conceive the prophet to have spoken if you read the whole chapter? Of whom else could he say in the same breath, "I clothe the heavens with blackness and I make sackcloth their covering. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair" (vv. 3, 6). What a descent from the omnipotence which veils the heavens with clouds to the gracious condescension which does not veil its own face, but permits it to be spat upon! No other could thus have spoken of Himself but He who is both God and man. He must be divine: how else could He say, "Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness" (v. 2)? And yet he must at the same time be a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," for there is a strange depth of pathos in the words, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Whatever others may say, we believe that the speaker in this verse is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, the Son of God and the Son of man, our Redeemer. It is the Judge of Israel whom they have

smitten with a rod upon the cheek who here plaintively declares the griefs which He has undergone. We have before us the language of prophecy, but it is as accurate as though it had been written at the moment of the event. Isaiah might have been one of the Evangelists, so exactly does he describe what our Saviour endured.

I have already laid before you in the reading of the Scriptures some of the passages of the New Testament wherein the scourging and the shame of our Lord Jesus are described. We saw Him first at the tribunal of His own countrymen in Matthew 26, and we read, "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him: and others smote him with the palms of their hands." It was in the hall of the high priest, among His own countrymen, that first of all the shameful deeds of scorn were wrought upon Him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." His worst foes were they of His own household; they despised and abhorred Him, and would have none of Him. His own Father's husbandmen said among themselves—"This is the heir; let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." This was His treatment at the hand of the house of Israel.

The same treatment, or the like thereto, was accorded Him in Herod's palace, where the fingering shade of a Jewish royalty still existed. There what I might venture to call a pattern mixture of Jew and Gentile power held court, but our Lord fared no better in the united company. By the two combined the Lord was treated with equal derision (Luke 23:11). "Herod with his men of war set him at naught, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe."

Speedily came His third trial, and He was delivered altogether to the Gentiles. Then Pilate, the governor, gave Him up to the cruel process of scourging. Scourging as it has been practiced in the English army is atrocious, a barbarism which ought to make us blush for the past, and resolve to end it for the future. How is it that such a horror has been tolerated so long in a country where we are not all savages? But the lash is nothing among us compared with what it was among the Romans. I have heard that it was made of the sinews of oxen, and that in it were twisted the knucklebones of sheep, with slivers of bone, in order that every stroke might more effectually tear its way into the poor quivering flesh, which

was mangled by its awful strokes. Scourging was such a punishment that it was generally regarded as worse than death itself, and indeed, many perished while enduring it, or soon afterwards. Our blessed Redeemer gave His back to the smiters, and the plowers made deep furrows there. O spectacle of misery! How can we bear to look thereon? Nor was that all, for Pilate's soldier's, calling all the band together, as if there were not enough for mockery unless all were mustered, put Him to derision by a mock enthronement and a mimic coronations and when they had thus done they again buffeted and smote Him, and spat in His face. There was no kind of cruelty which their heartlessness could just then invent which they did not exercise upon His blessed Person: their brutal sport had full indulgence, for their innocent victim offered neither resistance nor remonstrance. This is His own record of His patient endurance. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

Behold your King! I bring Him forth to you this morning in spirit and cry, "Behold the Man!" Turn hither all your eyes and hearts and look upon the despised and rejected of men! Gaze reverently and lovingly, with awe for His sufferings and love for His Person. The sight demands adoration. I would remind you of that which Moses did when he saw the bush that burned and was not consumed—fit emblem of our Lord on fire with griefs and yet not destroyed; I bid you turn aside and see this great sight, but first attend to the mandate—"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." All round the cross the soil is sacred. Our suffering Lord has consecrated every place whereon He stood, and therefore our hearts must be filled with reverence while we linger under the shadow of His passion.

May the Holy Spirit help you to see Jesus in four lights at this time. In each view He is worthy of devout attention. Let us view Him first as the representative of God; secondly, as the substitute of His people, thirdly, as the servant of Jehovah; and fourthly, as the Comforter of his redeemed.

I. First, I invite you to gaze upon your despised and rejected Lord as THE REPRESENTATIVE OF GOD. In the Person of Christ Jesus, God Himself

came into the world, making a special visitation to Jerusalem and the Jewish people, but at the same time coming very near to all mankind. The Lord called to the people whom He had favored so long and whom He was intent to favor still. He says, in the second verse, "I came" and "I called." God did in very deed come down into the midst of mankind.

Be it noted, that when our Lord came into this world as the Representative of God, He came with all His divine power about Him. The chapter before us says, "Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness." The Son of God, when He was here, did not perform those exact miracles, because He was bent upon marvels of beneficence rather than of judgment. He did not repeat the plagues of Egypt, for He did not come to smite, but to save; but He did greater wonders and wrought miracles which ought far more powerfully to have won men's confidence in Him because they were full of goodness and mercy. He fed the hungry, He healed the sick, He raised the dead, and He cast out devils. He did equal marvels to those which were wrought in Egypt when the arm of the Lord was made bare in the eyes of all the people. It is true He did not change water into blood, but He turned water into wine. It is true He did not make their fish to stink, but by His word He caused the net to be filled even to bursting with great fishes. He did not break the whole staff of bread as He did in Egypt, but He multiplied loaves and fishes so that thousands of men and women and children were fed from His bounteous hand. He did not slay their first-born, but He restored the dead. I grant you that the glory of the Godhead was somewhat hidden in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, but it was still there, even as the glory was upon the face of Moses when he covered it with a veil. No essential attribute of God was absent in Christ, and every one might have been seen in Him if the people had not been willfully blind. He did the works of His Father, and those works bore witness of Him that He was come in His Father's name. Yes, God was personally in the world when Jesus walked the blessed fields of the Holy land, now, alas, laid under the curse for rejecting Him.

But when God thus came among, men He was unacknowledged. What saith the prophet? "Wherefore when I came was there no man? when I

called was there none to answer?" A few, taught by the Spirit of God, discerned Him and rejoiced; but they were so very few that we may say of the whole generation that they knew Him not. Those who had some dim idea of His excellence and majesty yet rejected Him. Herod, because he feared that He was King, sought to slay Him. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed. He was emphatically and beyond all others "despised and rejected of men." Though, as I have said, the Godhead in Him was but scantily veiled, and gleams of its glory burst forth ever and anon, yet still the people would have none of it, and the cry, "Away with him. away with him, let him be crucified," was the verdict of the age upon which He descended. He called and there was none to answer; He spread out His hands all the day long unto a rebellious people who utterly rejected Him.

Yet our Lord when He came into the world was admirably adapted to be the Representative of God, not only because He was God Himself, but because as man His whole human nature was consecrated to the work, and in Him was neither flaw nor spot. He was untouched by any motive other than the one desire of manifesting the Father and blessing the sons of men. Oh, beloved, there was never One who had His ear so near the mouth of God as Jesus had. His Father had no need to speak to Him in dreams and visions of the night, for when all His faculties were wide awake there was nothing in them to hinder His understanding the mind of God; and therefore every morning when His Father wakened Him He spoke into His ear. Jesus sat as a scholar at the Father's feet that He might learn first, and then teach. The things which He heard of the Father He made known unto men. He says that He spoke not His own words but the words of Him that sent Him, and He did not His own deeds, but "my Father," saith He, "that dwelleth in me, he doeth the work." Now, a man thus entirely agreeable to the mind and will of the great God was fitted to be the Representative of God. Both the alliance of His manhood with the Godhead and its perfect character qualified it to be the fittest dwelling of God among men. Yes, dear friends, our Saviour came in a way which should at once have commanded the reverent homage of all men. Even His great Father said, "They will reverence my Son." Enough of the Godhead was manifested to impress and no more,



lest it should alarm. With a soul of gentlest mold and a body like our own He was altogether adapted to be the Representative of God. His errand, too, was all gentleness and love, for He came to speak words in season to the weary, and to comfort those that were cast down: surely such an errand should have secured Him a welcome. His course and conduct were most conciliatory, for He went among the people, and ate with publicans and sinners; so gentle was He that He took little children in His arms, and blessed them; for this, if for nothing else, they ought to have welcomed Him right heartily and rejoiced at the sight of Him. Our text tells us how contrary was their conduct towards Him to that which He deserved instead of being welcomed He was scourged, and instead of being honored He was scorned. Cruelty smote His back and plucked off the hair from His face, while derision jeered at Him and cast its spittle upon Him. Shame and contempt were poured upon Him, though He was God Himself. That spectacle of Christ spat upon, and scourged represents what man virtually does to his God, what he would do to the Most High if he could. Hart well puts it -

See how the patient Jesus stands,  
Insulted in his lowest case!  
Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,  
And spit in their Creator's face.

When our parents broke the command of their Maker, obeying the advice of the devil rather than the Word of God, and preferring a poor apple to the divine favor, they did as it were spit into the face of God; and every sin committed since has been a repetition of the same contempt of the Eternal One. When a man will have his pleasure, even though it displeases God, he as good as declares that he despises God, prefers himself, and defies the wrath of the Most High. When a man acts contrary to the command of God he does as good as say to God, "This is better for me to do than what Thou bidst me do. Either Thou art mistaken, in thy prohibitions, or else Thou dost willfully deny me the highest pleasure, and I, being a better judge of my own interests than Thou art, snatch at the pleasure which Thou dost refuse me. I judge Thee either to be unwise or unkind." Every act of sin does despite to the sovereignty of God: it denies Him to be supreme and refuses Him obedience. Every act of sin

does dishonor to the love and wisdom of God, for it seems to say that it would have been greater love to have permitted us to do evil than to have commanded us to abstain from it. All sin is in many ways an insult to the majesty of the thrice Holy God, and He regards it as such.

Dear friends, this is especially the sin of those who have heard the gospel and yet reject the Saviour, for in their case the Lord has come to them in the most gracious form, and yet they have refused Him. The Lord might well say, "I have come to you to save you, and you will not regard me. I have come saying to you, 'Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth,' and you close your eyes in unbelief. I have come saying, 'Let us reason together: though your sins be as crimson, they shall be as wool,' but you will not be cleansed from your iniquity. I have come with the promise, 'All manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven unto men.' What is your reply?" In the case of many the answer is, "We prefer our own righteousness to the righteousness of God." If that is not casting spittle into the face of God I know not what is, for our righteousnesses are well described as "filthy rags," and we have the impudence to say that these are better than the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. Or if we do not say this when we reject the Saviour we tell Him that we do not want Him, for we do not need a Saviour: this is as good as to say that God has played the fool with the life and death of His own Son. What greater derision can be cast upon God than to consider the blood of atonement to be a superfluity? He who chooses sin sooner than repentance prefers to suffer the wrath of God rather than be holy and dwell in heaven forever. For the sake of a few paltry pleasures men forego the love of God, and are ready to run the risk of an eternity of divine wrath. They think so little of God that He is of no account with them at all. All this is in reality a scorning and despising of the Lord God, and is well set forth by the insults which were poured upon the Lord Jesus.

Woe's me that it should ever be so. My God! My God! To what a sinful race do I belong. Alas, that it should treat thine infinite goodness so spitefully! That Thou shouldst be rejected at all, but especially that Thou shouldst be rejected when dressed in robes of love and arrayed in gentleness and pity is horrible to think upon. Do you mean it, O men? Can you really mean it? Can you deride the Lord Jesus who died for men?

For which of His works do ye stone Him, when He lived only to do good? For which of His griefs do you refuse Him, when He died only that He might save? "He saved others, himself he cannot save," for He had so much love that He could spare Himself. I can understand your resisting the thunder of Jehovah's power, for I know your insanity; but can you resist the tenderness of Jehovah's love? If you do I must charge you with brutality, but therein I wrong the brutes, to whom such crimes are impossible. I may not even call this cruel scorning diabolical, for it is a sin which devils never did commit, perhaps would not have committed had it been possible to them. They have never trifled with a Redeemer, nor rejected the blood of the seed of Abraham. Shall the favored race spit upon its friend? God grant we may be brought to a better mind. But there is the picture before you. God Himself set at naught, despised, rejected, put to shame, perpetually dishonored in the Person of His dear Son. The sight should breed repentance in us. We should look to Him whom we have scourged, and mourn for Him. O Holy Spirit, work this tender grace in all our hearts.

II. And now, secondly, I want to set the Lord Jesus before you in another light, or rather beseech Him to shine in His own light before your eyes:—**AS THE SUBSTITUTE FOR HIS PEOPLE.** Recollect when our Lord Jesus Christ suffered thus it was not on His own account nor purely for the sake of His Father, but He "was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." There has risen up a modern idea which I cannot too much reprobate, that Christ made no atonement for our sin except upon the cross: whereas in this passage of Isaiah we are taught as plainly as possible that by His bruising and His stripes, as well as by His death, we are healed. Never divide between the life and the death of Christ. How could He have died if He had not lived? How could He suffer except while He lived? Death is not suffering, but the end of it. Guard also against the evil notion that you have nothing to do with the righteousness of Christ, for He could not have made an atonement by His blood if He had not been perfect in His life. He could not have been acceptable if He had not first been proven to be holy, harmless, and undefiled. The victim must be spotless, or it cannot be presented for sacrifice. Draw no nice lines and raise no quibbling questions, but look at

your Lord as He is and bow before Him.

Understand, my dear brothers and sisters, that Jesus took upon Himself our sin, and being found bearing that sin He had to be treated as sin should be treated. Now, of all the things that ever existed sin is the most shameful thing that can be. It deserves to be scourged, it deserves to be spit upon, it deserves to be crucified; and because our Lord had taken upon Himself our sin, therefore must He be put to shame, therefore must He be scourged. If you want to see what God thinks of sin, see His only Son spat upon by the soldiers when He was made sin for us. In God's sight sin is a shameful, horrible, loathsome, abominable thing, and when Jesus takes it He must be forsaken and given up to scorn. This sight will be the more wonderful to you when you recollect who it was that was spat upon, for if you and I, being sinners, were scourged, and smitten, and despised, there would be no wonder in it; but He who took our sin was God, before whom angels bow with reverent awe, and yet, seeing the sin was upon Him, He was made subject to the most intense degree of shame. Seeing that Jesus stood in our stead, it is written of the eternal Father that "He spared not his own Son." "It pleased the Father to bruise him: he hath put him to grief"; He made His soul an offering for sin. Yes, beloved, sin is condemned in the flesh and made to appear exceeding shameful when you recollect that, even though it was only laid on our blessed Lord by imputation, yet it threw Him into the very depths of shame and woe ere it could be removed.

Reflect, also, upon the voluntariness of all this. He willingly submitted to the endurance of suffering and scorn. It is said in the text, "He gave his back to the smiters." They did not seize and compel Him, or; if they did, yet they could nor have done it without His consent. He gave His back to the smiters He gave His cheek to those that plucked off the hair. He did not hide His face from shame and spitting: He did not seek in any way to escape from insults. It was the voluntariness of His grief which constituted in great measure the merit of it. That Christ should stand in our stead by force were a little thing, even had it been possible; but that He should stand there of His own free will, and that being there He should willingly be treated with derision, this is grace indeed. The Son of God was willingly made a curse for us, and at His own desire was made

subject to shame on our account. I do not know how you feel in listening to me, but while I am speaking I feel as if language ought scarcely to touch such a theme as this: it is too feeble for its task. I want you to get beyond my words if you can, and for yourselves meditate upon the fact that He who covers the heavens with blackness, yet did not cover His own face, and He who binds up the universe with the girdle which holds it in one, yet was bound and blindfolded by the men He had Himself made; He whose face is as the brightness of the sun that shineth in its strength was once spit upon. Surely we shall need faith in heaven to believe this wondrous fact. Can it have been true, that the glorious Son of God was jeered and jested at? I have often heard that there is no faith wanted in heaven, but I rather judge that we shall want as much faith to believe that these things were ever done as the patriarchs had to believe that they would be done. How shall I sit down and gaze upon Him and think that His dear face was once profaned with spittle? When all heaven shall lie prostrate at His feet in awful silence of adoration will it seem possible that once He was mocked? When angels and principalities, and powers shall all be roused to rapture of harmonious music in His praise, will it seem possible that once the most abject of men plucked out the hair? Will it not appear incredible that those sacred hands, which are "as gold rings set with the beryl," were once nailed to a gibbet, and that those cheeks which are "as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers," should have been battered and bruised? We shall be quite certain of the fact, and yet we shall never cease to wonder, that His side was gashed, and His face was spit upon? The sin of man in this instance will always amaze us. How could you commit this crime? Oh, ye sons of men, how could ye treat such an One with cruel scorn? O thou brazen thing called sin, thou hast, indeed, as the prophet saith, "a whores forehead"; thou hast a demons heart, hell burns within thee. Why couldst thou not spit upon earthly splendors? Why must heaven be thy scorn? Or if heaven, why not spit on angels! Was there no place for thy spittle but His face? His face! Woe is me! His face! Should such loveliness receive such shame as this? I could wish that man had never been created, or that being created, he had been swept into nothingness rather than have lived to commit such horror.

Yet, here is matter for our faith to rest upon, Beloved, trust yourselves in the hands of your great Substitute. Did He bear all this shame? Then

there must be more than enough merit and efficacy in this, which was the prelude of His precious death—and especially in His death itself—there must be merit sufficient to put away all transgression, iniquity, and sin. Our shame is ended, for He has borne it! Our punishment is removed: He has endured it all. Double for all our sins has our Redeemer paid. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, and let peace take full possession of thy weeping heart.

III. But time fails us, and therefore we will mention, next, the third light in which it is our desire to see the Saviour. Beloved, we desire to see the Lord Jesus Christ AS THE SERVANT OF GOD. He took upon Himself the form of a servant when He was made in the likeness of man. Observe how He performed this service right thoroughly, and remember we are to look upon this third picture as our copy, which is to be the guide of our life. I know that many of you are glad to call yourselves the servants of God; take not the name in vain. As Jesus was, so are you also in this world, and you are to seek to be like Him.

First, as a servant, Christ was personally prepared for service. He was thirty years and more here below, learning obedience in His Father's house, and the after years were spent in learning obedience by the things which He suffered. What a servant He was, for He never went about His own errands nor went by His own will, but He waited always upon His Father. He was in constant communication with heaven, both by day and by night. He says, "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." The blessed Lord or ever the day broke heard that gentle voice which called Him, and at its whisper He arose before the sunrise, and there the dawning found Him, on the mountain side, waiting upon God in wrestling prayer, taking His message from the Father that He might go and deliver it to the children of men. He loved man much, but He loved His Father more, and He never came to tell out the love of God without having as man received it fresh from the divine heart. He knew that His Father heard Him always, and He lived in the spirit of conscious acceptance. Have you ever noticed that sometimes a passage will begin, "At that time Jesus answered and said," and yet there is no notice that He had been speaking to anybody before, or that anybody had been speaking to Him? What He said was an answer to a voice which no

ear heard but His own, for He was always standing with opened ear, listening to the eternal voice. Such service did Jesus render, and you must render the same. You cannot do your Lord's will except you live near to Him. It is of no use trying to preach with power unless we get our message from our heavenly Father's own Self. I am sure you as hearers know the difference between a dead word which comes from a man's own brain and lip, and a living word which the preacher delivers fresh as the manna which fell from heaven. The word should come from the minister like bread hot from the oven, or better still, like a seed with life in it; not as a parched grain with the germ dead and killed, but as a living seed which roots itself in your souls, and springs up to a harvest. This made our Lord such a good servant that He listened to His Father's voice and yielded Himself to the Father's will to perfection.

Our text assures us that this service knew no reserve in its consecration. We generally draw back somewhere. I am ashamed to say it, but I mourn that I have done so. Many of us could give to Christ all our health and strength, and all the money we have, very heartily and cheerfully; but when it comes to a point of reputation we feel the pinch. To be slandered, to have some filthy thing said of you; this is too much for flesh and blood. You seem to say, "I cannot be made a fool of, I cannot bear to be regarded as a mere impostor"; but a true servant of Christ must make himself of no reputation when he takes upon himself the work of his Lord. Our blessed Master was willing to be scoffed at by the lewdest and lowest of men. The abjects jeered at Him; the reproach of them that reproached God fell upon Him. He became the song of the drunkard, and when the rough soldiery detained Him in the guard-room they heaped up their ridicule, as though He were not worthy of the name of man.

They bow their knees to me, and cry, "Hail, King":  
Whatever scoffs or scornfulness can bring,  
I am the floor. the sink, where they it fling:  
Was ever grief like mine?

The soldiers also spit upon that face  
Which angels did desire to have the grace  
And prophets once to see, but found no place:

Was ever grief like mine?

Herod and Pilate were the very dross of men, and yet He permitted them to judge Him. Their servants were vile fellows, and yet He resigned Himself to them. If He had breathed upon them with angry breath, He might have flashed devouring fire upon them, and burned them up as stubble; but His omnipotent patience restrained His indignation, and He remained as a sheep before her shearers. He allowed His own creatures to pluck His hair and spit in His face. Such patience should be yours as servants of God. We are to be willing to be made nothing of, and even to be counted as the offscouring of all things. It is pitiful for the Christian to refuse to suffer, and to become a fighting man, crying, "We must stand up for our rights." Did you ever see Jesus in that posture? There is a propensity in us to say, "I will have it out." Yes, but you cannot picture Jesus in that attitude. I defy a painter to depict Him so: it is somebody else, and not Christ. No! He said, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

There is something more here than perfect consecration in the mere form of it, for its heart and essence are manifest in an obedient delight in the will of the Father. The words seem to me to express alacrity. It is not said that He reluctantly permitted His enemies to pluck His hair, or smite His back, but it is written, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." He could not delight in it; how could He delight in suffering and shame? These things were even more repugnant to His sensitive nature than they can be to us; and yet, "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame." He was ready for this dreadful treatment, for He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" He was ready for the cup of gall, and willing to drink it to its dregs, though it was bitterness itself to Him. He gave His back to the smiters.

All this while—now follow me in this next point—there was no flinching in Him. They spat in His face, but what says He in the seventh verse. "I have set my face like a flint." If they are about to defile His face He is resolved to bear it; He girds up His loins and makes Himself more



determined. Oh, the bravery of our Master's silence! Cruelty and shame could not make Him speak. Have not your lips sometimes longed to speak out a denial and a defense? Have you not felt it wise to be quiet, but then the charge has been so excessively cruel, and it has stung you so terribly that you hungered to resent it. Base falsehoods aroused your indignation, and you felt you must speak and probably you did speak, though you tried to keep your lips as with a bridle while the wicked were before you. But our own beloved Lord in the omnipotence of His patience and love would not utter a word, but like a lamb at the slaughter He opened not His mouth. He witnessed a good confession by His matchless silence. Oh, how might—how gloriously mighty was His patience! We must copy it if we are to be His disciples. We, too, must set our faces like flints, to move or to sit still, according to the Father's will, to be silent or to speak, as most shall honor Him. "I have set my face like a flint," saith He, even though in another place He cries, "My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels."

And do you notice all the while the confidence and quiet of His spirit? He almost seems to say, "You may spit upon Me, but you cannot find fault with Me. You may pluck my hair, but you cannot impugn my integrity; you may lash my shoulders, but you cannot impute a fault to Me. Your false witnesses dare not look Me in the face: let Me know who is mine adversary, let him come near to Me. Behold, Adonai Jehovah will keep Me, who is he that shall condemn me! Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up." Be calm then, O true servant of God! In patience possess your soul. Serve God steadily and steadfastly though all men should belie you. Go to the bottom of the service, dive even to the very depth, and be content even to lie in Christ's grave, for you shall share in Christ's resurrection. Do not dream that the path to heaven is up the hill of honor, it winds down into the valley of humiliation. Imagine not that you can grow great eternally by being great here. You must become less, and less, and less, even though you should be despised and rejected of men, for this is the path to everlasting glory.

I have not time to expound the last two verses of the chapter, but they read you a noble lesson. "He gave his back to the smiters"; if, then, any of you walk in darkness and have no light, this is no new thing for a servant

of God. The chief of all servants persevered, though men despised Him. Follow Him, then. Stay yourselves upon God as He did, and look for a bright ending of your trials. He came out into the light ultimately, and there He sits in inconceivable splendor at His Father's right hand, and so shall all the faithful come out of the cloud and shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Only bear on with resolute patience, and glory shall be your reward, even as it is His.

IV. Lastly, I am to set Him forth in His fourth character, as THE COMFORTER OF HIS PEOPLE; but I must ask you to do this, while I just, as it were, make a charcoal sketch of the picture I would have painted.

Remember, first, our blessed Lord is well qualified to speak a word in season to him that is weary, because He Himself is lowly, and meek, and so accessible to us. When men are in low spirits they feel as if they could not take comfort from persons who are harsh and proud. The Comforter must come as a sufferer; He must come in a lowly broken spirit, if He would cheer the afflicted. You must not put on your best dress to go and visit the daughter of poverty, or go with your jewels about you to show how much better off you are than she. Sit down by the side of the downcast man and let him know that you are meek and lowly of heart. Your Master "gave his back to the smiters, and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair," and therefore He is the Comforter you want.

Remark not only His lowliness, but His sympathy. Are you full of aches and pains this morning? Jesus knows all about them, for He "gave his back to the smiters." Do you suffer from what is worse than pain, from scandal and slander? "He hid not his face from shame and spitting." Have you been ridiculed of late? Have the graceless made fun of your godliness? Jesus can sympathize with you, for you know what unholy mirth they made out of Him. In every pang that rends your heart your Lord has borne His share. Go and tell Him. Many will not understand you. You are a speckled bird, differing from all the rest, and they will all peck at you; but Jesus Christ knows this, for He was a speckled bird, too. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," but not separate from such as you. Get you to Him and He will sympathize with

you.

In addition to His gentle spirit and His power to sympathize, there is this to help to comfort us—namely, His example, for He can argue thus with you, "I gave my back to the smiters. Cannot you do the like? Shall the disciple be above his Master?" If I can but get on the doorstep of heaven and sit down in the meanest place there I shall feel I have an infinitely better position than I deserve, and shall I think of my dear, blessed Lord and Master giving His face to be spit upon, and then give myself airs, and say, "I cannot bear this scorn, I cannot bear this pain!" What, does the King pass over the brook Kedron, and must there be no brook Kedron for you? Does the Master bear the cross, and must your shoulders never be galled? Did they call the Master of the house "Beelzebub," and must they call you "Reverend Sir?" Did they laugh at Him, and scoff at Him, and must you be honored? Are you to be "gentleman" and "lady" where Christ was "that fellow"? For His birth they loaned Him a stable, and for His burial He borrowed a grave. O friends, let pride disappear, and let us count it our highest honor to be permitted to stoop as low as ever we can.

And, then, His example further comforts us by the fact that He was calm amid it all. Oh, the deep rest of the Saviour's heart! They set Him up upon that mock throne, but He did not answer with an angry word; they put a reed into His hand, but He did not change it to an iron rod, and break them like potters' vessels, as He might have done. There was no wincing and no pleading for mercy. Sighs of pain were forced from Him, and He said, "I thirst," for He was not a stoic; but there was no fear of man, or timorous shrinking of heart.

The King of Martyrs well deserves to wear the martyr's crown, for right royally did He endure: there was never a patience like to His. That is your copy, brother, that is your copy, sister—you must write very carefully to write as well as that. You had need your Master held your hand; in fact, whenever children in Christ's school do write according to His copy, it is always because He holds their hand by His Spirit.

Last of all, our Saviour's triumph is meant to be a stimulus and encouragement to us. He stands before us this morning as the Comforter

of His people. Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself lest ye be weary and faint in your minds; for though He was once abased and despised, yet now He sitteth at the right hand of God, and reigns over all things; and the day is coming when every knee shall bow before Him, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. They that spat upon Him will rue the day. Come hither, ye that derided Him! He has raised you from the dead, come hither and spit upon Him now! Ye that scourged Him, bring your rods, see what ye can do in this day of his glory! See, they fly before Him, they invoke the hills to shelter them, they ask the rocks to open and conceal them. Yet it is nothing but His face, that selfsame face they spat upon, which is making earth and heaven to flee away. Yea, all things flee before the majesty of his frown who once gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. Be like Him, then, ye who bear His name; trust Him, and live for Him, and you shall reign with Him in glory forever and ever. Amen.

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## **The Shameful Sufferer**

Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. - Hebrews 12:2

Oh what shall I do, my Saviour to praise?" Where shall language be found which shall describe his matchless, his unparalleled love towards the children of men. Upon any ordinary subject one may find liberty of speech and fullness of utterance, but this subject lies out of the line of all oratory, and eloquence cannot attain unto it. This is one of the unutterable things - unutterable, because it surpasses thought, and defies the power of words. How, then, can we deal with that which is unutterable? I am conscious that all I can say concerning the sufferings of Jesus, this morning, will be but as a drop of the bucket. None of us know

the half of the agony which he endured; none of us have ever fully comprehended the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Philosophers have probed the earth to its very center, threaded the spheres, measured the skies, weighed the hills - nay, weighed the world itself; but this is one of those vast, boundless things, which to measure doth surpass all but the Infinite itself. As the swallow but skimmeth the water, and diveth not into its depths, so all the descriptions of the preacher but skim the surface, while depths immeasurable must lie far beneath our observation. Well might a poet say

"O love, thou fathomless abyss!"

for this love of Christ is indeed measureless and fathomless. None of us can attain unto it. In speaking thereof we feel our own weakness, we cast ourselves upon the strength of the Spirit, but, even then, we feel that we can never attain unto the majesty of this subject. Before we can ever get a right idea of the love of Jesus, we must understand his previous glory in its height of majesty, and his incarnation upon the earth in all its depths of shame. Now, who can tell us the majesty of Christ? When he was enthroned in the highest heavens he was very God of very God; by him were the heavens made, and all the hosts thereof, by his power he hanged the earth upon nothing; his own almighty arm upheld the spheres; the pillars of the heavens rested upon him; the praises of angels, arch-angels, cherubim and seraphim, perpetually surrounded him; the full chorus of the Hallelujahs of the universe unceasingly flowed to the foot of his throne: he reigned supreme above all his creatures, God over all, blessed for ever. Who can tell his height, then? And yet this must be attained before we can measure the length of that mighty stoop which he took when he came to earth to redeem our souls. And who, on the other hand, can tell how low he descended? To be a man was something, but to be a man of sorrows was far more; to bleed, and die, and suffer, these were much for him who was the Son of God; but to suffer as he did - such unparalleled agony - to endure, as he did, a death of shame and a death of desertion of his God, this is a lower depth of condescending love which the most inspired mind must utterly fail to fathom. And yet must we first understand infinite height, and then, infinite depth; we must measure, in fact, the whole infinite that is between heaven and hell, before we can

understand the love of Jesus Christ.

Yet because we cannot understand shall we therefore neglect, and because we cannot measure shall we therefore despise? Ah! no; let us go to Calvary this morning, and see this great sight. Jesus Christ, for the joy that was set before him, enduring the cross, despising the shame.

I shall endeavor to show you, first, the shameful sufferer; secondly, we shall endeavor to dwell upon his glorious motive; and then in the third place, we shall offer him to you as an admirable example.

I. Beloved, I wish to show you the SHAMEFUL SUFFERER. The text speaks of shame, and therefore before entering upon suffering, I shall endeavor to say a word or two upon the shame.

Perhaps there is nothing which men so much abhor as shame. We find that death itself has often been preferable in the minds of men to shame; and even the most wicked and callous-hearted have dreaded the shame and contempt of their fellow-creatures far more than any tortures to which they could have been exposed. We find Abimelech, a man who murdered his own brethren without compunction; we find even him overcome by shame, when "a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to break his skull. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died." Shame was too much for him. He would far rather meet the suicide's death - for such it was - than he should be convicted of the shame of being slain by a woman. So was it with Saul also - a man who was not ashamed of breaking his oath, and of hunting his own son-in-law like a partridge upon the mountains - even he fell upon his own sword rather than it should be said of him that he fell by the Philistines. And we read of an ancient king, Zedekiah, that albeit he seemed reckless enough, he was afraid to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, lest the Jews who had fallen away to Nebuchadnezzar should make a mock of him.

These instances are but a few of many. It is well known that criminals and

malefactors have often had a greater fear of public contempt than of ought else. Nothing can so break down the human spirit as to be subject continually to contempt, the visible and manifest contempt of one's fellows; in fact to go further, shame is so frightful to man that it is one of the ingredients of hell itself; it is one of the bitterest drops in that awful cup of misery. The shame of everlasting contempt to which wicked men awake in the day of their resurrection; to be despised of men, despised of angels, despised of God, is one of the depths of hell. Shame, then, is a terrible thing to endure; and many of the proudest natures have been subdued when once they have been subjected to it. In the Saviour's case, shame would be peculiarly shameful; the nobler a man's nature, the more readily does he perceive the slightest contempt, and the more acutely does he feel it. That contempt which an ordinary man might bear without a suffering, he who has been bred to be obeyed, and who has all his life-long been honored, would feel most bitterly. Beggared princes and despised monarchs are among the most miserable of men; but here was our glorious Redeemer, in whose face was the nobility of Godhead itself, despised and spit upon, and mocked. Ye may, therefore, think how such a noble nature as his had to endure. The mere kite can bear to be mewed, but the eagle cannot bear to be hoodwinked and blindfolded; he hath a nobler spirit than that. The eye that hath faced the sun, cannot endure darkness without a tear. But Christ who was more than noble, matchlessly noble, something more than of a royal race, for him to be shamed, and mocked, must have been dreadful indeed.

Besides some minds are of such a delicate and sensitive disposition that they feel things far more than others. There are some of us who do not so readily perceive an affront, or when we do perceive it, are totally indifferent to it. But there are others of a loving and tender heart; they have so long wept for others' woes, that their hearts have become tender, and they therefore feel the slightest brush of ingratitude from those they love, and if those for whom they are willing to suffer should utter words of blasphemy and rebuke against them, their souls would be pierced to the very quick. A man in armor would walk through thorns and briars without feeling, but a man who is naked feels the smallest of the thorns; now Christ was so to speak a naked spirit, he had stripped himself of all for manhood; he said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have

nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head." He stripped himself of everything that could make him callous, for he loved with all his soul; his strong passionate heart was fixed upon the welfare of the human race; he loved them even unto death, and to be mocked by those for whom he died, to be spit upon by the creatures whom he came to save, to come unto his own, and to find that his own received him not, but actually cast him out, this was pain indeed. Ye tender hearts can weep for others' woes, and ye that love with a love as strong as death, and with a jealousy as cruel as the grave, ye can guess, but only you, what the Saviour must have endured, when all did mock him, all did scorn him, and he found none to pity, none to take his part.

To go back to the point with which we started - shame is peculiarly abhorrent to manhood, and far more to such a manhood as that which Christ carried about with him - a noble, sensitive, loving nature, such as no other manhood had ever possessed.

And now come and let us behold the pitiful spectacle of Jesus put to shame. He was put to shame in three ways - by shameful accusation, shameful mockery, and shameful crucifixion.

1. And, first, behold the Saviour's shame in his shameful accusation. He in whom was no sin, and who had done no ill, was charged with sin of the blackest kind. He was first arraigned before the Sanhedrim on no less a charge than that of blasphemy. And could he blaspheme? - he who said "It is my meat and my drink to do the will of him that sent me." Could he blaspheme? He who in the depths of his agony, when he sweat as it were great drops of blood at last cried, "My Father, not my will, but thine be done," - could he blaspheme? No. And it is just because it was so contrary to his character, that he felt the accusation. To charge some of you here present with having blasphemed God, would not startle you, for ye have done it, and have done it so often as almost to forget that God abhors blasphemers, and that he "will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." But for one who loved as Jesus loved, and obeyed as he obeyed, for him to be charged with blasphemy, the accusation must have caused him peculiar suffering. We wonder that he did not fall to the ground, even as his betrayers did when they came to lay hold upon him. Such an



accusation as that might blight an angel's spirit. Such a calumny might wither the courage of a cherub. Marvel not, then, that Jesus felt the shame of being accused of such a crime as this.

Nor did this content them. Having charged him with breaking the first table, they then charged him with violating the second: they said he was guilty of sedition; they declared that he was a traitor to the government of Caesar, that he stirred up the people, declaring that he himself was a king. And could he commit treason? he who said "my kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight;" he who when they would have taken him by force, to make him a king withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed - could he commit treason? It were impossible. Did he not pay tribute, and sent to the fish, when his poverty had not wherewith to pay the tax. Could he commit treason? He could not sin against Caesar, for he was Caesar's lord; he was King of kings, and Lord of lords. If he had chosen he could have taken the purple from the shoulders of Caesar and at a word have given Caesar to be a prey to the worms. He commit treason? 'Twas far enough from Jesus, the gentle and the mild to stir up sedition or set man against man. Ah no, he was a lover of his country, and a lover of his race; he would never provoke a civil war, and yet this charge was brought against him. What would you think good citizens and good Christians, if you were charged with such a crime as this, with the clamours of your own people behind you crying out against you as so execrable an offender that you must die the death. Would not that abash you? Ah! but your Master had to endure this as well as the other. He despised the shameful indictments, and was numbered with the transgressors.

2. But next, Christ not only endured shameful accusation but he endured shameful mocking. When Christ was taken away to Herod, Herod set him at nought. The original word signifies made nothing of him. It is an amazing thing to find that man should make nothing of the Sun of God, who is all in all. He had made himself nothing, he had declared that he was a worm, and no man; but what a sin was that, and what a shame was that when Herod made him nothing! He had but to look Herod in the face, and he could have withered him with one glance of his fire-darting eyes. But yet Herod may meek him, and Jesus will not speak, and men of

arms may come about him, and break their cruel jests upon his tender heart, but not a word has he to say, but "is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and like a sheep before her shearers is dumb."

You will observe that in Christ's mocking, from Herod's own hall, on to the time when he was taken from Pilate's hall of judgment to his crucifixion, and then onward to his death, the mockers were of many kinds. In the first place they mocked the Saviour's person. One of those things about which we may say but little, but of which we ought often to think, is the fact that our Saviour was stripped in the midst of a ribald soldiery, of all the garments that he had. It is a shame even for us to speak of this which was done by our own flesh and blood toward him who was our Redeemer. Those holy limbs which were the casket of the precious jewel of his soul were exposed to the shame and open contempt of men-coarse-minded men who were utterly destitute of every particle of delicacy. The person of Christ was stripped twice; and although our painters, for obvious reasons, cover Christ upon the cross, there he hung - the naked Saviour of a naked race. He who clothed the lilies had not wherewith to clothe himself; he who had clothed the earth with jewels and made for it robes of emeralds, had not so much as a rag to conceal his nakedness from a staring, gazing, mocking, hard-hearted crowd. He had made coats of skins for Adam and Eve when they were naked in the garden; he had taken from them those poor fig leaves with which they sought to hide their nakedness, given them something wherewith they might wrap themselves from the cold; but now they part his garments among them, and for his vesture do they cast lots, while he himself, exposed to the pitiless storm of contempt, hath no cloak with which to cover his shame. They mocked his person, - Jesus Christ declared himself to be the Son of God; - they mocked his divine person as well as his human - when he hung upon the cross, they said. "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross, and we will believe on thee." Frequently they challenge him to prove his divinity by turning aside from the work which he had undertaken. They asked him to do the very thing which would have disproved his divinity, in order that they might then, as they declared, acknowledge and confess that he was the Son of God. And now can you think of it? Christ was mocked as man, we can conceive him as yielding to this. But to be mocked as God! A challenge thrown to

manhood, manhood would easily take up and fight the duel. Christian manhood would allow the gauntlet to lie there, or tread it beneath its foot in contempt, bearing all things, and enduring all things for Christ's sake. But can you think of God being challenged by his creature - the eternal Jehovah provoked by the creature which his own hated hath made; the Infinite despised by the finite; he who fills all things, by whom all things exist, laughed at, mocked, despised by the creature of an hour, who is crushed before the moth! This was contempt indeed, a contempt of his complex person, of his manhood, and of his divinity.

But note next, they mocked all his offices, as well as his person. Christ was a king, and never such a king as he. He is Israel's David; all the hearts of his people are knit unto him. He is Israel's Solomon; he shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. He was one of royal race. We have some called kings on earth, children of Nimrod, these are called kings, but kings they are not. They borrow their dignity of him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. But here was one of the true blood, one of the right royal race, who had lost his way, and was mingled with the common herd of men. What did they do? Did they bring crowns with which to honor him, and did the nobility of earth cast their robes beneath his feet to carpet his footsteps. See, what they do? He is delivered up to rough and brutal soldiery. They find for him a mimic throne, and having put him on it, they strip him of his own robes, and find some old soldier's cloak of scarlet or of purple, and put it about his loins. They plait a crown of thorns, and put it about his brow - a brow that was of old bedight with stars, and then they fix in his hand - a hand that will not resent an insult, a sceptre of reed, and then bowing the knee, they pay their mimic homage before him, making him a May-day king. Now, perhaps there is nothing so heartrending as royalty despised. You have read the story of an English king, who was taken out by his cruel enemies to a ditch. They seated him on an ant-hill, telling him that was his throne, and then they washed his face in the filthiest puddle they could find; and the tears running down his cheeks, he said, "he should yet be washed in clean water;" though he was bitterly mistaken. But think of the King of kings and Lord of lords, having for his adoration the spittle of guilty mouths, for homage the smittings of filthy hands, for tribute the jests of brutal tongues! Was ever shame like thine, thou King of kings, thou

emperor of all worlds, flouted by the soldiery, and smitten by their menial hands? O earth! how couldst thou endure this iniquity. O ye heavens! why did ye not fall in very indignation to crush the men who thus blasphemed your Maker? Here was a shame indeed, - the king mocked by his own subjects.

He was a prophet, too, as we all know, and what did they that they might mock him as a prophet? Why they blindfolded him; shut out the light of heaven from his eyes, and then they smote him, and did buffet him with their hands, and they said, "Prophecy unto us who it is that smote thee." The prophet must make a prophecy to those who taunted him to tell them who it was that smote him. We love prophets; it is but the nature of mankind, that if we believe in a prophet we should love him. We believe that Jesus was the first and the last of prophets; by him all others are sent; we bow before him with reverential adoration. We count it to be our highest honor to sit at his feet like Mary; we only wish that we might have the comfort to wash his feet with our tears, and wipe them with the hairs of our head we feel that like John the Baptist, his shoe latchet we are not worthy to unloose and can we therefore bear the spectacle of Jesus the prophet, blindfolded and buffeted with insult and blows?

But they also mocked his priesthood, Jesus Christ had come into the world to be a priest to offer sacrifice, and his priesthood must be mocked too. All salvation lay in the hands of the priests, and now they say unto him, "It thou be the Christ save thyself and us," Ah! he saved others, himself he could not save. But oh, what mystery of scorn is here, what unutterable depths of shame that the great High Priest of our profession, he who is himself the Paschal Lamb, the altar, the priest, the sacrifice, that he, the Son of God incarnate, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, should thus be despised, and thus be mocked.

He was mocked, still further, in his sufferings. I cannot venture to describe the sufferings of our Saviour under the lash of the scourge. St. Bernard, and many of the early fathers of the Church, give such a picture of Christ's scourging, that I could not endure to tell it over again. Whether they had sufficient data for what they say, I do not know; but this much I know, - "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our

iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." I know it must have been a terrible scourging, to be called wounding, bruising, chastisement, and stripes; and, remember, that every time the lash fell on his shoulders, the laugh of him who used the lash was mingled with the stripe, and every time the blood poured out afresh, and the flesh was torn off his bones, there was a jest and a jeer, to make his pain yet more poignant and terrible. And when he came at last to his cross, and they nailed him upon it, how they continued the mockery of his sufferings! We are told that the high priests and the scribes stood, and at length sat and watched him there. When they saw his head fall upon his breast, they would, no doubt, make some bitter remark about it, and say, "Ah! he will never lift his head again among the multitude;" and when they saw his hands bleeding they would say, "Ha, ha, these were the hands that touched the lepers, and that raised the dead, they will never do this again;" and when they saw his feet, they would say, "Ah, those feet will never tread this land again, and journey on his pilgrimages of mercy;" and then some coarse, some villainous, some brutal, perhaps some beastly jest would be made concerning every part of his thrice-adorable person. They mocked him, and, at last, he called for drink, and they gave him vinegar - mocking his thirst, while they pretended to allay it.

But worst of all, I have one more thing to notice, they mocked his prayers. Did you ever read in all the annals of executions, or of murders, that ever men mocked their fellow-creatures prayers? I have read stories of some dastardly villains who have sought to slay their enemies, and seeing their death approaching the victims have said, "give me a moment or two for prayer" - and rare has been the cases when this has been disallowed. But I never read of a case in which when the prayer was uttered it has been laughed at, and made the object of a jest. But here hangs the Saviour, and every word he speaks becomes the subject of a pun, the motto of a jest. And when at the last he utters the most thrilling death-shriek that ever startled earth and hell, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," even then they must pun upon it, and say, "he calleth for Elias, let us see whether Elias will come and take him down." He was mocked even in his prayer. O Jesus! never was love like thine; never patience that could be compared with thy endurance when thou didst endure the cross, despising the

shame.

I feel that in thus describing the Saviour's mockeries, I have not been able to set before you the fullness of the shame through which he passed, and shall have to attempt it yet, again, in another moment, when I come to describe his shameful death, taking the words which preceded the ones I have already enlarged upon. He endured the cross just as he did despise the shame.

The cross! the cross! When you hear that word it wakens in your hearts no thoughts of shame. There are other forms of capital punishment in the present day far more disgraceful than the cross. Connected with the guillotine there is much with the block as much, with the gallows, most of all. But, remember, that although to speak of the gallows is to utter a word of ignominy, yet there is nothing of shame in the term "gallows," compared with the shame of the cross, as it was understood in the days of Christ. We are told that crucifixion was a punishment to which none could be put but a slave, and, even then, the crime must have been of the most frightful character - such as the betrayal of a master, the plotting his death, or murdering him - only such offenses would have brought crucifixion, even, upon a slave. It was looked upon as the most terrible and frightful of all punishments. All the deaths in the world are preferable to this; they have all some slight alleviating circumstance, either their rapidity or their glory. But this is the death of a villain, of a murderer, of an assassin, - a death painfully protracted, one which cannot be equalled in all inventions of human cruelty, for suffering and ignominy. Christ himself endured this. The cross, I say, is in this day no theme of shame. It has been the crest of many a monarch, the banner of many a conqueror. To some it is an object of adoration. The finest engravings, the most wonderful paintings, have been dedicated to this subject. And now, the cross engraven on many a gem has become a right, royal, and noble thing. And we are unable at this day, I believe, fully to understand the shame of the cross; but the Jew knew it, the Roman knew it, and Christ knew what a frightful thing, what a shameful thing it was to be put to the death of crucifixion.

Remember, too, that in the Saviour's case, there were special

aggravations of this shame. He had to carry his own cross; he was crucified, too, at the common place of execution, Calvary, analogous to our ancient Tyburn, or our present Old Bailey. He was put to death, too, at a time when Jerusalem was full of people. It was at the feast of the Passover, when the crowd had greatly increased, and when the representatives of all nations would be present to behold the spectacle. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Greece, ay, and perhaps far-off Tarshish, and the islands of the sea. All were there to unite in this scoffing, and to increase the shame. And he was crucified between two thieves, as if to teach that he was viler than they. Was ever shame like this?

Let me conduct you to the cross. The cross, the cross! Tears begin to flow at the very thoughts of it. The rough wood is laid upon the ground, Christ is flung upon his back, four soldiers seize his hands and feet, his blessed flesh his rent with the accursed iron; he begins to bleed, he is lifted into mid-air, the cross is dashed into the place prepared for it, every limb is dislocated, every bone put out of joint by that terrific jerk; he hangs there naked to his shame, gazed upon by all beholders, the sun shines hot upon him, fever begins to burn, the tongue is dried up like a potsherd, it cleaveth to the roof of his mouth, he hath not wherewith to nourish nature with moisture. His body has been long emaciated by fasting, he has been brought near the brink of death by flagellation in the hall of Pilate. There he hangs, the tenderest part of his body, his hands and feet are pierced, and where the nerves are most numerous and tender, there is the iron rending and tearing its fearful way. The weight of his body drags the iron up his foot, and when his knees are so weary that they cannot hold him, then the iron begins to drag through his hands. Terrible spectacle indeed! But you have seen only the outward, there was an inward, you cannot see that: if you could see, it though your eyes were like the angels, you would be smitten with eternal blindness. Then there was the soul. The soul dying. Can you guess what must be the pangs of a soul dying? A soul never died on earth yet. Hell is the place of dying souls, where they die everlastingly the second death. And there was within the ribs of Christ's body, hell itself poured out. Christ's soul was enduring the conflict with all the powers of hell, whose malice was aggravated by the fact, that it was the last battle they should ever be able to fight with him.

Nay, worse than that. He had lost that which is the martyr's strength and shield, he had lost the presence of his God, God himself was putting his hand upon him; it pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief, he hath made his soul a sacrifice for sin. God, in whose countenance Christ had everlastingly seemed himself, basking in delight, concealed his face. And there was Jesus forsaken of God and man, left alone to tread the winepress, nay, to be trodden in the wine-press, and dip his vesture in his own blood. Oh, was there ever grief like this! No love can picture it. If I had a thought in my heart concerning the suffering of Christ, it should excoriate my lips ere I uttered it. The agonies of Jesus were like the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, heated seven times hotter than ever human suffering was heated before. Every vein was a road for the hot feet of pain to travel in; every nerve a string in a harp of agony that thrilled with the discordant wail of hell. All the agonies that the damned themselves can endure were thrust into the soul of Christ. He was a target for the arrows of the Almighty, arrows dipped in the poison of our sin; all the billows of the Eternal dashed upon this rock of our salvation. He must be bruised, trodden, crushed, destroyed, his soul must be exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.

But I must pause, I cannot describe it. I can creep over it, and you can too. The rocks rent when Jesus died, our hearts must be made of harder marble than the rocks themselves if they do not feel. The temple rent its gorgeous veil of tapestry, and will not ye be mourners too? The sun itself had one big tear in its own burning eye, which quenched its light; and shall not we weep; we for whom the Saviour died? Shall not we feel an agony of heart that he should thus have endured for us?

Mark, my friends, that all the shame that came on Christ he despised. He counted it so light compared with the joy which was set before him, that he is said to have despised it. As for his sufferings, he could not despise them, that word could not be used in connection with the cross for the cross was too awful for even Christ himself to despise. That he endured; the shame he could cast off, but the cross he must carry, and to it he must be nailed. "He endured the cross, despising the shame."

II. And now HIS GLORIOUS MOTIVE. What was that which made Jesus



Speak like this? - "For the joy that was set before him." Beloved, what was the joy? Oh, 'tis a thought must melt a rock, and make a heart of iron move; that the joy which was set before Jesus, was principally joy of saving you and me. I know it was the joy of fulfilling his Father's will - of sitting down on his Father's throne - of being made perfect through suffering; but still I know that this is the grand, great motive of the Saviour's suffering, the joy of saving us. Do you know what the joy is of doing good to others? If you do not I pity you, for of all joys which God has left in this poor wilderness, this is one of the sweetest. Have you seen the hungry when they have wanted bread for many an hour, - have you seen them come to your house almost naked, their clothes having been thrust away that they might get money upon them to find them bread? Have you heard the woman's story of the griefs of her husband? Have you listened when you have heard the tale of imprisonment, of sickness, of cold, or hunger, of thirst, and have you never said, "I will clothe you, I will feed you." Have you never felt that joy divine, when your gold has been given to the poor, and your silver has been dedicated to the Lord, when you bestowed it upon the hungry, and you have gone aside and said, "God forbid that I should be self-righteous;" but I do feel it is worth living for to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and to do good to my poor suffering fellow creatures. Now, this is the joy which Christ felt, it was the joy of feeding us with the bread of heaven - the joy of clothing poor, naked sinners in his own righteousness - the joy of finding mansions in heaven for homeless souls, - of delivering us from the prison of hell, and giving us the eternal enjoyments of heaven.

But why should Christ look on us? Why should he choose to do this to us? Oh my friends, we never deserved anything at his hands. As a good old writer says "When I look at the crucifixion of Christ, I recollect that my sins put him to death. I see not Pilate, but I see myself in Pilate's place, bartering Christ for honor. I hear not the cry of the Jews, but I hear my sins yelling out, 'Crucify, him, crucify him.' I see not iron nails, but I see my own iniquities fastening him to the cross. I see no spear, but I behold my unbelief piercing his poor wounded side,

'For you, my sins, my cruel sins, his chief tormentors were;  
Each of my sins became a nail, and unbelief the spear.'"

It is the opinion of the Romanist, that the very man who pierced Christ's side was afterwards converted, and became a follower of Jesus. I do not know whether that is the fact, but I know it is the case spiritually. I know that we have pierced the Saviour, I know that we have crucified him; and yet, strange to say, the blood which we fetched from those holy veins has washed us from our sins, and hath made us accepted in the beloved. Can you understand this. Here is manhood mocking the Saviour, parading him through the streets, nailing him to a cross, and then sitting down to mock at his agonies. And yet what is there in the heart of Jesus but love to them? He is weeping all this while that they should crucify him, not so much because he felt the suffering, though that was much, but because he could bear the thought that men whom he loved could nail him to the tree. "That was the unkindest stab of all." You remember that remarkable story of Julius Caesar, when he was struck by his friend Brutus. "When the noble Caesar saw him stab, ingratitude, more strong than traitor's arms, quite vanquished him! Then burst his mighty heart." Now Jesus had to endure the stab in his inmost bowels, and to know that his elect did it - that his redeemed did it, that his own church was his murderer - that his own people nailed him to the tree? Can you think, beloved, how strong must have been the love that made him submit even to this. Picture yourself to-day going home from this hall. You have an enemy who all his life long has been your enemy. His father was your enemy, and he is your enemy too. There is never a day passes but you try to win his friendship; but he spits upon your kindness, and curses your name. He does injury to your friends, and there is not a stone he leaves unturned to do you plumage. As you are going home to-day, you see a house on fire; the flames are raging, and the smoke is ascending up in one black column to heaven. Crowds gather in the street, and you are told there is a man in the upper chamber who must be burnt to death. No one can save him. You say, "Why that is my enemy's house;" and you see him at the window. It is your own enemy - the very man; he is about to be burnt. Full of lovingkindness, you say, "I will save that man if I can." He sees you approach the house; he puts his head from the window and curses you. "An everlasting blast upon you!" he says; "I would rather perish than that you should save me." Do you imagine yourself then, dashing through the smoke, and climbing the blazing staircase to save

him; and can you conceive that when you get near him he struggles with you, and tries to roll you in the flames? Can you conceive your love to be so potent, that you can perish in the flames rather than leave him to be burned? You say, "I could not do it; it is above flesh and blood to do it." But Jesus did it. We hated him, we despised him, and, when he came to save us, we rejected him. When his Holy Spirit comes into our hearts to strive with us, we resist him; but he will save us; nay, he himself braved the fire that he might snatch us as brands from eternal burning. The joy of Jesus was the joy of saving sinners. The great motive, then, with Christ, in enduring all this, was, that he might save us.

III. And now, give me just a moment, and I will try and hold the Saviour up for OUR IMITATION. I speak now to Christians - to those who have tasted and handled of the good word of life. Christian men! if Christ endured all this, merely for the joy of saving you, will you be ashamed of bearing anything for Christ? The words are on my lips again this morning, -

"If on my face for thy dear name, shame and reproach shall be,  
I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame, my Lord, I'll die for thee."

Oh! I do not wonder that the martyrs died for such a Christ as this! When the love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts, then we feel that if the stake were present we would stand firmly in the fire to suffer for him who died for us. I know our poor unbelieving hearts would soon begin to quail at the crackling faggot and the furious heat. But surely this love would prevail over all our unbelief: Are there any of you who feel that if you follow Christ you must lose by it, lose your station, or lose your reputation? Will you be laughed at, if you leave the world and follow Jesus? Oh! and will you turn aside because of these little things when he would not turn aside, though all the world mocked him, till he could say "It is finished." No, by the grace of God, let every Christian lift his hands to the Most High God, to the maker of heaven and earth, and let him say within himself,

"Now for the love I bear his name, what was my gain I count my loss,  
I pour contempt on all my shame, and nail my glory to his cross."

"For me to live is Christ; to die is gain," Living I will be his, dying I will be his; I will live to his honor, serve him wholly, if he will help me, and if he needs, I will die for his name's sake.

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## **Sharing Christ's Life**

Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also. - John 14:19

This was, and is, the mark of the true believer, that he see Jesus. When Jesus was here among men, the world saw him in a certain sense, but yet in truth it did not see him at all. The world's eye saw the outside of Christ—the flesh of the man Christ, but the true Christ the ungodly eye could not discern. They could not perceive those wonderful attributes of character, those delightful graces and charms, which made up the true spiritual Christ. They saw but the husk, and not the kernel; they saw the quartz of the golden nugget, but not the pure gold which that quartz contained. They saw but the external man; the real, spiritual Christ they could not see. But unto as many as God had chosen, Christ manifested himself as he did not unto the world. There were some to whom he said, "The world seeth me not, but ye see me." Some there were whose eyes were anointed with the heavenly eye-salve, so that they saw in the "the man Christ Jesus," the God, the glorious Saviour, the King of kings, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

The blind world said of him that he was a root out of a dry ground, and

when they saw him there was no beauty in him that they should desire him; he was despised and rejected of men. But these men saw him as God over all blessed for ever, descending to tabernacle among men, and to take upon himself man's imperfect nature, that so he might redeem him from all iniquity and save him.

Now, to this hour, this is the mark of the true Christian: this is to be of the elect: this is the very badge and symbol of the faithful—they see Jesus. They look beyond the clouds. Other men see the cloud and the darkness, and they wist not what it is; but these men with more than eagle eye pierce through the clouds of mere sensual impressions, and they see the glory that was always his, even the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Beloved, have you ever seen Jesus with the eye of faith? Have you ever perceived the glory of his person, and the beauty of his character? Have you so perceived Jesus as to trust in him? Have you been so enamoured of him as to have yielded yourselves to be his servants for ever? Do you take up his cross? Do you avow yourselves to be his followers, come what may? If so, then are ye saved; but if ye see not Christ with your spirit, neither do ye know him, nor shall ye enjoy a portion with him.

Blessed be God, there is this to be said, that he who has once seen Christ shall always see him. The eye may sometimes gather dimness, but the light shall yet return. Where Christ hath opened a blind eye, blindness comes not back again. He take the cataract totally away. He does not give a transient gleam of spiritual sight, and then permit the soul to go back into the darkness of its grave; but the sight which he gives is the sight of things eternal, a sight which shall strengthen and grow until at the last, when death shall take away every barrier which parts us from the unseen world, we shall know even as we are know, and see even as we are seen. To see Jesus! 'Tis heaven begun! And heaven consummated is but to see Jesus, no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face—still it is to see Jesus, to behold the King in his beauty. This, I say, is the sum and substance of life eternal, and it is true life here below.

And now our Lord, speaking of those who had seen him, seen him truly and in spiritual recognition, talks to them concerning life. Sometimes it is

ours to speak to you of death, not necessarily with gloom, for it is to the Christian illuminated with rays of heavenly light; but here and now we desire to speak of life, the best and divinest life; we will forget the raven with its dusky wing, and see only the tender, gentle dove, bearing for each one of us the olive-branch of peace and victory.

We shall speak of life—life of the highest possible degree: not the life which gladdens our eyes in the sunlight when we behold the flowers of the field opening their cups: this is vegetable life. Nor the life of the young lambs as they frisk, and caper, and dance for very gladness in the spring sunbeams. This is but animal life. Nor even the life that enables men to think and speak upon common themes of interest, and perform the ordinary duties of their different calling: this is but mental and social life. We reach to something higher still—spiritual life, life in Christ Jesus; a life twice created; a life which is grafted, and is an advance upon the first life which we have when we are born, surpassing far the life of the flesh, because that shall by-and-bye expire; but this is a life which springs from incorruptible seed, and which liveth and abideth for ever.

The text, in talking to us about life, gives us, first the assurance that Jesus lives; it promises us that his people shall live; and it clearly states that there is a link of connection between the two things—that because Jesus lives, his people shall live also. First, then:—

## I. JESUS LIVES.

He always lived. There never was a time when he was not. "Before the hills were brought forth I was there," saith he. The eternal Wisdom of God is from everlasting. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was with God. The same was in the beginning with God." The life, however, which we think is intended in the text, is not his divine life, his life as Deity, but his life as man, his life as Mediator between God and man. In that life he lives. We needed not to be assured of his divine life: but seeing that, as a Mediator he died, it was necessary to assure us that as a Mediator he descended into the tomb; it is well for us to be assured that as a Mediator he rose again from his grave, and now lives at the right hand of the Father, no more to bleed and die.

Jesus Christ at this time lives in his proper manhood. He lives as to his soul: his human soul is as it was on earth. He lives as to his human body. He is a man before the throne; and I have no doubt that he wears the symbol, of course, mightily glorified, of his sufferings.

"Looks like a Lamb that had been slain.  
And wears his priesthood still."

That very Christ, who did once as a babe lie upon his mother's breast, and who afterwards trod the waves of Gennesaret: who, after his resurrection, ate a piece of broiled fish and of honeycomb—that very Christ is now before the eternal throne. In very soul and body the man Christ Jesus is there. He lives.

He lives a real life. We are so very apt to mystify and becloud everything, and to suppose that Christ lives by his influence only, or lives by his Spirit. Brethren, he lives, the very man that died, as surely as he bled upon the tree, and in his own proper person, from five actual wounds poured out the warm life-torrents of his heart, so surely does he actually live at this present moment in the midst of unnumbered hearts that sound his praise—the delightful object of the vision of the myriads of spirits who continually adore him. He actually lives; he really and truly lives, as he lived here below.

He lives, also, actively—not in some wondrous sleep of quiet and sacred repose. He is as busy now as he was when here. He proposed to himself when he went away a certain work. "I go to prepare a place for you," said he. He is preparing that place for us still. He intercedes, also, daily for his people. Oh! if your faith is strong enough, even now you can see him distinctly standing before the throne of God, pleading his glorious merits. I think I see him now as clearly as ever the Jews saw Aaron when he stood with his breast-plate on before the mercy-seat, for remember, the Jew never did see Aaron at all there, for the curtain was dropped, and Aaron was within the veil, and therefore, the Jew could only see him in his fancy. But I say I see him as clearly as that, for I see my Lord, not by fancy, but by faith. There, where the veil is rent, so that he is not hidden

from my soul's gaze. I see him with my name and yours upon his breast, pleading before God.

Why, gaze awhile and you may think you see him now. Just as the Jew saw Aaron, waving the censer, standing between the living and the dead, and staying the plague, even so is Christ standing at this hour between the living and the dead, and so moving the whole Deity to spare the guilty yet a little longer, whilst he makes intercession for them that they may live. And then comes his higher intercession for them that they may live. And then comes his higher intercession for his elect, of whom he says, "I pray for them; I pray not for the world." He lives, then, an actual life, of which you and I reap the daily fruits. Not a life of slumber and stillness, but an active, busy life, by which he continually dispenses gifts to us.

For this reason it is well to remind you, that, therefore, Jesus can only live as a man in one place. When we speak of Christ being found in every assembly of his people, we understand that of his presence in his Godhead and by his Holy Spirit, who rules on earth in this dispensation of the Spirit. But the man Christ can be but in one place, and he is now at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is absurd, it is horrible both to faith and to reason, to say the Christ's body is eaten, and that his blood is drunk in tens of thousands of places wherever priests choose to offer what they call "the mass." A "mass" of profanity, indeed, it is! Our Lord Jesus Christ, as to his real, positive, corporeal presence, is not here. As to his flesh and his blood, he is not, and cannot be, here. He will be here one day, when he shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God, but in his real person, he is now where his saints are—before the throne, whence by-and-bye he will descend. Meanwhile, his spiritual presence is our joy and our gladness, but his corporeal presence—a doctrine which our faith grasps and lays hold of—his corporeal presence is before the throne of God, and there he lives in proper flesh and blood as the Son of Man.

Brethren and sisters, listen to a brief sketch of the biography of Christ's life in glory. When the holy women and godly men wrapped him in spices, and laid him in the tomb, Jesus was dead. There for parts of three days and nights he tarried. He saw no corruption, but yet he was in the



place of corruption. No worm could assail that holy thing which no sin had tainted, and yet he laid in the place where death seemed sovereign. A while he slept, and the Church mourned, but blessed was the day when, at the first rosy dawn of the light, the Saviour rose.

Then could he say, "I live." His body, instinct with life, rose from its slumber, and began at once to put off the grave-clothes. He unwound the winding-sheets and the fine white linen, and laid them carefully down, and left them there, for you and me, that we might have our bed well sheeted when we come to lie in it at the last.

As for the napkin, he unwound it, and laid it by itself, as though that were for us who are living, to wipe our eyes when our dear ones are taken away, since we have no cause to sorrow as they do who have no hope. And when this was done, an angel rolled away the stone, and forth came the Saviour—glorious, no doubt, but so much like other men that Mary "supposed him to have been the gardener," so that there could have been no very supernatural splendour surrounding his person. He revealed himself to many of his disciples—sometimes to as many as five hundred at once. He ate with them; he drank with them; he was a man among men with them, till, when forty days had passed, he gathered them all at Olivet, the mountain from which he had so often addressed them, and took his final leave. While he was blessing them, his hands outstretched in benediction, a cloud received him out of their sight. And since then he hath sat down at the right hand of God, expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. He is tarrying there yet a little while longer. When the fulness of time shall come—if I may go on with his biography—he will come again. "This same Jesus," said the angels, "which is taken up from you heaven, shall so come in a like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." He will, therefore, come in proper person a second time, without a sin offering, unto salvation. Then will he gather his saints together who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice. Then shall they reign with him. Then shall the earth be covered with his glory. All nations shall bow before him, and all people shall call him blessed. And then shall come the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all. But Christ shall still live, for he hath received a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, without beginning of days, or

end of years—a priest for ever. When suns and moons shall grow dim with age, and the round world shall all dissolve, like the morning hoarfrost, and time shall be rolled up like a vesture, and all the ages shall have been trodden out like sparks beneath the foot of the Eternal God, then shall Jesus Christ live on still, world without end. Thus have we spoken concerning Christ as living. But now, in the next place:—

## II. LIFE IS PROMISED TO CHRIST'S PEOPLE.

This does not mean their natural existence. That they have received from Adam, and, through their sin, it has become a curse to them, rather than a blessing. Should they remain unpardoned, the fact of continued existence will become to them the dreadful of calamities, since it must be an existence in God's holy abhorrence of sin for ever; driven from every glimpse or hope of forgiveness.

The life which comes to us through Christ is of this sort—I trust you know it in your own hearts—it is life spiritual, given to us in regeneration. When the Holy Spirit quickens a dead soul, that dead soul then receives the life of Christ. No man is alive unto God spiritually, except through Christ. Because Christ lives, we live. When a dead soul gets into living contact with the living Saviour by the power of the Spirit, then it is that spiritual life begins. The very first evidence of spiritual life is trusting in Jesus, which shows that the first symptom is alliance to Christ, the cause of the life must be somewhere here, namely, union with Christ. One of the very first outward signs is prayer—prayer to Christ, and that, again, rises from the fact that Christ gives us of his life, and then that life goes back again to him. Brethren, if you seek the life of other souls, and desire to see them brought to God, preach Christ to them. Do you not see, "Because I live, ye shall live"? Then no sinner ever will live spiritually apart from Christ. Though you and I cannot quicken them, yet we can preach the gospel to them, and faith cometh by hearing, and where faith is, there life is. It is no use trying to raise the dead by preaching the law to them. That is only covering them up fairly with a lie in their right hand; but preach of dying love and of rising power, to tell of pardons bought with blood, and to declare that Christ died a substitute for sinners—this is the hopeful way of bringing life to the dead. IT is by such instrumentality

that souls are brought to life eternal. Because Christ is alive, his elect in due time receive spiritual life by the power of the Holy Spirit, and, although once they were dead in sin, they begin to live unto righteousness.

Further, this spiritual life is preserved in us by Christ still living. "Because I continue to live, ye shall continue to live also." The text clearly means that: it bears that paraphrase. Oh! dear friends! when we once get spiritual life into us, what a thousand enemies there are who try to put it out! Many and many a time has it seemed to go hard with my soul as to whether I really had a spark of life within my spirit. Temptation after temptation have I endured until it appeared as if I must yield my hold on Christ and give up my hope. There has been conflict upon conflict, and struggle upon struggle, until at last the enemy has got his foot upon the neck, and my whole being has trembled, and had it not been for Christ's promise, "Because I live, ye shall live also," it might have gone harder with me, and I might have despaired, and given up all hope, and laid down to die. The assurance, then, that the spiritual life of the Christian must be maintained because Christ lives, was the only power to get me the victory. Let it teach us, then, this practical lesson. Whenever our spiritual life is very weak, and we want it to grow stronger, let us get to the living Christ for the supply of his strength. When you feel you are ready to die spiritually, go to the Saviour for revived life. The text is like a hand that points us to the storehouse. You who are in the desert, there is a secret spring under your feet, and you know not where it is; this is the mysterious finger which points you to the spot. Contemplate Christ; believe in Christ; draw yourselves by faith nearer and nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ, and so shall your life receive a divine impetus which it has not known for many a day. "Because I live, ye shall live also."

And further, brethren, we get from Christ an educated life. Any man may be spiritually alive, and yet he may not know much about the higher life. There is in spiritual life a scale of degree. One man is just alive unto God; another man may be vigorous; another may be rapturously consecrated. I hope you and I will anxiously desire to get the highest form of spiritual life that is known. We do not wish to be beggars in the kingdom of Christ, but, if we can, to take our place in the House of Peers, to be princes

through Jesus Christ. We need not be poor; Christ is willing to enrich us. We are not straitened in him; we are straitened in ourselves. Now, Christ gives the promise, "Because I live," saith he, "the highest life, far above all principalities and powers, ye shall live also this higher life with me." You may have it; you may obtain it, but brethren, if you want to get it, never go to Moses for it; never go to yourselves for it. Do not seek to school yourselves by rules, and regulations, and resolutions, or by a morbid asceticism, such as some men delight in; but go the living Saviour, and in the living liberty which you will enjoy in communion with him, your soul will take unto itself wings, and mount into a clearer atmosphere: your spirit will be braced to a higher degree of robust devotion: you will draw nearer to heaven, because you have got nearer to Christ, who is the Lord of heaven. "Because I live, ye shall have life: ye shall have that life continued, and ye shall have that life yet more abundantly: I am come, not only that ye may have life, but more abundantly." There are your Master's words; plead them before your Master's throne.

And now, brethren, we will go a little further. We will suppose that you are well acquainted with these forms of life, and now there comes a jerk, as it were. You are travelling along the iron road of the railway, and there comes a sudden jerk, and you stop. What is it? It is the thought of death. Well, but Jesus tells us here that that is of no consequence. It is an item in the great world of life that to you who are in him is scarcely worth consideration, because the text over-rides that, and swallows it up, as it is written "death is swallowed up in victory": it is made as though it did not exist. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Your continued life of happiness, of holiness, of spirituality, of consecration, and of obedience—which, indeed is your only life worth having—is guaranteed to you in the text. Death cannot interfere with it, not even by the space of a single second—nay, I tell you not even by the space of the ticking of a clock. What, a Christian die? "Because I live, ye shall live also," is never suspended. There is not time for it to be suspended in. Do you know what death really is? Does it take long to die? I have heard of men who have been said to be weeks in dying. Not so; they were weeks living; the dying occupied no space; that was done at once, and immediately. And so with the believer. To him death is so slight a jerk that he still keeps on upon the same line. He still lives, only there is this difference, that it is as though the railway

had hitherto been running through a tunnel, and he now comes out of it into the open plain. His life below was the train in the tunnel, but when he dies, as we call it, there is a jerk, and then it comes right out of the tunnel into the fair, open, champaign country of heaven, where all is clear and bright, where all the birds are singing, and the darkness is over, and the mist and fogs are gone, and his soul is for ever blessed. "Because I live a life that cannot be suspended," Christ seems to say, "ye shall live also." At the bottom of every man's heart there is, I suppose, a fear of ceasing to be. Some infidels seem to find comfort in the thought of being annihilated, but that thought is, perhaps, the most abhorrent that ever crossed the human mind. There is a something which makes us hope we are, and shrink with loathing from the idea of being annihilated. Now, at that point comes in our text, and it says, "What! Annihilated! You who believe in Jesus cannot be: you shall live also, live with that higher life which you have received—a life of beauty, a life of excellence, of holiness, and of God-likeness: that new life implanted within you shall never be suspended." Nay, never by the space of a single tick, for "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Further, brethren, our text is such a wide one that we have a hold of the fact that we are to continue to live as to our spirits and our souls. The text beneath its sheltering wings, like a hen gathering her brood, gathers many precious truths, and the next one is that this very body of ours is to live, too. It must take its time for that. It must abide in the earth, whereon it has dwelt. It is so decreed that there it should lie, unless Christ should come before that time. But concerning this very body, there is no decree of annihilation. It will smoulder away. It may be taken up by the spade of the careless sexton, and scattered to the winds of heaven may all the atoms of the body be. But there is a life-germ within it which no human power can destroy, and over which the divine eye perpetually watches; and when that mysterious and long-expects sound of the angelic trump shall ring o'er land and sea, through heaven and earth, and the graves shall all be opened, then shall my soul find my body yet again—fashioned after a more beautiful form; more fit for the spirit than aforesaid; more elastic; altogether free from weakness; no longer such as shall be subject to pain, to sickness, to accident, to decay, to ultimate corruption; but a spiritual body, raised in power, in glory, and in immortality; not raised in

the likeness of the first Adam in the garden, but in the likeness of the second Adam in the everlasting Paradise of God. Courage, my eyes, courage! Ye shall be closed for a while, but ye shall not be so for ever, for ye, even ye, shall strike the strings of those celestial harps that pour forth his praise. Courage, all ye members of my body, which have been sanctified to be members of Christ, and made to be parts of the Holy Spirit's temple! Ye shall all take your part in the grand triumphal entry of Christ, when he shall descend to take possession of his kingdom. "Though worms destroy this body yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall behold for myself, and not another." So go to thy bed in the earth, poor body, and sleep there awhile. Bathe thyself like her who bathed herself in spices to make herself ready for the King, so go and get thyself prepared to meet thy Lord. Put off thy word-day dress, and put on thy Sabbath garments, thy bridal array, and then shalt thou come to the King and see him in his beauty, and crown him with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the days of his espousals. Yea, because he lives in the body which he bore, his body shall live again, also.

And so, beloved, the text amounts to this, that in body and soul, the Christian shall be immortal, like his Master. When our reign on earth—whether it shall last a thousand years, or a thousand ages—(we know not what the Word of God intends)—but when that glorified state on earth, which I do most assuredly believe in, shall be over, and it shall be said:—

"Now Jehovah's banner's furled,  
Sheathed his sword because 'tis done";

when the drama of the mediatorial reign shall all be closed, and we shall dwell under the immediate sovereignty of God once again, then, beloved, every believer shall be with Christ, eternally glorified, for here stand the irrevocable decree and the divine mandate of creation's Lord, who is also the redeeming Lamb, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Reel, ye pillars of earth! Be shaken, ye arches of the starry heavens! Pass away, O Time, and you ye rolling worlds, dissolve into your native nothingness! But the believer must live on, because Jesus lives, and until the Lord's Christ can bow his head, till he who hath immortality can expire, till God himself can cease to be, no soul that believed in Jesus can lose the life

incorruptible which God's own Spirit hath put within it.

I want to sing, brethren, rather than to talk with you. These are words and thoughts fit for some ancient bard, or for the spirit of some inspired prophet sent from heaven. I do but lisp where even seraphs might find their loudest songs fail in the them. Let your hearts mount! Let your souls exult! Let your spirits be glad! Do you

"Long for evening to undress,  
That you may rest with God,"

and enter into his heaven? Long for the evening of death, when your toil shall be over, and the hour of your bliss shall have come. I shall have no time, I fear, for the third and last point, and, therefore, must only give a few hints of what I would have said.

### III. THIS LIFE IS LINKED WITH CHRIST'S LIFE.

Immortal, all glorious, promised to true believers, it is bound up with the life of our immortal Lord. Why is this? First, because Christ leads a justified life. I scarcely know how to express my meaning. You understand that so long as Jesus was here he lay under the charge of our sins. Whilst he was in the world, his Father had made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all. But when he died, his death discharged all the liabilities of his elect. The handwriting of ordinances that was against us was then taken away. When he went to Calvary as our Surety, the sins of all his people were his debts: he had taken them upon himself. But when he rose from the dead in the garden that first Easter morning he had no debts of ours: he had no longer any substitutional engagement or liability. All the debts which he had taken upon himself as our Redeemer he had fully and completely discharged. No officer can arrest a man for debt who has none, and Christ now lives, therefore, as a justified person. And, brethren, no officer of justice can arrest any of the people for whom Christ paid their debts. How, then, shall death have any dominion over those whose debts are all discharged? How shall they be laid in prison for whom Christ was laid in prison? How shall they suffer death, which is the penalty of sin, for whom Christ has already suffered all the penalties

which just ice could have demanded? Because he lives the life of one who has discharged the debts of his people, they must, in justice, live.

Secondly, Christ lives a representative life. He is no longer Christ for himself. As the Member of Parliament represents a town, so Jesus Christ represents all the people who are in him, and as long as he lives they live. He is their Covenant Head. As long as Adam stands, his race shall stand; when Adam falls, the human race falls. While, therefore, Christ lives, the Christly ones, who are in him, live through his representation.

In the next place, Christ lives a perfect life. Perhaps you do not see how this is a link between his living and your living, but it is, because we are a part of Christ. According to the Word of Scripture, every believer is a member of Christ's body. Now, a man who lives perfectly has not lost his finger, of his arm, or his hand. A man may be alive with many of his limbs taken away, but you can scarcely call him a perfect-living man. But I cannot imagine a maimed Christ. I have never been able to conceive in my soul, of Christ lacking any of his members. Such a thing was never seen on earth. The barbarous cruelty of the Jews could not effect that, and, by the Providence of God, Pilate's officers were not permitted to cause such a thing. "Not a bone of him shall be broken," was the ancient prophecy. They brake the legs of the first and second thief, but when they came to the matchless Lord they saw he was already dead, so they brake not his legs. Even in his earthly body, which was the type of his spiritual body, he must suffer no maiming injury. Therefore, my brethren, because Christ lives as a perfect Christ, everyone that is one with him must live also.

Then, fourthly, Christ lives a blessed life—a life of perfect blessedness, and, therefore, we must live also. "Why?" say you. Why, look you: there is a mother here. She is alive: she is in good health, but she is not perfectly happy, for she is a Rachel weeping for her children, and will not be comforted, because they are not. Time will heal her wounds, it is true: for the most affectionate heart cannot be always mourning; but our Lord Jesus Christ in that infinitely affectionate heart of his would not only mourn over one of his children if lost, but he would mourn for ever over it. I cannot conceive of Christ being happy and losing one of his dear



children. I cannot conceive Christ to be personally blessed, and yet on of the members of his own person cast into the "outer darkness." Because he lives in perfect happiness, I conceive that all who are dear to him will be round about him. It shall not be said that he lost one of them, nor shall one of the family be missing, but:—

"All the chosen seed  
Shall meet around the throne,  
To bless the conduct of his grace,  
And make his wonders known."

And, lastly, Christ leads a triumphant life, and, therefore, ye shall live also. You say again, "How is that?" Why, brethren, the triumph of Christ concerns us. This is the triumph of Christ, "Of all those whom thou hast given me, I have lost none" Now, suppose there to be heard a whisper from the infernal pit, "aha! Aha! Thou liest! There is one here whom the Father gave thee, but who thou didst lose"—why, Christ would never be able to speak again by way of triumph! He could never boast any more. Then might he put down his crown. If it were but to happen in that one case, at any rate, the enemy would have got the advantage over him, and he would not have been the Conqueror all along the line. But, glory be to God! he who trod the winepress with none for his assistant, came forth out of the crimson conflict, having smitten all his foes, and won a complete victory. There shall not be in the whole campaign a single point over which Satan shall be able to boast.

Christ has brought many sons to glory as the Captain of their salvation, and never yet has he failed, and he never shall in any point, neither the least nor the greatest, neither the strongest nor the weakest. This is essential, dear friends. It is essential to the acclamations of heaven, that every soul that believes in Jesus should live for ever. It is essential to the everlasting harmony and to the joy of Christ throughout Eternity, that all who trust in him should be preserved and kept safe, even until the end. Therefore, says the text, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

So I leave this truth with you, only praying that those who have no part in this matter may seek Christ at this very time, and be led by the Spirit to

cry mightily to him, and his promise is, "They that seek me early shall find me." Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found, call ye upon him whilst he is near."

God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **The Sheep And Their Shepherd**

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. - John 10:27

Christians are here compared to sheep. Not a very flattering comparison you may say; but then we do not wish to be flattered, nor would our Lord deem it good to flatter us, While far from flattering, it is, however, eminently consoling, for of all creatures there are not any more compassed about with infirmity than sheep. In this frailty of their nature they are a fit emblem of ourselves; at least, of so many of us as have believed in Jesus and become his disciples. Let others boast how strong they are; yet if there be strong ones anywhere, certainly we are weak. We have proved our weakness, and day by day we lament it. We do confess our weakness; yet may we not repine at it, for, as Paul said, so we find, when we are weak then are we strong. Sheep have many wants, yet they are very helpless, and quite unable to provide for themselves. But for the shepherd's cure they would soon perish. This, too, is our case. Our spiritual needs are numerous and pressing, Yet we cannot supply any of them. We are travelers through a wilderness that yields us neither food nor water. Unless our bread drop down from heaven, and our water flow out of the living rock, we must die. Our weakness and our want we keenly feel: still we have no cause to murmur, since the Lord knows our poor estate, and succours us with the tenderest care. Sheep, too, are silly creatures, and in this respect likewise we are very sheepish. We meekly own it to him who is ready to guide us. We say, as David said, "O God, thou knowest my foolishness;" and he says to us as he said to David, "I

will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go." If Christ were not our wisdom, we should soon fall a prey to the destroyer. Every grain of true wisdom that we possess we have derived from him; of ourselves we are dull and giddy; folly is bound up in our heart. The more conscious you are, dear brethren, of your own deficiencies, your lack of stamina, discretion, sagacity, and all the instincts of self-preservation, the more delighted you will be to see that the Lord accepts you under these conditions, and calls you the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. He discerns you as you are, claims you as his own, foresees all the ills to which you are exposed, yet tends you as his flock, sets store by every lamb of the fold, and so feeds you according to the integrity of his heart, and guides you by the skilfulness of his hands. "I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God." Oh, what sweet music there is to us in the name which is given to our Lord Jesus Christ of "the good Shepherd"! It not only describes the office he holds, but it sets forth the sympathy he feels, the aptness he shows, and the responsibility he bears to promote our well-being. What if the sheep be weak, yet is the shepherd strong to guard his flock from the prowling wolf or the roaring lion. If the sheep suffer privation because the soil is barren, yet is the shepherd able to lead them into pasturage suitable for them. If they be foolish, yet he goes before them, cheers them with his voice, and rules them with the rod of his command. There cannot be a flock without a shepherd; neither is there a shepherd truly without a flock. The two must go together. They are the fullness of each other. As the church is the fullness of him that filleth all in all, so we rejoice to remember that "of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." That I am like a sheep is a sorry reflection; but that I have a shepherd charms away the sorrow and creates a new joy. It even becomes a gladsome thing to be weak, that I may rely on his strength; to be full of wants, that I may draw from his fullness; to be shallow and often at my wit's end, that I may be always regulated by his wisdom. Even so doth my shame redound to his praise. Not to you, ye great and mighty, who lift your heads high, and claim for yourselves honor: not for you is peace, not to you is rest; but unto you, ye lowly ones, who delight in the valley of humiliation, and feel yourselves to be taken down in your own esteem—to you it is that the Shepherd becomes dear; and to you will he give to lie down in green pastures beside the still waters.

In a very simple way, we shall speak about the proprietor of the sheep. "My sheep," says Christ. Then, we shall have a little to say about the marks of the sheep. After that I propose to talk awhile about the privileges of the sheep. "I know my sheep:" they are privileged to be known of Christ. "My sheep hear my voice."

I. Who is the proprietor of the sheep? They are all Christ's. "My sheep hear my voice." How came the saints to be Christ's?

They are his, first of all, because he chose them. Ere the worlds were made, out of all the rest of mankind he selected them. He knew the race would fall, and become unworthy of the faculties with which he endowed them, and the inheritance he had assigned them. To him belonged the sovereign prerogative that he might have mercy on whom he would have mercy; and he, out of his own absolute will, and according to the counsel of his own good pleasure, made choice severally and individually of certain persons, and he said, "These are mine." Their names were written in his book: they became his portion and his heritage. Having chosen them of old so many ages ago, rest assured he will not lose them now. Men prize that which they have long had. If there is a thing that was mine but yesterday, and it is lost today, I might not fret about it; but if I have long possessed it, and called it my patrimony, I would not willingly part with it. Sheep of Christ, ye shall be his for ever, because ye have been his from ever. They are Christ's sheep, because his Father gave them to him. They were the gift of the Father to Christ. He often speaks of them in this way. "As many as thou hast given me:" "Thou hast given them me," saith he, over and over again. Of old, the Father gave his people to Christ. Separating them from among men, he presented them to him as a gift, committed them into his hand as a trust, and ordained them for him as the lot of his inheritance. Thus they become a token of the Father's love to his only begotten Son, a proof of the confidence he reposed in him, and a pledge of the honor that shall be done unto him. Now, I suppose we most of us know how to value a gift for the donor's sake. If presented to us by one whom we love, we set great store by it. If it has been designed to be a love-token, it awakens in our minds many sweet memories. Though the intrinsic worth may be of small account, the associations make it

exceedingly precious. We might be content to lose something of far greater value in itself rather than that which is the gift of a friend, the offering of his love I like the delicate sentiment of the poet, as it is expressed in that pretty verse -

"I never cast a flower away,  
The gift of one who cared for me;  
A little flower—a faded flower,  
But it was done reluctantly."

Yet, oh, how weak the words of human passion! but, oh, how strong the expressions of divine ardor, when Jesus speaks to the Father of "the men whom thou gavest me out of the world"! "Thine they were," he says, "and thou gavest them me; and those that thou gavest me I have kept." Ye sheep of Christ, rest safely; let not your soul be disturbed with fear. The Father gave you to his Son, and he will not lightly lose what God himself has given him. The infernal lions shall not rend the meanest lamb that is a love-token from the Father to his best Beloved. While Christ stands defending his own, he will protect them from the lion and the bear, that would take the lambs of his flock; he will not suffer the least of them to perish.

"My sheep," says Christ. They are his, furthermore, because, in addition to his choice and to the gift, he has bought them with a price. They had sold themselves for nought; but he has redeemed them, not with corruptible things as with silver and gold, but with his precious blood. A man always esteems that to be exceedingly valuable which he procured with risk—with risk of life and limb. David felt he could not drink the water that the brave warriors who broke through the host of the Philistines brought to him from the well at Bethlehem, because it seemed to him as though it were the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives; and he poured it out before the Lord. It was too precious a draught for him, when men's lives had been hazarded for it. But the good Shepherd not only hazarded his life, but even laid it down for his sheep. Jacob exceedingly valued one part of his possessions, and he gave it to Joseph: he gave him one portion above his brethren. Now, you may be sure he would give, Joseph that which he thought most precious. But why

did he give him that particular portion? Because, he says, "I took it out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow." Now, our blessed Shepherd esteems his sheep because they cost him his blood. They cost him his blood—I may say, he took them out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and with his bow in bloody conflict, where he was victor, but yet was slain. There is not one sheep of all his flock but what he can see the mark of his blood on him. In the face of every saint the Savior sees, as in a glass, the memorial of his bloody sweat in Gethsemane, and his agonies at Golgotha. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." That stands as a call to duty, but it is at the same time a consolation, for if he has bought me, he will have me. Bought with such a price, he will not like to lose me, nor suffer any foe to take me out of his hand. Think not that Christ will suffer those to perish for whom he died. To me the very suggestion seems to draw near to the verge of blasphemy. If he has bought me with his blood, I cannot conceive he cares nothing for me, will take no further concern about me, or will suffer my soul to be cast into the pit. If he has suffered in my stead, where is justice gone that the substitute should bear my guilt, and I should bear it too? and where is mercy fled, that God should execute twice the punishment for one offense! Nay, beloved, those whom he hath bought with blood are his, and he will keep them.

"My sheep," says Christ. They are his, or in due time they shall become so, through his capturing them by sacred power. As well by power are we redeemed as by price, for the blood-bought sheep had gone astray even as others. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way," but, my brethren, the good shepherd has brought many of us back with infinite condescension: with boundless mercy he followed us when we went astray. Oh, what blind slaves we were when we sported with death! We did not know then what his love had ordained for us: it never entered our poor, silly heads that there was a crown for us; we did not know that the Father's love had settled itself on us, or ever the day-star knew its place. We know it now, and it is he that has taught us; for he followed us over mountains of vanity, through bogs and miry places of foul transgression; tracked our devious footsteps on and on, through youth and manhood, till at last, with mighty grace, he grasped us in his arms and laid us on his shoulder, and is this day carrying us home to the

great fold above, rejoicing as he bears all our weight and finds us in all we need. Oh, that blessed work of effectual grace! He has made us his own, he has defeated the enemy, the prey has been taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive has been delivered. "He hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron asunder," to set his people free. "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

"My SHEEP," saith Christ, as he stands in the midst of his disciples. "My Shepherd," let us one and all reply. All the sheep of Christ who have been redeemed by his power, become his by their own willing and cheerful surrender of themselves to him. We would not belong to another if we might; nor would we wish to belong to ourselves if we could; nor, I trust, do we want any part of ourselves to be our own property. Judge ye whether this be true of you or not. In that day when I surrendered my soul to my Savior, I gave him my body, my soul, my spirit; I gave him all I had, and all I shall have for time and for eternity. I gave him all my talents, my powers, my faculties, my eyes, my ears, my limbs, my emotions, my judgment, my whole manhood, and all that could come of it, whatever fresh capacity or new capability I may be endowed with. Were I at this good hour to change the note of gladness for one of sadness, it should be to wail out my penitent confession of the times and circumstances in which I have failed to observe the strict and unwavering allegiance I owe to my Lord. So far from regretting, I would fain renew my vows and make them over again. In this I think every Christian would join.

"'Tis done!  
the great transaction's done:  
I am my Lord's, and he is mine:  
He drew me, and I follow'd on,  
Charm'd to confess the voice divine.

Now rest, my long-divided heart;  
Fix'd on this blissful center, rest:  
With ashes who would grudge to part,  
When call'd on angels' bread to feast?

High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,  
That vow renew'd shall daily hear:  
Till in life's latest hour I bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear."

And yet, brethren, though our hearts may now be all in a glow, lest they should presently grow cold, or the bleak atmosphere of this evil world should chill our devotion, let us never cease to think of the good Shepherd in that great, good act, which most of all showed his love when he laid down his life for the sheep. You have heard the story told by Francis de Sales. He saw a girl carrying a pail of water on her head, in the midst of which she had placed a piece of wood. On asking her why she did this, she told him it was to prevent the motion of the water, for fear it might be spilt. And so, said he, let us place the cross of Christ in the midst of our hearts to check the movement of our affections, that they may not be spilt in restless cares or grievous troubles.

"My sheep," says Christ, and thus he describes his people. They are Christ's, his own, a peculiar property. May I hope that this truth will be henceforth treasured up in your soul! It is a common truth, certainly; but when it is laid home by the Holy Spirit it shines, it beams, not merely as a lamp in a dark chamber, but as the day-star rising in your hearts. Remember this is no more our shame that we are sheep, but it is our honor that we are Christ's sheep. To belong to a king carries some measure of distinction. We are the sheep of the imperial pastures. This is our safety: he will not suffer the enemy to destroy his sheep. This is our sanctity: we are separated, the sheep of the pasture of the Lord's Christ. This is sanctification in one aspect of it: for it is the making of us holy, by setting us apart to be the Lord's own portion for ever. And this is the key to our duty: we are his sheep: then let us live to him, and consecrate ourselves to him who loved us and gave himself for us. Christ is the proprietor of the sheep; and are the property of the good Shepherd.

II. Now, let us commune together awhile upon the marks of the sheep. When there are so many flocks of sheep, it is necessary to mark them. Our Savior marks us. It has been very properly observed, that there are



two marks on Christ's sheep. One is on their ear, the other is on their foot. These are two marks of Christ's sheep not to be found on any other; but they are to be found on all his own—the mark on the ear: "My sheep hear my voice."—the mark on the foot: "I know them, and they follow me."

Think of this mark on their ear. "My sheep hear my voice." They hear spiritually. A great many people in Christ's day heard his voice who did not hear it in the way and with the perception that is here intended. They would not hear; that is to say, they would not hearken or give heed, neither would they obey his call or come unto him that they might have life. These were not always the worst sort of people: there were some of the best that would not hear Christ, of whom he said, according to the original, as translated by some, "Ye search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." They would get as far as curiosity or criticism might allure them; but they would not go any farther: they would not believe in Jesus. Now, the spiritual ear listens to God. The opening of it is the work of the Holy Spirit, and this is a mark of Christ's chosen blood-bought people, that they hear not only the hollow sound, but the hidden sense; not the bare letter, but the spiritual lesson; and that too not merely with the outward organ, but with the inward heart. The chief point is that they hear his voice. Oh, if all that heard my voice heard Christ's voice, how would I wander down every street in this city to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ; but, alas! the voice of the minister is utterly ineffectual to save a soul, unless the voice of Christ reach the conscience and rouse its dormant powers. "My sheep hear my voice;" the voice of Jesus, his counsel, his command, clothed with the authority of his own sacred sovereign utterance. When the gospel comes to you as Christ's gospel, with demonstration of the Spirit, the invitation is addressed to you by him. You can look upon it in no other light; so you must accept and receive it. When his princely power comes with it—being mighty to save, he puts saving power into the word—then you hear Christ's voice as a fiat that must be obeyed, as a summons that must be attended to, as a call to which there must be a quick response. O beloved, do not ever rest satisfied with hearing the voice of the preacher. We are only Christ's speaking-trumpets: there is nothing in us: it is only his speaking through us that can do any good. O children of God, some of you

do not always listen to Christ's voice in the preaching. While we comment on the word, you make your comments on us. Our style, or our tone, or even our gesture, is enough to absorb—I might rather say, to distract—your thoughts. "Why look ye so earnestly on us?" I beseech you, give less heed to the livery of the servant, and give more care to the message of the Master. Listen warily, if you please; but judge wisely, if you can. See how much pure grain, and how much of Christ, there is in the sermon. Use your sieve; put away all the chaff; take only the good wheat; hear Christ's voice. Well were it if we could obscure ourselves that we might manifest him. I could wish so to preach that you could not see even my little finger; might I but so preach that you could get a full view of Jesus only. O that you could hear his voice drowning ours! This is the mark, the peculiar mark of those who are Christ's peculiar people: they hear his voice. Sometimes, truly it sounds in the ministry; sometimes it thrills forth from that book of books, which is often grossly neglected; sometimes it comes in the nightwatches. His voice may speak to us in the street. Silent as to vocal utterance, but like familiar tones that sometimes greet us in our dreams, the voice of Christ is distinctly audible to the soul. It will come to you in sweet or in bitter providences; yea, there is such a thing as hearing Christ's voice in the rustling of every leaf upon the tree, in the moaning of every wind, in the rippling of every wave. And there be those that have learned to lean on Christ's bosom, till they have looked for all the world as though they were a shell that lay in the ocean of Christ's love, listening for ever to the sonorous cadence of that deep, unfathomed, all-mysterious main. The billows of his love never cease to swell. The billowy anthem still peals on with solemn grandeur in the ear of the Christian. O may we hear Christ's voice each one of us for ourselves! I find that language fails me, and metaphors are weak to describe its potent spell.

One point is worth noticing, however. I think our Lord meant here that his sheep, when they hear his voice, know it so well that they can tell it at once from the voice of strangers. The true child of God knows the gospel from the law. It is not by learning catechisms, reading theological books, or listening to endless controversies, that he finds this out. There is an instinct of his regenerate nature far more trustworthy than any lessons he has been taught. The voice of Jesus! Why there is no music like it. If you have once heard it, you cannot mistake it for another, or another for it.

Some are babes in grace: others are of full age, and by reason of use, have their senses exercised; but one sense is quickly brought out—the sense of hearing. It is so easy to tell the joy-bells of the gospel from the death-knell of the law; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. "Do, or die," says Moses. "Believe, and live," says Christ: you must know which is which. Yes; and I think they are equally shrewd and quick to discriminate between the flesh and the Spirit. Let some of the very feeblest of God's people sit down under a fluent ministry, with all the beauties of rhetoric, and let the minister preach up the dignity of human nature, and the sufficiency of man's reason to find out the way of righteousness, and you will hear them say: "It is very clever; but there is no food for me in it." Bring, however, the best and most instructed, and most learned Christian man, and set him down under a ministry that is very faulty as to the gift of utterance, and incorrect even in grammar; but if it is full of Jesus Christ, I know what he will say: "Ah! never mind the man, and never mind the platter on which he brought the meat; it was food to my soul that I fed upon with a hearty relish; it was marrow and fatness, for I could hear Christ's voice in it." I am not going to follow out these tests; but certain it is, that the sheep know Christ's voice, and can easily distinguish it. I saw hundreds of lambs the other day together, and there were also their mothers; and I am sure if I had had the task of allotting the proper lamb to each, or to any of them, it would have kept me till now to have done it. But somehow the lambs knew the mothers, and the mothers knew the lambs; and they were all happy enough in each other's company.

Every saint here, mixed up as he may be at times with parties and professors of all sorts, knows Christ, and Christ knows him, and he is therefore bound to his owner. That is the mark on the ear. You have seen sometimes in the country two flocks together on the road, and you say: "I wonder how the shepherds will manage to keep them distinct? They will get mixed up." They do not; they go this way and that way; and after a little commingling they separate, for they know their master's voice; "and a stranger will they not follow." You will go to-morrow, many of you, out into the world, some to the Exchange, others to the market, and others again into the factory: you are all mixed. Yes; but the seeming confusion of your company is temporary, not real and permanent. You will come

right again, and you will go to your own home and your own fellowship. And at the last, when we shall have ended our pilgrimage, the one shall wend his way to the glory land, and the other to the abyss of woe. There will be no mistake. You will hear the Master's call, and obey. There is a mark on the ear which identifies every saint.

Christ's sheep hear his voice obediently. This is an important proof of discipleship. Indeed, it may serve as a reproof to many. Oh, I would that you were more careful about this! "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them," said Jesus, "he it is that loveth me." "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." How comes it to pass, then, that there are certain commands of Christ which some Christians will suffer to lie in abeyance? They will say, "The Lord commands this, but it is not essential." Oh, unloving spirit, that can think anything unessential that thy Bridegroom bids thee do! They that love, think little things of great moment, especially when they are looked upon as tokens of the strength or the tenderness of one's regard. It may not be essential, in order to prove the relation in which a wife stands to her husband, that she should study his tastes, consult his wishes, or attend to his comfort. But will she the less strive to please, because love, not fear, constrains her? I trow not. And can it be that any of you, my brethren, would harbour such a thought as your negligence implies? Do you really suppose that after the choice of Christ has been fixed on you, and the love of Christ has been plighted to you, you may now be as remiss or careless as you like? Nay, rather, might we not expect that a sacred passion, an ardent zeal, a touch of inspiration would stir you up, put you on the alert, make you wake at the faintest sound of his voice, or keep you listening to do his will? Be it ours, then, to act out with fidelity that verse we have often sung with enthusiasm: -

"In all my Lord's appointed ways  
My journey I'll pursue."

However little the precept may appear in the eyes of others; however insignificant as compared with our salvation, yet—doth the Lord command it?—then his sheep hear his voice, and they follow him.

Christ has marked his sheep on their feet as well as their ears. They follow

him: they are gently led, not harshly driven. They follow him as the Captain of their salvation; they trust in the power of his arm to clear the way for them. All their trust on him is stayed; all their hope on him they lean. They follow him as their teacher; they call no man "Rabbi" under heaven, but Christ alone. He is the infallible source of their creeds; neither will they allow their minds to be ruled by conclaves, councils, nor decrees. Hath a Christ said it? It is enough. If not, it is no more for me than the whistling of the wind. They follow a Christ as their teacher.

And the sheep of Christ follow him as their example; they desire to be in this world as he was. It is one of their marks, that to a greater or less degree they have a Christ-like spirit; and if they could they would be altogether like their Lord.

They follow him, too, as their Commander, and Lawgiver, and Prince. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," was his mother's wise speech; and it is the children's wise rule: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Oh, blessed shall they be above many of whom it shall be said, "These are they that have not defiled their garments." "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Some of his followers are not very scrupulous. They love him. It is not for us to judge them. Rather we place ourselves among them and share in the censure. But happiest of all the happy are they who see the footprint—the print of that foot that once was pierced with the nail—and put their foot down where he placed it, and then again, in the selfsame mark, follow where he trod, till they climb at last to the throne. Keep close to Christ; take care of his little precepts unto the end. Remember, "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." Do not peril being least in the heavenly kingdom though it is better to be that than to be greatest in the kingdom of darkness. O seek to be very near him, to be a choice sheep in his chosen flock, and to have the mark distinctly upon your foot!

I will not stay to apply these truths, but leave each one of you to make such self-searching enquiries as the text suggests. Have I the ear mark? Have I the foot mark? "My sheep hear my voice," "and they follow me." I hope that I am among the number.

III. The last point, with which we now proceed to close, is—THE PRIVILEGE OF CHRIST'S SHEEP. It does not look very large, but if we open it we shall see an amazing degree of blessedness in it. "I know them," "I know them." What does it mean?

I have not time now to tell you all it means. "I know them." What is the reverse of this but one of the most dreadful things that is reserved for the day of judgment? There will be some who will say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils?" And he shall say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I never knew you; depart from me, ye cursed." Now measure the height of that privilege by the depth of this misery. "I never knew you." What a volume of scorn it implies! What a stigma of infamy it conveys! Change the picture. The Redeemer says, "I know them," "I know them." How his eyes flash with kindness; how their cheeks burn with gratitude, as he says, "I know them"! Why, if a man had a friend and acquaintance that he used to know, and some years after he found him a disreputable, abandoned, wicked, guilty criminal, I feel pretty sure he would not say much about having known such a fellow, though he might be driven to confess that he had some years ago a passing acquaintance with him. But our Lord Jesus Christ, though he knows what poor, unworthy ones we are, yet when we shall be brought up before the Lord, before the great white throne, he will confess he knew us. He does know us, we are old acquaintances of his, and he has known us from before the foundation of the world, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called." There are riches of grace in this; but we will consider it in another way. Our Savior knows us, our Shepherd knows us. Beloved, he knows your person and all about you. You, with that sick body, that aching head, he knows you and he knows your son with all its sensitiveness; that timidity, that anxiety, that constitutional depression—he knows it all. A physician may come to see you, and be unable to detect what the disease is that pains or prostrates you, but Christ knows you through and through; all the parts of your nature he understands. "I know them," saith he; he can therefore prescribe for you. He knows your sins. Do not let that dismay you, because he has blotted

them all out; and he only knows them to forgive them, to cover them with his righteousness. He knows your corruptions; he will help you to overcome them; he will deal with you in providence and in grace, so that they shall be rooted up. He knows your temptations. Perhaps you are living away from your parents and Christian friends, and you have had an extraordinary temptation, and you wish you could go home and tell your mother. Oh, he knows it, he knows it; he can help you better than your mother can. You say: "I wish the minister knew the temptation I have passed through." Do not tell it; God knows it. As Daniel did not want Nebuchadnezzar to tell him the nature of his dream, but gave him the dream and the interpretation at the same time, so God can send you comfort. There will be a word as plainly suited to your case as though it were all printed and the preacher had known it all. It must be so. Depend upon it, the Lord know's your temptation, and watches your trial; or be it a sick child, or be it a bad matter of business that has lately occurred; or be it a slander that has wounded your heart, there is not a pang you feel but God as surely sees it as the weaver sees the shuttle which he throws with his own hand. He knows your trial, and he knows the meaning of your groans: he can read the secret desire of your heart, you need not write it nor speak it: he has understood it all. You were saying: "O that my child were converted! O that I grew in grace!" He knows it: he knows it every whit. There is not a word on your tongue, nor a wish in your heart, but he knoweth it altogether. O dear heart, he knows your sincerity! Perhaps you want to join the church, and your proposal has been declined, because you could not give satisfactory testimony. If you are sincere, he knows it; he knows, moreover, what your anxiety is. You cannot tell another what it is that is bitter to you—the heart knoweth its own bitterness—he knows it. As his secret is with you, so your secret is with him. He knows you: he knows what you have been trying to do. That secret gift—that offering dropped so quietly where none could see it—he knows it. And he knows that you love him. "Yes," you are saying in your soul, "if ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now." No, you cannot tell him, nor tell others; but he knows it all.

So, now, in closing, let us say that in the text there is mutual knowledge. "I know them, but they also know me, because they hear my voice, and recognize it." Here is mutual confession. Christ speaks, else there would

be no voice: they hear, else were the voice not useful. "I know them;" that is his thoughts go towards them. "They follow me;" that is, their thoughts go towards him. He leads the way, else they could not follow. They follow, however, whom he leads the way. Being the counterpart of each other, what the one does the other returns through grace; and what grace puts into the sheep the shepherd recognises, and makes a return to them. Christ and his church become an echo of each other: his the voice, theirs is but a faint echo of it; still it is a true echo, and you shall know who are Christ's by this. Do they echo what Christ saith? Oh, how I wish we were all sheep! How my soul longs that we may many of us who are not of his fold be brought in. The Lord bring you in, my dear hearers. The Lord give you his grace, and make you his own, comfort you, and make you to follow him. And if you are his, show it. These, dear brethren and sisters, here at this time, desire to confess Christ in your presence. If they are doing right, and you are not doing as they do, then you are doing wrong. If it is the duty of one, it is the duty of all; and if one Christian may neglect making a profession, all may do so, and then there will be no visible church whatever, and the visible ordinances must die out. If you know him, own him, for he hath said: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **The Ship On Fire - A Voice Of Warning**

Escape for thy life. - Genesis 19:17

Thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life. - Genesis 19:19



Here is the alarm of mercy declaring the sinner's duty—"Escape for thy life." Here is the work of grace, and the gratitude of the sinner after he is saved. "Thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life."

The other day, there sailed down the Thames as stout a vessel as had ever ploughed the deep. The good ship "Amazon," had sailed the broad Pacific many a time, and what is there to hinder her from once more reaching America in safety? Who would refuse to underwrite her? Who among her crew or passengers has a fear for her safety? But in the book of providence, there was a black line against that ship, and never more could she reach her desired haven. The wind was exceedingly high: the vessel tarried awhile at Gravesend. There was a little improvement in the weather: she sailed a little further; but cast anchor again, and remained off Broadstairs. Matters went as usual in such weather. Night came on; the watch was changed as usual; the captain turned in, feeling that all was right and safe. The passengers were snug in their berths—a little the worse, perhaps, for the roll of the ship, but as assured of security as men could be. In a moment, what a change had taken place! A passenger perceives a smell of fire; the warning cry is raised. Everyone rushes upon deck. Attempts are made to quench the fire; but when the hatches are lifted up, the wind rushes in, and the fire is fanned to a dreadful, all-devouring conflagration. Further effort is of no avail. Rockets are fired, as the signals of distress. The boats are let down, crowded with the passengers. A lugger puts off to her, and a steam-tug hastens to the rescue, and, thanks be unto the God of providence, all the passengers—the captain and chief officers last—are on board the vessels and carried to Margate, where they see the melancholy, and yet satisfactory spectacle of their vessel burning to the water's edge, and then disappearing from view.

Now, as the good brother who was captain to that vessel, constantly comes here when he is on shore, and as he is sitting in the midst of you to-night, I thought I might use the burning of this vessel as a picture of spiritual things, out of which I might make an illustrated sermon. These things happen not without design, and should not escape without improvement.

Two things, then, to-night: they are both in the text and in the story of the ship on fire. First, an alarm—"Escape for thy life;" secondly, grateful acknowledgment—"Thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life."

### I. First, AN ALARM.

We come here to-night, to raise an alarm. True ministers of God. are great alarmists. It is their duty to be like Barnabas, who was a son of consolation; but it is equally their duty to be like Boanerges—sons of thunder. Thunder does not rock men to sleep, and plays no pleasant tune for fools to dance to; with its crash and roar, it wakes a slumbering world, and its dread volleys, echoed peal on peal, afford no dulcet notes for dainty ears. God's servants should learn to thunder; for when God speaketh through them, the voice of the Lord is powerful and full of majesty; and in his temple doth everyone speak of his glory.

The alarm we have to give to-night, is that of the angel to Lot, with an emphasis of meaning—"Escape for thy life." It is an alarm suggested by tremendous danger. When the cry of "Fire! fire! fire!" ran along the decks, and the cabins, and the saloons of the "Amazon," everyone knew that there was no small danger to be encountered, for flame is a cruel tyrant and devours remorselessly. The very word "Fire!" has a razor-edge about it, cutting to the very quick. Terror has fire for her first-born. But the alarm we have to raise, is concerning a matter more terrific still—add to the word "Fire," that dreadful syllable "Hell," and then what shall more alarm than "Hell fire?" In that cry, we comprehend such weighty matters as eternity alone can reveal. The wrath to come! The judgment of the Eternal! The wrath of the Most High! Fire, when it is at its most furious pitch, is but a plaything compared with hell fire; yea, when it consumes a city; when it runs down the red lips of a volcano, and buries thousands; when it sets the sky and earth upon a blaze as in Egypt's plagues, it is but child's-play compared with the wrath of God, and that Tophet which is prepared of old, the pile whereof is wood and much smoke. Here is something at which the joints of a man's loins may well be loosed, for there is eternity in it, infinity in it, deity in it; and where these three are

set against a man,. woe unto him. It is as when the fire is set in battle array against the stubble. Well may it be written by the prophet, "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burning?" Sinner, by the crushing terror of the woe which cometh, I beseech thee, "Escape for thy life."

It is a danger not to be overcome. The fire-engine was brought out upon the deck of the burning ship; attempts were made to extinguish the fire; but the mischief was far too much in power to be driven from its stronghold. The like may be boldly declared of the evil which cometh upon the ungodly. Sinner, your danger is such that you cannot contend with it by any power of your own. There is a fire of sin within you which you cannot quench; there is a fire of hell without you which no drops even of your own blood shall be able to extinguish. You are in a danger which you are unable to cope with. There is no possibility that if you remain in it, your utmost exertions or most strenuous efforts can avert the certain ruin which your state must bring upon you. If you neglect the only way of salvation, how can you escape? What awaits you but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation? The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at the reproof of the Lord of hosts—how, then, canst thou endure the tempest of his anger, and the fury of his hot displeasure?

"O sinner, seek his face,  
Whose wrath thou canst not bear;  
Fly to the dying Savior's wounds,  
And find salvation there."

It is a danger, too, a terrific danger which makes no exception to anyone. The captain is as much in danger as the poorest cabin-boy, if he cannot escape from the burning ship. The rich man, with ingots of gold in his cabin, will as certainly be burned alive as the poor traveler who could scarcely pay his passage. There is no distinction of persons in the judgments of God. Sinner, you may be great and mighty, but you shall go down to hell unless grace shall save you. Woman, thou mayst be amiable in thy temper and excellent in thy deportment, but thou shalt perish as surely as a harlot, unless Christ have pity upon thee. Man, thou mayst be

upright, and shine before thy fellow-merchants as one of excellent repute, but the wrath of God abideth on thee except thou fleest to Jesus; for there is none other name given under heaven whereby ye must be' saved; and out of that name, and apart from that name, whoever thou mayst be, though thou wert monarch of seven empires, thou art still in danger. Rich and poor, high and low, learned and ignorant, my cry is to you all, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord!"

Do not forget that we are in danger of a consuming fire—a danger which kills without remedy. It is not a fire which merely singes and scorches, but a fire which burns to ashes. As yonder ship must be burned up, and every passenger who cannot leave its burning deck must be consumed, so you, O unconverted men, are in danger of utter destruction from the presence of the Lord. "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." I would I could speak upon this dreadful subject in a proper manner. Whitfield had tones and emotions which were fitting for such a subject. He would cry out, "Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come!" He would cry, I say, until all his hearers responded with, "What must we do to be saved?" And good Baxter, trembling lest he should be guilty of men's blood, while he delivered the message, as a dying man to dying men—knew the terrors of the law, and right earnestly he persuaded men to escape for their lives. O sirs, if I saw you in a burning house, there were not half so much need of earnestness as when I see you in the midst of a mass of sin and corruption which must be consumed by God's anger, and you with it. Sinner, why wilt thou die? What can ail thee? What besots thee that thou dost not perceive anything dreadful in the wrath of him who made thee? He can dash whole worlds to pieces—what can he not do with thee? Hast thou learned to be callous when thou hearest of eternity? Hast thine ear grown cold to that dreadful word, "Condemnation?" Canst thou read the story of those to whom he said, "Depart, ye cursed," and not tremble? Canst thou know that thou art this day in danger of the judgment, and not be afraid? When the sword is sharp, and furbished, and taken out of its sheath, canst thou play about its edge? Canst thou yet make mirth? Then is there indeed, need for me to cry to thee, and for all God's faithful

ministers to cry with louder voice than mine—"Escape! escape! escape for thy life."

The alarm of fire was needed because of the security of the persons in danger. Many on board the "Amazon" were sound asleep. Oh, how dreadful to be awakened out of sleep with the cry of "Fire! fire! fire! Some of them, when they awoke, seemed to have been so startled and so confused, that they had fairly to be dragged out of their berths that they might be rescued. There were none there, we have reason to believe, who would have been kept below through their own drunkenness or the carelessness of the crew. They were in a right state, with this exception, of course, that they were all alarmed—and men alarmed are not always ready to do the wisest thing, and as for the captain and his men they seem to have been as sensible as they were brave. My hearers, God's ministers have to deal with passengers much more difficult to handle. Are not men asleep? Till the voice of God awakens us, we are all asleep. How you and I walked for years, and years, and years, upon the brink of the grave, as utterly unconcerned as though we were to live for ever; and when sometimes we were a little impressed by the passing bell, or an open grave, or an earnest sermon, how soon we went back again to 'our old frivolity, and toyed with the flames of hell as though they were fancy's dream. It is not so now. God has awakened us; but we had never been awakened if the voice which awakes the dead had not cried in our ear, "Escape for thy life." Nay, worse, men are not only asleep, but when they do perceive their danger, they love their sins too well to leave them, even though hell stares them in the face. The best of them cry with Solomon's sluggard, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." Sinner, how hard it is to bring thee to serious consideration of thy ways. We cannot touch thy wits, or make thee reason like a man of sound mind. Thou wilt sooner be damned by thoughtlessness than give an hour's careful meditation to thy soul's affairs. We would fain drag thee out of thy sleeping berth, and even kick thee and strike thee, treating thee to rough usage, if we could by this means drag thee from the devouring flames; thou wouldst thank us well enough afterwards for these rough cuffs, if we could but wake thee. We hear complaints that the minister speaks too harshly and talks too much of judgment. Saved sinners never make that complaint. They know that nothing but these terrors will

awaken some slumbering minds; and if they be awakened themselves, they are but too glad, however rough the means may have been. Are there not some in this house to-night who are hard, fearfully hard, to be brought to sober thinking, because they are drunken and besotted with sin? Some of you, with your Sunday trading, will rather gain your sixpences and your paltry pence on the Sunday, than find eternal felicity in faith in the Lord Jesus. Others of you, with your tap-room companions, with your theatres, your balls, and worse places still, where lust wears no mask, are cutting the throats of your poor miserable souls. You cannot give up your vices; you will sooner be damned than be Christians. Well, so it must be, sirs, if ye will have these things, and will pawn your souls for them, so it must be; you have chosen your own delusions, and you shall inherit them. But O, do listen once more, while we warn you in God's name, "Escape for thy life," and trifle no more with hell and heaven, with thine own soul and judgment, God and his dear bleeding Son. If every preacher in London should suddenly begin to preach nothing but alarms, it would all be needed, for what a secure and reckless city is this. If every corner in the street had a Jonah in it, and that Jonah's sermon were nothing but this—"Yet a few more days and thou shalt be destroyed!" it were not too much for a city so given to slumber. We have waxen rich; we have grown careless, till we have become like Nineveh of old, a people at ease, and dwelling carelessly Isaiah might well say concerning London—"Thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it." Let us take heed unto ourselves lest in the world to come this carnal security of ours should be like faggots to the fire, and the remembrance of our sloth should pour oil upon the flames. O God, let the alarm be heard, to-night by those who crowd this house, for thou knowest that many of them are sound asleep.

Again, it is an alarm which requires instant attention. A man on board a vessel, when he hears the cry of "Fire!" must not stop to arrange his clothes; he must not be concerned to see that his face is washed, that he has bound together that little bundle of papers, or packed up the portmanteau, or counted over the little purse of gold, or even snatched his little property from the cabin. At once, at once, must he climb the stairs and reach the deck, or he will never have stairs to climb, nor feet to

climb with. Now or never. Quick is the word. Waste a moment, and it is all over with you; the fire is upon you, for it tarries not in its march. So is it with you to-night who fear not God. "Escape for thy life," is a cry for the present moment. Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Now, now, NOW. This is the only period God has allotted to you, take care that you use it, lest when your to-days are past, and you hope to see your to-morrow, you should have to spend your to-morrows in the pit of hell. Procrastination is not only the thief of time, but the thief of souls. Now is the day of salvation; I have never heard of any other day. I do not know, but I think this is one of the most difficult things in the gospel ministry, a matter worthy of the Holy Ghost's power—to make men seriously think about their souls at this present. I know, young man, you intend to think of these things when you are ill; you expect to have a long time upon a sick-bed, and then you suppose all will be right before you die. Who told you you would ever lie upon a sick-bed at all? Yours may be a sudden death; and sudden death to such as you, are would be sudden damnation. As men stand upon the bank, and spring head-first into the water, so may you dash into hell. Death enters men's doors without knocking. The judgment may follow on the heels of your next sins. And what if you should lie upon a bed of sickness? You will have enough to do to bear the pain, to mourn over your weeping wife, and worry yourself about those little children who will be left fatherless: I tell you, sir, it is hard repenting upon a dying bed. Do not sew pillows to thine armholes, and make for thyself this fond hope, that thou shalt one day be saved. It is now or never, it is now or never with you. I speak as a prophet of God at this moment, I know I do; there are some of you to whom this now or never is a more applicable thing than you suppose. You will not see a new year. No Christmas festivities will be yours. You will be at home on Christmas-day, but it will be your long, lost home. "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." As the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, thus saith the Lord unto some of you—"There is but a step between you and death." Be warned, then, for as I will meet you on the other side the stream, at my Master's judgment-seat, I have bidden you give immediate, instantaneous attention to the Word of God. Consider your ways, O sinners, born to die. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, O trembler, and thou shalt be saved. Trust him, trust him. God help thee to trust Jesus to-night, for it is now or never with thy soul.

Again, this alarm demands of every one of us who are unsaved, an undivided attention. You have fifty things to think about. You tell me you have a thousand cares. O sirs, a man whose life is in danger, has no other care than to save his life. Did those who were rescued from the "Amazon," have time to save their money and their gold? We are told that they were utterly destitute when they landed at Margate, and what signifies it? Would not a flush of joy be on their cheeks because their lives were preserved! If one said to his fellow, "Where is thy purse?" "Oh," saith the other, "never mind my purse, I am in the lifeboat; my life is saved." What shall it profit you, if you gain the whole world, and lose your own soul? And what is the loss after all, if you lose the world, if you gain your soul? Nay, those on board the ship had not time to save their clothes. The instincts of self-preservation made them run, just as they were, half-naked, to the vessel's deck, and so must you. I know you will tell me you are not living to make money; if you could just make ends meet, keep your family, and supply the wants of your children—that is all—are you not to think of this? It is well and good; far be it from me to discourage prudent carefulness in all matters; it is your business to see to temporal matters, but still your paramount business must be your soul; even necessaries must not come between your soul and your most serious thoughts. You must see to this first and foremost, and remember there is a promise about it—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Those persons who escaped from the blazing vessel had, some of them, even to suffer in body. We read of one who broke his arm in the medley of the escape, but what of that?\* (\*I hear since, from the friends of the second mate, that the man did not break his arm.) Better to escape with a broken arm, than fry in those horrible flames with every bone in its place. It would be very little comfort to the poor passenger to save his bones entire, and to have his body consumed. "It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire." You are rightly considerate of your bodies, but still, if that poor body, which is to become worm's meat one day, is worthy of so much thought, how much more ought you to give to your immortal spirit, which is to live for ever with God in glory, or with fiends in torment? Think first, I pray you, think chiefly, think now to-night with



undivided heart, with consecrated thought upon your soul. Let comforts go, let pelf go, let raiment go, let life itself go—but do see to that which is better than life—thy soul—thine everlasting destiny.

Now, the alarm which I have tried to give—"Escape for thy life!" seems to me to suggest a very solemn question. "How can I escape?" says cue. Dost thou sincerely ask that question—"What must I do to be saved?" Remember there is but one way of rescue—the lifeboat of faith must put thee into the vessel of salvation—Christ Jesus. Stop in thine own vessel, and thou art burned; leap into those floods of wrath, and thou art drowned; get into that boat of saving faith, let that boat bear thee into the vessel of Christ Jesus, and thou art safe. Sinner, the road of salvation is, out of self into Christ. There are only two steps to heaven—out of self, into Christ. That man who has left himself as a burning vessel behind, left sin and left self-righteousness as a thing to be destroyed—that man who has taken Christ to be his all in all, and takes the cross to be the only thing to which he clings, is safe. Escape, I pray thee, for thy life, awakened and seeking sinner, for Jesus is the only foundation, he only is thy rock and thy salvation; come to him for shelter, and you are saved.

To conclude this matter of alarm, our meditation arouses a very solemn enquiry—Will all be safe? Will all in the vessel escape? What joy must there have been in the captain's heart when he heard that not one had been left to burn in the vessel! Will all escape? Will every hearer in this huge house of prayer to-night be a singer in heaven? Dare we, in the judgment of charity, hope so? Well, well, let us try to hope, if so your charity wishes it, but I fear me, I fear me it will be hope without any grounds; for there are some here who love the drunkard's cup, others who vomit the swearer's oaths, and some who have the proud, self-righteous look which God hateth. O that we could hope that these would be transformed by grace through Jesus Christ, that so they might be saved! I am, I own it, very much afraid that all of you will not be saved, but that some of you will perish in your iniquities. It is not, however, our duty to pry into futurity, let us therefore, turn to that which far more concerns us, our own personal salvation. The enquiry changes—"Shall I be saved? If there be an alarm given, 'Escape for thy life!' Shall I be saved?" And what if it should be the preacher's lot to be lost for ever! What, if after talking

to you this morning of being sick of love to Christ, he should have to hear those doleful words, "I never knew you, depart, ye cursed!" And what if this were to be the lot of the church-officers who sit around me, or of any one amongst you? Brother, you have passed the sacramental cup to others, what if the cup of devils be your portion for ever and ever! My brethren and sisters in Church fellowship, you may well put the question as did the apostles of old, "Lord is it I?"

"Shall I be banished for my life,  
And yet forbid to die?  
Shall I endure eternal death,  
Yet death for ever fly?"

Shall it be so! My dear hearer, thou who makest no profession of religion, will you ask the question, Shall I, shall I perish in devouring flames, or shall I escape? The answer to that question, so far as you are concerned, at this moment, must depend upon whether there is now a work of grace in your heart. If thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, thou canst never perish. If thou dost not, and wilt not believe, thy destruction is most sure. O God Almighty, thou who alone canst impress the heart, lead everyone of us now to take such sure hold of Christ that we may never perish, neither may any pluck us out of his hand.

II. My time is fled, woe is me, when I had meant to have spoken with my whole heart upon another topic. It was GRATITUDE. Well, we will just run over the points, although most briefly. I will hope that you and I are saved; I will trust that we have been put into thy grace-vessel; I will believe that we have laid hold on Christ; may me belief be warranted by facts? Then this calls for gratitude. Gratitude of what kind? Gratitude that I was awakened. O my God, I bless thee that I was not permitted to sleep the sleep of death. I thank thee for that fever which made me fear, that loss which made me think, that dear dead babe which brought the parent to a Savior's feet. I bless thee, Lord, for the minister's earnest voice which shook me in my slumbers, for a mother's tears which fell like cold drops on my sleeping brow, and made me wake. I thank thee, O God, that though others slumber, yet, thou hast awakened me, and made me look to my soul's concerns. It is no slight mercy to be able to hear the trumpet of

warning. It is a foundation mercy, but it is not the least of mercies to have an awakened conscience.

Secondly, I would thank God, and let every believer join with me, that when you and I were awakened, the ship was not out to sea. If the "Amazon" had been far out to sea when the cry of "Fire" was given, what must have been the result? How few could have escaped! But there she was, close to land. You and I, when we were awakened, were not in hell—not like the rich man, lifting up our eyes where hope could never come—we were still on praying ground, still on pleading terms with God, still off the Foreland, still where mercy could come to us, and grace could meet us. Sinner, if you have been awakened to-night, thank God for this, thank him that the trumpet which wakes you is not the trumpet of the archangel summoning you to judgment, but the silver trumpet of God's messenger of mercy, inviting you to mercy banquet.

Let us thank God it did not blow harder, for there might have been much trouble in reaching the boat. When you and I were awakened to a sense of sin, it might have been just when death was coming, or when the terrors of conscience would have been too much for us, and when the fears of death might have kept us from a Savior. But, blessed be God, when we were aroused there was wind enough, we were conscience-stricken and smitten, but still not too much, or else the fire had been too vehement, and we had not escaped. Thank God, then, that he awakened us while there was really time to avail ourselves of the covenant lifeboat.

Let us be thankful again, that we could use the signals. I told you that the vessel sent up its rockets—signals of distress. Ah! what a thousand mercies it was that we could pray. I remember well when this was the only comfort my bursting spirit had, I could pray. Oh, to be on pleading terms with God! Thank God for this, awakened sinner, bless God for this. If you have not got so far as being completely saved, yet do praise him that you are allowed to fire off the rockets of desires, sighs, groans, sobs, tears, longings, and pantings, and that you can send them up where God can see them. Your cries, and groans, and tears will yet bring comfort and peace from heaven through the Lamb's redeeming blood. Rejoice, my beloved brethren, that the Lord has not abolished a mercy-seat, nor

forgotten to be gracious. He saith "not to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain." He waits to be gracious. He delighteth in mercy. Before you call he will answer, and while you are yet speaking he will hear.

Thank God that there were good officers on board to direct the passengers. Without firm authority, men become a mob, and then, with every appliance which might save, few are rescued. Awakened sinner, be grateful that you have gospel ministers. Oh! what a mercy to have a gospel ministry! What an awful thing to sit under a half-and-half milk-and-water, yea-and-nay ministry, as was my lot when under conviction. I attended different places of worship, but what I heard was not the gospel. And I venture to say it, that a few years ago, in nine places out of ten in London, and in the suburbs, and throughout England, such a thing as the gospel was not preached, except by accident. It is preached NOW. It is not preached now as it should be, but it is preached now. What I mean by the gospel, is the doctrine that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and that the simple trusting upon him is saving faith. This is a doctrine which the revival has brought up more clearly, and which the revival keeps before the public mind; but before that great movement came, it was a doctrine ignored and cast behind; too much of the preaching was a dry morality, or else philosophy which might tickle the ears of men who claimed intellect, but could never move the heart. Oh, thank God, poor sinner, that you do hear it rung in your ears—Come as you are! Come as you are! You hear the gospel sung to you: -

"Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I aim-thy love I own,  
Has broken every barrier down:  
Now, to be thine, yea, thine alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!"

We hold up to you no ceremonies, no feelings, no works, no orthodoxies; we only hold up Christ, Christ crucified, a substitute for sinners, a

substitute for you if you trust him; and we tell you again and again, till we half fear of tiring you, that, trusting Jesus, you are saved. Now we have reason, if saved, to be grateful to God for gospel officers.

Then how grateful ought you and I to be that the ship is come to the rescue. Jesus came all the way from heaven to earth to save us—"Who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." How shall we be grateful enough for this unspeakable gift?

"O, for this love let rocks and hills  
Their lasting silence break,  
And all harmonious human tongues  
The Savior's praises speak."

Better still: how grateful we ought to be that we have got on board that ship. Oh! joy! joy! joy! that blessed step which set me upon Christ! that blessed act which made me one with him. My soul would repeat now that grace-wrought deed of faith.

"A wounded, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Christ's kind arms I fall;  
Be thou my strength and confidence,  
My Jesus and my all."

Be grateful for this; and, sinner, if thou canst now step into Christ and trust him with thyself, make earth ring with thy joy, and make heaven resound with thy praise.

Our gratitude, methinks, will be greatest of all when we get safe on shore, and look on this old hulk, the burning world, without a fear; we, will see her blaze and cast her dreadful splendours over the infinite leagues of space, until beings in far-off worlds shall ask, "What is this? A world on fire, whose elements dissolve with fervent heat." But we, caught up together with the Lord, to dwell for ever with him, shall look on with complacency, having lost nothing because saved in him; having found in him our Savior, better than all we had before, and being, once for all on

heaven's terra firma, never to put to sea again, never to fear tempest, rock, wreck, or fire; but saved! saved! saved eternally!

Escape, sinner, escape for thy life. Remember, though thus I talk to thee, if thou shalt escape, free grace must have all the praise; and in the language of good Lot, thou wilt have to say—"Thou hast magnified thy mercy in saving my life." May God send you away with a blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **Shoes Of Iron, And Strength Sufficient: A New Year's Promise**

And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be. -  
Deuteronomy 33:24-25

I once heard an old minister say that he thought the blessing of Asher was peculiarly the blessing of ministers; and his eyes twinkled as he added, "At any rate, they are usually blessed with children, and it is a great blessing for them if they are acceptable to their brethren, and if they are so truly anointed that they even dip their foot in oil." Well, well, I pray that all of us who preach the gospel may enjoy this triplet of blessings in the highest sense. If our quiver is not full of children according to the flesh, yet may we have many born unto God through our ministry. May we be blessed by being made spiritual fathers to very many, who shall be brought by us to receive life, pardon, peace, and holiness, through our Lord Jesus. What is the use of our life if it be not so? To what end have we

preached unless we see souls born into the family of grace? My inmost soul longs to see all my hearers born anew: this would be my greatest joy, my highest blessedness. Ask for me the blessing of Asher—"Let Asher be blessed with children"; and may the Lord make my spiritual offspring to be as the sands upon the sea-shore.

It is a great blessing from the Lord when our speech is sweet to the ears of saints—when we have something to bring forth which our brethren in Christ can accept, and which comes to them with a peculiar preciousness and power, so that they can receive it, and feel that it is thoroughly acceptable to them. We do not wish to be acceptable to the worldly wise, nor to the error-hunters of the day; but we are very anxious to be pleasant to the Lord's own children—our brethren in Christ. They have a holy taste whereby they discern spiritual meats, and we would bring forth for food that which they will account to be nourishing and savoury. Every minister prays to be "acceptable to his brethren."

And what could we do without the third blessing, namely that of unction? "Let him dip his foot in oil." Oh, for an anointing of the Holy Spirit, not only upon the head with which we think, but upon the foot with which we move! We would have our daily walk and conversation gracious and useful. We wish that, wherever we go, we may leave behind us the print of divine grace. I was asking concerning a preacher what kind of man he was, and the simple, humble cottager, answered me, "Well, sir, he is this kind of man: if he comes to see you, you know that he has been." We must not only have oil in the lamps of our public ministry, but oil in the vessels of our private study. We need the holy oil everywhere, upon every garment, even down to our skirts. I know that there are mockers who scoff at the very mention of unction; but I pray that to myself and my brethren the promise may be fulfilled, "He shall dip his foot in oil." Such a man, anointed with fresh oil, holds an unquestioned office, enjoys an unfailing freshness, and exercises an effectual influence. Wherever he goes you see his footprints, for his foot has been dipped in oil.

Well, now, if these three blessings be good for ministers, they are equally good for all sorts of workers. You in the school, you who visit tract districts, you who manage mothers' meetings, and you who in any shape

or way endeavour to make Christ known, may you have the threefold blessing! The Lord give you many spiritual children: may you be blessed with them, and never be without additions to their number! The Lord make you acceptable to those among whom you labour; and the Lord grant you always to go forth in his strength, anointed with his Spirit!

That is the first part of our text, and I am not going to say any more about it, as the second part is that to which I shall call your especial attention. May the Holy Spirit make the promise exceeding sweet to you, and grant you a full understanding of it.

"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

There are two things in the text—shoes and strength. We will talk about these two, hoping to possess them both.

I. "THY SHOES SHALL BE IRON AND BRASS." That is a very great promise, and I fear that I shall not be able to bring out all its meaning in one discourse.

I find that the passage has several translations; and, though I think that which we have now before us is by far the best, yet I cannot help mentioning the others, for I think they are instructive. These interpretations may serve me as divisions in opening up the meaning. I take it as a rule that the Lord's promises are true in every sense which they will fairly bear. A generous man will allow the widest interpretation of his words, and so will the infinitely gracious God.

This promise meant that Asher should have treasures under his feet—that there should, in fact, be mines of iron and copper within the boundaries of the tribe. Metals enrich nations, and help their advancement in many ways. Tribes that possess minerals are thereby made rich, what ever metals those may be; but such useful metals as iron and copper would prove of the utmost service to the people of that time, if they knew how to use them. Is there any spiritual promise at all in this! Asher is made rich and iron and copper lying beneath his feet. Are saints ever made rich with



treasures under their feet? Undoubtedly they are. The Word of God has mines in it. Even the surface of it is rich, and it brings forth food for us; but it is with Scripture as Job saith it is with the earth: "As for the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire. The stones of it are the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold." There are treasures upon the surface of the Word which we may pick up very readily: even the casual reader will find himself able to understand the simplicities and elements of the gospel of God; but the Word of God yields most to the digger. He that can study hard, and press into the inner meaning—he is the man that shall be enriched with riches current in heavenly places. Every Bible student here will know that God has put under his feet great treasures of precious teaching, and he will by meditation sink shafts into the deep places of revelation. I wish we gave more time to our Bibles. We waste too much time upon the pretentious, poverty-stricken literature of the age; and some, even Christian people, are more taken up with works of fiction than they are with this great Book of everlasting fact. We should prosper much more in heavenly husbandry if we would "dig deep while sluggards sleep." Remember that God has given to us to have treasures under our feet; but do not so despise his gifts as to leave the mines of revelation unexplored.

You will find these treasures, not only in the Word of God, but everywhere in the providence of God, if you will consider the ways of the Lord, and believe that God is everywhere at work, He that looks for a providence will not be long without seeing one. All events are full of teaching to the man that has but grace and wit to interpret them. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." There shall be treasures under your feet if your feet keep to the ways of truth. A rich land is the country along which believers travel to their rest: its stones are iron, and out of its bowels thou mayest dig brass. "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right."

The Revised Version has it, "Thy bars shall be iron and brass;" and certainly the original text bears that meaning. "Thy bars shall be iron and brass:" there shall be protection around him. The city gates shall be kept fast against the enemy, so as to preserve the citizens. The slaughtering foe

shall not be able to intrude, because, instead of the common wooden bar, which might be sufficient in more peaceful times, there shall be given bars of metal, not easily cut in sunder or removed. Herein I see a spiritual blessing for us also. What a mercy it is, when God strengthens our gates and secures the bars thereof, so that, when the enemy comes, he is not able to enter or to molest us! Peace from all assaults, safety under all alarms, shutting in from all attacks—this is a priceless boon. Happy people who have God for their protector! Blessed are they who rest in the sure promises and faithfulness of God, for they may laugh their enemies to scorn. O brethren, how safe are they whose trust is in the living God and in his covenant and promise! Personally I know what this means. I have rested as calmly in the centre of the battle as ever I have reposed in the deepest calm: with all against me I am as quiet in soul as when everyone called himself my friend. It is true—"Thy bars shall be iron and brass."

Still, I like the Old Version best, and the original certainly bears it, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." The Revised Version puts this in the margin He shall have protection for his feet. The chief objection that has been raised to this is that it would be a very unusual thing for shoes to be made of iron and brass. Such a thing is not heard of anywhere else in Scripture, neither is it according to Oriental custom. For that reason I judge that the interpretation is the more likely to be correct, since the protection which God gives to his people is unusual. No other feet shall wear so singular a covering; but those who are made strong in the Lord shall be able to wear shoes of iron, and the Lord shall give them sandals of brass. As Og, the King of Bashan, was of the race of the giants, and "his bedstead was a bedstead of iron," so shall the Lord's champions wear shoes of iron. Theirs are no common equipments, for they are no common people. God's people are a peculiar people, and everything about them is peculiar. Even if the poetry of the passage would not bear to run upon all fours, there is no reason why it should, since it only relates to shoes. We may be quite content to take the notion of iron and brazen shoes with all its strangeness, and even let the strangeness be a commendation of it. You have peculiar difficulties, you are a peculiar people, you traverse a peculiar road, you have a peculiar God to trust in, and you may, therefore, find peculiar consolation in a peculiar promise:

"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass."

With shoes of iron and of brass,  
O'er burning marl thy feet shall pass,  
Tread dragons down, from fear set free;  
For as thy day thy strength shall be.

But what does this mean—"thy shoes shall be iron and brass"? Are there not several meanings? Does it not mean that our feet, tender and unprotected by nature, shall receive protection—protection from God? Our feebleness and necessity shall call upon God's grace and skill, and he will provide for us, and give to us exactly what we, by reason of our feebleness, so much need.

We want to have shoes of iron and brass, first, to travel with. We are pilgrims. We journey along a road which has not been smoothed by a steam-roller, but remains rough and rugged as the path to an Alpine summit. We push on through a wilderness where there is no way. Sometimes we traverse a dreary road, comparable too a burning sand. At other times sharp trials afflict us as if they cut our feet with flints. Our journey is a maze, a labyrinth: the Lord leads us up and down in the wilderness, and sometimes we seem further from Canaan than ever. Seldom does our march take us through gardens: often it leads us through deserts. We are always travelling, never long in one stay. Sometimes the fiery cloudy pillar rests for a little, but it is only for a little. "Forward!" is our watchword. We have no abiding city here. We pitch our tent by the wells and palms of Elim, but we strike it in the morning, when the silver bugle sounds, "Up, and away!" and so we march to Marah, or to the place of the fiery serpents. Ever onward; ever forward; ever moving! This is our lot. Be it so. Our equipment betokens it: we have appropriate shoes for this perpetual journey. We are not shod with the skins of beasts, but with metals which will endure all wear and tear. Is it not written, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass"? However long the way, these shoes will last to the end.

Perhaps I address some friend whose way is especially rough. You seem to be more tried than anybody else. You reckon yourself to be more

familiar with sorrow than anyone you know: affliction has marked you for its own. I pray you take home this promise to yourself by faith: the Lord saith to thee, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." This special route of yours, which is beset with so many difficulties—your God has prepared you for it. You are shod as none but the Lord's chosen are shod. If your way is singular, so are your shoes. You shall be able to traverse this thorny road—to journey along it with profit to yourself, and with glory to God. For your travelling days you are well fitted, for your shoes are iron and brass.

"If the sorrows of thy case  
Seem peculiar still to thee,  
God has promised needful grace,  
'As thy days, thy strength shall be."

Shoes of iron remind us of military array—they are meant to fight with. Brethren, we are soldiers as well as pilgrims. These shoes are meant for trampling upon enemies. All sorts of deadly things lie in our way, and it is by the help of these shoes that the promise is made good. "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." Are we not often too much like the young man Jether, who was bidden by his father to slay Zebah and Zalmunna, but he was afraid. We tremble to put our foot upon the neck of the enemy; we fancy that if we should attempt it, we should be guilty of presumption. Let us have done with this false humility, for thus we dishonour the Lord's promise: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." Better far to say, "Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us." Thus we may say without fear, for assuredly "The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly."

"O my soul, thou has trodden down strength," said the holy woman of old, when the adversaries of Israel had been routed. Thus can our exultant spirits also take up the chant. I also can say, "O my soul, thou has trodden down strength." Yes, believer, with thy foot thou has crushed thy foe, even as thy Lord, who came on purpose that he might break with his foot, even with his bruised heel, the head of our serpent adversary. Be not afraid, therefore, in the day of conflict, to push onward against the

foe. Do not be afraid to seize the victory which Christ has already secured for thee. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass" thou shalt trample down thy foe, and march unharmed to victory.

What a blessing it is when we get self under our feet! We shall have good use for iron shoes if we keep him there. What a mercy it is when you get a sinful habit under your feet! You will need have shoes of brass to keep it there. What a mercy it is when some temptation that you have long struggled with at last falls to the ground, and you can set your foot upon it! You need to have both of your shoes strengthened with iron, and hardened with brass, that you may bruise this spiritual enemy, and crush out its life. Feet shod with sound metal of integrity and firmness will be none too strong in this evil world, where so many, like serpents, are ready to bite at our heels. Only so shod shall we win the victory.

See, the Lord promises that we shall have shoes suitable alike for travelling and for trampling upon enemies!

Next, we have fit shoes for climbing. One interpreter thinks that the sole of the shoe was to be studded with iron or copper nails. Certainly, those who climb would not like to go with the smooth soles which suit us in our parlours and drawing-rooms. There are many instances where a rough tip of iron, or a strong nail in the heel of the shoe, has checked the slipping mountaineer when gliding over a shelving rock, and there he has stayed on the very brink of death. Our spiritual life is an upward climb, with constant danger of a fall. It is a great mercy to have shoes of iron and brass in our spiritual climbings, that should our feet be almost gone, we may find foothold before we are utterly cast down. We ought to climb: the higher our spiritual life the better. It is written of the believer, "He shall dwell on high." We ought not to be satisfied till we reach the highest places of knowledge, experience, and practice. High doctrine is glorious doctrine, high experience is blessed experience, high holiness is heavenly living. Many souls always keep in the plains: the simple elements are enough for them; and, thank God, they are enough for salvation and for comfort. But if you want the richest delight and the highest degree of grace, climb the hills and roam among the mysteries of God, the sublimer revelations of his divine will. Especially climb into the doctrines of grace:

be not afraid of electing love, of special redemption, of the covenant, and all that is contained in it. Be not afraid to climb high, for if thy feet be dipped in the oil of grace, they shall also be so shod that they shall not slip. Trust in God, and you shall be as Mount Zion, which can never be removed. Your shoes shall be iron and brass, for lofty thought and clear knowledge, if you commit your mind to the instruction of the Lord. Receiving nothing except as you find it in the Word, but in a childlike spirit receiving everything that you find there, you shall stand upon your high places. Your feet shall be like hinds' feet, and your place of abode shall be above the mists and clouds of earth's wretched atmosphere of doubt.

Rise, also, to the highest graces and the noblest virtues. As is the food we feed on, such should our actions be. Let us love, for God is love, and as dear children we must be imitators of him in all gentleness, tenderness, and forgiveness. Climb to the heights of self-denial, the summits of consecration. Be as near heaven as is possible for those who dwell on earth. Have you not the shoes to climb with? Wherefore tarry down below?

I will not press this longer upon you, for I hope that your hearts aspire to climb up where your Lord reveals himself in clearer light; but, lest you should be at all afraid of the climbing as the aged man is afraid of that which is high, I would arouse you to a holy bravery, since God has not given you shoes of iron and brass merely to trip over the plains. He means you to climb; your equipments prove it. Will you be as the children of Ephraim, who, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle? Will you be shod with iron, and melt like wax under a little heat of opposition?

Once more. These shoes are for travelling, for trampling, for climbing; they are also made of iron and brass for perseverance. You would not need such shoes for a little bit of a run—for a trip up the street and back again. Since the Lord has shod you in this fashion, it is a warning to you that the way is long and weary, and the end is not by-and-by. The Lord has furnished you with shoes that will not wear out. "Old shoes and clouted" were good enough for Gibeonites, but they are not fit for

Israelites. The Lord does not mean that you should be arrayed as beggars, or become lame through worn-out shoes. The sacred canticle, in one of its verses, saith, "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!" The princes of the heavenly household shall be shod according to their rank and this shall be the case at the end of their journey as surely as at the beginning. Whether Israel traversed sand or rock, the camp never halted because the people had become lame; for the Lord had said "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." It is a good pair of shoes that lasts a man for forty years; yet there are some of us who can testify that God's grace has furnished us with spiritual shoes of that kind. I can speak of nearly that length of time since I knew the Lord, and I bear my unhesitating witness that I have found the grace of God all-sufficient, and his promises most sure and steadfast.

If we are allowed to live till we touch the borders of a century, or if we even fulfill our hundred years, these shoes would never be too old. These are the sort of shoes that Enoch wore; and was it not for more than three hundred years that he walked with God? He was always walking, but his shoes of iron and brass were never worn out. It matters not, dear friend, how severe may be your trials and troubles, or how long may be your pilgrimage through this wilderness, God, who gives these extraordinary shoes, such as no other has ever fashioned, and such as men are not accustomed to wear, has in this provided you against the utmost of endurance, the extremity of suffering. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass"—does not this symbol signify the best, the strongest, the most lasting, and the most fitting provision for a pilgrimage of trial? Thy shoes shall last as long as thou shalt last. Thou shalt find them as good as new when thou art about to lie down on thy last bed, to be gathered to thy fathers. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass."

I may be addressing some here that are very low in spirit: they fear that they shall not hold on their way, they are ready to halt, yea, ready to lie down in despair. I trust the way will hold you on when you can hardly hold on your way. May you hear the ring of your iron sandals, and be ashamed of cowardice. They should be iron men to whom God has given iron shoes. I would encourage you to go forward in the way, for you are, by God's grace, made fit for travelling. You are not bare-footed, nor badly

shod. You ought to go forward bravely, after your heavenly Father has put such shoes as these upon your feet. You are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and you may trip lightly on your way; and again I say, though that way should be a very long one, you need not think that your provision for the way will fail you. Even to hoar hairs the Lord will be with you. He has made, and he will bear; even he will carry you. Your last days shall be better than your first days. Yea, you shall go from strength to strength through his abounding and faithful love.

I find great difficulty in speaking tonight, because of some failure of my voice; but the divine promise is so sweet that even when poorly uttered it has a music all its own. For fear my voice should quite fail me, I will hasten on to say a few words upon the second point. We have examined the shoes, now let us consider the strength.

## II. "AS THY DAYS,SO SHALL THY STRENGTH BE."

This provision is meant to meet weakness. The words carry a tacit hint to us that we have no strength of our own, but have need of strength from above. Our proud hearts need such a hint; for often we poor creatures begin to rely upon ourselves. Although we are weak as water, we get the notion that our own wit, or our own experience, may now suffice us, though once they might not have done so. But our best powers will not suffice us now, any more than in our youth. If we begin to rest in ourselves it will not be long before we find out our folly. The Lord will not let his people depend upon themselves: they may make the attempt, but, as sure as they are his people, he will empty them from vessel to vessel, and make them know that their fullness dwells in Christ, and not in themselves. Remember that, if you have a sense of weakness, you have only a sense of the truth. You are as weak as you think you are; you certainly do not exaggerate your own helplessness. The Saviour has said "Without me, ye can do nothing"; and that is the full extent of what you can do. The Lord promises you strength, which he would have no need to promise you if you had it naturally apart from him. But he promises to give it, and therein he assures you that you need it. Come down from your self-esteem: stoop from the notion of your own natural ability: divest yourself of the foolish idea that you can do anything in and of yourself,



and come down to the strong for strength, and ask your Lord to fulfill this promise in your experience, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

The strength which is here promised is to abide through days. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Not for today only, but for tomorrow, and for every day as every day shall come. The longest and the shortest day, the brightest and the darkest day, the wedding and the funeral day, shall each have its strength measured out, till there shall be no more days. The Lord will portion out to his saints their support even as their days follow each other.

"Days of trial, days of grief,  
In succession thou may'st see;  
This is still thy sweet relief,  
'As thy day, thy strength shall be.'"

This strength is to be given daily We shall never have two days' grace at a time.

"Day by day the manna fell:  
Oh, to learn this lesson well,  
'Day by day' the promise reads:  
Daily strength for daily needs!"

If I get strength enough to get through this sermon, I shall be satisfied for the present. I do not want strength to get through next Sabbath morning's sermon till that Sabbath morning comes. If I can weather the present storm, I shall not just now require the strength to outlive the storms of all the year 1889. What should I do with this reserve force if I had it? Where would you store away your extra grace? You would put it in the lumber-room of your pride, where it would breed worms, and become an offence. A storage of what you call "grace" would turn into self-sufficiency. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be": this secures you a day's burden and a day's help, a day's sorrow and a day's comfort. After all, what more do we want? If a man has a meal, let him give thanks for it: he does not want two meals at once. If a man has enough for the day, he certainly is not yet in want for tomorrow. He cannot eat tomorrow's food today; or, if he did,

it would injure his health, and be no comfort to him. Let us narrow our vision as to the necessities of daily life, not looking so far ahead as to compress into today more evil than naturally belongs to it; for "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Our strength is to be given to us daily.

And then the text seems to say clearly that it will be given to us proportionately, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." A day of little service, little strength; a day of little suffering, little strength; but in a tremendous day—a day that needs thee to play the Samson—thou shalt have Samson's strength. A day of deep waters in which thou shalt need to swim, shall be a day in which thou shalt ride the billows like a sea-bird. Do you not think that this might almost tempt us to wish for days of great trial, in order that we might receive great grace? If we are always to go smoothly, and to receive but little grace in consequence, we shall never rise to the great things of the divine life. We shall be dwarfs, and none shall say, "There were giants in those days." We may not wish to be always children, with boyish tasks and childish duties; it is right we should grow, and that in consequence we should shoulder burdens from which youthful backs are exempt. Who would wish to be always a little child? Great grace will be sent to us to meet our great necessities. And is not that a most desirable thing? I remember that for a long season the Lord was very gracious to me in the matter of funds for the extensive works which I have been called upon to originate and superintend, and I felt very grateful for the ease which I enjoyed; yet it crossed my mind that I was learning less of God than in more trying seasons, and I trembled. Years gone by there were considerable necessities which did not appear to be met at once, and I went with them to God in prayer, and I trusted him, and he supplied my needs in such a wonderful way that I seemed to have the closest intercourse with him. I could most plainly see his hand stretched out to help me. I could see him working for me as gloriously as if he wrought miracles. These were glorious days with me! I cannot tell you what holy wonder often filled my soul when the Lord interposed on behalf of the Orphanage or the College. The record reads so charmingly that unbelievers would never accept it as true. Then God made me by grace like one who steps from the summit of one mountain to another: I stepped across the valleys, leaving the deep places far below. So in my easy seasons I thought to myself, "Everything comes in regularly and

abundantly. I am like a little child walking along a smooth lawn. This is but a common, ordinary state of affairs, in which even a man of no faith could pursue his way. I do not see so much of God, though assuredly I ought to see him as clearly now as ever." I did not wish for necessities, but I remembered how the Lord glorified himself in them, and therefore I half desired them. The regular blessing day by day, almost without need of special prayer, does not constrain you to look to God so vividly as when you gaze down into the deep, dark abyss of want, and feel, "If he does not help me now, I shall soon be in dire distress." This forces forth the living prayer. "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses." Our great necessities bring God so very near to us, so manifest to our consciousness, that they are an unspeakable blessing. So I did not ask to have a time of need; I hope that I shall never be so foolish as that; but when I found a time of need hurrying up, as I soon did, I felt a special delight in it—I took pleasure in my necessities. My heart cried, "Now I shall see my Lord; now I shall see him again. Now I shall get a hold of that great arm, and hang upon it, and I shall see how the Lord will deliver me in time of need." I did thus lay hold upon my Lord again, and I found him still God All-sufficient, for which I bless his name. In proportion as he sends the trial he sends the help. Be not, therefore, afraid of great trial: on the contrary, look for it, and when it comes, say to yourselves, "Now for great grace. Now for a special manifestation of the faithfulness of God."

Mark, again, that strength will be given to us in all forms. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Our days vary, our trials change; our service varies, too. Our lives are far from being monotonous: they are musical with many notes and tones. Our present state is like chequered work: or, say, as a mosaic of many colours. But the strength that God gives varies with the occasion. He can bestow physical strength, and mental strength, and moral strength, and spiritual strength. He gives strength just where the strength is needed, and of that peculiar kind which the trial demands. We have no need to fear because we feel weak in a certain direction: if we need strength in that special quarter, the strength will come there. "But if I am tried," says one, "in a certain way, I shall fail." No, you will not. "As your days, so shall your strength be." "I am horrified," says one, "at the thought of having to pass through the ordeal of a surgical operation." Do

not be horrified at it; for though at the present moment you may be quite unfit for the trial, you will be quite ready for it when it comes. Have you never been in great danger and found yourself cool and calm beyond anything you could have expected? It has been so with me, and I have learned from my experience, not to measure what I shall be, in a trying hour, by what I happen to be just now. The Lord will take care to fit us for our future, and, as our days, so shall our strength be.

I find that some persons read this passage thus—when our days grow many, and we come to the end, yet our strength shall be equal to what it was in the days of our youth. We shall, according to this, find our strength continuing as our days continue. It is a cheering meaning, certainly. The children of God do find that, spiritually, their strength is renewed day by day. The outer man decayeth, that is nature: but the inward man is renewed day by day, that is grace. As thy days are, so shall thy strength continue to be. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Though days come one after another, so shall strength come with them; there shall be such a continuity of perpetual renewal that the heart shall be strong even to the end of life, and the old man shall know no inward decay.

An hour or so ago, I stood by what will certainly be the death-bed of one of our best friends, and I was cheered and comforted when I heard him so blessedly speaking both of the present with its pain, and of the future with its near descent into the vale of death. He said, "I have no doubt as to my eternal bliss. I have had no doubt—no, not a shadow of doubt—of my interest in Christ through my long illness. In fact, I have felt a perfect rest of mind about it all. And," he added, "this is nothing more than ought to be, with us who listen to the glorious gospel, for we live on good spiritual meat. Sound doctrine should make us strong in the Lord. I have not been a hearer of yours for thirty years, and heard of covenant love and faithfulness, to die with a trembling hope. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." Thus, dear friends, shall we also be supported, for the brother of whom I speak is a simple-minded man, who makes no pretensions to learning, but is one of our own selves. It will be a great

privilege to find that when death's days come—the days of sickness, and decline, and weakness, yet still our strength remains the same. It will be glorious to go from strength to strength, and even in the day of utter physical prostration to find the spirit leaping for joy, in anticipation of the time when it shall be free from the cumbering clay, and shall stretch its wings and fly aloft to yonder world of joy. Yes, as our days our strength shall be.

Come, child of God, be peaceful, be happy in the prospect of the future. Do more, be joyous, and show your joy. You are out of harm's reach, for Christ has you in his hand. You shall never be staggered nor overcome, for the Lord is your strength and your song, and he has become your salvation. This text is a royal banquet for you. Here are fat things full of marrow. Eat abundantly, O beloved. Feel your spirit renewed by the Holy Spirit. Be prepared for whatever is yet to come; for such a word as this, not from me, but from the Lord himself, may gird up your loins for another march towards Canaan; "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

I am sorry, very sorry, for those among you who have no portion and lot in such a promise as this. Whatever you may have in this world, you are very poor in losing such a promise as this. You are shoeless, or if you have some wooden sabot, it will soon be worn out. You will never be able to travel to heaven in any shoes that mortal men can make for you. You need to go to the great Father, who alone can say, "Put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." I am sorry for you in your present condition, for you have no strength but your own, and that is a poor piece of weakness. You are troubled even now: what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? The common footmen of daily life have wearied you: what will you do when you have to contend with horses? O souls, what will you do when you are ushered into the presence of the dread mysteries of another world? O sirs, you are without strength; but is not that a grand verse, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"? Ungodly as you are, clutch at such a word as that. "Without strength" as you are, yet lay hold upon the Lord's strength. It is for those who have no strength that Christ came into the world. It is for the ungodly that he laid down his life. Come, and trust him. Let him become

your strength and your righteousness from this time forth; and my he  
manifest himself to you in a special and gracious way; and unto his name  
shall be praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

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## **The Shortest Of The Seven Cries**

After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. - John 19:28

It was most fitting that every word of our Lord upon the cross should be gathered up and preserved. As not a bone of him shall be broken, so not a word shall be lost. The Holy Spirit took special care that each of the sacred utterances should be fittingly recorded. There were, as you know, seven of those last words, and seven is the number of perfection and fulness; the number which blends the three of the infinite God with the four of complete creation. Our Lord in his death-cries, as in all else, was perfection itself. There is a fulness of meaning in each utterance which no man shall be able fully to bring forth, and when combined they make up a vast deep of thought, which no human line can fathom. Here, as everywhere else, we are constrained to say of our Lord, "Never man spake like this man." Amid all the anguish of his spirit his last words prove him to have remained fully self-possessed, true to his forgiving nature, true to his kingly office, true to his filial relationship, true to his God, true to his love of the written word, true to his glorious work, and true to his faith in his Father.

As these seven sayings were so faithfully recorded, we do not wonder that they have frequently been the subject of devout meditation. Fathers and confessors, preachers and divines have delighted to dwell upon every syllable of these matchless cries. These solemn sentences have shone like the seven golden candlesticks or the seven stars of the Apocalypse, and have lighted multitudes of men to him who spake them. Thoughtful men have drawn a wealth of meaning from them, and in so doing have arranged them into different groups, and placed them under several heads. I cannot give you more than a mere taste of this rich subject, but I have been most struck with two ways of regarding our Lord's last words. First, they teach and confirm many of the doctrines of our holy faith. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" is the first. Here is the forgiveness of sin—free forgiveness in answer to the Saviour's plea.

"To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Here is the safety of the believer in the hour of his departure, and his instant admission into the presence of his Lord. It is a blow at the fable of purgatory which strikes it to the heart. "Women, behold thy son!" This very plainly sets forth the true and proper humanity of Christ, who to the end recognised his human relationship to Mary, of whom he was born. Yet his language teaches us not to worship her, for he calls her "woman," but to honor him in whom his direst agony thought of her needs and griefs, as he also thinks of all his people, for these are his mother and sister and brother. "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" is the fourth cry, and it illustrates the penalty endured by our Substitute when he bore our sins, and so was forsaken of his God. The sharpness of that sentence no exposition can fully disclose to us: it is keen as the very edge and point of the sword which pierced his heart. "I thirst" is the fifth cry, and its utterance teaches us the truth of Scripture, for all things were accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, and therefore our Lord said, "I thirst." Holy Scripture remains the basis of our faith, established by every word and act of our Redeemer. The last word but one, "It is finished." There is the complete justification of the believer, since the work by which he is accepted is fully accomplished. The last of his last words is also taken from the Scriptures, and shows where his mind was feeding. He cried, ere he bowed the head which he had held erect amid all his conflict, as one who never yielded, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." In that cry there is reconciliation to God. He who stood in our stead has finished all his work, and now his spirit comes back to the Father, and he brings us with him. Every word, therefore, you see teaches us some grand fundamental doctrine of our blessed faith. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

A second mode of treating these seven cries is to view them as setting forth the person and offices of our Lord who uttered them. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"—here we see the Mediator interceding: Jesus standing before the Father pleading for the guilty. "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise"—this is the Lord Jesus in kingly power, opening with the key of David a door which none can shut, admitting into the gates of heaven the poor soul who had confessed him on the tree. Hail, everlasting King in heaven, thou dost admit to thy paradise whomsoever thou wilt! Nor dost thou set a



time for waiting, but instantly thou dost set wide the gate of pearl; thou hast all power in heaven as well as upon earth. Then came, "Women, behold thy son!" wherein we see the Son of man in the gentleness of a son caring for his bereaved mother. In the former cry, as he opened Paradise, you saw the Son of God; now you see him who was verily and truly born of a woman, made under the law; and under the law you see him still, for he honours his mother and cares for her in the last article of death. Then comes the "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Here we behold his human soul in anguish, his inmost heart overwhelmed by the withdrawing of Jehovah's face, and made to cry out as if in perplexity and amazement. "I thirst," is his human body tormented by grievous pain. Here you see how the mortal flesh had to share in the agony of the inward spirit. "It is finished" is the last word but one, and there you see the perfected Saviour, the Captain of our salvation, who has completed the undertaking upon which he had entered, finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in ever lasting righteousness. The last expiring word in which he commended his spirit to his Father, is the note of acceptance for himself and for us all. As he commends his spirit into the Father's hand, so does he bring all believers nigh to God, and henceforth we are in the hand of the Father, who is greater than all, and none shall pluck us thence. Is not this a fertile field of thought? May the Holy Spirit often lead us to glean therein.

There are many other ways in which these words might be read, and they would be found to be all full of instruction. Like the steps of a ladder or the links of a golden chain, there is a mutual dependence and interlinking of each of the cries, so that one leads to another and that to a third. Separately or in connection our Master's words overflow with instruction to thoughtful minds: but of all save one I must say, "Of which we cannot now speak particularly."

Our text is the shortest of all the words of Calvary; it stands as two words in our language—"I thirst," but in the Greek it is only one. I cannot say that it is short and sweet, for, alas, it was bitterness itself to our Lord Jesus; and yet out of its bitterness I trust there will come great sweetness to us. Though bitter to him in the speaking it will be sweet to us in the hearing,—so sweet that all the bitterness of our trials shall be forgotten as

we remember the vinegar and gall of which he drank.

We shall by the assistance of the Holy Spirit try to regard these words of our Saviour in a five-fold light. First, we shall look upon them as THE ENSIGN OF HIS TRUE HUMANITY. Jesus said, "I thirst," and this is the complaint of a man. Our Lord is the Maker of the ocean and the waters that are above the firmament: it is his hand that stays or opens the bottles of heaven, and sendeth rain upon the evil and upon the good. "The sea is his, and he made it," and all fountains and springs are of his digging. He poureth out the streams that run among the hills, the torrents which rush adown the mountains, and the flowing rivers which enrich the plains. One would have said, If he were thirsty he would not tell us, for all the clouds and rains would be glad to refresh his brow, and the brooks and streams would joyously flow at his feet. And yet, though he was Lord of all he had so fully taken upon himself the form of a servant and was so perfectly made in the likeness of sinful flesh, that he cried with fainting voice, "I thirst." How truly man he is; he is, indeed, "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," for he bears our infirmities. I invite you to meditate upon the true humanity of our Lord very reverently, and very lovingly. Jesus was proved to be really man, because he suffered the pains which belong to manhood. Angels cannot suffer thirst. A phantom, as some have called him, could not suffer in his fashion: but Jesus really suffered, not only the more refined pains of delicate and sensitive minds, but the rougher and commoner pangs of flesh and blood. Thirst is a commonplace misery, such as may happen to peasants or beggars; it is a real pain, and not a thing of a fancy or a nightmare of dreamland. Thirst is no royal grief, but an evil of universal manhood; Jesus is brother to the poorest and most humble of our race. Our Lord, however, endured thirst to an extreme degree, for it was the thirst of death which was upon him, and more, it was the thirst of one whose death was not a common one, for "he tasted death for every man." That thirst was caused, perhaps, in part by the loss of blood, and by the fever created by the irritation caused by his four grievous wounds. The nails were fastened in the most sensitive parts of the body, and the wounds were widened as the weight of his body dragged the nails through his blessed flesh, and tore his tender nerves. The extreme tension produced a burning feverishness. It was pain that dried his mouth and made it like an oven, till he declared, in the language

of the twenty-second psalm, "My tongue cleaveth to my jaws." It was a thirst such as none of us have ever known, for not yet has the death dew condensed upon our brows. We shall perhaps know it in our measure in our dying hour, but not yet, nor ever so terribly as he did. Our Lord felt that grievous drought of dissolution by which all moisture seems dried up, and the flesh returns to the dust of death: this those know who have commenced to tread the valley of the shadow of death. Jesus, being a man, escaped none of the ills which are allotted to man in death. He is indeed "Immanuel, God with us" everywhere.

Believing this, let us tenderly feel how very near akin to us our Lord Jesus has become. You have been ill, and you have been parched with fever as he was, and then you too have gasped out "I thirst." Your path runs hard by that of your Master. He said, "I thirst," in order that one might bring him drink, even as you have wished to have a cooling draught handed to you when you could not help yourself. Can you help feeling how very near Jesus is to us when his lips must be moistened with a sponge, and he must be so dependent upon others as to ask drink from their hand? Next time your fevered lips murmur "I am very thirsty," you may say to yourself, "Those are sacred words, for my Lord spake in that fashion." The words, "I thirst," are a common voice in death chambers. We can never forget the painful scenes of which we have been witness, when we have watched the dissolving of the human frame. Some of those whom we loved very dearly we have seen quite unable to help themselves; the death sweat has been upon them, and this has been one of the marks of their approaching dissolution, that they have been parched with thirst, and could only mutter between their half-closed lips, "Give me to drink." Ah, beloved, our Lord was so truly man that all our griefs remind us of him: the next time we are thirsty we may gaze upon him; and whenever we see a friend faint and thirsting while dying we may behold our Lord dimly, but truly, mirrored in his members. How near akin the thirsty Saviour is to us; let us love him more and more.

How great the love which led him to such a condescension as this! Do not let us forget the infinite distance between the Lord of glory on his throne and the Crucified dried up with thirst. A river of the water of life, pure as crystal, proceedeth to-day out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and

yet once he condescended to say, "I thirst," before his angelic guards, they would surely have emulated the courage of the men of David when they cut their way to the well of Bethlehem that was within the gate, and drew water in jeopardy of their lives. Who among us would not willingly pour out his soul unto death if he might but give refreshment to the Lord? And yet he placed himself for our sakes into a position of shame and suffering where none would wait upon him, but when he cried, "I thirst," they gave him vinegar to drink. Glorious stoop of our exalted Head! O Lord Jesus, we love thee and we worship thee! We would fain lift thy name on high in grateful remembrance of the depths to which thou didst descend!

While thus we admire his condescension let our thoughts also turn with delight to his sure sympathy: for if Jesus said, "I thirst," then he knows all our frailties and woes. The next time we are in pain or are suffering depression of spirit we will remember that our Lord understands it all, for he has had practical, personal experience of it. Neither in torture of body nor in sadness of heart are we deserted by our Lord; his line is parallel with ours. The arrow which has lately pierced thee, my brother, was first stained with his blood. The cup of which thou art made to drink, though it be very bitter, bears the mark of his lips about its brim. He hath traversed the mournful way before thee, and every footprint thou leavest in the sodden soil is stamped side by side with his footmarks. Let the sympathy of Christ, then, be fully believed in and deeply appreciated, since he said, "I thirst."

Henceforth, also, let us cultivate the spirit of resignation, for we may well rejoice to carry a cross which his shoulders have borne before us. Beloved, if our Master said, "I thirst," do we expect every day to drink of streams from Lebanon? He was innocent, and yet he thirsted; shall we marvel if guilty ones are now and then chastened? If he was so poor that his garments were stripped from him, and he was hung up upon the tree, penniless and friendless, hungering and thirsting, will you henceforth groan and murmur because you bear the yoke of poverty and want? There is bread upon your table to-day, and there will be at least a cup of cold water to refresh you. You are not, therefore, so poor as he. Complain not, then. Shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord? Let patience have her perfect work. You do suffer. Perhaps, dear

sister, you carry about with you a gnawing disease which eats at your heart, but Jesus took our sicknesses, and his cup was more bitter than yours. In your chamber let the gasp of your Lord as he said, "I thirst," go through your ears, and as you hear it let it touch your heart and cause you to gird up yourself and say, "Doth he say, 'I thirst'? Then I will thirst with him and not complain, I will suffer with him and not murmur." The Redeemer's cry of "I thirst" is a solemn lesson of patience to his afflicted.

Once again, as we think of this "I thirst," which proves our Lord's humanity, let us resolve to shun no denials, but rather court them that we may be conformed to his image. May we not be half ashamed of our pleasures when he says, "I thirst"? May we not despise our loaded table while he is neglected? Shall it ever be a hardship to be denied the satisfying draught when he said, "I thirst." Shall carnal appetites be indulged and bodies pampered when Jesus cried :I thirst"? What if the bread be dry, what if the medicine be nauseous; yet for his thirst there was no relief but gall and vinegar, and dare we complain? For his sake we may rejoice in self-denials, and accept Christ and a crust as all we desire between here and heaven. A Christian living to indulge the base appetites of a brute beast, to eat and to drink almost to gluttony and drunkenness, is utterly unworthy of the name. The conquest of the appetites, the entire subjugation of the flesh, must be achieved, for before our great Exemplar said, "It is finished," wherein methinks he reached the greatest height of all, he stood as only upon the next lower step to that elevation, and said, "I thirst." The power to suffer for another, the capacity to be self-denying even to an extreme to accomplish some great work for God—this is a thing to be sought after, and must be gained before our work is done, and in this Jesus is before us our example and our strength.

Thus have I tried to spy out a measure of teaching, by using that one glass for the soul's eye, through which we look upon "I thirst" as the ensign of his true humanity.

II. Secondly, we shall regard these words, "I thirst," as **THE TOKEN OF HIS SUFFERING SUBSTITUTION**. The great Surety says, "I thirst," because he is placed in the sinner's stead, and he must therefore undergo the penalty of sin for the ungodly. "My God, my God, why hast thou

forsaken me?" points to the anguish of his soul; "I thirst" expresses in part the torture of his body; and they were both needful, because it is written of the God of justice that he is "able to destroy both soul and body in hell," and the pangs that are due to law are of both kinds, touching both heart and flesh. See, brethren, where sin begins, and mark that there it ends. It began with the mouth of appetite, when it was sinfully gratified, and it ends when a kindred appetite is graciously denied. Our first parents plucked forbidden fruit, and by eating slew the race. Appetite was the door of sin, and therefore in that point our Lord was put to pain. With "I thirst" the evil is destroyed and receives its expiation. I saw the other day the emblem of a serpent with its tail in its mouth, and if I carry it a little beyond the artist's intention the symbol may set forth appetite swallowing up itself. A carnal appetite of the body, the satisfaction of the desire for food, first brought us down under the first Adam, and now the pang of thirst, the denial of what the body craved for, restores us to our place.

Nor is this all. We know from experience that the present effect of sin in every man who indulges in it is thirst of soul. The mind of man is like the daughters of the horseleech, which cry for ever, "Give, give." Metaphorically understood, thirst is dissatisfaction, the craving of the mind for something which it has not, but which it pines for. Our Lord says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," that thirst being the result of sin in every ungodly man at this moment. Now Christ standing in the stead of the ungodly suffers thirst as a type of his enduring the result of sin. More solemn still is the reflection that according to our Lord's own teaching, thirst will also be the eternal result of sin, for he says concerning the rich glutton, "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment," and his prayer, which was denied him, was, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." Now recollect, if Jesus had not thirsted, every one of us would have thirsted for ever afar off from God, with an impassable gulf between us and heaven. Our sinful tongues, blistered by the fever of passion, must have burned for ever had not his tongue been tormented with thirst in our stead. I suppose that the "I thirst" was uttered softly, so that perhaps only one and another who stood near the cross heard it at all; in contrast with the louder cry of

"Lama sabachthani" and the triumphant shout of "It is finished": but that soft, expiring sigh, "I thirst," has ended for us the thirst which else, insatiably fierce, had preyed upon us throughout eternity. Oh, wondrous substitution of the just for the unjust, of God for man, of the perfect Christ for us guilty, hell-deserving rebels. Let us magnify and bless our Redeemer's name.

It seems to me very wonderful that this "I thirst" should be, as it were, the clearance of it all. He had no sooner said "I thirst," and sipped the vinegar, than he shouted, "It is finished"; and all was over: the battle was fought and the victory won for ever, and our great Deliverer's thirst was the sign of his having smitten the last foe. The flood of his grief has passed the high-water mark, and began to be assuaged. The "I thirst" was the bearing of the last pang; what if I say it was the expression of the fact that his pangs had at last begun to cease, and their fury had spent itself, and left him able to note his lessor pains? The excitement of a great struggle makes men forget thirst and faintness; it is only when all is over that they come back to themselves and note the spending of their strength. The great agony of being forsaken by God was over, and he felt faint when the strain was withdrawn. I like to think of our Lord's saying, "It is finished," directly after he had exclaimed, "I thirst"; for these two voices come so naturally together. Our glorious Samson had been fighting our foes; heaps upon heaps he had slain his thousands, and now like Samson he was sore athirst. He sipped of the vinegar, and he was refreshed, and no sooner has he thrown off the thirst than he shouted like a conqueror, "It is finished," and quitted the field, covered with renown. Let us exult as we see our Substitute going through with his work even to the bitter end, and then with a "Consummatum est" returning to his Father, God. O souls, burdened with sin, rest ye here, and resting live.

III. We will now take the text in a third way, and may the Spirit of God instruct us once again. The utterance of "I thirst" brought out A TYPE OF MAN'S TREATMENT OF HIS LORD. It was a confirmation of the Scripture testimony with regard to man's natural enmity to God. According to modern thought man is a very fine and noble creature, struggling to become better. He is greatly to be commended and admired, for his sin is said to be seeking after God, and his superstition is a

struggling after light. Great and worshipful being that he is, truth is to be altered for him, the gospel is to be modulated to suit the tone of his various generations, and all the arrangements of the universe are to be rendered subservient to his interests. Justice must fly the field lest it be severe to so deserving a being; as for punishment, it must not be whispered to his ears polite. In fact, the tendency is to exalt man above God and give him the highest place. But such is not the truthful estimate of man according to the Scriptures: there man is a fallen creature, with a carnal mind which cannot be reconciled to God; a worse than brutish creature, rendering evil for good, and treating his God with vile ingratitude. Alas, man is the slave and the dupe of Satan, and a black-hearted traitor to his God. Did not the prophecies say that man would give to his incarnate God gall to eat and vinegar to drink? It is done. He came to save, and man denied him hospitality: at the first there was no room for him at the inn, and at the last there was not one cool cup of water for him to drink; but when he thirsted they gave him vinegar to drink. This is man's treatment of his Saviour. Universal manhood, left to itself, rejects, crucifies, and mocks the Christ of God. This was the act too of man at his best, when he is moved to pity; for it seems clear that he who lifted up the wet sponge to the Redeemer's lips, did it in compassion. I think that Roman soldier meant well, at least well for a rough warrior with his little light and knowledge. He ran and filled a sponge with vinegar: it was the best way he knew of putting a few drops of moisture to the lips of one who was suffering so much; but though he felt a degree of pity, it was such as one might show to a dog; he felt no reverence, but mocked as he relieved. We read, "The soldiers also mocked him, offering him vinegar." When our Lord cried, "Eloi, Eloi," and afterwards said, "I thirst," the persons around the cross said, "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him," mocking him; and, according to Mark, he who gave the vinegar uttered much the same words. He pitied the sufferer, but he thought so little of him that he joined in the voice of scorn. Even when man compassionates the sufferings of Christ, and man would have ceased to be human if he did not, still he scorns him; the very cup which man gives to Jesus is at once scorn and pity, for "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." See how man at his best mingles admiration of the Saviour's person with scorn of his claims; writing books to hold him up as an example and at the same moment rejecting his deity; admitting that he



was a wonderful man, but denying his most sacred mission; extolling his ethical teaching and then trampling on his blood: thus giving him drink, but that drink vinegar. O my hearers, beware of praising Jesus and denying his atoning sacrifice. Beware of rendering him homage and dishonouring his name at the same time.

Alas, my brethren, I cannot say much on the score of man's cruelty to our Lord without touching myself and you. Have we not often given him vinegar to drink? Did we not do so years ago before we knew him? We used to melt when we heard about his sufferings, but we did not turn from our sins. We gave him our tears and then grieved him with our sins. We thought sometimes that we loved him as we heard the story of his death, but we did not change our lives for his sake, nor put our trust in him, and so we gave him vinegar to drink. Nor does the grief end here, for have not the best works we have ever done, and the best feelings we ever felt, and the best prayers we have ever offered, been tart and sour with sin? Can they be compared to generous wine? are they not more like sharp vinegar? I wonder he has ever received them, as one marvels why he received this vinegar; and yet he has received them, and smiled upon us for presenting them. He knew once how to turn water into wine, and in matchless love he has often turned our sour drink-offerings into something sweet to himself, though in themselves, methinks, they have been the juice of sour grapes, sharp enough to set his teeth on edge. We may therefore come before him, with all the rest of our race, when God subdues them to repentance by his love, and look on him whom we have pierced, and mourn for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. We may well remember our faults this day,

"We, whose proneness to forget  
Thy dear love, on Olivet  
Bathed thy brow with bloody sweat;

"We whose sins, with awful power,  
Like a cloud did o'er thee lower,  
In that God-excluding hour;

"We, who still, in thought and dead,

Often hold the bitter reed  
To thee, in thy time of need."

I have touched that point very lightly because I want a little more time to dwell upon a fourth view of this scene. May the Holy Ghost help us to hear a fourth tuning of the dolorous music, "I thirst."

IV. I think, beloved friends, that the cry of "I thirst" was THE MYSTICAL EXPRESSION OF THE DESIRE OF HIS HEART—"I thirst." I cannot think that natural thirst was all he felt. He thirsted for water doubtless, but his soul was thirsty in a higher sense; indeed, he seems only to have spoken that the Scriptures might be fulfilled as to the offering him vinegar. Always was he in harmony with himself, and his own body was always expressive of his soul's cravings as well as of its own longings. "I thirst" meant that his heart was thirsting to save men. This thirst had been on him from the earliest of his earthly days. "Wist ye not," said he, while yet a boy, "that I must be about my Father's business?" Did he not tell his disciples, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" He thirsted to pluck us from between the jaws of hell, to pay our redemption price, and set us free from the eternal condemnation which hung over us; and when on the cross the work was almost done his thirst was not assuaged, and could not be till he could say, "It is finished." It is almost done, thou Christ of God; thou hast almost saved thy people; there remaineth but one thing more, that thou shouldst actually die, and hence thy strong desire to come to the end and complete thy labour. Thou wast still straightened till the last pang was felt and the last word spoken to complete to full redemption, and hence thy cry, "I thirst."

Beloved, there is now upon our Master, and there always has been, a thirst after the love of his people. Do you not remember how that thirst of his was strong in the old days of the prophet? Call to mind his complaint in the fifth chapter of Isaiah, "Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein." What was he looking for from his

vineyard and its winepress? What but for the juice of the vine that he might be refreshed? "And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes,"—vinegar, and not wine; sourness, and not sweetness. So he was thirsting then. According to the sacred canticle of love, in the fifth chapter of the Song of Songs, we learn that when he drank in those olden times it was in the garden of his church that he was refreshed. What doth he say? "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." In the same song he speaks of his church, and says, "The roof of thy mouth is as the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak." And yet again in the eighth chapter the bride saith, "I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate." Yes, he loves to be with his people; they are the garden where he walks for refreshment, and their love, their graces, are the milk and wine which he delights to drink. Christ was always thirsty to save men, and to be loved of men; and we see a type of his life-long desire when, being weary, he sat thus on the well and said to the woman of Samaria, "Give me to drink." There was a deeper meaning in his words than she dreamed of, as a verse further down fully proves, when he said to his disciples, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." He derived spiritual refreshment from the winning of that women's heart to himself.

And now, brethren, our blessed Lord has at this time a thirst for communion with each one of you who are his people, not because you can do him good, but because he can do you good. He thirsts to bless you and to receive your grateful love in return; he thirsts to see you looking with believing eye to his fulness, and holding out your emptiness that he may supply it. He saith, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." What knocks he for? It is that he may eat and drink with you, for he promises that if we open to him he will enter in and sup with us and we with him. He is thirsty still, you see, for our poor love, and surely we cannot deny it to him. Come let us pour out full flagons, until his joy is fulfilled in us. And what makes him love us so? Ah, that I cannot tell, except his own great love. He must love, it is his nature. He must love his chosen whom he has once begun to love, for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His

great love makes him thirst to have us much nearer than we are; he will never be satisfied till all his redeemed are beyond gunshot of thee enemy. I will give you one of his thirsty prayers—"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." He wants you brother, he wants you, dear sister, he longs to have you wholly to himself. Come to him in prayer, come to him in fellowship, come to him by perfect consecration, come to him by surrendering your whole being to the sweet mysterious influences of his Spirit. Sit at his feet with Mary, lean on his breast with John; yea, come with the spouse in the song and say, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine." He calls for that: will you not give it to him? Are you so frozen at heart that not a cup of cold water can be melted for Jesus? Are you lukewarm? O brother, if he says, "I thirst" and you bring him a lukewarm heart, that is worse than vinegar, for he has said, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." He can receive vinegar, but not lukewarm love. Come, bring him your warm heart, and let him drink from that purified chalice as much as he wills. Let all your love be his. I know he loves to receive from you, because he delights even in a cup of cold water that you give to one of his disciples; how much more will he delight in the giving of your whole self to him? Therefore while he thirsts give him to drink this day.

V. Lastly, the cry of "I thirst" is to us THE PATTERN OF OUR DEATH WITH HIM. Know ye not, beloved,—for I speak to those who know the Lord,—that ye are crucified together with Christ? Well, then, what means this cry, "I thirst," but this, that we should thirst too? We do not thirst after the old manner wherein we were bitterly afflicted, for he hath said, "He that drinketh of this water shall never thirst:" but now we covet a new thirst. A refined and heavenly appetite, a craving for our Lord. O thou blessed Master, if we are indeed nailed up to the tree with thee, give us a thirst after thee with a thirst which only the cup of "the new covenant in thy blood" can ever satisfy. Certain philosophers have said that they love the pursuit of truth even better than the knowledge of truth. I differ from them greatly, but I will say this, that next to the actual enjoyment of my Lord's presence I love to hunger and to thirst after him. Rutherford used words somewhat to this effect, "I thirst for my Lord and this is joy; a joy which no man taketh from me. Even if I may not come at him, yet

shall I be full of consolation, for it is heaven to thirst after him, and surely he will never deny a poor soul liberty to admire him, and adore him, and thirst after him." As for myself, I would grow more and more insatiable after my divine Lord, and when I have much of him I would still cry for more; and then for more, and still for more. My heart shall not be content till he is all in all to me, and I am altogether lost in him. O to be enlarged in soul so as to take deeper draughts of his sweet love, for our heart cannot have enough. One would wish to be as a spouse, who, when she had already been feasting in the banqueting-house, and had found his fruit sweet to her taste, so that she was overjoyed, yet cried out, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love." She craved full flagons of love though she was already overpowered by it. This is a kind of sweet whereof if a man hath much he must have more, and when he hath more he is under a still greater necessity to receive more, and so on, his appetite for ever growing by that which it feeds upon, till he is filled with all the fulness of God. "I thirst,"—ay, this is my soul's word with her Lord. Borrowed from his lips it well suiteth my mouth.

"I thirst, but not as once I did,  
The vain delights of earth to share;  
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid  
That I should seek my pleasures there.

Dear fountain of delight unknown!  
No longer sink below the brim;  
But overflow, and pour me down  
A living and life-giving stream."

Jesus thirsted, then let us thirst in this dry and thirsty land where no water is. Even as the hart panteth after the water brooks, our souls would thirst after thee, O God.

Beloved, let us thirst for the souls of our fellow-men. I have already told you that such was our Lord's mystical desire; let it be ours also. Brother, thirst to have your children save. Brother, thirst I pray you to have your workpeople saved. Sister, thirst for the salvation of your class, thirst for the redemption of your family, thirst for the conversion of your husband.

We ought all to have a longing for conversions. It is so with each one of you? If not, bestir yourselves at once. Fix your hearts upon some unsaved one, and thirst until he is saved. It is the way whereby many shall be brought to Christ, when this blessed soul-thirst of true Christian charity shall be upon those who are themselves saved. Remember how Paul said, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." He would have sacrificed himself to save his countrymen, so heartily did he desire their eternal welfare. Let this mind be in you also.

As for yourselves, thirst after perfection. Hunger and thirst after righteousness, for you shall be filled. Hate sin, and heartily loathe it; but thirst to be holy as God is holy, thirst to be like Christ, thirst to bring glory to his sacred name by complete conformity to his will.

May the Holy Ghost work in you the complete pattern of Christ crucified, and to him shall be praise for ever and ever. Amen.

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## **A Simple Sermon For Seeking Souls**

Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. - Romans 10:13

It has been said by an eminent divine that many of us in preaching the word suppose too great knowledge in our hearers. "Very often," says this divine, "there are in the congregation persons who are totally unacquainted with the great science of divinity. They are entire strangers to the whole system of grace and salvation." It is proper, then, that the preacher should address himself to his hearers sometimes as if they were

totally ignorant of his message, and tell it to them as a new thing, going over the whole of it as if he believed them to be ignorant of it; "For," says this good man, "it is better to suppose too little knowledge, and so to explain the thing clearly, to the meanest comprehension, than to suppose too much, and thus to let the ignorant escape without a word of instruction."

Now, I think, I shall not this morning err in his point of view, for I shall assume that some of my congregation, at least, are totally unacquainted with the great plan of salvation. And you that know it well, and have tried its preciousness, will bear with me, I am sure, whilst I try in the simplest words that human lips can put together to tell out the story of how men are lost, and how men are saved according to the words of my text by calling upon the name of the Lord.

Well then, we must begin at the beginning. And we must first tell our hearers, that inasmuch as our text talks of men being saved, it implies that men need saving, and we tell them that if men had been as God created them, they would have needed no saving. Adam in the garden wanted no salvation, he was perfect, pure, clean, holy, and acceptable before God. He was our representative, he stood as the representative for all the race, and when he touched the forbidden fruit, and ate of the tree of which God had said, "Thou shalt not eat thereof, or thou shalt surely die." When he so transgressed against God, he needed a Saviour and we, his offspring through his sin, are born into this world, each of us needing a Saviour. We, who are now present, must not however throw blame on Adam; no man was ever yet damned for Adam's sin alone. Children dying in infancy are, without doubt, saved by sovereign grace through the atonement which is in Christ Jesus. No sooner do they close their eyes to earth than being innocent of any actual sin they at once open them on the bliss of heaven. But you and I are not children. We need not talk just now of Adam's sins. We have our own to a count for, and God knoweth they are enough. Holy Scripture tells us that we all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and conscience beareth witness to the same truth. We have all broken the great commands of God, and in consequence thereof the just God is bound in justice to punish us for the sins we have committed. Now, my brethren, it is because you and I have

broken the divine law, and are subject to the divine wrath, that we stand in need of mercy. Every one of us therefore - every one of us if we would be happy, if we would dwell in heaven with God for ever, must be saved.

But there is great confusion in the minds of men as to what being saved is. Allow me, then, just to say, that salvation means two things. It means in the first place, our escaping from the punishment of sins committed; and it means in the next place, the escaping from the habit of sin, so that in future we shall not live as we have lived. The way in which God saves you is twofold: he finds man a sinner breaking his law, he says, "I forgive you, I will not punish you. I have punished Christ instead of you - you shall be saved." But that is only half the work. He says in the next place - "Man, I will not let you go on sinning as you have been wont to do; I will give you a new heart, which shall subdue your evil habits. So that whereas you have been the slave of sin, you shall be free to serve me. Come away, you are not going to serve that black master of yours any more, you must leave that demon, I will have you to be my child, my servant. Thou sayest, 'I cannot do so.' Come, I will give thee grace to do it; I give thee grace to break off drunkenness, grace to renounce thy swearing, grace to give up Sabbath-breaking; I give thee grace to run in the ways of my commandments, and to find them to be a delightful road." Salvation, then, I say, consists of two things - deliverance on the one hand from the habit of living in enmity with God; and, on the other hand, from the punishment annexed to transgression.

The great subject of this morning, which I shall attempt to dwell upon in very plain language; attempting no flights of oratory whatever - is, how men may be saved. That is the one great question. Let them remember what to be saved is. It is to be made Christians, to have new thoughts, new minds new hearts, and then, it is to have a new home for ever at God's right hand in bliss. How may they be saved? "What must I do to be saved?" is a cry springing from many lips here this morning. The answer of my text is this - "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." I shall first try to explain the text a little - *explanation*. Secondly, I shall try to clear the text from some errors about salvation, which are very popular - that will be *refutation*. And then, thirdly, I shall press the usefulness of my text upon your minds: that will be *exhortation*.



*Explanation, refutation, exhortation*, you will remember the points, and may God impress them upon your minds!

I. First, then, EXPLANATION - What is here meant by calling upon the name of the Lord? And I tremble at this very moment, when I try to explain my text, for I feel it is very easy to darken words without knowledge." Full many a time has a preacher rendered Scripture dark by his explanations, instead of making it brighter. Many a preacher has been like a painted window, shutting out the light, instead of admitting it. There is nothing whatever puzzles me more, and tries my mind more, than the answer to that simple question, What is faith? What is believing? What is calling upon the name of the Lord? In order to get the true sense of this, I turned to my concordance, and looked out the passages where the same word is employed; and, so far as I can judge, I may state from the authority of Scripture, that the word "call" signifies worship, so that I might translate it thus - "Whosoever worships God shall be saved." But you must let me explain that word "worship" according to the Scripture signification of it which must be received, in order to explain the word "call."

To call upon the name of the Lord, in the first place, signifies to *worship God*. You will find in the book of Genesis that, "when men began to multiply upon the face of the earth, then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." That is they began to worship God, they builded altars in his name, they certified their belief in the sacrifice that was to come, by offering a typical sacrifice upon the altar they had reared, they bowed their knee in prayer; they lifted their voice in sacred song, and cried, "Great is Jehovah, Creator, Preserver, let him be praised, world without end." Now, whosoever - whoever he may be in the wide, wide world, who is enabled by grace to worship God, in God's way, shall be saved. If you worship him by a Mediator, having faith in the atonement of the cross, if you worship him by humble prayer and hearty praise, your worship is a proof that you shall be saved. You could not thus worship, unless you had grace within your heart, and your faith and grace are a proof that you shall have glory. Whosoever, then in lowly devotion, on the green sward, beneath the wide-spreading branches of a tree, beneath the vault of God's heaven, or in God's house, or out of it - whosoever shall worship God with

a pure heart fervently, looking for acceptance through the atonement of Christ, and meekly casting himself upon the mercy of God, shall be saved. So stands the promise.

But lest any man should run away with a mistaken idea of what worship is, we must just explain a little further. The word "call," in holy Scripture meaning, signifies *prayer*. You remember the case of Elijah: when the prophets of Baal roughs to get rain from the false god, he said, "I will call upon God" - that is to say, "I will pray to God that he may send the rain." Now, prayer is a sure sign of divine life within. Whosoever prayeth to God through Christ, with sincere prayer shall be saved. Oh, I can remember how this text cheered me once. I felt the weight of sin, and I did not know the Saviour. I thought God would blast me with his wrath, and smite me with his hot displeasure! From chapel to chapel I went to hear the word preached, but never a gospel sentence did I hear; but this one text just preserved me from what I believe I should have been driven to - the commission of suicide through grief and sorrow. It was this sweet word - "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Well, I thought, I cannot believe on Christ as I could wish. I cannot find pardon, but I know I call upon his name, I know I pray, ay, and pray with groans and tears and sighs day and night; and if I am ever lost, I will plead that promise - "Oh God thou saidst, he that calleth upon thy name shall be saved; I did call; wilt thou cast me away? I did plead thy promise; I did lift up my heart in prayer; canst thou be just, and yet damn the man who did really pray?" But mark that sweet thought: prayer is the certain forerunner of salvation. Sinner, thou canst not pray and perish; prayer and perishing are two things that never go together. I ask you not what your prayer is; it may be a groan, it may be a tear, a wordless prayer, or a prayer in broken English, ungrammatical and harsh to the ear: but if it be a prayer from the inmost heart, thou shalt be saved; or else this promise is a lie. As surely as thou prayest whoever thou mayest be whatever thy past life, whatever the transgressions in which thou hast indulged, though they be the foulest which pollute mankind, yet if from thine heart thou hast learned to pray -

"Prayer is the breath of God in man  
Returning whence it came" -

And thou canst not perish with God's breath in thee. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!"

But the word "call" signifies a little more, it signifies *trust*. A man cannot call upon the name of the Lord, unless he trusts in that name. We must have reliance upon the name of Christ, or else we have not called aright. Hear me, then, poor tried sinner; thou hast come here this morning sensible of thy guilt, awakened to thy danger; here is thy remedy. Christ Jesus the Son of God, became a man; he was "born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried." He did this to save sinners such as thou art. Wilt thou believe this? Wilt thou trust thy soul to it? Wilt thou say "Sink or swim, Christ Jesus is my hope; and if I perish I will perish with my arms around his cross, crying -

"Nothing in my hands I bring  
Simply to the cross I cling?"

Poor soul, if thou canst do that, thou wilt be saved. Come, now, no good works of thine own are needed - no sacraments, all that is asked of thee is this, and that he gives thee. Thou art nothing; wilt thou take Christ to be everything? Come, thou art black, wilt thou be washed? Wilt thou down on thy knees, and cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner, not for anything I have done, or can do, but for his dear sake, whose blood streamed from his hands and feet, in whom alone I trust?" Why sinner the solid pillars of the universe shall totter rather than thou shouldst perish; ay heaven should weep a vacant throne, and an extinguished Godhead, rather than the promise should be violated in any case in the world. He that trusteth in Christ, calling on his name, shall be saved.

But once more, and then I think I shall have given you the whole scripture meaning of this. Calling on the name of the Lord signifies *professing his name*. You remember what Ananias said to Saul, afterwards called Paul, "arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord." Now, sinner if thou wouldst be obedient to Christ's word, Christ's word says, "He that believeth, and is *immersed*, shall be saved." Mark, I have translated the word. King James

would not have it translated. I dare not be unfaithful to my knowledge of God's word. If it means sprinkle, let our brethren translate it "sprinkle." But they dare not do that; they know they have nothing in all classical language that would ever justify them in doing that, and they have not the impudence to attempt it. But I dare translate it - "He that believeth, and is immersed, shall be saved." And though immersion is nothing, yet God requires of men who believe that they should be immersed, in order to make a profession of their belief. Immersion is nothing, I repeat, in salvation, it is the profession of salvation; but God requires that every man that puts his trust in the Saviour should be immersed, as the Saviour was, in order to the fulfillment of righteousness. Jesus went meekly down from Jordan's shore, to be immersed beneath the wares; and so let every believer be baptized in his name. Now some of you draw back from the thought of making a profession. "No," you say, "we will believe and be secret Christians." Hear you this then - "If any man be ashamed of me, and of my words in this generation; of him will I be ashamed, when I shall come in the glory of my Father, with all his holy angels." I will repeat a truism; not one of you in your lives ever knew a secret Christian, and I will prove it to demonstration. For if you knew a man to be a Christian, it could not be a secret; for if it had been a secret how came you to know it? Then, as you never knew a secret Christian, you are not justified in believing there ever is such a one. You must come out and make a profession. What would Her Majesty think of her soldiers, if they should swear they were loyal and true, and were to say - "Your Majesty, we prefer not to wear these regimentals; let us wear the dress of civilians! We are right honest men and upright; but we do not care to stand in your ranks, acknowledged as your soldiers, we had rather slink into the enemy's camp, and into your camps too, and not wear anything that would mark us as being your soldiers!" Ah! some of you do the same with Christ. You are going to be secret Christians, are you, and slink into the devil's camp, and into Christ's camp, but acknowledged by none? Well, ye must take the chance of it, if ye will be so; but I should not like to risk it. It is a solemn threatening, "of him will I be ashamed when I come in the glory of my Father, and all his holy angels with me!" It is a solemn thing, I say, when Christ says, "Except a man take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple." Now, then, I claim of every sinner here whom God has awakened to feel his need of a Saviour, obedience to the

command of Christ, in this point, as well as in every other. Hear the way of salvation: worship, prayer, faith, profession. And the profession, if men would be obedient, if they would follow the Bible, must be done in Christ's way, by a baptism in water, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. God requireth this; and though men are saved without any baptism, and multitudes fly to heaven who are never washed in the stream, though baptism is not saving, yet if men would be saved, they must not be disobedient. And inasmuch as God gives a command, it is mine to enforce it. Jesus said, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth, and is immersed, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

Here, then, is the explanation of my text. No churchman here can object to my interpretation. The Church of England holdeth dipping. It only saith, if children be weak they are to be sprinkled; and it is marvellous what a many weakly children there have been born lately. I am astonished to find any of you alive, after finding that so much weakness has everywhere existed! The dear little ones are so tender, that a few drops suffice instead of the dipping which their own church enforces. I would that all churchmen were better churchmen; if they would be more consistent with their own articles of faith, they would be more consistent with Scripture, and if they were a little more consistent with some of the rubrics of their own church, they would be a little more consistent with themselves. If your children are weak, you can let them be sprinkled; but if you are good churchmen you will immerse them, if they can bear it.

II. But now, the second point is REFUTATION. There are some popular errors with regard to salvation, which need to be cured by refutation. My text says, "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Now, one idea which conflicts with my text is this, *that a priest or a minister is absolutely necessary to assist men in salvation*. That idea is current in other places besides the Romish Church; there are many, alas! too many who make a dissenting minister as much their priest as the Catholic makes his priest his helper. There are many who imagine that salvation cannot be accomplished except in some undefinable and

mysterious way - and the minister and the priest are mixed up with it. Hear ye then, if you had never seen a minister in your lives, if you had never heard the voice of the bishop of the church, or an elder thereof, yet if ye did call on the name of the Lord your salvation would be quite as sure without one as with one. Men cannot call upon a God they do not know. The necessity of a preacher lies in telling what the way of salvation is, for how can they hear without a preacher, and how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? But the preacher's office goes no further than just the telling of the message, and after we have told it, God, the Holy Spirit, must apply it; for further we cannot go. Oh, take care of priestcraft, take care of mancraft, of ministercraft, of clergycraft. All God's people are clergy, we are all God's *cleros*, all his clergy, if we have been anointed with the Holy Spirit, and are saved. There never ought to have been a distinction between clergy and laity. We are all clergy who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are as much fit to preach the gospel, if God has given you the ability, and called you to the work by his Spirit as any man alive. No priestly hand, no hand of presbyterian - which means priest written large - no ordination of men is necessary; we stand upon the rights of manhood to speak what we believe, and next to that we stand upon the call of God's Spirit in the heart bidding us testify his truth. But, brethren, neither Paul, nor an angel from heaven, nor Apollos, nor Cephas can help you in salvation. It is not of man, neither by men, and neither Pope, nor Archbishop, nor bishop, nor priest, nor minister, nor any one hath any grace to give to others. We must each of us go ourselves to the fountain-head, pleading this promise - "Whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord Jesus, shall be saved." If I were shut up in the mines of Siberia, where I could never hear the gospel, if I did call upon the name of Christ the road is just as straight without the minister as with him, and the path to heaven is just as clear from the wilds of Africa, and from the dens of the prisonhouse and the dungeon, as it is from the sanctuary of God. Nevertheless for edification, all Christians love the ministry, though not for salvation; though neither in priest nor preacher do they trust, yet the word of God is sweet to them, and beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of peace."

Another very common error is, that a good dream is a most splendid thing in order to save people. Some of you do not know the extent to

which this error prevails. I happen to know it. It is received among many persons, that if you dream that you see the Lord in the night you will be saved, and if you can see him on the cross, or if you think you see some angels, or if you dream that God says to you, "You are forgiven, all is well;" but if you do not have a very nice dream you cannot be saved. So some people think. Now, if it be so, the sooner we all begin to eat opium the better; because there is nothing that makes people dream so much as that, and the best advice I could give would be - let every minister distribute opium very largely, and then his people would all dream themselves into heaven. But, out upon that rubbish; there is nothing in it. Dreams, the disordered fabrics of a wild imagination; the totterings often of the fair pillars of a grand conception; how can they be the means of salvation? You know Rowland Hill's good answer; I must quote it, in default of a better. When a woman pleaded that she was saved because she dreamed, he said, "Well, my good woman, it is very nice to have good dreams when you are asleep; but I want to see how you act when you are awake; for if your conduct is not consistent in religion when you are awake I will not give a snap of the finger for your dreams." Ah, I do marvel that ever any person should go to such a depth of ignorance as to tell me the stories that I have heard myself about dreams. Poor dear creatures, when they were sound asleep they saw the gates of heaven opened, and a white angel came and washed their sins away, and then they saw that they were pardoned; and since then they have never had a doubt or a fear. It is time that you should begin to doubt, then very good time that you should; for if that is all the hope you have, it is a poor one. Remember it is, "whosoever calls upon the name of God," not whosoever dreams about him. Dreams may do good. Sometimes people have been frightened out of their senses in them; and they were better out of their senses than they were in, for they did more mischief when they were in their senses than they did when they were out; and the dreams did good in that sense. Some people, too, have become alarmed by dreams; but to trust to them is to trust to a shadow, to build your hopes on bubbles, scarcely needing a puff of wind to burst them into nothingness. Oh! remember, you want no vision, no marvellous appearance. If you have had a vision or a dream, you need not despise it; it may have benefitted you: but do not trust to it. But if you have had none, remember that is the mere calling upon God's name to which the promise is appended.

And now, once again, there are others, very good sort of people too, that have been laughing while I was talking about dreams, and now it is our turn to laugh at them. There are some people who think they must have some very wonderful kind of feelings, or else they cannot be saved; some most extraordinary thoughts such as they never had before, or else certainly they cannot be saved. A woman once applied to me for admission to church-membership. So I asked her whether she had ever had a change of heart. She said, "Oh yes sir, such a change as you know," she said, "I felt it across the chest so singular, sir; and when I was a praying one day I felt as if I did not know what was the matter with me, I felt so different. And when I went to the chapel, sir, one night, I came away and felt so different from what I felt before, so light." "Yes," I said "light-headed, my dear soul, that is what you felt, but nothing more, I am afraid." The good woman was sincere enough; she thought it was all right with her, because something had affected her lungs, or in some way stirred her physical frame. "No," I hear some of you say, "people cannot be so stupid as this." I assure you that if you could read the hearts of this present congregation, you would find there are hundreds here that have no better hope of heaven than that, for I am dealing with a very popular objection just now. "I thought," said one addressing me one day, "I thought when I was in the garden, sure Christ could take my sins away, just as easily as he could move the clouds. Do you know, sir, in a moment or two the cloud was all gone, and the sun was shining. Thought I to myself, the Lord is blotting out my sin." Such a ridiculous thought as that, you say, cannot occur often. I tell you, it does, very frequently indeed. People get supposing that the veriest nonsense in all the earth is a manifestation of divine grace in their hearts, Now, the only feeling I ever want to have is just this, - I want to feel that I am a sinner and that Christ is my Saviour. You may keep your visions, and ecstasies and raptures, and dancings to yourselves; the only feeling that I desire to have is deep repentance and humble faith; and if, poor sinner, you have got that, you are saved. Why, some of you believe that before you can be saved there must be a kind of electric-shock, some very wonderful thing that is to go all through you from head to foot. Now hear this, "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart. If thou dost with thy heart believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and with thy mouth dost confess, thou shalt be saved."



What do ye want with all this nonsense of dreams and supernatural thoughts? All that is wanted is, that as a guilty sinner I should come and cast myself on Christ. That done, the soul is safe, and all the visions in the universe could not make it safer.

And now, I have one more error to try to rectify. Among very poor people - and I have visited some of them, and know what I say to be true, and there are some here, and I will speak to them, - among the very poor and uneducated, there is a very current idea that somehow or other salvation is connected with learning to read and write. You smile, perhaps, but I know it. Often has a poor woman said, "Oh! sir, this is no good to poor ignorant creatures like us; there is no hope for me, sir; I cannot read. Do you know, sir, I don't know a letter? I think if I could read a bit I might be saved; but, ignorant as I am, I do not know how I call: for I have got no understanding, sir." I have found this in the country districts too, among people who might learn to read if they liked. And there are none but can, unless they are lazy. And yet they sit down in cold indifference about salvation, under the notion that the parson could be saved, for he reads a chapter so nicely; that the clerk could be saved, for he said "Amen" so well; that the squire could be saved, for he knew a great deal, and had a vast many books in his library, but that they could not be saved, for they did not know anything, and that therefore it was impossible. Now, have I one such poor creature here? I will speak plainly to you. My poor friend, you do not want to know much to go to heaven. I would advise you to know as much as ever you can; do not be backward in trying to learn. But in regard to going to heaven, the way is so plain that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." Do you feel that you have been guilty, that you have broken God's commandments that you have not kept his Sabbath, that you have taken his name in vain that you have not loved your neighbor as yourself, nor your God with all your heart. Well, if you feel it, Christ died for such as you; he died upon the cross, and was punished in your stead, and he tells you to believe it. If you want to hear more about it, come to the house of God and listen, and we will try to lead you to something else. But remember, all you want to know to get to heaven is the two things that begin with S. - Sin and Saviour. Do you feel your sin? Christ is your Saviour trust to him pray to him; and as sure as you are here now, and I am talking to you, you will one day be in heaven.

I will tell you two prayers to pray. First, pray this prayer, - "Lord, show me myself." That is an easy one for you. Lord, show me myself, show me my heart, show me my guilt; show me my danger, Lord, show me myself. And, when you have prayed that prayer, and God has answered it, (and remember, he hears prayer) when he has answered it, and shown you yourself, here is another prayer for you, - "Lord, show me *thyself*: Show me thy work, thy love, thy mercy, thy cross, thy grace." Pray that, and those are about the only prayers you want to pray, to get to heaven with, - "Lord, show me myself;" "Lord, show me *thyself*." You do not want to know much, then. You need not spell, to get to heaven; you need not be able to speak English, to get to heaven; the ignorant and rude are welcome to the cross of Christ and salvation.

Excuse my thus answering these popular errors; I answer them because they *are* popular, and popular among some who are present. O men and women, hear the word of God once more. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Man of eighty, child of eight, young man and maiden, rich, poor, literate, illiterate, to you is this preached in all its fullness and freeness, yea, to every creature under heaven "whosoever "( and that shuts out none,) "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

III. And now I have nothing to do except to finish with EXHORTATION. My exhortation is, I intreat you by the name of God believe the message which this day I declare from God's word. Do not turn away from me because the message is simply delivered, do not reject it because I have chosen to preach it simply and plainly to the poor, but hearken again, "Whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved." I beseech you believe this. Does it seem hard to believe? Nothing is too hard for the Most High. Do you say, "I have been so guilty, I cannot think God will save me?" Hear Jehovah speak: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my thoughts above your thoughts, my ways above your ways." Do you say, "I am excluded. Surely, you cannot mean that he would cave me?" Hark you; it says, "Whosoever" - "whosoever" is a great wide door, and lets in big sinners. Oh, surely, if it says, "whosoever," you are not excluded if you call - there is the point.

And now come, I must plead with you, and I will use a few reasons to induce you to believe this truth. They shall be Scripture reasons May God bless them to you, sinner. If thou callest on Christ's name thou wilt be saved. I will tell thee first, thou wilt be saved because *thou art elect*. No man ever called on Christ's name yet who was not elected. That doctrine of election which puzzles many and frightens more, never need do so. If you believe, you are elect, if you call on the name of Christ you are elect, if you feel yourself to be a sinner, and put your trust in Christ you are elect. Now, the elect must be saved, for them there is no perdition. God has predestinated them unto eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of Christ's hands. God does not choose men, and then cast them away; he does not elect them, and then cast them into the pit. Now, you are elect, you could not have called if you had not been elected your election is the cause of your calling, and inasmuch as you have called, and do call upon the name of God, you are God's elect. And from his book not death nor hell can ever erase your name. 'Tis an omnipotent decree. Jehovah's will be done! His chosen must be saved, though earth and hell oppose, his strong hand shall break *their* ranks, and lead his people through. You are one of these people. You shall at last stand before his throne, and see his smiling face in glory ever lasting, because you are elect.

Now, another reason. If thou callest upon the name of the Lord thou shalt be saved, because *thou art redeemed*. Christ has bought thee, and paid for thee, poured out the hottest of his heart's blood to buy thy ransom, split his heart, and riven it to splinters to buy thy soul from wrath. Thou art a bought one, thou knowest it not, but I see the blood-mark on thy brow. If thou callest on his name though thou hast as yet no comfort, yet Christ has called thee his own. E'er since that day when he said "It is finished," - Christ has said, "My delight is in him, for I have bought him with my blood," and because thou art bought thou shalt never perish. Not one of Jesus' blood-bought ones was ever lost yet. Howl, howl, O hell, but howl thou canst not over the damnation of a redeemed soul. Out upon the horrid doctrine that men are bought with blood, and yet are damned, it is too diabolical for me to believe. I know that what the Saviour did he did, and if he did redeem he did redeem, and those redeemed by him are

positively redeemed from death and hell and wrath. I can never bring my mind to the unrighteous idea that Christ was punished for a man, and that such a man will be punished again. I never could see how Christ could stand in a man's stead and be punished for him, and yet that man be punished again. No, inasmuch as thou callest on God's name there is proof that Christ is thy ransom. Come, rejoice! If he was punished, God's justice cannot demand a double vengeance, first, at the bleeding Surety's hands and then again at thine. Come, soul put thine hand upon the Saviour's head, and say "Blest Jesus, thou wast punished for me." Oh, God, I am not afraid of thy vengeance. When my hand is on the atonement, smite, but thou must smite me through thy Son. Smite, if thou wilt, but thou canst not for thou hast smitten him, and sure thou wilt not smite again for the same offense. What! Did Christ at one tremendous draught of love, drink my damnation dry? and shall I be damned after that? God forbid! What! shall God be unrighteous forget the Redeemer's work for us and let the Saviour's blood be shed in vain? Not hell itself has ever indulged the thought which has only been worthy of the men who are traitors to God's truth. Ay, brethren, if ye call on Christ, if ye pray, if ye believe, ye may be quite sure of salvation, for ye are redeemed, and the redeemed must not perish.

Shall I tell you one more reason? Believe this truth: it must be true. For it ye call upon the name of God, "In my Father's house," says Christ, "there are many mansions," and there is one there for you. Christ has prepared a house and a crown, from before the foundation of the world, for all them that believe. Come! dost thou think Christ will prepare a house, and not carry the inhabitant there? Will he make crowns, and then lose the heads that are to wear them! God forbid! Turn thine eye towards heaven. There is a seat there that must be filled, and must be filled by thee; there is a crown there that must be worn, and must be worn by thee. Oh! be of good cheer: heavens preparation shall not be too abundant, he shall make room for those that believe, and because he hath made that room those that believe shall come there. Oh! I would to God I might know that some soul could lay hold on this promise! Where are you? Are you standing away among the crowd there, or sitting here in the body of the hall or in the topmost gallery? Are you feeling your sins? Do you shed tears in secret on account of them? Do you lament your iniquities? Oh! take his

promise - "Whosoever (sweet whosoever!) - whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Say thus. The devil says it is of no use for you to call; you have been a drunkard. Tell him it says, "Whosoever," "Nay," says the evil spirit, "it is of no use for you, you have never been to hear a sermon, or been in the house of God these last ten years." Tell him it says, "Whosoever." "No," says Satan, "remember the sins of last night, and how you have come up to the MUSIC HALL stained with lust." Tell the devil it says. "Whosoever," and that it is a foul falsehood of his, that you can call on God and yet be lost. No; tell him that -

"If all the sins that men have done  
In thought, or word, or deed,  
Since worlds were made or time begun,  
Could meet on one poor head,  
The blood of Jesus Christ alone  
For all this guilt could well atone."

Oh lay this to thine heart. May God's Spirit do it! "Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

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## **The Simplicity And Sublimity Of Salvation**

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. - John 1:11-13

Everything here is simple; everything is sublime. Here is that simple gospel, by which the most ignorant may be saved. Here are profundities, in which the best-instructed may find themselves beyond their depth. Here are those everlasting hills of divine truth which man cannot climb; yet here is that plain path in which the wayfaring man, though a fool,

need nor err, nor lose his way. I always feel that I have no time to spare for critical and captious persons. If they will not believe, neither shall they be established. They must take the consequences of their unbelief. But I can spare all day and all night for an anxious enquirer, for one who is blinded by the very blaze of the heavenly light that shines upon him, and who seems to lose his way by reason of the very plainness of the road that lies before him. In this most simple text are some of the deep things of God, and there are souls here that are puzzled by what are simplicities to some of us; and my one aim shall be, so to handle this text as to help and encourage and cheer some who would fain touch the hem of the Master's garment, but cannot for the press of many difficulties and grave questions which rise before their minds.

Let us go to the text at once, and notice, first, a matter which is very simple: "As many as received him . . . even to them that believe on his name"; secondly, a matter which is very delightful: "to them gave he power to become the sons of God"; and thirdly, a matter which is very mysterious: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

I. Here is, first, A MATTER WHICH IS VERY SIMPLE; receiving Christ, and believing on his name. Oh, that many here may be able to say, "Yes, I understand that simple matter. That is the way in which I found eternal life"!

The simple matter of which John here speaks is receiving Christ, or, in other words, believing on his name.

Receiving Christ is a distinctive act. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The very people you would have thought would have eagerly welcomed Christ did not do so; but here and there a man stood apart from the rest, or a woman came out from her surroundings, and each of these said, "I receive Christ as the Messiah." You will never go to heaven in a crowd. The crowd goes down the broad road to destruction; but the way which leadeth to life eternal is a narrow way; "and few there be that find it." They that go to heaven must come out one by one, and say to him that sits at the wicket-gate, "Set my name down, sir, as a pilgrim to

the celestial city." They who would enter into life must fight as well as run, for it is an uphill fight all the way, and few there be that fight it out to the end, and win the crown of the victors.

Those who received Christ were different from those who did not receive him; they were as different as white is from black, or light from darkness. They took a distinctive step, separated themselves from others, and came out and received him whom others would not receive. Have you taken such a step, dear friend? Can you say, "Yes, let others do as they will, as for me, Christ is all my salvation, and all my desire; and at all hazards I am quite content to be counted singular, and to stand alone; I have lifted my hand to heaven, and I cannot draw back. Whatever others may do, I say, 'Christ for me'"?

As it was a distinctive act, so it was a personal one: "To as many as received him." They had to receive Christ each one by his own act and deed. "Even to them that believe on his name." Believing is the distinct act of a person. I cannot believe for you any more than you can believe for me; that is clearly impossible. There can be no such thing as sponsorship in receiving Christ, or in faith. If you are an unbeliever, your father and mother may be the most eminent saints, but their faith does not overlap and cover your unbelief. You must believe for yourself. I have had to even remind some that the Holy Ghost himself cannot believe for them. He works faith in you; but you have to believe. The faith must be your own distinct mental act. Faith is the gift of God; but God does not believe for us; how could he? It is for you distinctly to believe. Come, dear hearer, have you been trying to put up with a national faith? A national faith is a mere sham. Or have you tried to think that you possess the family faith? "Oh, we are all Christians, you know!" Yes, we are all hypocrites; that is what that comes to. Unless each one is a Christian for himself, he is a Christian only in name, and that is to be a hypocrite. Oh, that we might have the certainty that we have each one laid our sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God! God grant that, if we have never done so before, we may do so this very moment!

Mark, next, that, as it was a distinctive and personal act, so it related to a Person. I find that the text runs thus, "He came unto his own, and his

own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." That religion which leaves out the person of Christ, has left out the essential point. Thou art not saved by believing a doctrine, though it is well for thee to believe it if it be true. Thou art not saved by practising an ordinance, though thou shouldst practise it if thou art one of those to whom it belongs. Thou art not saved by any belief except this, believing on Christ's name, and receiving him. "I take in a body of divinity," says one. Do you? There is no body of divinity that I know of but Christ, the son of God in human flesh, living, bleeding, dying, risen, ascended, soon to come; thou must lean on him; for the promise is only to as many as receive him.

This reception of Christ consisted in faith in him: "As many as received him . . . even to them that believe on his name." He was a stranger, and they took him in. He was food, and they took him in, and fed on him. He was living water, and they received him, drank him up, took him into themselves. He was light, and they received the light. He was life, and they received the life, and they lived by what they received. As the empty cup receives from the flowing fountain, so do we receive Christ into our emptiness. We, being poor, and naked, and miserable, come to him, and we receive riches, and clothing, and happiness in him. Salvation comes by receiving Christ. I know what you have been trying to do; you have been trying to give Christ something. Let me caution you against a very common expression. I hear converts continually told to give their hearts to Jesus. It is quite correct, and I hope they will do so; but your first concern must be, not what you give to Jesus, but what Jesus gives to you. You must take him from himself as a gift to you, then will you truly give your heart to him. The first act, and, indeed, the underlying act all the way along, is to receive, to imbibe, to take in Christ, and that is called believing on his name. Note that "name." It is not believing a fanciful christ; for there are many christs nowadays, as many christs as there are books, nearly; for every writer seems to make a christ of his own; but the christ that men make up will not save you. The only Christ who can save you is the Christ of God, that Christ who, in the synagogue at Nazareth, found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath



sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

You are to believe on the Christ as he is revealed in the Scriptures. You are to take him as you find him here; not as Renan, not as Strauss, or anybody else, pictures of him; but as you find him here. As God reveals him, you are to believe on his name: "the Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace"; Emmanuel, God with us; Jesus, saving from sin; Christ anointed of the Father. You are to believe on his name, not on the Christ of Rome, nor the Christ of Canterbury, but the Christ of Jerusalem, the Christ of the eternal glory; no christ of a dreamy prophecy, with which some are defaming the true prophetic spirit of the Word, no christ of idealism, no man-made christ; but the eternal God, incarnate in human flesh, as he is here pictured by Psalmist, Prophet, Evangelist, Apostle, very God of very God, yet truly man, in your stead suffering, bearing the sin of men in his own body on the tree. It is believing in this Christ that will effectually save your soul. To believe is to trust. Prove that you believe in Christ by risking everything upon him.

"Upon a life I did not live,  
Upon a death I did not die,  
I risk my whole eternity."

On his who lived for me, and died for me, and rose again for me, and has gone into heaven for me; on him I throw the whole weight of past, present, and future, and every interest that belongs to my soul, for time and for eternity.

This is a very simple matter, and I have noticed a great many sneers at this simple faith, and a great many depreciatory remarks concerning it; but, let me tell you, there is nothing like it under heaven. Possessing this faith will prove you to be a son of God; nothing short of it ever will. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God;" and he has given that power to nobody else. This will prove you to be absolved, forgiven. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them

which are in Christ Jesus;" but if thou hast no faith in Christ Jesus, the wrath of God abideth on thee. Because thou hast not believed on the Son of God, thou art condemned already. One grain of this faith is worth more than a diamond the size of the world; yea, though thou shouldst thread such jewels together, as many as the stars of heaven for number, they would be worth nothing compared with the smallest atom of faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.

But whence comes this wonderful power of faith? Not from the faith, but from him on whom it leans. What power Christ has! The power of his manhood suffering, the power of his Godhead bowing on the cross, the power of the God-man, the Mediator, surrendering himself as the greatest sacrifice for sin; why, he who toucheth this, hath touched the springs of omnipotence! He who comes, by faith, into contact with Christ, has come into contact with boundless love, and power, and mercy, and grace. I marvel not at anything that faith brings when it deals with Christ. Thou hast a little key, a little rusty key, and thou sayest, "By use of this key I can get all the gold that I want." Yes, but where is the box to which you go for the gold? When you show me, and I see that it is a great chamber filled full of gold and silver, I can understand how your little key can enrich you when it opens the door into such a treasury. If faith be the key which unlocks the fulness of God, "for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," then I can understand why faith brings such boundless blessings to him who hath it. Salvation is a very simple business. God help us to look at it simply and practically, and to receive Christ, and believe on his name!

II. Now, secondly, here is A MATTER WHICH IS VERY DELIGHTFUL: "To them gave he power to become sons of God." If I had a week to preach from this text, I think that I should be able to get through the first head; but at this time I can only throw out just a few hints. Look at the great and delightful blessing which comes to us by our faith in Christ. We give Christ our faith, and he gives us power to become sons of God, the authority, liberty, privilege, right, - something more than mere strength or force - to be sons of God.

When we believe in Jesus, he indicates to us the Great Father's

willingness to let us be his sons. We who were prodigals, far away from him, perceive that, when we receive Christ, the Father, who gave us Christ, is willing to take us to be his sons. He would not have yielded up his Only-begotten if he had not willed to take us into his family.

When we believe in Jesus, he bestows on us the status of sons. We were slaves before; now we are sons. We were strangers, aliens, enemies; and every word that means an evil thing might have been applied to us; but when we laid hold on Christ, we were adopted by some great citizen, and publicly acknowledged in the forum as being henceforth that man's son, was regarded as such, so, as soon as we believe in Jesus, we get the status of sons. "Beloved, now we are the sons of God."

Then Christ does something more for us. He gives us grace to feel our sonship. As we sang just now, -

"My faith shall 'Abba, Father,' cry,  
And thou the kindred own."

God owns us as his children, and we own him as our Father; and henceforth, "Our Father, which art in heaven," is no meaningless expression, but it comes welling up from the depths of our heart.

Having given us grace to feel sonship, Christ gives us the nature of our Father. He gives us "power to become the sons of God." We get more and more like God in righteousness and true holiness. By his divine Spirit, shed abroad in our hearts, we become more and more the children of our Father who is in heaven, who doeth good to the undeserving and the unthankful, and whose heart overflows with love even to those who love not him.

When this nature of sons shall be fully developed, Christ will bestow his glory upon us. We shall be in heaven, not in the rear rank, as servants, but nearest to the eternal throne. Unto angels he has never said, "Ye are my sons"; but he has called us sons, poor creatures of the dust, who believe in Jesus; and we shall have all the honour, and joy, and privilege, and delight that belong to the princes of the blood royal of heaven,

members of the imperial house of God, in that day when the King shall manifest himself in his own palace.

Some of us could draw parallels, about being made sons, from our own lives. You were once a very tiny child; but you were a son then as much as you are now. So is it with you who have only just begun to believe in Christ; he has given you authority and right to become sons of God. Very early in our life, our father went down to the registrar's office, and wrote our name in the roll as his sons. We do not recollect that, it was so long ago; but he did it, and he also wrote our name in the family Bible, even as our Father in heaven has enrolled our names in the Lamb's Book of Life. You recollect that, as a child, you did not go into the kitchen, to dine with the servants; but you took your seat at the table. It was a very little chair in which you first sat at the table; but as you grew bigger, you always went to the table, because you were a son. The servants in the house were much bigger than you, and they could do a great many things that you could not do, and your father paid them wages. He never paid you any; they were not his sons; but you were. If they had put on your clothes, they would not have been his sons. You had privileges that they had not. I remember that, in the parish where my home was, on a certain day in the year, the church-bell rang, and everybody went to receive a penny roll. Every child had one, and I recollect having mine. I claimed it as a privilege, because I was my father's son. I think there were six of us, who all had a roll; every child in the parish had one. So there are a number of privileges that come to us very early in our Christian life, and we mean to have them, first, because our Lord Jesus Christ has given us the right to have them; and, next, because, if we do not take what he bought for us,, it will be robbing him, and wasting his substance. As he has paid for it all, and has given us the right to have it, let us take it.

You were put to school because you were a son. You did not like it; I daresay that you would rather have stopped at home at play. And you had a touch of the rod, sometimes, because you were a son. That was one of your privileges: "for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" One day you were in the street with other boys, doing wrong, and your father came along, and punished you. He did not touch your companions, for they were not his sons. You smile at those little things, and you did not at

the time count your punishments as privileges; but they were. When the chastening of the Lord comes, call it a privilege, for that is what it is. There is no greater mercy that I know of on earth than good health except it be sickness; and that has often been a greater mercy to me than health.

It is a good thing to be without a trouble; but it is a better thing to have a trouble, and know how to get grace enough to bear it. I am not so much afraid of the devil when he roars, as I am when he pretends to go to sleep. I think that, oftentimes, a roaring devil keeps us awake; and the troubles of this life stir us up to go to God in prayer, and that which looks to us ill turns to our good. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."

III. Now I come to my last point, that is, A MATTER WHICH IS MYSTERIOUS. We are not only given the status of children, and the privilege of being called sons, but this mysterious matter is one of heavenly birth: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

This new birth is absolutely needful. If we are ever to be numbered amongst God's children, we must be born again, born from above. We were born in sin, born children of wrath, even as others; to be God's children, it is absolutely necessary that we should be born again.

The change wrought thereby is wonderfully radical. It is not a mere outside washing, nor any touching up and repairing. It is a total renovation. Born again? I cannot express to you all that the change means, it is so deep, so thorough, so complete.

It is also intensely mysterious. What must it be to be born again? "I cannot understand it." Says one. Nicodemus was a teacher in Israel, and he did not understand it. Does anybody understand it? Does anybody understand his first birth? What know we of it? And this second birth; some of us have passed through it, and know that we have, and remember well the pangs of that birth, yet we cannot describe the movements of the Spirit of God, by which we were formed anew, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, according to that word from him who sits on the throne,

"Behold, I make all things new!" It is a great mystery.

Certainly it is entirely superhuman. We cannot contribute to it. Man cannot make himself to be born again. His first birth is not of himself, and his second birth is not one jot more so. It is a work of the Holy Ghost, a work of God. It is a new creation; it is a quickening; it is a miracle from beginning to end.

Here is the point to which I call your special attention, it is assuredly ours. Many of us here have been born again. We know that we have, and herein lies the evidence of it, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." If thou believest on Christ's name, thou art born of God. If thou hast received Christ into thy soul, thou hast obtained that birth that comes not of blood, nor of the will of parents, nor of the will of man, but of God. Thou hast passed from death unto life.

Let no man sit down here, and cover his face, and say, "There is no hope for me. I cannot understand about this new birth." If thou wilt take Christ, to have and to hold, henceforth and for ever, as thy sole trust and confidence, thou hast received that which no line of ancestors could ever give thee; for it is "not of blood." Thou dost possess that which no will of the father and mother could ever give thee; for it is "not of the will of the flesh." Thou hast that which thine own will could not bring thee; for it is "not of the will of man." Thou hast that which only the Giver of life can bestow; for it is "of God." Thou art born again; for thou hast received Christ, and believed on his name. I do not urge you to look within, to try and see whether this new birth is there. Instead of looking within thyself, look thou to him who hangs on yonder cross, dying the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Fix thou thine eyes on him, and believe in him; and when thou seest in thyself much that is evil, look away to him; and when doubts prevail, look to him; and when thy conscience tells thee of thy past sins, look to him.

I have to go through this story almost every day of the year, and sometimes half a dozen times in a day. If there is a desponding soul

anywhere within twenty miles, it will find me out, no matter whether I am at home, or at Mentone, or in any other part of the world. It will come from any distance, broken down, despairing, half insane sometimes; and I have no medicine to prescribe except "Christ, Christ, Christ; Jesus Christ and him crucified. Look away from yourselves, and trust in him." I go over and over and over with this, and never get one jot further. Because I find that this medicine cures all soul sicknesses, while human quackery cures none. Christ alone is the one remedy for sin-sick souls. Receive him; believe on his name. We keep hammering at this. I can sympathize with Luther when he said, "I have preached justification by faith so often, and I feel sometimes that you are so slow to receive it, that I could almost take the Bible, and bang it about your heads." I am afraid that the truth would not have entered their hearts if he had done so. This is what we aim at, to get this one thought into a man, "Thou art lost, and therefore such an one as Christ came to save."

One said to me just lately, "Oh, sir, I am the biggest sinner that ever lived!" I replied, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "But I have not any strength." "While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died." "Oh! But," he said, "I have been utterly ungodly." "Christ died for the ungodly." "But I am lost." "Yes," I said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "The Son of man has come to save that which was lost." I said to this man, "You have the brush in your hand, and at every stroke it looks as if you were quoting Scripture. You seem to be making yourself out to be the very man that Christ came to save. If you were to make yourself out to be good and excellent, I should give you this word - Jesus did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He did not die for the good, but for the bad. He gave himself for our sins; he never gave himself for our righteousness. He is a Saviour. He has not come yet as a Rewarder of the righteous; that will be in his Second Advent. Now he comes as the great Forgiver of the guilty, and the only Saviour of the lost. Wilt thou come to him in that way?" "Oh! But," my friend said, "I have nothing to bring to Christ." "No," I said, "I know that you have not; but Christ has everything." "Sir," he said, "you do not know me, else you would not talk to me like this;" and I said, "No, and you do not know yourself, and you are worse than you think you are, though you

think that you are bad enough in all conscience; but be you as bad as you may, Jesus Christ came on purpose to uplift from the dunghill those whom he sets among princes by his free, rich, sovereign grace."

Oh, come and believe in him, poor sinner! I feel that, if I had all your souls, I would believe in Christ for their salvation; I would trust him to save a million souls if I had them, for he is mighty to save. There can be no limit to his power to forgive. There can be no limit to the merit of his precious blood. There can be no boundary to the efficacy of his plea before the throne. Only trust him, and you must be saved. May his gracious Spirit lead you to do so now, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **Sin And Grace**

Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. - Romans 5:20

There are two very powerful forces in the world, which have been here ever since the time when Eve partook of the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. Those two forces are sin and grace. A very great power is sin, a power dark, mysterious, baleful, but full of force. The sorrows of mankind, whence came they but from sin? We should have known no war, nor pestilence, nor famine, nor would aught of sickness or sorrow ever have smitten the human race had not sin sown its evil seed in this earth. Sin is the Pandora's box from which all evil has come to mankind. See what ravages death has made; its hillocks are everywhere. Its mighty scythe mows men down as the mower cuts down the grass of the field; but death came by sin and after death comes judgment, and, to the ungodly, the doom that never can be desired, the eternal wrath whose blackness the wildest tempest cannot imitate. Who digged this pit? It was the justice of God on account of sin, and sin must therefore be charged with the authorship of sorrow, disease, death, and hell. This is no mean power with which we have come into conflict; it is a veritable Goliath, stalking



along and defy in the whole race of mankind.

The power that is to fight and overcome sin is ever described in the Word of God, as the natural goodness of human nature, Pshaw! That is but as wax before the fire, or as the fat of rams upon the altar; it is consumed in a moment in the fierce heat of sin. The force to combat sin is never described, in the truthful pages of God's Word, as the power of human endeavor to keep the law. Indeed, this has been tried, and it has utterly failed. The way to heaven is not up the steep sides of Sinai; that granitic mountain is too rugged and too high for unaided human feet to climb. Not there can be found the weapons with which a man may slay his sins, and fight his way to everlasting bliss.

The only counter force against sin is grace; so my text tells us, and we may learn the same truth from a hundred texts besides. And what is grace? Grace is the free favor of God, the undeserved bounty of the ever-gracious Creator against whom we have offended, the generous pardon, the infinite, spontaneous lovingkindness of the God who has been provoked and angered by our sin, but who, delighting in mercy, and grieving to smite the creatures whom he has made, is ever ready to pass by transgression, iniquity, and sin, and to save his people from all the evil consequences of their guilt. Here, my brethren and sisters in Christ, is a force that is fully equal to the requirements of the duel with sin; for this grace, of which I am going to speak, is divine grace, and hence it is omnipotent, immortal, and immutable. This favor of God never changes; and when once it purposes to bless anyone, bless him it will, and none can revoke the blessing. The gracious purpose of God's free favor to an undeserving man is more than a match for that man's sin, for it brings to bear, upon his sin, the blood of the incarnate Son of God, and the majestic and mysterious fire of the eternal Spirit, who burns up evil and utterly consumes it. With God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost united against sin, the everlasting purposes of grace are bound to be accomplished, sin must be overcome and my text proved to be true, "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound."

I. To illustrate the great principle of my text, I ask you to notice, first, that the context refers us to THE ENTRANCE OF THE LAW. "The law

entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Instead of giving any historical statement concerning the introduction of the law in the days of Moses, I am going to speak about the experimental matter of the introduction of the law of God into our hearts. Those of you who have been converted remember the time when the law of the Lord first entered your heart. The law engraved on the two tables of stone, the law recorded in the Bible, does but very little for us; but when the law really enters our heart, it does much for us. What does it do?

The first thing the law does to most men is to develop the sin that is in them. Paul writes, "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." But, as soon as he found that there was a law against a certain sin, by some unhallowed instinct of his unrenewed nature, he wanted to do the very thing that he was forbidden to do. It was like that with us, the first effect of the entrance of the law of God into our hearts was to develop the sin that was already within us. "That is a dreadful thing," says one Yes, it is; but look at the matter from another aspect. Here is a man who has within him a dire disease which will be fatal if it is allowed to remain, so the physician gives him some medicine which throws the disease out. The man used to have a beautiful complexion, but after he has taken that medicine, his face is covered with blotches. Is that a bad thing? Yes, the blotches are bad, but the hidden disease was worse. While that disease was concealed within his system, and was killing him, he probably did not even know that it was there. He knew that he was not well, and perhaps thought that he was dying as the result of some other complaint; but now he sees what the disease is, and everybody sees it, and now that which looked like an evil thing may turn out to be for real good to the man. So does it often happen mentally, morally, and spiritually. A man's wicked heart is full of enmity against God, yet he thinks—and perhaps he is right in thinking—that he is outwardly a strictly moral man; but, lo! the law of God, with its requirements of perfect purity and Absolute obedience, enters his heart, and he rebels against it, and now the sin is apparent, even to himself. It is likely now that this man will repent of sin, it is highly probable that this development of his latent sin will lead him to form a

different opinion of himself from any that he ever had before; and therefore, though the sin is evil, and the development of it is evil, yet, where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound, and so good shall come out of the evil after all.

When the law enters a man's heart, it also brings his sin out in very strong relief. He never saw his sin to be so black as he now sees it to be. A stick is crooked, but you do not notice how crooked it is until you place a straight rule by the side of it. You have a handkerchief, and it seems to be quite white; you could hardly wish it to be whiter; but you lay it down on the newly-fallen snow, and you wonder how you could ever have thought it to be white at all. So the pure and holy law of God, when our eyes are opened to see its purity, shows up our sin in its true blackness, and in that way it makes sin to abound; but this is for our good, for that sight of our sin awakens us to a sense of our true condition, leads us to repentance, drives us by faith to the precious blood of Jesus, and no longer permits us to rest in our self-righteousness; and so it can be said of us that, though the entrance of the law has made our sin to abound, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

The entrance of the law of God into the heart very generally causes great anguish. Well do I remember that experience, and so do some of you. When the law entered our hearts, it came not merely with a straight rule, and with a perfect pattern of whiteness, to show us our deformity and our blackness, but it also came with a heavy whip; and it laid that whip about our shoulders, and every time it fell it stung us to the quick. A little while ago, I met with a brother who said to me, "You cannot too forcibly describe the anguish of a convicted conscience; for," said he, "I remember when I reckoned how long it would be before I must, in the ordinary course of nature, be in hell. I said to myself, 'Suppose I live to be eighty years of age, yet how short a time it will be before I must be enduring the infinite wrath of God.'" Yes, that is the effect that the law of the Lord often produces upon a man when it enters his heart. It brings a mirror before him, and says to him "Look in there, and see not only what you have done, but also what is the just consequence of your evil deeds." A man no longer cavils at God's justice when the law once gets inside his heart; it shuts his mouth except for groans and sighs, and he has plenty of

them.

It may be thought, by some people, to be a very sad thing that the law should come into a man's heart to break it, and to cause him such sorrow and anguish as I am trying to describe. Ah, but it is not so; it is a very blessed thing. You cannot expect God to clothe you until he has stripped you, nor to heal you until he has cut the proud flesh out of your wounds. When a woman is sowing with a fine white silken thread, she must have a sharp needle to go first, to make a way for the thread to go through after it; and the anguish of spirit, which the law creates in the soul, is just the sharp needle which makes a way for the fine silken thread of the gospel to enter our heart, and so to bless us. Let us thank God if ever we have experienced the entrance of his law into our hearts: for, although it makes sin to abound, it makes grace much more abound.

When the law gets thoroughly into a man's heart, it drives him to despair of himself. "Oh!" says he, "I cannot keep that law." Once, he thought that he was as good as other people, and a little better than most; and he did not know but that, with a little polishing, and a little help, he might be good enough, to win the favor of God and go to heaven; but when the law entered his heart, it soon smashed his idol to atoms. The Dagon of self-righteousness speedily falls before the ten commands of God, and is so broken that it can never be mended. Men try to set the stump of it up on its pedestal again; but so long as the law of the Lord is in the same temple with self-righteousness, self-righteousness can never be exalted again. To some people, it seems to be a dreadful thing to give a man such a bad opinion of himself, but, indeed, it is the greatest blessing that could come to him, for when he despairs of himself, he will fly to Christ to save him. When the last crust is gone from his cupboard, he will cry to the great Giver of the bread of life, whereof, if a man eat, he shall live for ever. You must starve the sinner's self-righteousness to make him willing to feed on Christ; and thus the very depths of his despair, when he thinks that he must be lost for ever, will only lead him, by God's abundant love, to a fuller appreciation of the heights of God's grace.

Once more, when the law of God enters a man's heart, it pronounces a curse upon him. That was a singular scene which was beheld over against

mount Ebal, and over against mount Gerizim, where one company read the curses, and another company read the blessings out of the book of the law. Now the law can do nothing for a sinner but say to him, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;" but the gospel comes in, and it replies to the curse of the law with such words as these, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord impuneth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Let the law curse as it may, the gospel's blessing is richer and stronger, for the gospel says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them, which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

II. Now I change our line of thought, and come closer home to Christians, by noticing that the great principle of our text is also illustrated in **THE AFTER-EXPERIENCE OF THE BELIEVER.**

Some young converts imagine that, as soon as they believe in Christ and find peace with God, they will be perfect; and have no more sin within them. Such an erroneous idea will only prepare them for a great disappointment, for conversion is not the end of the battle with sin, it is only the beginning of that battle. From the moment that a man believes in Jesus, and is thereby saved, he begins his life-long struggle against his inbred sins. I hear that, there are some brethren and sisters who have become perfect, and I am pleased to hear it if it is true: but I am glad they are not members of my family, I do not think I could live with them very peaceably, as I have generally found that the so-called "perfect." People are usually not at all pleasant people to be associated with those of us who do not profess to be perfect. We wish we were perfect, and we wish that other people were perfect; but, hitherto, our investigations have led us to believe that the perfection which is claimed by certain persons is in every case a mistake, and in many cases is a delusion and a sham.

Our opinion is that men, after they are converted, and begin to examine themselves in the light of God's Word, if they are at all like us, find sin everywhere within them;—sin in the affections, so that the hearts lusteth

after evil things;—sin in the judgment, so that it often makes most serious mistakes, and honestly puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter—sin in the desires, so that though we try to curb them, they wander hither and thither, whither we would not;—sin in the will, so that Lord Will-be-will proves that he is still very proud, and wants to have his own way,—and is not willing to bow submissively to the will of God;—sin in the memory, so that the most godly people can often recollect a snatch of a bad old song which they used to hear or to sing, far more readily than they can remember a text of Scripture; which they wish to treasure up in their memories, for memory has become unhinged, like all the rest of our faculties, and is quick to retain evil, and slow to retain that which is good. Brethren and sisters in Christ, in what part of our body does sin not dwell? Is there any single faculty, or power, or propensity that we have which will not lead us astray if we will let it do so? Are we not obliged to be always upon our guard against ourselves, and to watch ourselves as a garrison of soldiers would have to watch the natives of a country whom they had subdued, but who were anxious to throw off the yoke of the foreigners who had overcome them. In a similar fashion, grace is a foreigner in possession of our nature, and it holds by its own superior force what it has won; and only by its supernatural strength are we kept from regaining our former position.

Thus you see how sin abounds, even in the heart of a believer; but, blessed be God, grace doth much more abound there; for, although the will is still strong, there is a higher power that subdues and controls it so that our will is being gradually conformed to the will of God. Our affections, though they are apt to grovel here below, do soar towards Christ, for he really has won our hearts. Our desires do go astray, yet their main tendency is towards holiness. Blessed be the name of the Lord, unless we are awfully deceived, we do desire to do that which is well-pleasing in his sight. Our memory, too, though I have already confessed its faultiness, does often enable us to remember Jesus Christ, and it never will forget him whoever else it may forget. Ay, and our whole nature, though I have truly spoken of its faults, is a new nature, which God has wrought within us,—a nature that is akin to the divine, and in this nature grace triumphs over sin, so that where sin aboundeth, grace doth much more abound.

The same truth may be learned in another way. Sin abounds in the believer, not merely in the shape of the original sin in which he was born, and in the tendency to sin which is ever present with him, but sin mars the best thing he ever does. Did you ever examine one of your own prayers, did you ever look at it critically after it was finished? Shall I tell you what it was like? It was like something that man had manufactured, and which, when observed by the naked eyed, looked very beautiful. Put a microscope over it, and look at it. Take a needle if you like, for that seems to be one of the most polished pieces of metal conceivable; and as soon as you place it under the microscope, you say, "Why, I have got a rough bar of iron here! Surely it cannot be a needle." Yes it is, but you are looking at it now with a power far beyond your ordinary sight; and, in like manner, when the grace of God opens a man's eyes to see his best actions as they appear in God's sight, he sees that those actions are marred by sin. There is not anything that he has done which appears to him to be what it ought to be when he looks at it aright in the light of God's Word. The most consecrated action of his life, the most devout communion with Christ, the most intense ardor after God, falls far short of what it ought to be, and has something in it which ought not to be there. When the grace of God is strong within us, it makes sin appear to abound even to our own vision; we see it in every hymn we sing, in every prayer we pray, in every sermon we preach.

Not only do we see sin in our best things, but we also discover sin in our omissions. We were never troubled about that matter before, but now we recollect that what we do not do is often sinful;—not merely the wrong that we commit, but the good that we omit, the good that we neglect or forget to do. There is much sin there. Then we begin to examine our thoughts, and our trivial utterances, and we see them all crusted over with sin. Tested under the light of God's Word, everything seems to be honeycombed through and through with sin, so that sin indeed aboundeth. Well, what then? Why, then, this blessed text comes sweetly home to our hearts. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And now, how gloriously grace abounds! Now we prove the power of that precious blood which can wash us whiter than snow, so that God himself shall say to each one of us, "There is no spot in thee."

Beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, I do firmly believe that a deep and clear sense of sin is necessary to a right estimation of the power of pardoning love. I am sure that it is a great blessing to us when we have a deep sense of our sinnership. God forbid that we should ever pray as the Pharisee did, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are." Far better would it be for us to imitate the publican, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." None but those who are lost prize the Savior who came to seek and to save that which was lost, none but those who feel that they are foul and vile rightly value his cleansing blood. O beloved, when your sin abounds, then is the time to recollect that grace much more abounds. Sinner as you are, you are forgiven, you are "accepted in the Beloved," you are saved, you are a child of God, you shall be in heaven ere long, to praise for ever the grace that shall be crowned with glory.

Once more on this point. I believe that many of you have had an experience similar to mine, and that there have been times when you have been living specially near to God, and walking in the light of his countenance, when, on a sudden, the sin that dwelleth in you has seemed to attack you just when you least expected it. I know that my fiercest temptations often come to me immediately after my highest enjoyment of communion with God. They seem to come like a sharp draught of cold air the moment you step out of a warm room, and you hardly know what to do for the best, you are scarcely prepared for it. It will sometimes happen that a tempter, which you thought you had quite overcome, will rush upon you like a lion out of a thicket; or a passion, which you thought had been most eventually conquered, will come sweeping down upon you like a hurricane from the hills, and your poor little skiff upon the lake seems well-nigh overwhelmed with its furious onslaught. Then, as you look at yourselves, and are surprised to find so much sin in yourselves, you know that sin abounds; what do you do then? Well, I believe that, at such times, Christians try to nestle closer than ever under the wings of God, and they feel humbler, and they go to the precious blood of Jesus with a more intense desire to prove again its cleansing power; and they cry to the Strong for strength, and they feel more than ever they did before their need of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying power. Ralph Erskine said that he was more afraid of a sleeping devil than of a roaring devil, and there was good reason for his fear, for when the devil was roaring, the saints would



be more on the watch than when he was quiet. The worst temptation in the world is not to be tempted at all; but when there is a strong temptation, and your soul is fully aware of it, you are on your guard against it. The wave of temptation may even wash you higher up upon the Rock of ages, so that you cling to it with a firmer grip than you have ever done before, and so again where sin abounds, grace will much more abound.

III. Now I must close with a few general observations upon another matter. The great truth revealed in our text is not only illustrated by the entrance of the law into the hearts of believers, and in the after-life of Christians, but also IN ALL THE BLESSINGS OF SALVATION.

It is very wonderful, but it is certainly true, that there are many persons in heaven in whom sin once abounded. In the judgment of their fellow-men, some of them were worse sinners than others. There was Saul of Tarsus, there was the dying thief, there was the woman in the city who was a sinner,—a sinner in a very open and terrible sense. These, and many more of whom we read in the Scriptures, were all great sinners, and it was a great wonder of grace, in every instance, that they should be forgiven; but did they make poor Christians when they were converted? Quite the reverse; they loved much because they had been forgiven much. Amongst the best servants of God are many of those who were once the best servants of the devil. Sin abounded in them, but grace much more abounded when. It took possession of their hearts and lives. They were long led captive by the devil at his will, but they never were such servants to Satan as they afterwards became to the living and true God. They threw all the fervor of their intense natures into the service of their Savior, and so rose superior to some of their fellow-disciples, who did not so fully realize how much they owed to their Lord. I trust that any here present, who have gone far in sin, may be saved by the immeasurable grace of God ere they leave this building, and that, throughout the whole of their future lives, they may love Jesus Christ better, and serve him more than others who have not sinned as deeply as they have.

The same truth comes out if we think of what sin has done for us. O brethren, sin has infected the nature of man with a foul leprosy, a deadly

disease, but Jesus has cured the disease, and given us a life of a holier kind than we ever knew before. Sin has robbed us; but Christ has restored to us more than sin ever took away from us. Sin has stripped us; but Christ has clothed us in a better robe than our natural righteousness could ever have been. Well do we sing of Jesus,—

"In him the tribes of Adam boast  
More blessings than their father lost."

Sin has brought us very low, but Christ has lifted us higher than we stood before sin cast us down. Sin took away from man his love to God, but Christ has given us an intenser love to God than Adam ever had, for we love God because he has first loved us, and given his Son to die for us, and we have, in his greater grace, a good reason for yielding to him a greater love. Sin took away obedience from man, but now that saints obey to a yet higher degree than they could have done before; for I suppose it would not been possible for unfallen man to suffer, but now we are capable of suffering for Christ; and many martyrs have gone signing to death for the truth, because, while sin made them capable of suffering, Christ's grace has made them capable of obedience to him in the suffering, and so of doing more to prove their allegiance to God than would have been possible if they had never fallen. Sin, dear brethren and sisters in Christ, has shut us out of Eden; yet let us not weep, for Christ has prepared a better paradise for us in heaven; Sin has deprived us of the river that rippled o'er sands of gold, and of the green glades of that blessed garden into which suffering could never have come unless sin had first entered, but God has provided for us "a pure river of water of life," and a lovelier garden than Eden ever was; and there we shall for ever dwell through the abounding grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which has abounded even over our abounding sin.

Sin has separated us from God, but grace has brought us nearer to God than we ever were before sin divided us from him. Until Christ became man, there was no man on the earth, and there would have been no man, who was more to God than man could be to his Maker; but now there lives a Man who is more to God than any created being ever could be, for that Man is also God, and he sits at the right hand of his Father, and

shares with him the control of the universe. That Man has brought the human race nearer to the Deity than the mere act of creation could possibly have done. Glory be to God for Jesus Christ, the Man from heaven, the Son of Mary, and the Son of the Highest. Sin wrought us untold mischief, but grace has made even that mischief to be a gain to us, for now we are sought with blood as, otherwise, we never could have been. Now we know both sin and righteousness as we could not otherwise have done; and now the whispering of the old serpent, which was a lie, has proved to have a truth concealed in it, for we are indeed as gods, since we have become partakers of the divine nature by virtue of our union with the Christ of God. O wondrous Fall, which would have broken us hopelessly had it not been for still more marvelous grace! O wondrous restoration which has lifted us up, and made us more perfect than we were before we were broken, and elevated us to a glory of which we could never have dreamed, had we lived with Adam and Eve in paradise, and remained in innocence for ever!

One practical remark I want to make before I close; it is this, if you have received this grace, which has abounded over your sin, take care that you do more for grace than you ever did for sin. It is wonderful how much people will do for sin, what they will give, what they will spend, and what they will endure to gratify their passions and serve their cruel taskmaster, Satan. I should not like to guess what some men waste on their lusts; I should not like to make a calculation as to what some people spend in a year on what they call their pleasures. Well, whatever the amount is, shall they give more, shall they do more for their god than we give and do for ours? Shall they be more intense in their adoration of Satan than we are in our obedience to God? That must never be, nor must we ever permit, them to outdo us in the praises of their treasure. They make night hideous with their praises of their god, Bacchus; but we do not often annoy them with the songs of Zion; it would be as well, perhaps, if we did; but we are often cowards in not rendering due praises to our God. They are not ashamed to make the welkin ring with their lascivious notes; then let us pluck up courage, and solidly assert the glories of our God and the wonders of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Especially, let us never be ashamed to say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me, and blessed be his holy name for ever and ever. Amen."

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## **Sin Immeasurable**

Who can understand his errors? - Psalm 19:12

What we know is as nothing when compared with what we know not. The sea of wisdom has cast up a shell or two upon our shore, but its vast depths have never known the footstep of the searcher. Even in natural things we know but the surface of matters. He that has traveled the wide world over, and has descended into its deepest mines, must yet be aware that he has viewed but a part of the mere crust of this world; that as for its vast center, its mysterious fires and molten secreta, the mind of man hath not as yet conceived them. If you will turn your eyes above, the astronomer will tell you that the undiscovered stars, that the vast mass of worlds which form the milky way, and the abundant masses of nebulae - that those vast clusters of unknown worlds, as infinitely exceed the little that we can explore, as a mountain exceeds a grain of sand. All the knowledge which the wisest men can possibly attain in a whole life-time, is no more than what the child may take up from the sea with his tiny cup, compared with the boundless waters which fill their channels to the brim. Why, when we are at the wisest, we have but come to the threshold of knowledge, we have taken but one step in that race of discovery which we may have to pursue throughout all eternity. This is equally the case with regard to things of the heart, and the spiritual things which concern this little world called man. We know nothing but the surface of things. Whether I talk to you of God, of his attributes, of Christ, of his atonement, or of ourselves and our sin, I must confess that as yet we know nothing but the exterior; that we cannot comprehend the length, the breadth, the height of any one of these matters.

The subject of this morning - our own sin, and the error of our own

hearts, is one which we sometimes think we know, but of which we may always be quite sure that we have only began to learn, and that when we have learned the most we shall ever know on earth, the question will still be pertinent, "Who can understand his errors?"

Now, this morning I propose first of all, very briefly indeed, to explain the question; then at greater length to impress it upon our hearts; and lastly we will learn the lessons which it would teach us.

I. First, then, let me EXPLAIN THE QUESTION. - "Who can understand his errors?"

We all acknowledge that we have errors. Surely we are not so proud as to imagine ourselves to be perfect. If we pretend to perfection we are utterly ignorant, for every profession of human perfection arises from perfect ignorance. Any notion that we are free from sin should at once discover to us that we abound in it. To vindicate my boast of perfection, I must deny the Word of God, forget the law, and exalt myself above the testimony of truth. Therefore, I say, we are willing to confess that we have many errors, yet who amongst us can understand them? Who knows precisely how far a thing may be an error which we imagine to be a virtue? Who among us can define how much of iniquity is mingled with our uprightness - how much of unrighteousness with our righteousness? Who is able to detect the component parts of every action, so as to see the proportion of motive which would constitute it right or wrong? He were indeed a crafty man who should be able to unmask an action and divide it into essential motives which are its component parts. Where we think we are right, who knows but what we may be wrong? Where even with the strictest scrutiny we have arrived at the conclusion that we have done a good thing, who among us is quite sure that he has not been mistaken? May not the apparent good be so marred with internal motive as to become a real evil?

Who again can understand his errors, so as always to detect a fault when it has been committed? The shades of evil are perceptible to God, but not always perceptible to us. Our eye has been so blinded and its vision so ruined by the fall, the absolute black of sin we can detect, but the shades

of its darkness we are unable to discern. And yet the slightest shadow of sin is perceptible to God, and that very shade divides us from the Perfect One, and causes us to be guilty of sin. Who amongst us has that keen method of judging himself, so that he shall be able to discover the first trace of evil? "Who can understand his errors?" Surely no man will claim a wisdom so profound as this. But to come to more common matters by which perhaps we may the more understand our text. Who can understand the number of his errors? the mightiest mind could not count the sins of a single day. As the multitude of sparks from a furnace, so innumerable are the iniquities of one day. We might sooner tell the grains of sand on the sea-shore, than the iniquities of one man's life. A life most purged and pure is still as full of sin as the sea is full of salt. And who is he that can weigh the salt of the sea, or can detect it as it mingles with every fluid particle? But if he could do this, he could not tell how vast an amount of evil saturates our entire life, and how innumerable are those deeds, and thoughts, and words of disobedience, which have cast us out from the presence of God, and caused him to abhor the creatures which his own hands have made.

Again, even if we could tell the number of human sins, who, in the next place, could estimate their guilt? Before God's mind the guilt of one sin, and such an one as we foolishly call a little one - the guilt of one sin merits his eternal displeasure. Until that one iniquity be washed out with blood, God cannot accept the soul and take it to his heart as his own offspring. Though he has made man, and is infinitely benevolent, yet his sense of justice is so strong, and stern, and inflexible, that from his presence he must drive out his dearest child if one single sin should remain unforgiven. Who then amongst us can tell the guilt of guilt, the heinousness of that ungrateful rebellion which man has commenced and carried on against his wise and gracious Creator. Sin, like hell, is a bottomless pit! Oh, brethren, there never lived a man yet who really knew how guilty he was; for if such a being could be fully conscious of all his own guilt, he would carry hell in his bowels. Nay, I often think that scarcely can the damned in perdition know all the guilt of their iniquity, or else even their furnace might be heated seven times hotter, and Tophet's streams must be enlarged to an unmeasurable depth. The hell which is contained in a single evil thought is unutterable and

unimaginable. God only knows the blackness, the horror of darkness, which is condensed into the thought of evil.

And then again, I think our text would convey to us this idea. Who can understand the peculiar aggravation of his own transgression. Now, answering the question for myself, I feel that as a minister of Christ I cannot understand my errors. Placed where multitudes listen to the Word from my lips, my responsibilities are so tremendous, that the moment I think of them, a mountain presses upon my soul. There have been times, when I have wished to imitate Jonah and take ship and flee away from the work which God has thrust upon me; for I am conscious that I have not served him as I ought. When I have preached most earnestly, I go to my chamber and repent that I have preached in so heartless a manner. When I have wept over your souls, and when I have agonized in prayer, I have yet been conscious that I have not wrestled with God as I ought to have wrestled, and that I have not felt for your souls as I ought to feel. The errors which a man may commit in the ministry are incalculable. There is no hell methinks that shall be hot enough for the man who is unfaithful here. There can be no curse too horrible to be hurled upon the head of that man who leads others astray when he ought to guide them in the path of peace, or who deals with sacred things as if they were matters of no weight, and but of slight importance. I bring here any minister of Christ that lives, and if he be a man really filled with the Holy Spirit, he will tell you that when he is bowed down with the solemnity of his office, he would give up the work if he dare; that if it were not for something beyond, mysterious impulses that drive him forward, he would take his hand from the plough and leave the field of battle. Lord have mercy upon thy ministers, for, beyond all other men, we need mercy.

And now I single out any other member of my congregation, and whatever be your position in life, whatever your education, or the peculiar providences through which you have passed, I will insist upon it that there is something special about your case which makes your sin such sin, that you cannot understand how vile it is. Perhaps you have had a pious mother who wept over you in your childhood, and dedicated you to God when you were in your cradle. Your sin is doubly sin. There is about it a scarlet hue which is not to be discovered in an ordinary criminal. You

have been directed from your youth up in the way of righteousness, and if you have gone astray, every step you have taken has been not a step to hell but a stride thither. You do not sin so cheaply as others. Other men's scores run up fast; but where there are pence put down for other sinners there are pounds put down for you, because you know your duty but you do it not. He that breaks through a mother's bosom to hell goes to its lowest depths. There is in hell a degree of torture, and the deepest should surely be reserved for the man who leaps over a mother's prayers into perdition. Or you may never have this to account for; but you may have an equal aggravation. You have been at sea, sir. Many times you have been in danger of being shipwrecked. You have had miraculous escapes. Now every one of these shipwrecks has been a warning to you. God has brought you to the gates of death, and you have promised that if he would but save your wretched soul that you would lead a fresh life - that you would begin to serve your Maker. You have lied to your God. Your sins before you uttered that vow were evil enough; but now you break not only the law but your own covenant which you voluntarily made with God in the home of sickness. You have, some of you perhaps, been thrown from a horse, or have been attacked by fever, or in other ways have been brought to the very gates of the grave. What solemnity is attached to your life now! He that rode in the charge of Balaklava and yet came back alive - saved alive where hundreds die - should from that time consider himself to be a God's man, saved by a singular Providence for singular ends. But you too have had your escapes, if not quite so wonderful, yet certainly quite as special instances of God's goodness. And now, every error you commit becomes unutterably wicked, and of you I may say, "Who can understand his errors?"

But I might exhaust the congregation by bringing up one by one. Here comes the father. Sir, your sins will be imitated by your children. You cannot therefore understand your errors, because they are sins against your own offspring - sins against the children that have sprung from your own loins. Here is the magistrate. Sir, your sins are of a peculiar dye, because, standing in your position, your character is watched and looked up to, and whatever you do becomes the excuse of other men. I bring up another man who holds no office in the state whatever, and who perhaps is little known among men. But, sir, you have received special grace from



God, you have had rich enjoyment of the light of your Savior's countenance; you have been poor, but he has made you rich - rich in faith. Now when you rebel against him, the sins of God's favourites are sins indeed. Iniquities committed by the people of God become as huge as high Olympus, and reach the very stars. Who among us, then, can understand his errors: their special aggravations, their number, and their guilty Lord, search thou us and know our ways!

II. I have thus tried briefly to explain my text; now I come to THE IMPRESSING OF IT ON THE HEART, as God the Holy Spirit shall help me.

Before a man could understand his errors there are several mysteries which he must know. But each one of these mysteries, methinks, is beyond his knowledge, and consequently the understanding of the whole depth of the guilt of his sin must be quite beyond human power. Now the first mystery that man must understand is the fall. Until I know how much all my powers are debased and depraved, how thoroughly my will is perverted and my judgment turned from its right channel, how really and essentially vicious my nature has become, it cannot be possible for me to know the whole extent of my guilt. Here is a piece of iron laid upon the anvil. The hammers are plied upon it lustily. A thousand sparks are scattered on every side. Suppose it possible to count each spark as it falls from the anvil; yet who could guess the number of the unborn sparks that still lie latent and hidden in the mass of iron? Now, brethren, your sinful nature may be compared to that heated bar of iron. Temptations are the hammers; your sins the sparks. If you could count them (which you cannot do) yet who could tell the multitude of unborn iniquities - eggs of sin that lie slumbering in your souls? Yet must you know this before you know the whole sinfulness of your nature. Our open sins are like the farmer's little sample which he brings to market. There are granaries full at home. The iniquities that we see are like the weeds upon the surface soil; but I have been told, and indeed have seen the truth of it, that if you dig six feet into the earth, and turn up fresh soil, there will be found in that soil six feet deep the seeds of the weeds indigenous to the land. And so we are not to think merely of the sins that grow on the surface, but if we could turn our heart up to its core and center, we should find it as fully

permeated with sin as every piece of putridity is with worms and rottenness. The fact is, that man is a reeking mass of corruption. His whole soul is by nature so debased and so depraved, that no description which can be given of him even by inspired tongues can fully tell how base and vile a thing he is. An ancient writer said once of the iniquity within, that it was like the stores of water which it is are hidden in the depths of the earth. God once broke up the fountains of the great deep, and then they covered the mountains twenty cubits upward. If God should even withdraw his restraining grace, and break up in our hearts the whole fountains of the great depths of our iniquity, it would be a flood so wondrous, that it would cover the highest tops of our hopes and the whole worm within us would be drowned in dread despair. Not a living thing could be found in this sea of evil. It would cover all, and swallow up the whole of our manhood. Ah! says an old proverb, "If man could wear his sins on his forehead, he would pull his hat over his eyes. That old Roman who said he would like to have a window into his heart that every man could see within it, did not know himself, for if he had had such a window he would soon have begged to have a pair of shutters, and he would have kept them shut up I am sure; for could he ever have seen his own heart, he would have been driven raving mad. God, therefore, spares all eyes but his own that desperate sight - a naked human heart. Great God, here would we pause and cry, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."

A second thing which it will be needful for us to understand before we can comprehend our errors is God's law. If I just describe the law for a moment, you will very readily see that you can never hope by any means fully to understand it. The law of God, as we read it in the ten great commandments, seems very simple, very easy. When we come, however, to put even its naked precepts into practice, we find that it is quite impossible for us to keep them in the full. Our amazement, however, increases, when we find that the law does not mean merely what it says, but that it has a spiritual meaning, a hidden depth of matter which at first sight we do not discover. For instance, the commandment, "Thou shalt

not commit adultery," means more than the mere act - refers to fornication and uncleanness of any shape, both in act, and word, and thought. Nay, to use our Savior's own exposition of it, "He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her, committeth adultery already with her in his heart." So with every commandment. The bare letter is nothing, compared with the whole stupendous meaning and severe strictness of the rule. The commandments, if I may so speak, are like the stars. When seen with the naked eye, they appear to be brilliant points; if we could draw near to them, we should see them to be infinite worlds, greater than even our sun, stupendous though it is. So is it with the law of God. It seems to be but a luminous point, because we see it at a distance, but when we come nearer where Christ stood, and estimate the law as he saw it, then we find it is vast, immeasurable. "The commandment is exceeding broad." Think then for a moment of the spirituality of the law, its extent and strictness. The law of Moses condemns for offense, without hope of pardon, and sin, like a millstone, is bound around the sinner's neck, and he is cast into the depths. Nay, the law deals with sins of thought, - the imagination of evil is sin. The transit of sin across the heart, leaves the stain of impurity behind it. This law, too, extends to every act, - tracks us to our bed-chamber, goes with us to our house of prayer, and if it discovers so much as the least sign of wavering from the strict path of integrity, it condemns us. When we think of the law of God we may well be overwhelmed with horror, and sit down and say, "God be merciful to me, for to keep this law is utterly beyond power; even to know the fullness of its meaning is not within finite capacity. Therefore great God cleanse us from our secret faults - save us by thy grace, for by the law we never can be saved."

Nor yet, even if you should know these two things, should you be able to answer this question; for, to comprehend our own errors, we must be able to understand the perfection of God. To get a full idea of how black sin is, you must know how bright God is. We see things by contrast. You will at one time have pointed out to you a color which appears perfectly white; yet it is possible for something to be whiter still; and when you think you have arrived at the very perfection of whiteness, you discover that there is still a shade, and that something may be found that is blanched to a higher state of purity. When we put ourselves in comparison with the

apostles, we discover that we are not what we should be; but if we could bring ourselves side by side with the purity of God, O what spots! what defilements should we find on our surface! while the Immaculate God stands before us as the bright back-ground to set out the blackness of our iniquitous souls. Ere thou canst know thine own defilement those eyes must look into the unutterable glory of the divine character. Him before whom the heavens are not pure - who chargeth the angels with folly - thou must know him before thou canst know thyself. Hope not, then, that thou shalt ever attain to a perfect knowledge of the depths of thine own sin.

Again: he that would understand his errors in all their heinousness must know the mystery of hell. We must walk that burning marl, stand in the midst of the blazing flame; nay, feel it. We must feel the venom of destruction as it makes the blood boil in each vein. We must find our nerves converted into fiery roads, along which the hot feet of pain shall travel, hurrying with lightning pace. We must know the extent of eternity, and then the unutterable agony of that eternal wrath of God which abides on the souls of the lost, before we can know the awful character of sin. You may best measure the sin by the punishment. Depend upon it, God will not put his creatures to a single pang more pain than justice absolutely demands. There is no such thing as sovereign torture or sovereign hell. God does not stretch his creature on the rack like a tyrant; he will give him but what he deserves, and, perhaps, even when God's wrath is fiercest against sin, he does not punish the sinner so much as his sin might warrant, but only as much as it demands. At any rate, there will not be a grain more of wormwood in the cup of the lost than naked justice absolutely requires. Then, O my God! if thy creatures are to be cast into a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone - if into a pit that is bottomless lost souls must be driven, then what a hideous thing sin must be. I cannot understand that torture, therefore I cannot understand the guilt that deserves it. Yet am I conscious that my guilt deserves it, or else God would not have threatened me with it, for he is just and I am unjust; he is holy and righteous, and good, and he would not punish me more for my sin than my sin absolutely required.

Yet once more - a last endeavor to impress this question of my text upon

our hearts. George Herbert saith very sweetly: - "He that would know sin let him repair to Olivet, and he shall see a man so wrung with pain that all his head, his hair, his garments bloody be. Sin was that press and vice which forced pain to hunt its cruel food through every vein." You must see Christ sweating as it were great drops of blood; you must have a vision of him with the spittle running down his cheeks, with his back torn by the accursed whip; you must see him going on his dolorous journey through Jerusalem; you must behold him fainting under the weight of the cross; you must see him as the nails are driven through his hands and through his feet; your tearful eye must watch the throes of the grim agonies of death; you must drink of the bitterness of wormwood mingled with the gall; you must stand in the thick darkness with your own soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death; you must cry yourself that awful earth-startling cry of "Lama sabachthani;" you too must, as he did, feel all that weighs of God's almighty wrath; you must be ground between the upper and nether millstones of wrath and vengeance; you must drink of the cup to its last dregs, and like Jesus cry - "It is finished;" or else you can never know all your errors, and understand the guilt of your sin. But this is clearly impossible and undesirable. Who wishes to suffer as the Savior suffered, all the horrors which he endured? He, blessed be his name, has suffered for us. The cup is emptied now. The cross stands up no longer for us to die thereon. Quenched is the flame of hell for every true believer. Now no more is God angry with his people, for he has put away sin through the sacrifice of himself. Yet I say it again, before we could know sin we must know the whole of that awful wrath of God which Jesus Christ endured. Who, then, can understand his errors?

III. I hope to have your patient attention but a few moments longer while I make THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION, by touching upon the lessons which are drawn from such a subject as this.

The first lesson is - Behold then the folly of all hope of salvation by our own righteousness. Come hither, ye that trust in yourselves. Look to Sinai, altogether in a smoke, and tremble and despair. You say that you have good works. Alas your good works are evil, but have you no evil ones? Do you deny that you have ever sinned? Ah! my hearer, art thou so besotted as to declare that thy thoughts have all been chaste, thy desires

all heavenly, and thine actions all pure? Oh, man, if all this were true, if thou hadst no sins of commission, yet, what about thy sins of omission? Hast thou done all that God and that thy brother could require of thee? Oh these sins of omission! The hungry that you have not fed, the naked that you have not clothed, the sick ones, and those that are in prison that you have not visited - remember it was for sins like these that the goats were found at the left hand at last. Not for what they did do, but for what they did not do - the things they left undone, these men were put into the lake of fire. Oh, my hearer, have done with thy boasting; pull out those plumes from thine helmet thou rebellious one, and come with thy glory draggling in the mire, and with thy bright garment stained, and now confess that thou hast no righteousness of thine own - that thou art all unclean, and full of sin.

If but this one practical lesson were learned, it were sufficient to repay this morning's gathering, and a blessing would be conveyed to every spirit that had learned it. But now we come to another - how vain are all hopes of salvation by our feelings. We have a new legalism to fight with in our Christian churches. There are men and women who think they must not believe on Christ till they feel their sins up to a most agonizing point. They think they must feel a certain degree of sorrow, a high degree of sense of need before they may come to Christ at all. Ah! soul, if thou art never saved till thou knowest all thy guilt, thou wilt never be saved, for thou canst never know it. I have shown thee the utter impossibility of thy ever being able to discover the whole heights and depths of thine own lost state. Man, don't try to be saved by thy feelings. Come and take Christ just as he is, and come to him just as thou art. "But, Sir, may I come? I am not invited to come." Yes you are, "Whosoever will, let him come." Don't believe that the invitations of the gospel are given only to characters; they are, some of them, unlimited invitations. It is the duty of every man to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is every man's solemn duty to trust Christ, not because of anything that man is, or is not, but because he is commanded to do it. "This is the command of God, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he has sent."

"O, believe the promise true,  
God to you his Son has given."

Trust now in his precious blood, you are saved, and you shall see his face in heaven. Despair of being saved by feeling, since perfect feelings are impossible and a perfect knowledge of our own guilt is quite beyond our reach. Come, then to Christ, hard-hearted as thou art, and take him to be the Savior of thy hard heart. Come, poor stony conscience, poor icy soul, come as thou art; he will warm thee, he will melt thee.

"True belief, and true repentance,  
Every grace that brings us nigh;  
Without money,  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy."

But again. Another sweet inference - and surely this might well be the last - is this: what grace is this which pardons sin? - sin so great that the most enlarged capacity cannot comprehend its heinousness. Oh! I know my sins reach from the east even to the west - that aiming at the eternal skies they rise like pointed mountains towards hearer. But then, blessed be the name of God, the blood of Christ is wider than my sin. That shoreless flood of Jesus' merit is deeper than the heights of mine iniquities. My sin may be great, but his merit is greater still I cannot conceive my own guilt, much less express it, but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Infinite guilt, but infinite pardon. Boundless iniquities, but boundless merits to cover all. What if thy sins were greater than heaven's breadth, yet Christ is greater than heaven. The heaven of heavens cannot contain him. If thy sins were deeper than the bottomless hell, yet Christ's atonement is deeper still, for he descended deeper than ever man himself as yet hath dived - even damned men in all the horror of their agony, for Christ went to the end of punishment, and deeper thy sins can never plunge. Oh! boundless love, that covers all my faults. My poor hearer, believe on Christ now. God help thee to believe. May the Spirit now enable thee to trust in Jesus. Thou canst not save thyself. All hopes of self-salvation are delusive. Now give up, have done with self, and take Christ. Just as thou art, drop into his arms. He will take thee; he will save thee. He died to do it, and he lives to accomplish it. He will not lose the spirit that casts itself into his hands and makes him his all in all.

I think I must not detain you longer. The subject is one which might command far larger mind than mine, and better words than I can gather now, but if it has struck home I am thankful to God. Let me echo again and again the one sentiment I wish for all to receive, which is just this. We are so vile that our vileness is beyond our own comprehension, but nevertheless, the blood of Christ hath infinite efficacy, and he that believeth in the Lord Jesus is saved, be his sins ever so many, but he that believeth not must be lost, be his sins never so few.

God bless you all for Christ's sake.

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## **Sin: Its Spring-head, Stream, And Sea**

Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea. - Psalm 106:7

Our fathers! From them we derive our nature. We inherit our fathers' propensities; for that which is born of the flesh is flesh. As is the nature, such is the conduct. Hence the Psalmist writes in verse 6: "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly." If we must mention our fathers' faults, it is not to screen ourselves; for we have to confess that our life's story is no brighter than theirs. It is not because the fathers have eaten sour grapes that the children's teeth are set on edge; for we ourselves have greedily devoured those evil clusters: "We have sinned with our fathers." "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." When we read of the sins of others, we ought to be humbled and warned; for "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." We have no space wherein to set up a monument to our own glory. As we cannot boast in



our pedigree, for we are the children of sinners; so we cannot exalt ourselves because of our personal excellence, for there is none that doeth good, no not one. We come before God and confess our iniquities as a race and as individuals; and we cry unto him, in the words of the forty-seventh verse, "Save us, O Lord our God."

It may help us to escape out of the meshes of our natural depravity, if we look back and see the causes of our fathers' sins. To confess our personal sin will tend to keep us humble; and in view of the Lord's mercy, which has spared and pardoned us, a sense of our guilt will make us grateful. The less we think of ourselves the more we shall think of him whose "mercy endureth for ever"; and if we see where our fathers' sins began, and how they grew, and what they came to, we may hope that the Spirit of God will help us to turn from the beginnings of evil, and forsake the fountain-heads of our iniquities. This will tend to repentance and holiness. May we be so wrought upon by the Spirit of God that we shall not be as our earthly fathers, but become like our heavenly Father, who says to us, "Be ye followers of God, as dear children." We are not to take our fathers after the flesh for our example wherein they have gone astray; but our Father who is in heaven we are to imitate by the power of his grace.

Great things, whether good or evil, begin with littles. The river that rolls its mighty volume to the sea was once a tiny brook; nay, it started as a spring-head, where the child stooped down to drink, and, with a single draught, seemed as if he would exhaust the supply. The rivulet ripples itself into a river. Sin is a stream of this sort. It starts with a thought; it increases to a resolve, a word, an act; it gathers force, and becomes habit, and daring rebellion.

Follow me, therefore, first, when I notice, that want of understanding lies at the fountain-head of sin: "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt." Out of this lack of understanding comes the greater offense of ungrateful forgetfulness. Failure of memory follows upon a want of understanding: "They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies." This readily leads on to the sad consummation of rebellion. Provocation follows upon forgetfulness. Inward faults display themselves in outward

offenses: "They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea."

I. Let us begin at the beginning. WANT OF UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S WONDERS IS THE SOURCE OF SIN. The wonders that God wrought in Egypt were exceedingly great and instructive. The ten plagues were memorable master-strokes of God's judgment upon the proud, and notable displays of his favor to the oppressed. How Egypt staggered beneath the blows of Jehovah! Those tremendous judgments came one after another with righteous deliberation, and yet with terrible rapidity. Pharaoh and his proud nobles were wounded and humbled: the leviathan of Egypt was broken in pieces as one that is slain. Surely they for whom all these plagues were wrought ought to have considered them, and ought to have spied out the plain lessons which they taught; but they failed to do so, for they were dull of understanding. Albeit, God had come out of his secret places, and had made bare his arm for them, yet "our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt."

We see this to be the case when we read the story; for at the first, when God began to work for them, they were so taken up with the present that they complained of Moses, for the cruel retort of Pharaoh. He had gone in unto the proud monarch, and had urged the demand of Jehovah; and the tyrant had replied, "Ye hinder the people from their works; get you unto your burdens." He increased their toil, by refusing to give the people straw to make bricks; and so their bondage was made bitter to the last degree, and they groaned as they saw "that they were in evil case." They are not blamed for groaning; but it was very blameworthy that they should say to Moses and Aaron: "The Lord look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savor to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hands to slay us." It was mean to blame their friends for the cruel fault of their enemy. How wretchedly have we also complained when God, in his gracious dealings with us, has caused us an inward grief! He began to show us our sin—a very necessary thing; but we kicked against it and said, "Is this the grace of God? Oh, that we were rid of these convictions!" Thus the Lord took away our self-confidence; but we were full of unbelief, and we thought some great evil had happened to us; whereas it was the way of God's wisdom and love to make sin as much a bondage to us as Egypt was to

Israel. How else should we feel our need of redemption, and be willing to come forth free by the blood of the Lamb? If the Lord doth but lay his little finger upon us we complain; and instead of seeing love in our affliction, we cry out as if the Lord dealt hardly with us. His mercy designs to teach us some great lesson for our eternal benefit; and we murmur and ask, "Is this the love of God to his chosen?" Our fathers understood not his wonders in Egypt, and oftentimes this is our case; we judge by the feelings of the present, and forget the eternal future. We cannot understand our burdens and our soul-humblings; we stand bewildered and amazed. Though the point is plain enough to faith, unbelief does not hear the rod, nor him that has appointed it; but we are taken up with our present smart. Our selfish desire for immediate comfort prevents our understanding the great plans of divine grace.

Further on we find Israel broken down by utter hopelessness. Moses spoke to them again, but we read, "They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." They had been so brutally crushed by the Egyptians, that they had lost all heart. Slavery had killed all the manhood of their race: they were abject, timorous, and crouching bondsmen. The last ounce that breaks the camel's back was laid on them by Pharaoh, and they could no more listen to words of hope. Moses said he had come to deliver them; he told them they should be brought out with a high hand and an outstretched arm; but they could not think it possible; they shook their heads, and turned a deaf ear to what they regarded as vain words. Hope had fled. They understood not that God could, by any possible means, deliver them from the gigantic power which held them down. Alas! this also has been the case with us; and perhaps is the case with some here at this moment. You are so sad and so depressed that you cannot believe in salvation. Your presumptuous hopes lie dead in heaps round about you, and you cannot believe that you will ever be saved. "Oh!" say you, "there may be mercy for anybody else, but there is no mercy for me. God can forgive the chief of sinners, but he will never forgive me." Though we tell you of free grace and dying love, and of pardon for sins of deepest dye, a pardon bought with Jesus' blood, you turn a deaf ear to us because your spirit is wounded and faint. You understand not God's wonders for and in you. You cannot think that indeed and of a truth the Lord Jesus loved you, and gave himself for you.

You dare not hope that he has ordained you unto eternal life, that he will put his Spirit within you, and that he will give you power to become children of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Your very sorrow for sin has made you incapable of understanding God's wonders of grace. This is a painful state of mind.

You see, dear friends, these people, though they saw God's plagues on the Egyptians, which were mercies to Israel, yet they did not enter into their teaching. One would have thought that every Israelite would have said, when the thick darkness was over all the land, even "darkness that might be felt", surely Jehovah is a great and mighty God. When there was a storm of thunder and hail over all Egypt, the like of which had never been known before, would it not have been natural for them to cry, "Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah? We, thy people, bow before thy majesty!" The right-minded Israelite would have prostrated himself before the supreme power of God and would never henceforth have doubted the Lord's ability to redeem his chosen nation.

Should not Israel have learned also the royal sovereignty of the Lord God? What armies obeyed the call of that great King! At his word the river brought forth frogs abundantly. He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their borders. "He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number, and did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground." Jehovah's camp is very great. The waters were turned into blood, and the dust into creeping things; the heavens were set on fire, and the habitations of men were darkened.

He who did all these marvellous things is King over all the earth. "He smote all the first-born in Egypt, the chief of their strength." Even the first-born of Pharaoh, that sitteth on the throne, was made to die. Surely Jehovah is King of kings. Would you not have thought that his people would have felt the force of his divine dominion, and would have bowed before his supreme will throughout the rest of their lives? Awed by his power and glory, we might have expected to find in Israel a loyal people. But no; they neither seemed to tremble before the power, nor to bow before the sovereignty, of Jehovah; but they murmured against him, and

declared that he could not deliver them, and complained that they had been brought out of Egypt to die by the hand of Pharaoh at the Red Sea.

Beyond all question, they ought to have recognized Jehovah's love to them. By so much as the plagues were terrible to Egypt they were gracious to his people. Though the Israelites were a race of down-trodden slaves the Lord loved them. He moved heaven and earth to liberate them: he not only made the very dust of Egypt alive for them, but he sent swift angels out of heaven to avenge the wrongs of his chosen. The orbs of heaven and the creatures of earth—all were brought to bear upon God's great purpose of grace towards Israel. Truly said the Lord, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom: Ethiopia and Seba for thee." It was love, wondrous love to Israel, which made the Lord to show his signs in Egypt, his wonders in the land of Ham. Why did they not become lovingly obedient in return for such favors? Why were they hard of heart, and stiff of neck, and unwilling to be led of the Lord their God? Alas! they understood not what the Lord was doing for them.

To you, beloved, it may be that the same fault can be laid. God has done great wonders for believers; but, it may be, we have not yet learned his power so as to trust his might; nor his sovereignty, so as to submit to his will; nor his love, so as to rejoice in his faithfulness. Alas! we have but little understanding; nay, worse, we have none at all except as the Lord, the Holy Spirit, teaches us to profit, and instructs us, as children are instructed.

The tribes of Israel did not see in all this the claim which the Lord had upon them. As a people, they belonged to him who had made them a nation. Because of what he had done for them, the Lord took up a peculiar position to them, which he would have them acknowledge. Remember how, in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, before the Lord proclaims his ten commands, he says—"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." By this, Jehovah separated them to be his people, and he declared himself to be their God. During the plagues, he marked his special love to his own; for when the Lord sent a thick darkness over all the land, we read, "But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." When the

cattle of Egypt died, Pharaoh sent and found, upon inquiry that "there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead." When the firstborn of Egypt fell dead beneath the angel's sword, the sprinkled blood of the passover lamb secured to all Israel protection from the midnight slaughter; and men were made to know that God did put a difference between his chosen and the men of Egypt. Yet, the favored people did not understand it: the truth was conspicuous enough; but they did not perceive it as they ought to have done; neither did they practically show that they were the Lord's people, and that he only was their God. The like slowness to take up our true position, we may see and mourn in ourselves. After all the Lord's wonders of grace towards us, we do not exalt him as our God, nor serve him as his people, as we ought to do. Lord, have mercy upon us!

The people did not see that their God by all his wonders was pledging himself to them. After having done so much for them, he would not leave them. Could he have brought them out of Egypt to kill them at the Red Sea? They even dared to say that this was their suspicion. Oh, the slanders of unbelief! But if they had understood his wonders, they would have seen that he who had done such great things for them had bound himself to perfect his purpose, and to bring them into the land which he had promised to their fathers. "Ah!" you say, "they were very stupid." I do not defend them; but what about yourselves? Have we not been mistrustful? Have we not said in our hearts, "He will yet fail us, and our faith will be disappointed"? Alas, great God, we blush and are ashamed! But, listen -

"Determined to save, he watched o'er my path  
When, Satan's blind slave, I sported with death;  
And can he have taught me to trust in his name,  
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame."

Will the Lord lose all that he has wrought in us, and for us? Is he like to the foolish one, who began to build and was not able to finish? Does the Eternal revoke his resolves? Does the Almighty turn from his purposes? Is it not said, "The strength of Israel will not lie; for he is not a man, that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should repent"? O believer,

learn this lesson well; and trust in your unchanging God: thus shall you understand his wonders in Egypt.

The fact is, dear friends, these people had no deeply spiritual work upon their hearts. "They understood not his wonders in Egypt", because their hearts were hardened by their association with a proud, worldly, idolatrous and yet cultured nation, and they had turned aside from the spiritual faith of their fathers. Wonders were wrought, and they saw them, and were amazed; but they did not see beneath the surface, nor perceive the Lord's meaning in them. Beloved, I pray to God for you who are newly called out from the world, that the first working of grace in your souls may be deep, true, clear, and lasting. I would have you not only know, but understand. Depend upon it a man's after-character is very much shaped by the mode of his conversion. Why do some turn back altogether? It is because their change of heart was not that thorough radical conversion which involves the creation of a new nature. They felt certain superficial impressions which they mistook for the new birth, and they made a hasty profession which they could not afterwards maintain. They were not thoroughly saved from the dominion of sin, or they would have hold on to the end. Many professing Christians of whom we have a good hope that they will prove to be sincere, never had any deep conviction of sin, nor any overwhelming sense of their need of Jesus: hence they have seen little of our Lord in his glorious offices, and all-sufficient sacrifice, and have gained no thorough understanding of his truth. They are like slovenly farmers, who have ploughed their fields after a fashion, but they have not gone deep, and the land will never yield more than half a crop. We have all around us too much surface work. Numbers of conversions are true as far as they go, but they go a very little way. I am afraid for you if you have only a flimsy experience, a skin-deep conviction, a blind man's apprehension of heavenly light. No wonder if very soon you forgot, and afterwards rebel. Let us pray God that both in ourselves, and in those whom we bring to Christ, the work of grace may be deep and thorough; and may our faith in Jesus be sustained by a clear understanding of the gospel, and of our Lord's dealings with us! The truth itself, and our experience of it, may be likened to food: it is not the food we swallow which benefits us, but that which we digest. If food lies in our inward parts undigested, and unassimilated, it will brood disease rather

than promote health; so truth which is not understood, and thus taken up into the soul, cannot "feed" us in the true spiritual sense of that word. You see, brethren, here was a flaw in the Israelites at the beginning: "They understood not thy wonders in Egypt." When an iron girder suddenly snaps, they tell us that there was a flaw in the original casting. It was quite imperceptible at the first, and therefore the girder passed all the tests of the engineer; and it was not until years of wear and tear that it gave way. Here was a manifest flaw in the casting as to the people of Israel: "They understood not thy wonders in Egypt." Had they well understood the truth at the very first, they would not and could not have forgotten it; and they would not have been so little influenced by it in their conduct towards God.

So much upon the first point. We have had before us a subject which should produce great thoughtfulness, and devout anxiety.

II. FAILURE OF MEMORY FOLLOWS UPON WANT OF UNDERSTANDING. Children forget what they learn unless they understand it. They may pass the School Board standards, and yet in a few years they may know very little. The capacity for forgetting in some children is amazing. Many even among grown-up people have splendid memories for forgetting. Alas! it is the case with certain of the Lord's people. That which we do not understand we readily forget. When a child understands his lesson thoroughly, it will be fixed in his memory; but if he has merely learned the words, and has not entered into their senses, do you wonder that his lesson slips away? So was it with Israel in Egypt and at the Red Sea. Those sentences follow each other in true logical order: "They understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies."

Mercies should be remembered. It is a great wrong to God when we bury his mercies in the grave of unthankfulness. Especially is this the case with distinguishing mercies, wherein the Lord makes us to differ from others. Light, when the rest of the land is in darkness! Life, when others are smitten with the sword of death! Liberty from an iron bondage! O Christians, these are not things to be forgotten! Abundantly utter the memory of distinguishing mercies! Discriminating grace deserves



unceasing memorials of praise.

Mercies multiplied should never be forgotten. If they are new every morning, our memory of them should be always fresh. Read the story of the ten plagues, and see how the Lord heaped up his mercies upon Israel with both his hands. Even if they had forgotten one wonder they ought to have remembered others. "Forgot not all his benefits." Alas! some men, though their memories are refreshed with renewed loving-kindnesses, yet prove by their discontent and mistrust that they do not remember the Lord's goodness. A grievous thing is this, when God sends mercy, and mercy, and mercy, and mercy, and mercy—heaps of mercies, loads of mercies, hills of mercies, mountains of mercies, worlds of mercies, and yet men forget. His mercies are more than the stars, more than the drops of dew, more than the sands on the sea-shore, and yet we do not remember. This is a mournful and inexcusable fault!

"They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies." That is to say, they did not remember these blessings permanently. They remembered the Lord's wonders a little, and then they sang; but when the song was over, their memories failed. They remembered God's mercies while they marched for the first few days as freemen, who had no daily task of brick-making to fulfill; but when they found that Pharaoh pursued them they forgot all the Lord's mighty acts. When they tasted the waters of Marah, and found them bitter, "they murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" They forgot God's wonders whenever they were in straits, and limited The Holy One of Israel by their unbelief. "They soon forget his works; they waited not for his counsel; but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert." Our remembrance of the Lord's wonders of love should abide with us all our days. May the Lord give us a permanent recollection of his great goodness, both in providence and in grace! Hutton, Bishop of Durham, was one day riding over the bleak northern hills. He stopped, and, giving his horse to his servant, he went aside from the road to kneel down on a certain spot. He always did so when he reached that place; for in the day of his wealth and honor he had not forgotten that when he was a poor boy he had crossed those wild hills, without shoes and stockings, and had turned a cow out of her place that he might warm his foot with what little heat remained in

the place where the creature had lain. He had become bishop of a rich see, and a man of renown; but he never passed that spot without kneeling down and praising God. May we have faithful memories for the goodness of our faithful God! The Israelites had memories out of which the mercies of God soon faded. The Lord save us from being like them, and cause us to bless his name for what he did for us fifty years ago! Some of us would not have been among his people to-day if it had not been for the Lord's favors in our early youth: therefore let us praise him for old mercies as well as for new ones.

But Israel did not remember God's mercies powerfully. If they recollected these things, yet the remembrance did not enable them to bear up under present discouragements. The Egyptians pursued them; and when they heard the cracking of the whips, and the neighing of the horses, they cried out unto the Lord, and whined out "It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." Had they forgotten Jehovah, who had glorified himself over Egypt, and had crippled all her power? Their memory of Jehovah's wonders had not influence enough over them to keep up their courage! Oh, for such a powerful memory of God's mercies that we may never distrust him!

They did not remember practically. Their lives were not affected thereby. True gratitude shows itself in acts and deeds. A gentleman had been the means of making a position for a tradesman; and by a misfortune he came to be himself in want of immediate help to tide over a season of great pressure. He called at the house of the person he had so successfully helped, and found the wife at home. He told her the case, and she answered at once, "My husband will be ready to lend you his name to the full amount required. He will hasten to you the moment you need him, and be glad to do so." A prudent neighbor afterwards said, "But you may have to pay away all you have in the world." "Yes", said the grateful wife, "we do not mind that: he was the making of us; and if we have to lose everything for his sake, we shall do it very cheerfully, for we shall only be back to where we were when he first helped us." That is a form of gratitude which is rare enough in this world, though I have seen it here and there. Beloved, if the Lord were to take all away that we have, we should only be back where we were at the beginning. We have nothing

but what we have received from him. He takes nothing from us but what he first gave us: let us bless a taking as well as a giving God. Oh, for this practical gratitude towards the Lord, that we may in all things either do his will cheerfully, or suffer it patiently! If we remember the multitude of his mercies practically we shall be ready to surrender honor, ease, health, estate, yea, life itself for him who gave himself for us. Oh, to remember God's mercies practically in every-day life, in thought and word, and deed!

In fact, the Lord's mercies ought to be remembered progressively. We should think more and more of his exceeding kindness. A Christian man's life should be like another Bible, another Book of Chronicles. When we come to read through our personal life-story, we shall say,—neither the ninth chapter of Nehemiah, nor the hundred-and-sixth psalm can exceed my experience. The Lord has dealt well with his servant, according to his word. If some of us had opportunity to write our lives in full—which we could hardly venture to do, because there are private passages between our souls and our God which no human eye may read—how fully could we now testify to the faithful love of our covenant God! On our parts, sin and weakness and fickleness have been conspicuous in our career; but on the Lord's part, grace and truth, and faithfulness and love, shine forth as the sun. Beloved, we must not let go the memory of the Lord's matchless kindness; but we must remember it more and more. The older we are, the more must we trust in him, who has not suffered one of his promises to fail.

III. I want a little time for the third head, which is this: GRIEVOUS PROVOCATION FOLLOWED THEIR FORGETFULNESS OF GOD. Want of understanding begat forgetfulness, and forgetfulness brought forth rebellion. Let me read the last part of the text: "They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea." Why does the Psalmist dwell upon the place, and say, "at the sea, even at the Red sea"? Why was it worse to provoke the Lord there than elsewhere? It evidently was so, for the inspired Scripture mentions the spot twice to put an emphasis upon it. Why was this?

The offense itself was grievous anywhere. They doubted God when they

heard that Pharaoh pursued after them, and they said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" This imputation of cruelty to their faithful God provoked his sacred heart. The Lord is very pitiful, and his name is love, and therefore he is not easily provoked; but he declares that he was provoked by this display of their mistrust. They provoked him: they called him forth, as it were, to battle; they vexed him, and stirred him up to contend with them. O brothers and sisters, after so much love as God has shown us, we must not fall to provoking him; let us far rather spend our lives in extolling him! To provoke him at any time is a wanton wickedness—unjust, ungenerous, diabolical. It is no common sin which thus provokes the longsuffering Lord. Many a sin God has endured patiently, but in this case he is provoked to anger. This is an offense which touches the apple of his eye, and causes his jealousy to burn like coals of fire. O children of God, how can you provoke your Father to wrath? The Lord have mercy upon us! We must bow low at his feet with sorrowful repentance. Let us shun this fault in the future.

But why did their transgression at the sea so greatly anger the Lord? Was it because it came at the outset of their existence as a nation? They had not gone many days' journey out of Egypt before they rebelled. They had not yet eaten up the bread they carried in their kneading troughs, and they had scarcely met their first difficulty; and yet they hastened to provoke their God. How could they rebel so soon? They had scarcely reached the Red Sea before they began provoking the Lord with their dishonorable suspicions. O young Christian, if you provoke the Lord as soon as you are converted, your conduct will be black indeed. Only a day or two ago you sang his praises, and shouted, "Hallelujah! The blood of the Lamb has saved me." Will you so speedily distrust the Lord, and provoke him "at the sea, even at the Red sea"? What! stumble in the first few steps? God grant it may not be so! If you feel that you have already thus provoked the Lord, confess the wrong, and ask pardon through the precious blood. To begin to doubt almost as soon as you begin to believe is a wretched business. What! have you come out of Egypt, and have you brought its bondage with you? You have been saved by the sprinkled blood, and you have fed upon the Paschal lamb, and can you so soon utter words dishonoring to your delivering Lord? To doubt in the presence of a

mercy is to doubt indeed. To doubt the power of the blood of Christ when you have newly been saved, to doubt the power of the Holy Ghost to keep you to the end when you have just been renewed—why, this is aggravated guilt! It is sadly common, but it is none the less grievous to the heart of God. He marks it down, and there stands the record—"They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea." This is a poor beginning of a march to Canaan.

Now this Red Sea was the place of their consecration. Here they were "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Here it was that they said, "He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." As they stood by that Red Sea which had swallowed up all their enemies, they sang the praises of God, and proposed to do great things in his honor. What wonderful obedience they meant to render! And yet they provoked him there and then. What! will you come up from the waters of your baptism, and go home and provoke God by unholy conversation and ungovernable temper? Can any of you go from the Communion Table into sin? I heard of one who went from the table of the Lord across the street into the public-house. This is too gross. Such conduct grieves holy men, and much more the Holy God. To go from prayer to robbery, from reading the Word to fellowship with ungodly men—this must be terribly provoking to the thrice holy Jehovah. It is as though it were written again, "They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea."

It is a high crime and misdemeanor to sin in the presence of a great mercy. There is the sea; they have just marched through it, and they have reached Marah, where the waters are brackish. If they now distrust and complain, close on the heels of their great deliverance, it will be a crime indeed. O men, what are you at? There is the Red Sea which God divided: and yet you think he cannot give you water to drink! O fools and slow of heart, thus to doubt the Almighty! Doubt in the presence of a mercy! Doubt while so great a favor is before your eyes! This is evil indeed! I find the Hebrew has been read by some, "They provoked him in the sea, even in the Red sea"—while they were passing through the deep they were rebelling. You will hardly believe it! What! when the waters stood upright as an heap, and wore a wall on other side of them, and they walked

through the depths of the sea, and found good footing where sea-monsters once had whelped and stabled—were they then provoking him? Yes, they carried their sinful hearts with them even into the heart of the sea. O beloved, do not bear hard upon these Israelites, bear hard upon yourselves, and hate the sin which dares intrude within the sacred encloses of your joy in the cross, and dares to tempt you even when the five wounds of Jesus are shining on your soul like stars of God. Hate the sins which follow you to the Table of the Lord. Hate the wandering mind which taints the sacred bread and wine, and defiles you when the instructive symbols are yet in your mouths. Abhor the sin which dogs your heel, and follows you even to your knees, and hinders you in drawing near to God in prayer. Oh, the accursed sin which even on Tabor's top makes us fall asleep or talk foolishly! Lord, have mercy upon us, and forgive the sins of our holy places, and let it not stand against us in thy book that "They provoked thee at the sea, even at the Red sea." It was called the Sea of Weeds, and truly many were the weeds which grew, not only in the water, but in the hearts of those who stood on its shore.

I must give one or two touches to complete the picture. This provocation of God was all the worse because they had only just done singing. What a song it was! Handel with all the majesty of his half-inspired music, can hardly set forth that wondrous song of Israel at the sea. "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." That was a noble anthem; but murmuring was a miserable sequel to it. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" was a glorious hallelujah; but ere its echoes had ceased to stir the heart of the lone hills, the same tongues were heard to complain against the Lord. "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation", died away into mutterings of unbelief. Do you wonder that God was provoked? Have you ever acted so? Did you ever rise high in rapture, and praise the Lord upon the high-sounding cymbals, and then find yourself grovelling on the ground within an hour? Have you felt so jubilant that you could have snatched Gabriel's silver trumpet from his mouth that you might blow it with all your might, and have you before long been looking for a mousehole in which to hide your miserable head by reason of your unbelief. What fools we are! "Verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." When we know most, we are ignorant; when we swell

to our greatest, we are big nothings. When God makes much of us, we think least of ourselves. How greatly do we prize and praise the precious blood of Jesus which cleanseth us from all sin!

This evil happened near the time of their strong faith. You remember how they sang: "Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which thou hath purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established." They felt quite sure of conquering the land and chasing out the foe. They were so strong in faith, that they thought they should never again mistrust the Lord, whose right hand was so glorious in power. The exultant women who followed Miriam never suspected that they could doubt the Lord, whose right hand had dashed in pieces the enemy. One of them would probably have said, "As for our enemies, the depths have covered them, there is not one of them left. I shall never fear again. I have attained full assurance and perfection, and I shall never again mistrust the Lord." Yet these were the people who speedily murmured for want of bread, until the Lord heard them, and was grieved. I dare say the men of the Red Sea said each one, "My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved"; and yet in how brief an hour were they challenging the faithfulness of Jehovah, and questioning his power to give them bread in the wilderness! Lord, what is man? We distrust providence, we suspect grace, and we question the Lord himself; and all this after the Lord had made our assurance doubly sure. We are sad creatures, and yet the Lord does not cast us away; for it is written, "Nevertheless he saved them for his names sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known."

Two things more, and I have done. Admire the patient faithfulness of our God. Jehovah, though provoked, still loves his people. Admire his love to ourselves; and especially that he should entertain such constancy of affection towards such wayward, fickle, unreliable souls as we are!

Next, believe God so as to cease to grieve him. Do not start aside at the next little puddle you see in the road: it is not an ocean. Do not whine that you will be devoured the next time you see a cat in the garden: it is not a lion after all. Do not groan, "I cannot pass this dread abyss"; for it is only a little ditch, which you can leap by faith. God helping you rest not till you become "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Doubt God when he gives you cause to do so; but not till then. If God had left those Israelites once, they might have had some excuse for distrusting him; but he had never done so. If he had ever failed in his judgments, they might have had some excuse for unbelief; but when he threatened their enemies with plagues those plagues never failed to come. Was there a single weak point in what God had done for them? They had no ground whatever for their disbelief. O brothers, let us never distrust our God until he gives us ground for so doing; and that will be never. O thou blessed Holy Spirit, strengthen the faith of thy people this day, and may that faith create in us perfect obedience to the will of the Lord, so that henceforth we may magnify his holy name, and walk with him until we see his face unveiled above! The Lord sanctify us unto himself, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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## **Sin Laid On Jesus**

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. - Isaiah 53:6

The verse opens with a confession of sin common to all the persons intended in the verse. The whole of the elect people of God seem to me to be here represented; they have all fallen, those of them who have lived to years of responsibility have all actually sinned, and therefore in common chorus they all say from the first who entered heaven to the last who shall enter there, "All we like sheep have gone astray." But the confession while thus hearty and unanimous, is also special and particular: "We have



turned every one to his own way." There is a peculiar sinfulness about every one of the individuals; all are sinful, but each one with some special aggravation not found in his fellow. It is the mark of genuine repentance that while it naturally associates itself with other penitents, it also feels that it must take up a position of loneliness. "We have turned every one to his own way" is a confession importing that each man had sinned against light peculiar to himself, or sinned with an aggravation which he at least could not perceive in his fellow. This confession being thus general and particular has many other traits of excellence about it of which we cannot just now speak. It is very unreserved. You will observe that there is not a single syllable by way of excuse; there is not a word to detract from the force of the confession. It is moreover singularly thoughtful, for thoughtless persons do not use a metaphor so appropriate as the text: "All we like sheep have gone astray." Not like the ox which "knoweth its owner," nor even like the ass which "remembers its master's crib nor even like the swine which if it wandereth all day long cometh back to the trough at night, but "like sheep we have gone astray;" like a creature cared for but not capable of grateful attachment to the hand that cares for it; like a creature wise enough to find the gap in the hedge by which to escape, but so silly as to have no propensity or desire to return to the place from which it had perversely wandered; like sheep habitually, constantly, wilfully, foolishly, without power to return, we have gone astray. I wish that all our confessions of sin showed a like thoughtfulness, for to say that we are "miserable sinners" may be an increase of our sin unless we have really felt it, to use words of general confession without our soul entering into them may be but a "repentance that needeth to be repented of," an insult and mockery to high Heaven vented in that very place where there ought to have been the greatest possible tenderness and holy fear. I like the confession of the text because it is a giving up of all pleas of self-righteousness. It is the declaration of a body of men who are guilty, consciously guilty; guilty with aggravations, guilty without excuse; and here they all stand with their weapons of rebellion broken in pieces, saying unanimously, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."

I hear no dolorous wailings attending this confession of sin; for the next sentence makes it almost a song. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity

of us all." It is the most grievous sentence of the three; but it is the most charming and the most full of comfort. Strange is it that where misery was concentrated mercy reigned, and where sorrow reached her climax there it is that a weary soul finds sweetest rest. The Savior bruised is the healing of bruised hearts.

I want now to draw the hearts of all who feel the confession to the blessed doctrine set forth in the text: the Lord hath laid on Christ the iniquity of us all.

We shall take the text first by way of exposition; then by way of application; and we shall conclude with serious and I hope profitable contemplation.

I. First, let us consider the text by way of EXPOSITION.

1. It may be well to give the marginal translation of the text, "Jehovah hath made to meet on him the iniquity of us all." The first thought that demands notice is the meeting of sin. Sin I may compare to the rays of some evil sun. Sin was scattered throughout this world as abundantly as light, and Christ is made to suffer the full effect of the baleful rays, which stream from the sun of sin. God as it were holds up a burning glass, and concentrates all the scattered rays in a focus upon Christ. That seems to be the thought of the text, "The Lord hath focused upon him the iniquity of us all." That which was scattered abroad everywhere is here brought into terrible concentration; upon the devoted head of our blessed Lord all the sin of his people was made to meet. Before a great storm when the sky is growing black and the wind is beginning to howl, you have seen the clouds hurrying from almost every point of the compass as though the great day of battle were come, and all the dread artillery of God were hurrying to the field. In the center of the whirlwind and the storm, when the lightnings threaten to set all heaven on a blaze, and the black clouds fold on fold labor to conceal the light of day, you have a very graphic metaphor of the meeting of all sin upon the person of Christ; the sin of the ages past and the sin of the ages to come, the sins of those of the elect Who were in heathendom, and of those who were in Jewry; the sin of the young and of the old, sin original and sin actual, all made to meet, all the

black clouds concentrated and brought together into one great tempest that it might rush in one tremendous tornado upon the person of the great Redeemer and substitute. As when a thousand streamlets dash down the mountain side in the day of rain, and all meet in one deep swollen lake; that lake the Savior's heart, those gushing torrents the sins of us all who are here described as making a full confession of our sins. Or to take a metaphor not from nature but from commerce; suppose the debts of a great number of persons to be all gathered up, the scattered bonds and bills that are to be honored or dishonored on such and such a day, and all these laid upon one person who undertakes the responsibility of meeting every one of them without a single assistant; such was the condition of the Savior; the Lord made to meet on him the debts of all his people so that he became responsible for all the obligations of every one of those whom his Father had given him whatsoever their debts might be. Or if these metaphors do not suffice to set forth the meaning, take the text in our own version, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" put upon him as a burden is laid upon a man's back all the burdens of all his people; put upon his head as the high priest of old laid upon the scape-goat all the sin of the beloved ones that he might bear them in his own person. The two translations you see are perfectly consistent; all sins are made to meet, and then having met together and been tied up in one crushing load the whole burden is laid upon him.

2. The second thought is that sin was made to meet upon the suffering person of the innocent substitute. I have said "the suffering person" because the connection of the text requires it. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." It is in connection with this, and as an explanation of all his grief, that it is added, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The Lord Jesus Christ would have been incapable of receiving the sin of all his people as their substitute had he been himself a sinner: but he was, as to his divine nature, worthy to be hymned as "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;" and, as to his human nature, he was by miraculous conception free from all original sin, and in the holiness of his life he was such that he was the spotless Lamb of God, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, and therefore he was on all accounts capable of standing in the room, place,

and stead of sinful men. The doctrine of the text is, that Jesus Christ, who was man of the substance of his mother, and who was, nevertheless, very God of very God, most true and glorious Creator, Preserver, did stand in such a position as to take upon himself the iniquity of all his people, remaining still himself innocent; having no personal sin, being incapable of any, but yet taking the sin of others upon himself—it has been the custom of theologians to say—by imputation; but I question whether the use of that word, although correct enough as it is understood by us, may not have lent some color to the misrepresentations of those who oppose the doctrine of substitution. I will not say that the sins of God's people were imputed to Christ, though I believe they were; but it seems to me that in a way more mysterious than that which imputation would express, the sins of God's people were actually laid upon Jesus Christ; that in the view of God, not only was Christ treated as if he had been guilty, but the very sin itself was, I know not how, but according to the text it was somehow laid upon the head of Christ Jesus: "For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Is it not written, "He shall bear," not merely the punishment of their sin, nor the imputation of their sin, but "He shall bear their iniquities"? Our sin is laid on Jesus in even a deeper and truer sense than is expressed by the term imputation. I do not think I can express it, nor convey the idea that I have in my own mind, but while Jesus never was and never could be a sinner,—God forbid that the blasphemous thought should ever cross our lips or dwell upon our heart!—yet the sin of his people was literally and truly laid upon him.

3. It has been asked, Was it just that sin should thus be laid upon Christ? Our reply is fourfold. We believe it was rightly so, first because it was the act of him who must do right, for "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Jehovah, he against whom the offense was committed, and who has ordained that the sin of the people spoken of should be laid upon Christ. To impugn this, then, would be to impugn the justice of Jehovah, and I pray that none of us may have the hardihood to do that. Shall the potsherd venture to strive with the potter? shall the thing formed contend with the Creator of all things? Jehovah did it; and we accept it as being right, caring not what men may think of Jehovah's own deed. Remember, moreover, that Jesus Christ voluntarily took this sin upon himself. It was

not forced upon him, he was not punished for the sins of others with whom he had no connection and against his will; but He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, and while bearing it said, "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself." It was according to his own eternal agreement made with the Father on our behalf; it was according to his own expressed desire, for he had a baptism to be baptized with, and he was straitened until it was accomplished; and therefore whatever of injustice might be supposed, it is removed by the fact that he who was mainly concerned in it was himself voluntarily placed in such a position. But I would have you remember, beloved, that there was a relationship between our Lord and his people, which is too often forgotten, but which rendered it natural that he should bear the sin of his people. Why does the text speak of our sinning like sheep? I think it is because it would call to our recollection that Christ is our Shepherd. It is not, my brethren, that Christ took upon himself the sins of strangers. Remember that there always was a union of a most mysterious and intimate kind between those who sinned and the Christ who suffered. What if I say that it is not unjust but according to law that when a woman gets into debt her husband should bear it? And the church of God sinning it was but right that her Husband, who had espoused her unto himself, should become the debtor on her behalf. The Lord Jesus stood in the relationship of a married husband unto his church, and it was not, therefore, a strange thing that he should bear her burdens. It was natural for the next of kin to redeem the inheritance, it was most seemly that Immanuel, the next of kin, should redeem his lost church by his own blood. Recollect that there was a union closer even than the marriage bond, for we are members of his body. You shall not punish this hand of mine without making the sentient nature which dwells in the brain to suffer therewith; and does it seem strange to you that when the inferior members of the body have transgressed the Head should be made to suffer? It seems to me, my brethren, that while substitution is full of grace, it is not unnatural, but according to the laws of everlasting love. Yet there is a fourth consideration that may remove the difficulty of sin being laid upon Christ. It is not only that God laid it there, that Jesus voluntarily took it, and moreover was in such a union with his church that it was natural that he should take it, but you must remember that this plan of salvation is precisely similar to the method of our ruin. How

did we fall, my brethren? Not by any one of us actually ruining himself. I grant you that our own sin is the ground of ultimate punishment, but the ground of our original fall lay in another. I had no more to do with my fall than I have to do with my restoration; that is to say, the fall which made me a sinner was wholly accomplished long before I was born by the first Adam, and the salvation by which I am delivered was finished long before I saw the light by the second Adam on my behalf. If we grant the fall,—and we must grant the fact, however we may dislike the principle,—we cannot think it unjust that God should give us a plan of salvation based upon the same principle of federal head-ship. Perhaps it is true, as has been conjectured by many, that because the fallen angels sinned one by one, there was no possibility of their restoration; but man sinning, not one by one in the first place, but transgressing under a covenant head, there remained an opportunity for the restoration of the race by another covenant head-ship. At any rate we, accepting the principle of the federal head-ship in the fall, joyfully receive it as to the restoration in Christ Jesus. It seems right, then, on these four grounds, that the Lord should make the sins of all his people to meet upon Christ.

4. I beg you to observe in the fourth place, that lying upon Christ brought upon him all the consequences connected with it. God cannot look where there is sin with any pleasure, and though as far as Jesus is personally concerned, he is the Father's beloved Son in whom he is well pleased; yet when he saw sin laid upon his Son, he made that Son cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" It was not possible that Jesus should enjoy the light of his Father's presence while he was made sin for us; consequently he went through a horror of great darkness, the root and source of which was the withdrawing of the conscious enjoyment of his Father's presence. More than that, not only was light withdrawn, but positive sorrow was inflicted. God must punish sin, and though the sin was not Christ's by his actually doing it, yet it was laid upon him, and therefore he was made a curse for us. What were the pangs, which Christ endured? I cannot tell you. You have read the story of his crucifixion. Dear friends, that is only the shell, but the inward kernel who shall describe? It is certain that Christ not only bore all that humanity could bear, but there was a Deity within which added extraordinary strength to his humanity, and enabled it to bear far more than it would otherwise

have been able to endure. I doubt not that in addition to this the Godhead within gave a peculiar sensitiveness to the holiness of Christ's nature, so that sin must have become even more abhorrent to him than it would have been to a merely perfect man. His griefs are worthy to be described according to the Greek Liturgy as "unknown sufferings." The height and depth, the length and breadth of what Jesus Christ endured nor heart can guess, nor tongue can tell, nor can imagination frame; God only knows the griefs to which the Son of God was put when the Lord made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all. To crown all there came death itself. Death is the punishment for sin, and whatever it may mean, whatever over and beyond natural death was intended in the sentence, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," Christ felt. Death went through and through him, until "he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." "He became obedient to death, even to the death of the cross."

5. Dear friends, for a moment think of the result of all this. Sin meets on Christ and Christ is punished for sin, and what then? Why then sin is put away. If the penalty be endured justice asks no more. The debt discharged—there is no debt; the claim made and the claim met—the claim ceases to be. Though we could not meet that claim in our proper persons, yet we have met it in one who is so united and allied to us that we are in him even as Levi was in the loins of Abraham. Jesus himself also is free. Upon him the gathered tempest has spent itself, and not a single cloud lingers in the serene sky. Though the waters came his love has dried them up, his suffering has opened the sluices, and made the floods for ever spend themselves. Though the bills were brought he has honored them all, and there is not one outstanding account against a single soul for whom he died as a substitute.

6. We cannot close the exposition of this verse without just remarking upon the "us" here intended. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." It is usually conceded by us who hold the doctrine of particular redemption that there was in the death of Christ very much of generality and universality. We believe that the atonement of Christ was infinite in value, and that if Christ had decreed to save every man of woman born, he need not have suffered another pang; there was sufficient in his atonement if he had so willed it to have redeemed the entire race. We

believe also that by the death of Christ there is a general and honest invitation given to every creature under heaven in terms like these: —"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." We are not prepared, however, to go an inch beyond that. We hold that from the very nature of the satisfaction of Christ it could not have been made for any but for his elect; for Christ either did pay the debts of all men or he did not; if he did pay the debts of all men they are paid, and no man can be called to account for them. If Christ was the surety of every man living, then how in the name of common justice is Christ to be punished, and man punished too? If it be replied that the man would not accept the atonement, then I ask again, Was there a satisfaction given, for if so it was given whether the man accepts it or not, or else satisfaction by itself is powerless until man puts efficacy in it, which is preposterous to suppose. If you take away from us the fact that Christ did really satisfy for those for whom he stood, we cry like Jacob, "If I am bereaved I am bereaved;" you have taken away all that is worth having, and what have you given us in its place? You have given us a redemption, which confessedly does not redeem; you have given us an atonement, which is made equally for the lost in hell and for the saved in heaven; and what is the intrinsic value of such an atonement? If you tell us that Christ made a satisfactory atonement for every one of the human race, we ask you how it was that he made an atonement for those that must have been in the flames of hell thousands of years before he came into this world? My brethren, ours has the advantage of universality in its proclamation and in its bona fide offer, for there is no man living who shall believe in Jesus who shall not be saved by Christ; but it has a greater advantage than this; namely, that those who do believe are saved by it, and they know that Christ made such an atonement for them that for them to be punished for sin would be as much a violation of justice as it would of mercy. O my soul! thou knowest this day that all thy sins were made to meet on Christ, and that he bore the punishment for them all.

"He bore that we might never bear,  
His Father's righteous ire."

Here is a rock to stand on, a safe resting-place for those who trust in Jesus. As for you who trust him not, your blood be upon your own heads!



If ye trust him not, ye have no part nor lot in this matter, ye shall go down to your own punishment to bear it yourselves; the wrath of God abideth on you; you shall find that the blood of Jesus has made no atonement for your sins. You have rejected the invitation that was given, and put far from you the cross of Christ, and upon your heads the pardoning blood shall never drop, and for you it shall never plead, but you must perish under the law, seeing you refuse to be saved under the gospel.

## II. Let us come briefly to the APPLICATION.

Dear hearer, a friend now puts a question to you. There is a countless company whose sins the Lord Jesus bore; did he bear yours? Do you wish to have an answer? Are you unable to give one? Let me read this verse to you and see if you can join in it. I do not mean join in it saying, "That is true," but feeling that it is true in your own souls. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." If there be in you this morning a penitential confession which leads you to acknowledge that you have erred and strayed like a lost sheep, if there be in you a personal sense of sin which makes you feel that you have turned to your own way, and if now you can trust in Jesus, then a second question is not wanted; the Lord hath laid on him your iniquity, and the iniquity of all such as confess their sin and look alone to Christ. But if you will not trust to Christ, I cannot say to you that the Lord hath taken the sin from you and laid it upon Christ, for in my soul I know that living and dying as you now are, that sin of yours will rise up in judgment against you to condemn you. Dear friend, I will venture to say to you, are you reconciled to God's way of getting rid of sin? Do you feel any joy in your heart at the thought of Jesus bearing sin for you and suffering for you? If you do not, I cannot offer you the consolation, which the text gives to those who submit to it. But let me ask you, do you mean to bear your sin yourself? Do you know what that means? Jesus smarted when he bore the sin of his people, but what a smart shall yours be when you bear your own! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." There are some now-a-days who are mightily angry at the doctrine of everlasting punishment; I, too, might be angry at it if it were an invention of man; but when it is most certainly threatened in God's Book, it is vain for me to kick against the pricks; my

question should not be, "How can I dispute against it?" but "How can I escape from it?" Dear hearer, do not venture into God's presence with your sins upon yourself; even our God is a consuming fire, and his fury will break forth against you when you come to stand there. Have you an imagination that your own merits may make atonement for sin? I pray you think what Christ had to do before he could cast sin off from himself, what griefs he bore, through what an ocean of wrath he passed; and do you think that your poor merits, if they be merits, can ever avail to do what the Savior suffered so much to accomplish? Do you hope to escape without a punishment? If you do, let me pray you to think the matter over; for if God smote his own Son, do you think he will permit you to go scot-free? If the King of Glory, when he only takes others' sins upon him, must needs die, what think you will become of you, poor worm of the dust? Think you that God will be unjust in order to save you? Do you suppose that he will be hail fellow, well met! with you, and revoke his own sentence, because you do not choose to be saved by a plan which is both just to him and safe to you? Shall God be unjust to pander to your fancies, or indulge your lusts? Sinner, bow the knee to this plan of salvation, for be it known to you—and I speak now, knowing what I say, and coolly too—there is, none other plan of salvation under heaven. There may be other ways of salvation preached, but other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ the Righteous. If thou shalt struggle after salvation individually, and hope to get to heaven apart from the headship of Christ, thou mayest struggle, but thou shalt be like the Jews of old, who had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge; if thou shalt be going about to establish thine own righteousness, but not submitting thyself to the righteousness of Christ, thou shalt perish. But let me ask thee, does not this plan commend itself to thee? If I trust Jesus, this is to me the evidence that he took my sins and suffered in my stead. Oh the joy it gives me! I speak to you honestly of my own experience now; there is no doctrine that fires my soul with such delight as that of substitution. The doctrine of atonement, as it is often preached, is a hazy, misty doing of something by which the law is honored, or perhaps dishonored, for I scarce know which to call it; this yields me no joy; but when I know that Christ was literally and positively, not metaphorically and by way of figure, but literally and positively the substitute for his own people, and when I know that trusting in him I have the evidence of being one of his

people, why my soul begins to say, Now let me live! I'm clean, through Jesu's blood I'm clean. Now let me die! for I shall boldly stand in the day of resurrection, through Jesus my Lord. Why, soul, it seems to me as if it were enough to make you leap into the arms of Christ, crucified! covered with blood for you! disinterestedly suffering for his own enemies that they might live! Oh stay not away!

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away  
Like doves to Jesu's wounds;  
This is the welcome gospel-day,  
Wherein free grace abounds.

God loved the church, and gave his Son  
To drink the cup of wrath;  
And Jesus says he'll cast out none  
That come to him by faith."

III. Now consecrate a few minutes to hallowed CONTEMPLATION.

You do not want talk, you want thought: I will give you four things to think of. The first is the astounding mass of sin that must have been laid on Christ. Now do not jump at it, and say, "Yes, the sins of the millions of his elect." Do not leap at that, get at it by degrees. Begin with your own sin. Have you ever felt that?—your own sin. No, you never felt the full weight of it; if you did you would have been in hell. It is the weight of sin that makes hell. Sin bears its own punishment in its own weight. Do you remember when you felt that the pains of hell get hold upon you, and you found trouble and sorrow? That hour when you called upon the name of the Lord, saying, "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul!" Then you only felt as it were the little end of your sins, but all your sins, what must they weigh! How old are you? You know not how old you may be before you enter into rest, but all the sins of all your years he carried. All the sins against light and knowledge, sins against law and gospel, week-day sins, Sabbath sins, hand sins, lip sins, heart sins, sins against the Father, sins against the Son, sins against the Holy Ghost, sins of all shapes, all laid upon him; can you get the thought now? Now multiply that. Think of the sins of all the rest of his people; persecutions and murders at the door of

such an one as Saul of Tarsus; adultery at the door of David—sins of every shape and size, for God's elect have been among the chief of sinners; those whom he has chosen have not been the best of men by nature, but some of them the very worst, and yet sovereign grace delighted to find a home for itself where seven devils had dwelt before, nay, where a legion of devils held their carnival. Christ looks abroad among the sons of men, and while a Pharisee is passed by, Zaccheus the publican is selected—and the sins of all these with their full weight laid upon him. The weight of sin would have crushed all these into hell for ever, and yet Christ bore all that weight; and what if I venture to say the very eternity and infinity of wrath that was due for all that mass of sin, the Son of God, marvellously sustained by the infinity of the Godhead within, bore and sustained the whole. I would like to stop a minute and let you turn it over, but when you go home perhaps you will spend half an hour very profitably in thinking that

"The enormous load of human guilt  
Was on my Savior laid;  
With woes as with a garment he  
For sinners was array'd."

2. The next subject I offer you for contemplation is this, the amazing love of Jesus, which brought him to do all this. Remember Paul's way of putting it. "Scarcely for a righteous (or strictly just) man will one die; peradventure for a good (or benevolent) man one might even dare to die; but God commendeth his love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly." When Christ has renewed us by his Spirit, there may be a temptation to imagine that some excellency in us won the Savior's heart; but, my brethren, you must understand that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. Not that infant washed and swaddled, not that fair maiden with the jewel in her ear, and with the pure golden crown upon her head, not that lovely princess, presented like a chaste virgin to her husband; no, that was not what Jesus saw when he died. He saw all that in the glass of his prescience, but the actual condition of that fair maid was very different when he died for her; she was cast out, unwashed, unsalted, unswaddled, in her blood, a foul, filthy thing. Ah! my brethren, there is no filthy thing

under heaven so filthy as a filthy sinner. When there was not a ray of beauty to be discovered in us, when neither without nor within a single thing could be found to commend us, but we were morally altogether abhorrent to the Holy nature of Christ, then—oh wondrous grace!—he came from the highest heaven that the mass of our sin might meet on him. I met with this question the other day, which seemed a novel one to me. The question was asked thus: "Suppose you had a child that had the leprosy, or some other foul disease. Suppose this dear child of yours was infected and contaminated to the most loathsome degree in every part, till the eyes were blinded and the hands were rotting, and the heart was turning to stone, and the whole body was covered with wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores. Now, suppose there were no cure for this child but for your perfectly sane and healthy soul, suppose it to be such, to be put into that child's body, and for you to bear that child's diseases instead of that child; would you consent to it?" I can suppose a mother's love yielding even to that; but the more disgusted you had been with those putrifying sores, the more terrible would the task become. Now, that only touches the fringe of the work, which Jesus did for us when he himself took our sins and bore our sicknesses. Such a wonderful union is there between Christ and the sinner that I venture to say there are some expressions in the New Testament and in the Old with regard to Christ's connection with the sin of man that I would not dare to use except as direct quotations from Holy Writ; but being there you shall see how wondrously the love of Jesus Christ induced him to take upon himself our sad condition and plight. But, oh the love! oh the love! Nay, I will not speak of it; ye must muse upon it. Silence is sometimes the best eloquence; and it will be best for me to say to you, oh the depths of the love of Jesus! unsearchable, past finding out! God over all, blessed for ever, should have laid on him the iniquity of us all!

3. Wonder of wonders that I need another minute to set you thinking on another subject, the matchless security which this plan of salvation offers. I do not see in what point that man is vulnerable who can feel and know that Christ has borne his sin. I look at the attributes of God, and though to me, as a sinner, they all seem bristling as with sharp points, thrusting themselves upon me; yet when I know that Jesus died for me, and did literally take my sin, what fear I the attributes of God? There is justice,

sharp and bright, like a lance; but justice is my friend. If God be just, he cannot punish me for sin for which Jesus has offered satisfaction. As long as there is justice in the heart of Deity, it cannot be that a soul justly claiming Christ as his substitute can himself be punished. As for mercy, love, truth, honor, everything matchless, Godlike and divine about Deity, I say of all these, "You are my friends; you are all guarantees that Mince Jesus died for me I cannot die." How grandly does the apostle put it! It seems to me as if he never was worked up by the Holy Spirit to such a pitch of eloquence as when speaking about the death and resurrection of the Savior, he propounds that splendid question, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" There, where eternal justice sits upon a flaming throne, the apostle gazes with eye undimmed into the ineffable splendor, and though some one seems to say, "The Judge will condemn," he replies, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Can he justify and then condemn us? He justifies those for whom Christ died, for we are justified by his resurrection. How then shall he condemn? And then he lifts up his voice yet again—"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who sitteth at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." On other grounds a man must feel unsafe, but here he may know himself sure. Go ye that will, and build upon your sandy foundations; run up your superstructures till they are as high as Babel's tower, and tumble about your ears unable to support their own weight; but as for me, my soul shall rest upon this solid rock of substitution; and clinging to the rock with confident resolve, I know that I have no cause for fear since Jesus died for me.

4. Lastly, I desire to give you as a subject for contemplation, and I pray you do not forget it, this question, What then are the claims of Jesus Christ upon you and upon me? Brethren and sisters, I have sometimes wished to be eloquent; never when I had a cause to plead in which I was myself involved, but when I have had to speak for Jesus. But indeed, there is no need of eloquence here. Your hearts shall be the pleaders, his agonies shall be the plea. Did our blessed Lord take your sin, my brethren, and suffer all its terrific consequences for you, so that you are delivered. By his blood and wounds, by his death, and by the love that made him die, I conjure you treat him as he should be treated! Love him

as he should be loved! Serve him as he should be served! You will tell me that you have obeyed his precepts. I am glad to hear it. Are you sure that you have? "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Have you kept the ordinances as he delivered them? Have you sought to be obedient to him in all respects? In all your Lord's appointed ways have you scrupulously pursued your journey? If you can say this I am not content; it does not seem to me that with such a leader as Christ mere obedience should be all. Napoleon singularly enough had power to get the hearts of men twisted and twined about him; when he was in his wars there were many of his captains and even of his private soldiers who not only marched with the quick obedience of a soldier wherever they were bidden, but who felt an enthusiasm for him. Have you never heard of him who threw himself in the way of the shot to receive it in his bosom to save the Emperor? No obedience, no law could have required that of him, but enthusiastic love moved him to it; and it is such enthusiasm that my Master deserves in the very highest degree from us. It is out of and beyond all categories of law, it is far exceeding all that law ventured to ask, and yet not supererogation for all that, for ye are not under the law but under grace; and ye will do more out of love than ye would have done out of the compulsion of demand. What shall I do for my Master? What shall I do for my Lord? How shall I set him forth? My brethren and sisters, my highest aim before God, next to the conversion of the unconverted among you, is this, that you who do love Christ may really love him and act as if you (lid. 1 hope you will never become a dead cold church. Oh may my ministry never help to lull you into such a state as that! If Jesus Christ does not deserve everything of you he does not deserve anything; you do not know anything of his claims if you do not feel that

"If you could make some reserve,  
And duty did not call;  
You love the Lord with zeal so great  
That you must give him all."

Christ stands for me, oh may I learn to stand for him, and plead for him, and live for him, and suffer for him, and pray for him, and preach and labor for him as he may help me! May I remind you each individually as

you all followed your own way, and individually had some sin to increase that burden, pay him individual service? Contribute of your substance to the common work of the church, and do that constantly, and as a matter of delight. Our College, which is doing so much service greatly needs, and demands the help of all who love our work, and love the Lord's truth. But in addition to that, do something for yourself, speak for Christ yourself, have some work in hand on your own account. Do, I say again, at all times assist the work of the combined body, for that will be a great work, God being in us as our life and stay, and let no man withhold of his substance from Christ's cause; but still that is not all, he does not ask your pocket only but your heart. It is not the pence, it is the activities of the soul; it is not the shillings and the guineas and so on, but it is your very inmost soul, the core of your spirit. O Christian, by the blood of Jesus devote yourself to him again! In the old Roman battles it sometimes happened that the strife seemed dubious, and a captain inspired by superstitious patriotism would stand upon his sword and devote himself to destruction for the good of his country, and then, according to those old legends, the battle always turned. Now, men and brethren, sisters, every one of you who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, devote yourselves this day to live, to die, to spend, and to be spent for King Jesus. You will be no fool, for no man ever had an ambition more worthy. You will not be devoting yourself to one who does not deserve it. You know how much you owe him; nay, you do not know, to the fullest extent, the depth of your obligation, but you know you owe him all that you have; your escape from hell and your hope of heaven. Follow me this morning in these verses -

"'Tis done, the great transaction's done;  
I am my Lord's, and he is mine:  
He drew me, and I follow'd on,  
Charm'd to confess the voice divine.

Now rest, my long-divided heart;  
Fix'd on this blissful center rest;  
With ashes who would grudge to part,  
When call'd on angel's bread to feast?



High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,  
That vow renew'd shall daily hear;  
Till in life's latest hour I bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear."

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## Sin Slain

And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him. Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou, seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead and the nail was in his temples. - Judges 4:22

If the story of the world's sufferings under different tyrants could all be written, there would be no man found who would be capable of reading it. I believe that even the despots themselves, who have committed the atrocities to which I refer, would not be sufficiently cold-blooded to sit down and read the account of the agonies which their own victims have endured. I have been struck in passing through many lands with the horrible sufferings which in the olden times were endured by the poor at the hands of the rich kings and lords who were their oppressors. In almost every town in which you enter, you either have shown to you the rack, the dark dungeon, the thumb-screw, or the infernal machine, or instruments too horrible to describe—that make one's blood run chill at the very thought and sight of them. Verily, O earth, thou hast been scarred; thy back has been ploughed with many a furrow; from thy veins have gushed forth plenteous streams of blood, and thy sons and thy daughters have had to suffer agonies extreme! But oh! my brethren, I speak in sober earnestness when I declare that all the sufferings that have ever been exercised upon man have never been equal to the tyranny which man has brought upon himself—the tyranny of sin. Sin has brought more plagues upon this earth than all the earth's tyrants. It has brought more pangs and more miseries upon men's bodies and souls than the craftiest inventions of the most cold-blooded and diabolical tormentors. Sin is the world's great Despot. It is the serpent in whose subtle folds earth's inhabitants are crushed. It is such a tyranny that none but those whom God delivers have been able to escape from it. Nay, such a tyranny that even they have been scarcely saved; and they, when saved, have had to look back and remember the dreadful slavery in which they once existed; they have remembered the wormwood and the gall; and at the

remembrance the iron has entered into their souls. We have before us, in this chapter, a picture of the children of Israel attacked by a very wicked and powerful king—Jaban, the king of Canaan. It is but a faint emblem, a very indistinct picture of the oppression which sin exercises upon all mankind—the oppression which our own iniquities continually bring upon us.

I want to picture to you to-night, if I can, three acts in a great history—three different pictures illustrating one subject. I trust we have passed through all three of them, many of us; and as we shall look upon them, whilst I paint them upon the wall, I think there will be many here who will be able to say, I was in that state once;" and when we come to the last, I hope we shall be able to clap our hands, and rejoice to feel that the last is our case also, and that we are in the plight of the man with a description of whom I shall conclude.

First, I shall picture to you the sinner growing uneasy in his bondage and thinking about rebellion against his oppressors; secondly, the sinner putting to rout his sins and seeking their entire destruction; and, thirdly, I shall seek to bring to you that notable picture of the open door, and I shall stand at it and cry to those who are seeking the life of their sins—"Come hither, and I will show you the man whom ye seek; here he lies—dead; slain by the hammer and the nail; held not in the hand of a woman, but in the hand of the seed of the woman—the man Christ Jesus."

I. First, then, let us try to picture **THE SINNER GROWING UNEASY UNDER THE YOKE OF HIS SINS, AND PLANNING A REVOLT AGAINST HIS OPPRESSORS.**

It is said that when a man is born a slave, slavery is not near so irksome as when he has once been free. You will have found it, perhaps, in birds and such animals that we keep under our control. If they have never known what it is fly to and fro in the air from tree to tree, they are happy in the cage; but if, after having once seen the world, and floated in the clear air, they are condemned to live in slavery, they are far less content. This is the case with man—he is born a slave. The child in the cradle is born under sin, and as we grow up we wear our manacles and scarcely

know that they are about us. Use, we say, is second nature, and certainly the evil nature we have received makes the usages of sin seem as if they were not so slavish as they are. Nay, some men have become so used to their bonds, that they live with no true idea of liberty, and yet think themselves free. Nay, they take the names of freedom, and call themselves libertines, and free-thinkers, and free-doers, when they are the very worst of slaves, and might hear their chains rattle if they had but ears to hear. Until the Spirit of God comes into the heart—so strange is the use of nature—we live contented in our chains; we walk up and down our dungeon, and think we are at large. We are driven about by our taskmasters, and imagine that we are free. Once let the Spirit of God come into us—once let a word of life and liberty sound in our ears—once let Jehovah Jesus speak, and we begin to be dissatisfied with our condition. Now the chain frets us; now the fetter feels too small; now we long for a wider march than we had before, and are not content to be fettered for ever to a sinful lust. We begin to have a longing for something better, though we know not what it is. Now it is that the man begins to find fault with what he at one time thought was so passing excellent. He finds that now the cup which seemed to be all honey has traces of bitter in it; the cane once so sweet and palatable has lost its lusciousness, and he says within himself "I wish I had some nobler food than these swine's husks; this is not fit food for me." He does not know that God has begun to kindle in him new life and a diviner nature; but he knows this, that he cannot be content to be what he was before. He frets and chafes like the lion in bonds that longs to range in the forest and wilderness. He cannot endure it. And now, I say, it is that the man begins to act. His first action is the action of the children of Israel; he begins to cry unto the Lord. Perhaps it is not a prayer, as we use the term in ordinary conversation. He cannot put many words together. It is a sigh—a sigh for he knows not what. It is a groan after something—an indescribable something that he has not seen or felt, but of the existence of what he has some idea. "Oh God," saith he, "deliver me! Oh God, I feel I am not what I should be; I am not what I wish to be; I am discontented with myself." And if the prayer does not take the actual shape of "God be merciful to me a sinner," yet it means all that, for he seems to say "Lord, I know not what it is—I know not whether it be mercy or grace, or what the name of it may be; but I want something. I am a slave. I feel it all. Oh that I could be free! Oh

that I could be delivered!" The man begins now, you see, to look for something higher than he has seen before. After this prayer comes action; "Now," says the man, "I must begin to be up and doing." And if the Spirit of God is truly dealing with him, he is not content with prayer; he begins to feel that though it is little enough that he can do, yet he can do at least something. Drunkenness he forsakes; at one blow he lays that enemy in the dust. Then there is his cursing and his swearing—he tries to overcome that enemy, but the oath comes out when he least expects it. Perhaps it gives him weeks of struggling, but at last that too is overcome. Then come the practices of his trade—these, he feels, hurt his conscience. Here is another chain to be filed off—another rivet to be torn off. He toils, he strives still crying evermore to God, and at last he is free, and that enemy is overthrown. He is like Barak; the Lord is helping him, and his enemies flee before him. Oh my brethren, I speak from experience now. What a struggle that was which my young heart waged against sin! When God the Holy Ghost first quickened me, I scarcely knew of that strong armour whereon my soul could venture. Little did I know of the precious blood which has put my sins away, and drowned them in the seas for ever. But I did know this, that I could not be what I was; that I could not rest happy unless I became something better—something purer than I felt; and oh how my spirit cried to God with groanings—I say it without any exaggeration—groanings that could not be uttered! and oh! how I sought in my poor dark way to overcome first this sin and then another, and so to do battle in God's strength against the enemies that assailed me, and not, thank God, altogether without success, though still the battle had been lost unless he had come who is the Overcomer of sin and the Deliverer of his people, and had put the hosts to flight. Have I not some here to-night who are just in this position? They have not come to Mount Zion yet, but are fighting with the Amalakites in the wilderness. They have not come to the blood of sprinkling, but somehow or other—they don't know exactly what condition theirs is,—they are fighting up hill against a dread something which they would overcome. They cannot renounce the struggle; they sometimes fear they will be vanquished in the end. Oh, my brother or sister, I am glad to find the Lord has done so much for thee. This is one of the first marks of divine life when we begin to fight against sin.

Then courage, brethren! There shall be another picture painted soon, and that shall be thy picture too, when thou shalt be more than a conqueror, through him that hath loved thee. But I dare say this is not the picture of all here. There are some of you who say you are not slaves, and, therefore, you do not wish to be freed. But I tell you, sirs, if any earthly potentate could command you to do what the Devil makes your do, you would think yourselves the most oppressed beings in the world. If there should be a law passed in Parliament, and there should be power to put it into execution, that you should go and sit several hours of the night until midnight, and drink some vile poisonous stuff that would steal away your brains, so that you have to be wheeled home, you would say, "What vile tyranny! to force men to destroy their souls and bodies in that way;" and yet you do it wilfully of yourselves. And of the one blessed day of rest—the only one in seven that we have to rest in—if there were an enactment passed that you should open your shops on that day, and pursue your trade, you would say, "This is a wretched land, to have such tyrants to govern it;" you would declare you would not do it and yet the devil makes you, and you go and take down your shutters as greedily as if you would win heaven by your Sunday trading. What slaves do men make of themselves when they most think themselves free! I have seen a man work harder and spend more money in seeking pleasure in that which makes him sick and ill—which makes his eyes red and his whole body feverish—than he would have done if a thousand acts of parliament had tried to drive him to do so. The devil is indeed a cruel tyrant with his subjects, but he is such a tyrant that they willingly follow him. He rivets on them his chains, and whilst they think they are going of their own free will, he sits grinning all the while and thinking how when their laughter will change to bitterest tears, they shall be undeceived in the dread day in which hell's fire shall burn up their delusion, and the flames of the pit shall scatter the darkness that has concealed the truth from their eyes. Thus much, then, concerning the first picture—the sinner discontented and going to war with his sins.

II. And now we have the second picture—THE SINNER HAVING GONE TO WAR WITH HIS OWN SINS, HAS, TO A GREAT EXTENT, BY GOD'S GRACE, OVERCOME THEM; but he feels when this is done, that it is not enough—that external morality will not save the soul. Like Barak, he has

conquered Sisera; but, not content with seeing him flee away on his feet, he wants to have his dead body before him. "No," says he, "it is not enough to vanquish, I must; destroy; it is not sufficient to get rid of evil habits, I must overcome the propensity to sin. It is not sufficient to put to flight this sin or the other; I must trample the roots of corruption beneath my feet, that sin itself may be slain." Mark, my dear hearers, that is not a work of the Spirit which is not a radical work. If you are content merely to conquer your sins and not to kill them, you may depend upon it, it is the mere work of morality—a surface work—and not the work of the Holy Spirit.

Sirs, be not content with driving out thy foes, or they will come back again to thee; be not satisfied with wearing the sheep's skin; be not content till thy wolfish nature is taken from thee, and the nature of the sheep imparted. It is not enough to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, it must be broken and a new vessel must be given; be not satisfied with whitewashing the tomb. The charnel house must be empty, and where death reigned, life must reign. There is no mistake perhaps more common in these dangerous times than to mistake externals for internals, the outward sign for the inward grace, the painted imitation of mortality for the solid jewels of spirituality. Up, Barak! Up, thou son of Abinoam! thou hast routed the Sisera of thy drunkenness; thou hast put the hosts of thy sins to flight: but this is not enough. Sisera will return again upon thee with twice nine hundred chariots, and thou shalt yet be overcome. Rest not content till the blood of thine enemy stain the ground, until he be crushed and dead, and slain. Oh, sinner, I beseech thee never be content until grace reign in thy heart, and sin be altogether subdued. Indeed, this is what every renewed soul longs for, and must long for, nor will it rest satisfied until all this shall be accomplished. There was a time when some of us thought we would slay our sins. We wanted to put them to death, and we thought we would drown them in floods of penitence. There was a time, too, when we thought we would starve our sins; we thought we would keep out of temptation, and not go and pander to our lusts, and then they would die; and some of us can recollect when we gagged our lusts, when we pinioned their arms, and put their feet in the stocks, and then thought that would deliver us. But oh, brethren, all our ways of putting sin to death were not sufficient; we found the monster

still alive, insatiate for his prey. We might rout his myrmidons, but the monster was still our conqueror. We might put to flight our habits, but the nature of sin was still in us, and we could not overcome it. Yet did we groan and cry daily, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is a cry to which we are accustomed even at this day, and which we shall never cease to utter, till we can say of our sins, "They are gone," and of the very nature of sin, that it has been extinguished, and that we are pure and holy even as when the first Adam came from his Maker's hands.

Well, I have some here, I have no doubt, who are like Barak pursuing after Sisera, but who are faint-hearted. You are saying, "My sin can never be forgiven, it is too great, it must escape from me, and, even if it were put to flight it never could be overcome; I am so great a sinner, a sinner of such a double dye, a scarlet sinner I must always be. I was born in sin, and I have grown up in it; and as the twig is bent the tree is inclined. Who can make straight such a gnarled oak as I am? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? if so, I, who am accustomed to do evil, may learn to do well." You begin to think that rivers might sooner run uphill, than you could run to God and righteousness. You are tired of the battle, and ready to lay down your arms and die. But you cannot, you must not go back to be the drunkard and the swearer that you were before, and die in despair of ever overcoming the sin within; nor must you think, "Oh, I have entered upon a fight that is too much for me, I shall yet fall by the hands of mine enemy."

III. Come hither, I bring you to the third picture. I stand at THE DOOR today, not of a tent, but of a TOMB, and as I stand here I say to the sinner who is anxious to know how his sins may be killed, how his corruption may be slain, "Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest, and when you shall come in, YOU SHALL SEE YOUR SINS LYING DEAD, AND THE NAILS IN THEIR TEMPLES."

Sinner, the sin thou darest is forgiven, thou hast wept sore before God, and thou hast cast thyself on Christ and on Christ alone. In the name of him who is the Eternal God, I assure thee that thy sins are all forgiven. From the book of God's remembrance they are blotted out. They are as



clean gone as the clouds that floated through the sky last year, and distilled their showers on the ground. Thy sins are gone; every one of them; the sin over which thou hast wept, the sin which caused thee many a tear is gone, and is forgiven.

Further—dost thou ask where thy sin is? I tell thee thy sin is gone, so that it never can be recalled. Thou art so forgiven that thy sins can never have a resurrection. The nail is not driven through the hands of thy sins, but through their temples. If thou shouldst live twice ten thousand years no sin could ever be laid to thy charge again if thou believest in Christ Jesus. Thou hast no conscience of sin left. "As far as the east is from the west," so far hath he removed thy transgressions from thee. God hath spoken and said,—"Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," and it is done; none can reverse the sentence. He has cast thy sins into the depth of the sea, and they can never be found again. Nay, further, sinner, for thy peace and comfort, thy sins are not only forgiven and killed so that they cannot rise again, but thy sins have ceased to be. Their dead bodies, like the body of Moses, are brought where they never can be found. More than this, they do not exist. Again, O child of God, there doth not remain so much as a shadow of sin: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"—much less prove it against them. What dog can wag his tongue to accuse?—much less, what witness shall rise up to condemn? God hath justified thee, O sinner! if thou believest; and if thou art so justified, thou art as much accepted in God's sight as if thou hadst never sinned. Had thy life been blameless and thy path been holy even to perfection, thou hadst not been more pure in the eyes of Divine justice than thou art to-night if thy faith is fixed on the cross of Christ. Right through the brain of all thy sins, the hammer has driven the nail of Christ's grace. The spear that pierced the Saviour's heart, pierced the heart of thine iniquity; the grave in which he was buried was the tomb of all thy sins; and his resurrection was the resurrection of thy spirit to light and joy unspeakable. "Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest." This is a refreshing sight, even to the child of God, who has seen it long ago, and it will ever be solemn for us to contemplate the sin. It must ever be a direful spectacle; for an enemy, even when dead, is a ghastly sight. The head of Goliath, even though it makes us smile when it is cut off, is yet the head of a grim monster, and he is a monster even when he is slain. God forbid we

should ever glory in sin, but it is a theme for joy to a Christian when he can look upon his sins drowned in the blood of Jesus,

"Plunged, as in a shoreless sea;  
Lost, as in immensity."

My soul looks back to the days of my youth, and remembers her former transgressions,—she drops a tear of sorrow; she looks to the cross, and sees them all forgiven, and she drops there tears of gratitude. My eye runs along the days of manhood, and observes, with sorrow, omissions and commissions innumerable; but it lights up with a smile most rapturous when I see the flood of Jesus' blood swelling over the sands of my sins till they are all covered and no eye can behold them. Oh! child of God, come and see the man whom thou seekest, here he lies slain before thee. Come and see all thy sins for ever dead; fear them not; weep for them; avoid them in days to come, and remember they are slain. Look at thy sins as vanquished foes, and always regard them as being nailed to his cross—to his cross who

"Sang the triumph when he rose."

But I hear you say, "Well, I have faith enough to believe that my sins are overcome in that way, and that they are conquered and dead in that respect; but O, sir, as to this body of sin within me—I cannot get it killed, I cannot get it overcome." Now, when we begin the divine life, we believe that we shall get rid of our old Adam entirely. I know most of you had a notion when you first started in the pilgrimage, that as soon as ever you received grace, depravity would be cast out—did you find it so, brethren? I have heard some preachers laugh at the theory of the two natures. I never answered them, for I dare say they would not have comprehended me if I had tried the experiment; but one thing I know—that the theory of the two natures in a Christian is no theory to me, but a truth which daily proves itself. I cannot say with Ralph Erskine—

"To good and evil equal bent,  
And both a devil and a saint;"

but if that is not the truth it is very near to it; it is next door to it; and while on the one hand I am able to see sin perishing within, on the other hand I cannot fail to see the struggle which my soul has to wage against it, and the daily warfare and fightings that necessarily ensue. I know that grace is the stronger principle, and that it must overcome at last; but there are times when the old man seems for a little to get the upper hand—Ishmael prevails, and Isaac is cast to the ground; though this I know, that Isaac has the promise and Ishmael must be driven out. Well, child of God, if you have to look upon the Sisera of your sin still fleeing from you—be of good cheer; it is but the experience of all the people of God. Moreover, there have been many who have said they did not feel this; but my dear brethren, they did feel it, only that they did not use the same language as we do who have felt it. I know one or two good brothers who say they believe in perfection, but I find all the perfection they believe in is the very perfection that I preach. It is perfection in Christ, but they do not believe in perfection in themselves. Nor do I believe that any Christian who reads his own heart for a single day, can indulge the idea of being totally free from the risings of depravity, and the risings of the heart after sin. If there be such, I can only say, "I wish I could change places with thee, brother, for it is my hard lot to have wars and fightings day by day, and it seems difficult to say sometimes which way the matter will end, or how the battle will be decided." Indeed, one could not know it at all except by faith, for sight seems to lead to an opposite opinion. Well, be of good cheer, Christian. Though the old man is not slain in you, as you know personally yet I would have you remember that as you are in Christ, the old man is crucified. "Knowing that your old man is crucified with him." And know this, that the day shall come when the angels shall open wide the door, and ye that have been panting after your enemy, like Barak pressing after Sisera, shall hear the welcome Spirit say, "Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest," and there shall lie thine old inbred lusts, and he who is the father of them, old Satan himself, all chained and bound and cast into the lake of fire. Then will you sing indeed unto the Lord, "Oh! sing unto the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory." Till then, brethren, pursue after your sins. Spare them not, neither great nor small, and God speed you that you may fight valiantly, and by his aid utterly overcome them.

As for thee, poor sinner, whom I lately reminded that thou canst not slay thy sins, nor work out thy salvation, thou canst not be thine own deliverer. Trust in thy Master. Put thy soul into the hands of him who is able and willing to preserve and keep it, and to protect it; and mark me, if to-night thou wilt have nothing to do with thyself, but wilt give thyself to Christ entirely, then to-night thou art saved. What if my Master should give me to-night some fishes at the first shaking of the net, and what if some poor sinner should say within himself—

"I'll go to Jesus, though my sin,  
Hath like a mountain rose;  
I know his courts, I'll enter in,  
Whatever may oppose."

Come, sinner, come! Nay, do you say you cannot come? "My sins, my sins!" Come, and I will show thee thy sins nailed to the cross of Christ. "But I must not come," says one; "I have so hard a heart." Come, and I will show thee thy hard heart dissolved in a bath of blood divine. "Oh! but," still thou sayest, "I dare not come." Come, and I will show thee those fears of thine lulled into an eternal sleep, and thy soul resting on Christ shall never need to fear again, for thou shalt be his in time, his in life and death, and his in an eternity of bliss.

May the Lord add his blessing now, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **Sincere Seekers Assured Finders**

If thou seek him, he will be found of thee. - 1 Chronicles 28:9

Although this was addressed to Solomon, it may, without any violence to truth, be addressed tonight to every unconverted person here present, for there are a great many texts of Scripture of a similar import which apply to all ungodly ones, such, for instance, as that, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." And that other, "He that seeketh findeth; to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." I should like to go round, if it were possible, and say to every hearer here, as I put my hand upon his shoulder, "If thou seek thy God, he will be found of thee"—even of thee. May I ask you to take it as spoken to each individual—not to your neighbours, not to one who is better or worse than yourselves, but to you? You, young man, and you of riper years, you of all ages, classes and sexes, "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." I know that those who think at all about religion, and do not understand it, are very apt to conceive that there is something wonderfully mysterious about it. That a man should follow it, and may perhaps attain the blessing of it towards the end of life, or on a dying bed, though some conceive that then nobody is quite sure that he is saved, unless it is some extraordinarily good man. Oh! is not this strange, that with a book so plain as this, and with a gospel preached by so many in these days, yet the mass of mankind are in a cloud and a fog about the blessed revelation of God? Jesus Christ is salvation. He is to be had—he is to be had now. You may know you have him. You may be now saved—completely saved, and live in the full enjoyment of that knowledge. "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." The notion is that there are a great many very mysterious preliminaries, a great deal to do, and a great deal to be, and all quite beyond our power. It is not so, but seek him. We will tell you what that means, and he that seeks him finds him. "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." It has been supposed that we should want a good deal of help in seeking after salvation. Certain persons who step in to be absolutely necessary priests between us and God. A great delusion, but there be thousands who believe it and who fancy that God won't hear them if they pray, except they have some respect for these human mediators. Away with the whole, away with any pretence for anyone to stand between the soul and God, save Jesus Christ. "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." Though thou bring no other man with thee, but come empty-handed as thou art to God here, without paraphernalia, or

altar, or sacrifice of the Mass, he will be found of thee. Take the text in its simplicity and sublimity. It is just this: that if any heart really seeks God in his way, it shall find him; if any man really wants mercy from God and seeks it as God tells him to seek it, he shall have it. Any man or woman born, be he who he may, if he comes to God in the way laid down, and sincerely asks for salvation, that salvation he shall surely have. The matter is simple enough; our pride alone obscures it. The way to heaven is so plain that "a wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err therein." We do but muddle it because we dislike it; we do but add this and that and the other to it because, like Naaman, the Syrian, we want to do some great thing, and we are not content to take the prophetic word, "Wash and be clean." I aim at nothing tonight, therefore, but that some here present may be brought to see the way of salvation, and may be led to run in it. Oh! may God grant that, out of this company, there may be some at least who will be willing to seek and to find. While we shall cast the net, may the Master grant that some may be taken in it to their own eternal welfare. We shall try to do three things, four mayhap; first, to notice *that there is a promise here explained; we will then give directions; thirdly, we will answer objections;* and, if time serves us, we will *offer a stimulant* to the pursuit of this. First, then, there is:—

## I. A PROMISE TO BE EXPLAINED.

"If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." I have almost completed my explanation already. We have lost our God by the Fall—by our own sin. We have alienated ourselves from him, but our case is not hopeless. Since Jesus Christ has come into the world, and given the gospel, and provided an atonement. It is a certainty that, if we desire the Lord and seek him, he will be found of us. Now he has told us the way in which to seek. It is by coming to him as he is revealed in Christ Jesus, and trusting our souls with Jesus. If we do this, we have found God, and we are saved. The sum and substance of the promise is this: any soul that, by prayer, seeks God, desires salvation through Jesus, through faith in Jesus—such a soul shall be heard, shall get the blessing it desires, shall find its God. You shall not pray in vain. Your tears, and cries, and longings shall be heard. Christ shall be revealed to you, and, through your believing in Christ, you shall certainly be saved. There is not, and never will be, in hell, a single person

who dare say that he sought the Lord through Christ and could not find him. There is not living a man who dares say that, or if he did, his own conscience would belie him. They that seek him may not find at once, but they shall ultimately. Delays from God are no denials. I will repeat what I said. There is not, and there never shall be, in the pit of hell a soul that shall dare to say, "I earnestly sought mercy of God through Jesus Christ, and did not find it." They who never found mercy in Christ never sought it, or never sought it aright, and earnestly; but the seeker will become a finder. Seeking in God's way, heartily and earnestly, God will not reject him. "How know you who I may be?" saith one; "you speak at large of all." I do not know who you may be, but I do know this, that if "the wicked forsakes his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turns unto the Lord, he will have mercy upon him, and our God will abundantly pardon" him. I know this also, concerning you, my friend, that "whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," and be you who you may, I am bidden to preach this gospel to every *creature* under heaven, and surely you are a *creature*. And what is this gospel? Why, 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.' Therefore, however peculiar your case or circumstances, there stands the one grand, glorious promise. "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." The only "if" there is, is with thee; if thou seek him—no "if" about his being found of thee. Oh! shall it be an "if"? Shall it be an "if"? The Lord convert that "if" into a certainty, and may you be constrained to say tonight, "I will seek him, and I will never cease my seeking, until in my case the promise is true, and I have found him of whom it was written, 'If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.'" I have thus explained the text, though it scarcely needed it. Now let me give:—

## II. SOME DIRECTIONS.

What is it to seek the Lord? To seek the Lord is, in one word, simply this: the readiest way to seek him is *to believe that Jesus is the Christ*, and to trust him; that Jesus, the Saviour, is God's anointed, and to trust him as God's anointed to save your soul. You shall find peace the moment you do that. "But," saith one, "I want to get this faith you speak of—this trust which you explain." Well then, let me help you somewhat. How do we get faith in anything? Why, surely by trying to know what it is. It would be

very idle for me to stand here and say to you, "Believe, believe, believe"; but not tell you what to believe—what is to be believed. A man cannot command his faith about a something that he knows nothing of; therefore, let me say to every soul that is seeking mercy, "Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace." "Study the Scriptures." Try to understand what was the result of what he did. Get a clear view of his person and his work, and this will materially help you to believe.

Next to that, remember *faith cometh by hearing*. Frequent, therefore, the hearing of the Word, and be careful that thou seek not after the gaudy words of man's eloquence, which may feed thy pride and vanity, and tickle thine ear, but can never save thy soul. Seek a Christ-exalting ministry. Desire to be where thy soul will be handled with fidelity, and where Christ will be held up before thee with simplicity and earnestness, for the hearing that God blesses is not the hearing of every man that speaketh, but the hearing of the Word of God that "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"; "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief." Listen with all thine ears when Christ is being talked of, and pray whilst thou art hearing, and say, "Lord, bless that message to me." Open thy soul to the message; pray the Lord to open it, that thou mayest be like Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things which were spoken to her by Paul. Then when you think you understand the gospel, and have heard it so as to pretty plainly see it, if there should remain some difficulties which do not seem to be opened up to you by the ministry, *seek some earnest Christian*, to whom you may unbosom your soul on such points. You shall find that what is very difficult to you will be very easy to some believers; and they will be able, in God's hands, to be the means of removing the scales from your eyes. It was so with Paul when he was converted—he must go to Ananias, and when Ananias should come in, then should the scales fall from Paul's eyes. Meanwhile, take care to *be constantly in prayer*. Cry unto God to show thee the way; ask him to do it, for, remember, he can do for thee what you canst never do for thyself. Understand that thou canst not save thyself—that thou hast no right to be saved—that if saved, it will be his sovereign grace; therefore, cry humbly, but oh! note the value of the blessing thou needest, and, therefore, pray earnestly. Do not let him go, except he bless thee. Rob thyself of sleep,



sinner, rather than rob thy soul of Christ. Search the Word again and again, and turn each promise into a prayer, and if thou canst only get a hold on the edge of a promise, go with it to the mercy-seat and plead it. Be thankful for the smallest degree of hope; trust that the first beams of day will soon expand and deepen into dawn, and into noonday. Grieve not the Holy Spirit by going on with thy old sin. Part with thy old companions; seek the house of God; seek the people of God; *addict thyself to holy company and holy pursuits*; and although I would not put all this together in the place of my first word, which was, "Believe now—believe now in Christ," yet if there be difficulties in the way, they will yield under such an earnest mode of seeking as I have tried to point out to you. Oh! if a soul be resolved, "I will not perish if mercy is to be had; I will stoop to anything; I will have Christ for nothing; I will be nothing; I will let him do what he wills with me, if I may but be saved; I will make no terms and no conditions, only let my sins be blotted out:—my friend, thou art already not far from the kingdom of God. Already grace is at work in thy soul, and "if thou seek him, he will be found of thee." Continue in that blessed search. Let nothing take thee off from it; it is thy life; thy soul hangs on it; heaven and hell tremble in the balance for thee; give thy heart to God, thy faith to Christ, thy whole soul to the purpose of seeking thy salvation, and say, "It is my only business, with holy faith and holy fear, to make my calling and election sure while here I stand upon this narrow neck of land, betwixt the two unbounded seas." I have thus given you some directions, but I am not going to linger over them, but pass on to:—

### III. ANSWER A FEW OBJECTIONS.

I cannot anticipate them all, and objection-hunting from sinners is an endless work, for when you have destroyed fifty objections, they will be ready with fifty more. But still there are a few common ones; and one is, "*I am too guilty*. Why should I seek, when it is impossible I should ever be pardoned?" Oh! if thy soul rested with a man like thyself, or even with an angel, great sinner, I would not encourage thee; but who is the Saviour? Bethink thee for a little. He is the mighty God. He that made the heavens and stretched them out like a tent to dwell in—he who speaks, and it is done—the everlasting Father—is anything too hard for him?

Look to him. He becomes a man, and yields himself up to death. With sufferings that can never be understood or fully described: -

"He bears that we might never bear  
His Father's righteous ire."

Is anything impossible for the Saviour? Oh! conceive not so. The idea that any guilt is too great for Christ to pardon scarcely deserves to be replied to. It is so absurd when you are dealing with the infinite mercy of a Saviour who is God himself. It was said some years ago that the city of Peking in China suffered greatly from a severe climate at one part of the year, and paid much for fuel, and yet underneath it, or close to it, there were large coal mines. And when the Chinese were asked why they did not work them, they said that they were afraid of disturbing the equilibrium of the globe, and perhaps the world might turn over, and the celestial empire, which had always been at the top, might be at the bottom. Nobody thought it worthwhile to answer so absurd a theory; and when any say, "My sins are too great for Christ to pardon," I could almost smile in the same way at a conception so ignorant. What can be too great for the infinite mercy of the eternal God, who took our sins upon Himself upon the cross? Sinner, think not so.

There is another objection far more common, however, which is not put into words, but it means this: "*I am too good to seek Christ.* Why, have I not always been brought up religiously? I am not as those poor sinners are that have been drunkards and the like. I have not any need of seeking him." Oh! soul, if there is one that is least likely to be saved, it is you, for they that go about to establish their own righteousness are the last to submit to the righteousness in Christ Jesus, and verily the publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before some of you, for be ye sure of this, no man shall ever enter heaven by his own works. There is one gate to glory, and but one for queen or beggar, for the best or for the worst, and that is through the blood and righteousness of the one only Redeemer, and if thou hast not this, be thou never so good, thou art utterly undone. Oh! lay aside that thought; thou art neither too good nor too bad, but "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee."

But I hear somebody in the corner saying, "It is no use my thinking of seeking Christ, *I am too poor.*" Oh, my dear friend, your mistake, indeed, is a strange one, for did not Jesus say, "To the poor the gospel is preached"? I'll be bound to say you are not poorer than the Saviour himself, for he said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of man, have not where to lay my head." Dream not this. Gold and silver have no value in his kingdom. The poorest is as wealthy as the wealthiest if he come to Christ.

"Ay, ay," saith another, "but I am *too ignorant.* I scarce can read. Unhappily for me, I was brought up where I got no learning. I can never understand these things." Friend, if thou be not able to read a word in the Book, yet mayest thou read thy title clear to mansions in the skies. Thou needest not have all this learning; it were a good thing for thee if thou had it—serviceable for a thousand purposes, but not needful to the entering of that kingdom. If thou knowest thyself as a sinner, and if thou wilt trust Christ as a Saviour, thou shalt be as welcome into the kingdom as doctors who have taken their degree at the Universities, or the wisest men that have ever sat at the feet of Gamaliel. Come and welcome; come and welcome; come and welcome. Let not this keep thee back.

But I have heard one say, "I would fain seek the Lord, but *I have no place to seek him.*" "What mean you?" "I have no chamber into which I can go and pray alone." That is a sad deprivation, I grant you, but do not think for a moment that you need any special place in which to seek the Lord. I remember a sailor who used to be much in prayer, and he was asked where he went to pray. "Oh!" said he, "I have been many a time alone with Christ up on the mast." Why not? It is as good an oratory under conviction of sin, to make use of an old coach that was in his master's yard. Why not? Why not? I know one whose prayer-place used to be a saw-pit, and another a hay-loft. What matter?

"Where'er we seek him, he is found,  
And every place is hallowed ground."

Every place is consecrated where there is a true heart. In that seat you may seek and find him. Standing there, up in that corner of the gallery,

your soul may find her God. In Cheapside, walking in the busiest street, or at the plough-tail amidst the field, let thy soul but cry, "Jesus, pity a sinner"—let thy heart trust in that Jesus—no place is wanted—any place sufficeth. Raise not that excuse.

*"I have not the time,"* says another. Not the time! What time, pray, does it require? But if it did require it, oh! man, art thou mad to say, "I have no time"? Ye have time enough to dress your body; you stay for that other pin, and that other ribbon, and that adornment of your person. Not time to put on the robe of righteousness! You have time to feed your bodies, to sit down to your meals. Not time to eat the bread of heaven! Time to cast up your accounts to see how your business stands, and not time to see to your soul's affairs! Oh! sirs, be ashamed to make such an excuse. I charge you, give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids till you are saved. A man wakes up in the night, and finds his house is on fire. There is a noise in the street. The fireman is calling to him. The ladder is at the window. "I have not time," says he, "to go down the ladder and escape. I have little enough time for rest, and I must have my sleep while I can." The man is mad, sir, and so is every man who says, "I have not time to seek my God." Perhaps, however, you speak the truth, for ere the next word leaves my lips you may fall down a corpse. God sometimes makes our base excuses turn into solemn truth. Oh! while you have time, use it. "Escape for your life; look not behind thee"; stay not, but hasten till you find the Saviour, and never think of resting till Christ is yours.

Another reason that some bring is one which occurs to them as if it were very satisfactory, and that is, *"I cannot"*. No man can come, except he be drawn, and I cannot." Yes, but you may put a truth into such a shape that it is a lie. Will you let me put that into the right shape? Every time when a sinner cannot, the real reason is that he will not. All the cannots in the Bible about spiritual inability are tantamount to will nots. But when you say, "I cannot repent," you mean, "I will not—I will not seek, I will not believe." Now put it honestly to your own soul, for that is what you mean, for if you would you could. If the will were conquered, the power would be sure to come with it, but the first difficulty is, "You will not"; and this is it, you will not seek eternal life; you will not escape from hell; you will not have heaven; you will not be reconciled to God; you will not come into

Christ that you might have Christ. You make it as an objection, but I charge it upon you as a crime, a crime which aggravates all the rest, and is in itself a greater crime, perhaps, than all the rest put together. Ye will not come. "Do you want to come?" "Yes, but there is much I cannot do." "Aye! but there is means provided to help you." God the Holy Spirit helps you, yea, works mightily in you. Have you never heard of that negro servant who was sent by his master on an errand? He did not particularly like to go there. He was sent with a letter. He was back in a short time; and his master said, "Sam, you have not gone with that letter." "No, massa." "Why not?" "Massa couldn't expect Sam to do impossibilities." "What impossibilities, sir?" "I went on as far as I could massa—came to river—couldn't swim across river—very wide river—couldn't swim across it." "But there is a ferry-boat." "Ferry-boat t'other side, massa—ferry-boat t'other side." "Did you call to the ferry-boat, sir?" "No, massa; didn't." "Oh! you rascal," said he; "That is no excuse at all. Why didn't you call for the ferry-boat? Why didn't you call for it?" Now if that negro had only just said, "Boat, ahoy there!" the ferry-boat would have come to him, and all would have been well. It was an idle thing to say, "I cannot." It was true, but it was false. So when I come to a point where there is something in the matter of my being saved which I cannot do, yet if I pray the Holy Spirit to work in me that I cannot work in myself, he will do it. Jesus Christ will give me "true belief and true repentance—every grace that brings me nigh." I have only to ask for all that I want, and I shall have it. It is idle for me to say, "I cannot do it." Nobody asked you to. Christ will give it to you; only do stand and call—call mightily, and cry with all your soul until the blessing be come. But now I must close. I want to offer just a few sentences only.

IV. A STIMULANT, to lead you to seek him who will be found of you. And the first is, "*Is it not our duty to God* that we should seek him?" With some persons this reflection may be important. You remember the Countess of Huntingdon, one of the most remarkably gracious women that ever lived—a mother in Israel. Her conversion was to a great degree caused by this: she was a blithe and worldly lady of noble rank, excellent and amiable, and all that, but she had no thought of the things of God. She was at a ball, and the amusements of the evening were engrossing all attention, and suddenly the answer to the first question of the assembly's

catechism, which she appears to have learnt when she was a child, came forcibly into her mind, "The chief end of man is to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever." She thought to herself, "Why, here am I, a butterfly among a lot of butterflies. All our chief end is to enjoy ourselves, to spend the evening merrily and make ourselves agreeable, and so on." She went away smitten in her soul with that thought, "The end that God made me for I am not answering." Now there are some minds that have sufficient in them to think of such a thing as that, and I shall leave that to fall into some honest, and good ground. Perhaps some young man will say, "Well, after all, I am not serving my Creator as I should." You remember the conversion of Colonel Gardiner. He had lived a wild soldier's life, and he had appointed that very night of his conversion to perpetuate a gross sin. He was waiting an hour before he went to his appointment, and he thought he saw, I think upon the wall, the Saviour on the cross, and underneath the representation of the Crucified he read these words: -

"I have done this for thee;  
what hast thou done for me?"

He never kept that sinful appointment. He became a soldier of the cross. Oh! I wish that some here might feel something of nobility within them that would make them feel, "It is mean to act so unjustly to God, as to prefer the trivial things of time to the weighty matters of eternity."

The next stimulus I would offer is one of *hope*. "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." "Oh!" says one, "if I could find him, I would seek him." When persons go to South Africa, they search for diamonds; but if any man could be assured that he would find a Koh-i-noor, I warrant you he would be one of the hardest workers there. Oh! there are some here tonight that little dream it, that will yet before long be telling to others what eternal love has done for them. They are very ready to sneer at it, perhaps, at this moment. They think it is impossible. The Lord doth great marvels; he bringeth down the mighty from their seat, and exalteth them of low degree. Oh! soul, the gate may not open at the first knock to thee, it may be, but it will open. Let me encourage thee. Thou shalt yet rejoice. Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty, for there is a harp in heaven that no finger shall every play on but yours, and there is a crown there

that will fit no head but yours, and a throne on which no one must sit but you; the Lord hath chosen thee, and, therefore, this night he calls thee. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Go thou, poor soul, to Christ, and thou shalt find it so.

But if that doth not move thee, let me give thee another stimulant, and that is the opposite one, of *fear*. Suppose thou shouldst never seek thy Lord; suppose thou shouldst die without a Saviour; what then? "I shall die," sayest thou; "my soul will go before God." What then? Why, it must be condemned, and by-and-bye thy body shall rise up—from the grave shall thy body spring, and thou in body and soul shalt stand before the bar of that great Saviour whom thou dost tonight despise. Beware, for the books will be opened, and thy rejection of Christ written there shall be read before the assembled world; and then when the earth doth rock and reel and the ungodly in their terrors ask for the mountains to cover them—when the stars fall like withered figs from the trees, and all Creation gathers up her skirts to flee away from the face of him that comes in terror, oh! what will you do? What will you do? Expire, you cannot; be extinguished, you must not; live on, you must; and in anguish that shall never abate, in despair that never shall be enlightened with a hope. "Turn ye, turn ye! Why will ye die?" Why will ye reject him? "If ye seek him, he will be found of you." Oh! do seek him; reject him not. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Oh! who shall give me tears? Who shall teach me to speak with pathos? How shall I reach your consciences and stir your hearts? Eternal Spirit, do thou this mighty work, and win this night to thyself. O Jesu, save many a heart by this testimony of thy grace, which again and again we reiterate, "If we seek him—if thou seek him—he will be found of thee." God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# Sinners Bound With The Cords Of Sin

His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. - Proverbs 5:22

The first sentence has reference to a net, in which birds or beasts are taken. The ungodly man first of all finds sin to be a bait, and, charmed by its apparent pleasantness he indulges in it, and then he becomes entangled in its meshes so that he cannot escape. That which first attracted the sinner, afterwards detains him. Evil habits are soon formed, the soul readily becomes accustomed to evil, and then, even if the man should have lingering thoughts of better things, and form frail resolutions to amend, his iniquities hold him captive like a bird in the fowler's snare. You have seen the foolish fly descend into the sweet which is spread to destroy him, he sips, and sips again, and by-and-by he plunges boldly in to feast himself greedily: when satisfied, he attempts to fly, but the sweet holds him by the feet and clogs his wings; he is a victim, and the more he struggles the more surely is he held. Even so is it with the sins of ungodly men, they are at first a tempting bait, and afterwards a snare. Having sinned, they become so bewitched with sin, that the scriptural statement is no exaggeration: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

The first sentence of the text also may have reference to an arrest by an officer of law. The transgressor's own sins shall take him, shall seize him; they bear a warrant for arresting him, they shall judge him, they shall even execute him. Sin, which at the first bringeth to man a specious pleasure, ere long turneth into bitterness, remorse, and fear. Sin is a dragon, with eyes like stars, but it carrieth a deadly sting in its tail. The cup of sin, with rainbow bubbles on its brim, is black with deep damnation in its dregs. O that men would consider this, and turn from their delusions. To bring torment to the guilty, there is little need that God should, literally in the world to come, pile up Tophet with its wood



and much smoke, nor even that the pit should be digged for the ungodly in order to make them miserable; sin shall of itself bring forth death. Leave a man to his own sins, and hell itself surrounds him; only suffer a sinner to do what he wills, and to give his lusts unbridled headway, and you have secured him boundless misery; only allow the seething caldron of his corruptions to boil at its own pleasure, and the man must inevitably become a vessel filled with sorrow. Be assured that sin is the root of bitterness. Gild the pill as you may, iniquity is death. Sweet is an unholy morsel in the mouth, but it will be wormwood in the bowels. Let but man heartily believe this, and surely he will not so readily be led astray. "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird," and shall man be more foolish than the fowls of the air? will he wilfully pursue his own destruction? will he wrong his own soul? Sin, then, becomes first a net to hold the sinner by the force of custom and habit, and afterwards, a sheriffs officer to arrest him, and to scourge him with its inevitable results.

The second sentence of our text speaks of the sinner being holden with cords, and a parable may be readily fashioned out of the expression. The lifelong occupation of the ungodly man is to twist ropes of sin. All his sins are as so much twine and cord out of which ropes may be made. His thoughts and his imaginations are so much raw material, and while he thinks of evil, while he contrives transgression, while he lusts after filthiness, while he follows after evil devices, while with head, and hand, and heart he pursues eagerly after mischief, he is still twisting evermore the cords of sin which are afterwards to bind him. The binding meant is that of a culprit pinioned for execution. Iniquity pinions a man, disables him from delivering himself from its power, enchains his soul, and inflicts a bondage on the spirit far worse than chaining of the body. Sin cripples all desires after holiness, damps every aspiration after goodness, and thus, fettering the man hand and foot, delivers him over to the executioner, which executioner shall be the wrath of God, but also sin itself, in the natural consequences which in every case must flow from it. Samson could burst asunder green withes and new ropes, but when at last his darling sin had bound him to his Delilah, that bond he could not snap, though it cost him his eyes. Make a man's will a prisoner, and he is a captive indeed. Determined independence of spirit walks at freedom in

a tyrant's Bastille, and defies a despot's hosts; but a mind enslaved by sin builds its own dungeon, forges its own fetters, and rivets on its chains. It is slavery indeed when the iron enters into the soul. Who would not scorn to make himself a slave to his baser passions? and yet the mass of men are such—the cords of their sins bind them.

Thus, having introduced to you the truth which this verse teaches, namely, the captivating, enslaving power of sin, I shall advance to our first point of consideration. This is a solution to a great mystery; but then, secondly, it is itself a greater mystery; and when we have considered these two matters it will be time for us to note what is the practical conclusion from this line of thought.

I. First, then, the doctrine of the text, that iniquity entraps the wicked as in a net, and binds them as with cords is **A SOLUTION OF A GREAT MYSTERY.**

When you and I first began to do good by telling out the gospel, we labored under the delusion that as soon as our neighbors heard of the blessed way of salvation they would joyfully receive it, and be saved in crowds. We have long ago seen that pleasant delusion dispelled; we find that our position is that of the serpent-charmer with the deaf adder, charm we ever so wisely, men will not hear so as to receive the truth. Like the ardent reformer, we have found out that old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon. We now perceive that for a sinner to receive the gospel involves a work of grace that shall change his heart and renew his nature. Yet none the less is it a great mystery that it should be so. It is one of the prodigies of the god of this world that he makes men love sin, and abide in indifference as if they were fully content to be lost. It is a marvel of marvels that man should be so base as to reject Christ, and abide in wilful and wicked unbelief. I will try and set forth this mystery, in the way in which, I dare say, it has struck many an honest hearted worker for Jesus Christ.

Is it not a mysterious thing that men should be content to abide in a state of imminent peril? Every unconverted man is already condemned. Our Lord has said it: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he

hath not believed on the Son of God." Every unregenerate man is not only liable to the wrath of God in the future, but the wrath of God abideth on him. It is on him now, it always will remain upon him; as long as he is what he is, it abideth on him. And yet in this state men do not start, they are not amazed or alarmed, they are not even anxious. Sabbath after Sabbath they are reminded of their unhappy position: it makes us unhappy to think they should be in such a state, but they are strangely at ease. The sword of vengeance hangs over them by a single hair, yet sit they at their banquets, and they laugh and sport as though there were no God, no wrath to come, no certainty of appearing before the judgment-seat of Christ. See a number of persons in a train that has broken down. The guard has only to intimate that another train is approaching, and that it may perhaps dash into the carriages and mangle the passengers; he has only to give half a hint, and see how the carriage doors fly open, how the travelers rush up the embankment, each one so eager for his own preservation as to forget his fellow's. Yet here are men and women by hundreds and thousands, with the fast-rushing train of divine vengeance close behind them; they may almost hear the sound of its thundering wheels, and, lo, they sit in all quietness, exposed to present peril and in danger of a speedy and overwhelming destruction. "'Tis strange. 'tis passing strange, 'tis wonderful." Here is a mystery indeed, that can only be understood in the light of the fact that these foolish beings are taken by their sin, and bound by the cords of their iniquities.

Be it ever remembered that before very long these unconverted men and women, many of whom are present this morning, will be in a state whose wretchedness it is not possible for language fully to express. Within four-and-twenty hours their spirits may be summoned before the bar of God; and, according to this book, which partially uplifts the veil of the future, the very least punishment that can fall upon an unconverted soul will cause it "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." All they had endured, of whom it is written, that they wept and gnashed their teeth, was to be shut out into outer darkness, nothing more; no stripes had then fallen, they had not yet been shut up in the prison-house of hell, only the gate of heaven was shut, only the light of glory was hid; and straightway there was weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. What, then, will be the woe of the lost when positive punishment is inflicted? As for what

they will endure who have heard the gospel, but have wilfully rejected it, we have some faint notion from the Master's words: "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for them." We know that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for "our God is a consuming fire." From this platform there rings full often that question, "How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?" And yet for all this, men are willing to pass on through time into eternity regardless of the escape which God provides, turning aside from the only salvation which can rescue them from enduring "the blackness of darkness for ever." O reason, art thou utterly fled? Is every sinner altogether brutish? If we should meet with a man condemned to die, and tell him that pardon was to be had, would he hear us with indifference? Would he abide in the condemned cell and use no means for obtaining the boon of life and liberty? Yes, there awaits the sinner a more awful doom, and a more terrible sentence, and we are sent to publish a sure pardon from the God of heaven; and yet thousands upon thousands give us no deep heartfelt attention, but turn aside and perish in their sins. O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep for the folly of the race to which I belong, and mourn over the destruction of my fellow men!

It often strikes us with wonder that men do not receive the gospel of Jesus Christ, when we recollect that the gospel is so plain. If it were a great mystery one might excuse the illiterate from attending to it. If the plan of salvation could only be discovered by the attentive perusal of a long series of volumes, and if it required a classical training and a thorough education, why then the multitude of the poor and needy, whose time is taken up with earning their bread, might have some excuse; but there is under heaven no truth more plain than this, "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus hath everlasting life;" "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved." To believe—that is, simply to trust Christ. How plain! There is no road, though it ran straight as an arrow, that can be more plain than this. Legible only by the light they give, but all so legible that he who runs may read, stand these soul-quickenings words, "Believe and live." Trust Christ and your sins are forgiven; you are saved. This is so plain a precept, that I may call it a very A B C for infants, yet men receive it not. Are they not indeed holden by the cords of their sins

when they refuse to obey?

Moreover, brethren, there is a wonderful attractiveness in the gospel. If the gospel could possibly be a revelation of horrors piled on horrors, if there were something in it utterly inconsistent with reason, or something that shocked all the sensitive affections of our better part, we might excuse mankind, but the gospel is just this: man is lost, but God becomes man to save him, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Out of infinite love to his enemies the Son of God took upon himself human flesh, that he might suffer in the room and stead of men what they ought to have suffered. The doctrine of substitution, while it wondrously magnifies the grace of God and satisfies the justice of God, methinks ought to strike you all with love because of the disinterested affection which it reveals on Jesus Christ's part. O King of Glory, dost thou bleed for me? O Prince of Life, canst thou lie shrouded in the grave for me? Doth God stoop from his glory to be spat upon by sinful lips? Doth he stoop from the splendor of heaven to be "despised and rejected of men," that men may be saved? Why, it ought to win every human ear, it ought to entrance every human heart. Was ever love like this? Go ye to your poets, and see if they have ever imagined anything nobler than the love of Christ the Son of God for the dying sons of men! Go to your philosophers, and see if in all their maxims they have ever taught a diviner philosophy than that of Christ's life, or ever have imagined in their pictures of what men ought to be, an heroic love like that which Christ in very deed displayed! We lift before you no gory banner that might sicken your hearts; we bring before you no rattling chains of a tyrant's domination; but we lift up Jesus crucified, and "Love" is written on the banner that is waved in the forefront of our hosts; we bid you yield to the gentle sway of love, and not to the tyranny of terror. Alas! men must be bound, indeed, and fettered fast by an accursed love to sin, or else the divine attractions of a crucified Redeemer would win their hearts.

Consider, my friends, you who love the souls of your fellow men, how marvellous it is that men should not receive the gospel when the commandment of the gospel is not burdensome! Methinks if it had been written that no man should enter heaven except by the way of martyrdom, it had been wisdom for every one of us to give our bodies to

be burned, or to be stretched upon the rack; yea, if there had been no path to escape from the wrath of God, but to be flayed alive with Bartholomew, enduring present but exquisite torture, it would have been but a cheap price for an escape from wrath, and an entrance into heaven. But I find in God's word prescribed as the way of salvation, no such physical agonies. No austerities are commanded; not even the milder law which governed the Pharisee when he "fasted thrice in the week." Only this is written—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and the precept of the Christian's life is, "Love thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." Most pleasant duties these of love! What more sweet? What more delightful than to permit the soul to flow out in streams of affection? The ways of true religion are not irksome, her ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. What, heaven given for believing? What, heaven's gate opened only for knocking, and boons all priceless bestowed for nothing but the asking? Yet they will not ask, they will not knock. Alas, my God, what creatures are men! Alas, O sin, what monsters hast thou made mankind, that they will forget their own interests, and wrong their own souls!

Further, it is clear that men must be fast held by the bondage of their sins when we recollect that, according to the confession of the most of them, the pleasures of sin are by no means great. I have heard them say themselves that they have been satiated after a short season of indulgence. We know how true the word is, "Who hath woe? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine." No form of sin has ever been discovered yet that has yielded satisfaction. You shall look at those who have had all that heart could wish, and have without restraint indulged their passions, and you shall find them to be in their latter end amongst the most wretched rather than the most satisfied of mankind. Yet for these pleasures—I think I degrade the word when I call them pleasures—for these pleasures they are willing to pawn their souls and risk everlasting woe; and all this while, be it remembered, to add to the wonder, there are pleasures to be found in godliness; they do not deny this, they cannot without belying their own observation. We who are at least as honest as they are, bear our testimony that we never knew what true happiness was till we gave our hearts to Christ; but since then our peace has been like a river. We have had our afflictions, we have

suffered grievous bodily pain, we have endured mental depression, we have been heavily burdened, we have borne many trials; but we can say -

"We would not change our blest estate  
For all the world calls good or great."

"Happy are the people whose God is the Lord!" We can set our seal to this experimentally. See ye then, my brethren, these poor souls will prefer the pleasures that mock them to the pleasures that alone can satisfy. If we had to die like dogs, it would be worth while to be a Christian. If there were no hereafter, and our only consideration were who should enjoy this life the best, it would be the wisest thing to be a servant of God and a soldier of the cross. I say not it would ensure our being rich, I say not it would ensure our being respected, I say not it would ensure our walking smoothly and free from outward trouble; but I do say that because of "the secret something which sweetens all," because of the profound serenity which true religion brings, the Christian life out-masters every other, and there is none to be compared therewith. But think ye for awhile what the ungodly man's life is! I can only compare it to that famous diabolical invention of the Inquisition of ancient times. They had as a fatal punishment for heretics, what they called the "Virgin's Kiss." There stood in a long corridor the image of the Virgin. She outstretched her arms to receive her heretic child; she looked fair, and her dress was adorned with gold and tinsel, but as soon as the poor victim came into her arms the machinery within began to work, and the arms closed and pressed the wretch closer and closer to her bosom, which was set with knives, and daggers, and lancets, and razors, and everything that could cut and tear him, till he was ground to pieces in the horrible embrace; and such is the ungodly man's life. It standeth like a fair virgin, and with witching smile it seems to say, "Come to my bosom, no place so warm and blissful as this;" and then anon it begins to fold its arms of habit about the sinner, and he sins again and again, brings misery into his body, perhaps, if he fall into some form of sin, stings his soul, makes his thoughts a case of knives to torture him, and grinds him to powder beneath the force of his own iniquities. Men perceive this, and dare not deny it; and yet into this virgin's bosom they still thrust themselves, and reap the deep damnation that iniquity must everywhere involve. Alas, alas, my God!

And now, once more, this terrible mystery, which is only solved by men's being held by their sins, has this added to it, that all the while in the case of most of you now present, all that I have said is believed, and a great deal of it is felt. I mean this: if I were talking with persons who did not believe they had a soul, or believe in the judgment to come, or believe in the penalty of sin, or believe in the reward of righteousness, I should see some reason why they rejected the great salvation; but the most of you who attend this house of prayer—I think I might say all—have scarcely ever had a doubt about these things. You would be very much horrified if any one would insinuate that you did not believe the Bible to be the word of God. You have a little Pharisaism in your soul, that you think you are not as scoffers are, nor infidels. I own you are not, but I grieve to say I think you are more inconsistent than they. If these things be a fiction, well, sirs, your course is rational; but if these things be realities, what shall I say for you when I plead with God on your behalf? What excuse can I make for you? If you profess to believe these things, act as though you believe them; if you do not, practically act so. Why do you profess to own them as the truth? The case is worse, for you not only believe these things to be true, but some of you have felt their power. You have gone home from this place, and you could not help it, you have sought your chamber and bowed your knee in prayer; such prayer as it was, for, alas! your goodness has been like the morning cloud and the early dew. I know some of you who have had to break off some of your sins, for your conscience would not let you rest in them. Yet you are unbelievers still, still you are undecided, still you are unsaved, and at this moment, if your soul were required of you, nothing would be in prospect but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. O my hearer, you whose conscience has been at times awakened, in whom the arrows of the great King have found a lodging place, in whom they are rankling still, yield, I pray thee, yield to the divine thrusts, and give up thy contrite spirit to thy Redeemer's hands. But if thou do not, what shall I say to thee? The kingdom of God has been thrust from you by yourselves. Be sure of this, it has come near you, and in coming near it has involved solemn responsibilities which I pray you may not have to feel the weight of in the world to come.



Here, then, stands the riddle, that man is so set against God and his Christ that he never will accept eternal salvation until the Holy Spirit, by a supernatural work, overcomes his will and turns the current of his affections; and why is this? The answer lies in the text, because his own iniquities have taken him, and he is holden with the cords of his sin. For this reason he will not come unto Christ that he may have life; for this reason he cannot come, except the Father which hath sent Christ draw him.

II. But now, secondly, I pass on to observe that though this is the solution of one mystery, IT IS IN ITSELF A GREATER MYSTERY.

It is a terrible mystery that man should be so great a fool, so mad a creature as to be held by cords apparently so feeble as the cords of his own sins. To be bound by reason is honorable; to be hold by compulsion, if you cannot resist it, is at least not discreditable; but to be held simply by sin, by sin and nothing else, is a bondage which is disgraceful to the human name. It lowers man to the last degree, to think that he should want no fetter to hold him but the fetter of his own evil lusts and desires. Let us just think of one or two cords, and you will see this.

One reason why men receive not Christ and are not saved, is because they are hampered by the sin of forgetting God. Think of that for a minute. Men forget God altogether. The commission of many a sin has been prevented by the presence of a child. In the presence of a fellow creature, ordinarily a man will feel himself under some degree of restraint. Yet that eye which never sleeps, the eye of the eternal God, exercises no restraint on the most of men. If there were a child in that chamber thou wouldst respect it-but God being there thou canst sin with impunity. If thy mother or thy father were there thou wouldst not dare offend, but God who made thee and whose will can crush thee, thy lawful sovereign, thou takest no more account of him than though he were a dog, yea, not so much as that. Oh, strange thing that men should thus act! And yet with many it is not because of the difficulty of thinking of God. Men of study, for instance, if they are considering the works of God, must be led up to thoughts of God. Galen was converted from being an atheist while in the process of dissecting the human body; he could not but see the finger of God in the

nerves and sinews, and all the rest of the wonderful embroidery of the human frame. There is not an emmet or an infusorial animalcule beneath the microscope but what as plainly as tongue can speak, saith, "Mortal, think of God who made thee and me." Some men travel daily over scenes that naturally suggest the Creator; they go down to the sea in ships, and do business on great waters, where they must see the works of the Lord, and yet they even manage to become the most boisterous blasphemers against the sacred majesty of the Most High, in his very temple where everything speaks of his glory. But you will tell me perhaps, some of you, that you are not engaged in such pursuits. I reply, I know it. Many of you have to labor with your hands for your daily bread, in occupations requiring but little mental exercise. So much the more guilty then are you that when your mind is not necessarily taken up with other things, you still divert it from all thoughts of God. The working man often find is it very possible to spend his leisure hours in politics, and to amuse his working hours by meditating upon schemes more or less rational concerning the government of his country, and will he dare to tell me therefore that he could not during that time think of God? There is an aversion to God in your heart, my brother, or else it would not be that from Monday morning to Saturday night you forget him altogether. Even when sitting here you find it by no means a pleasant thing to be reminded of your God, and yet if I brought up the recollection of your mother, perhaps in heaven, the topic would not be displeasing to you. What owe you to your mother compared with what you owe to your God? If I spoke to you of some dear friend who has assisted you in times of distress, you would be pleased that I had touched upon such a chord; and may I not talk with you concerning your God, and ask you why do you forget him? Have you good thoughts for all but the best? Have you kind thoughts of gratitude for every friend but the best friend that man can have? My God! my God! why do men treat thee thus? Brightest, fairest, best, kindest, and most tender, and yet forgotten by the objects of thy care!

If men were far away from God, and it were a topic abstruse and altogether beyond reach, something might be said. But imagine a fish that despised the ocean and yet lived in it, a man who should be unconscious of the air he breathes! "In him we live and move and have our being; we are also his offspring." He sends the frost, and he will send the spring; he

sends the seed-time and the harvest, and every shower that drops with plenty comes from him, and every wind that blows with health speeds forth from his mouth. Wherefore then is he to be forgotten when everything reminds you of him? This is a sin, a cruel sin, a cursed sin, a sin indeed that binds men hard and fast, that they will not come to Christ that they may have life; but it is strange, it is beyond all miracles a miracle, that such a folly as this should hold men from coming to Christ.

Another sin binds all unregenerate hearts; it is the sin of not loving the Christ of God. I am not about to charge any person here with such sins as adultery, or theft, or blasphemy, but I will venture to say that this is a sin masterly and gigantic, which towers as high as any other—the sin of not loving the Christ of God. Think a minute. Here is one who came into the world out of pure love, for no motive but mercy, with nothing to gain, but though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor; why then is he not loved? The other day there rode through these streets a true hero, a brave bold man who set his country free, and I do remember how I heard your shouts in yonder street, and you thronged to look into the lion-like face of Italy's liberator. I blame you not, I longed to do the same myself, he well deserved your shouts and your loudest praises. But what had he done compared with what the Christ of God has done in actually laying down his life to redeem men from bondage, yielding up himself to the accursed death of the cross that man might be saved through him? Where are your acclamations, sirs, for this greater Hero? Where are the laurels that you cast at his feet? Is it nothing to you, is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by, is it nothing to you that Jesus should die? Such a character, so inexpressibly lovely, and yet despised! Such a salvation, so inexpressibly precious, and yet rejected! Oh, mystery of iniquity! indeed, the depths of sin are almost as fathomless as the depths of God, and the transgressions of the wicked all but as infinite in infamy as God is infinite in love.

I might also speak of sins against the Holy Ghost that men commit, in that they live and even die without reverential thoughts of him or care about him; but I shall speak of one sin, and that is the mystery that men should be held by the sin of neglecting their souls. You meet with a person who neglects his body, you call him fool, if, knowing that there is a disease, he will not seek a remedy. If, suffering, from some fatal malady,

he never attempts to find a cure, you think the man is fit only for a lunatic asylum. But a person who neglects his soul, be is but one of so numerous a class, that we overlook the madness. Your body will soon die, it is but as it were the garment of yourself and will be worn out; but you yourself are better than your body as a man is better than the dress he wears. Why spend you then all thoughts about this present life and give none to the life to come?

It has long been a mystery who was the man in the iron mask. We believe that the mystery was solved some years ago, by the conjecture that he was the twin brother of Louis XIV., King of France, who, fearful lest he might have his throne disturbed by his twin brother, whose features were extremely like his own, encased his face in a mask of iron and shut him up in the Bastille for life. Your body and your soul are twin brothers. Your body, as though it were jealous of your soul, encases it as in an iron mask of spiritual ignorance, lest its true lineaments, its immortal lineage should be discovered, and shuts it up within the Bastille of sin, lest getting liberty and discovering its royalty, it should win the mastery over the baser nature. But what a wretch was that Louis XIV., to do such a thing to his own brother! How brutal, how worse than the beasts that perish! But, sir, what art thou if thou doest thus to thine own soul, merely that thy body may be satisfied, and thy earthly nature may have a present gratification? O sirs, be not so unkind, so cruel to yourselves. But yet this sin of living for the mouth and living for the eye, this sin of living for what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed, this sin of living by the clock within the narrow limits of the time that ticks by the pendulum, this sin of living as if this earth were all and there were nought beyond—this is the sin that holds this City of London, and holds the world, and binds it like a martyr to the stake to perish, unless it be set free.

Generally, however, there also lies some distinct form of actual sin at the bottom of most men's impenitence. I will not attempt to make a guess, my dear hearer, as to what it may be that keeps thee from Christ, but without difficulty I could, I think, state what these sins generally are. Some men would fain be saved, but they would not like to tale up the cross and be despised as Christians. Some would fain follow Christ, but

they will not give up their self-righteous pride; they want to have a part of the glory of salvation. Some men have a temper, which they do not intend to try to restrain. Others have a secret sin, too sweet for them to give it up; it is like a right arm, and they cannot come to the cutting of it off. Some enjoy company which is attractive, but destructive, and from that company they cannot fly. Men one way or another are held fast like birds with birdlime, till the fowler comes and takes them to their destruction. O that they were wise, for then they might be awakened out of this folly! But this still remaineth the mystery of mysteries, that those sins absurd and deadly, bind men as with cords, and hold them fast like a bull in a net.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER IS THIS, a message sinner to thee, and saint, to thee.

Sinner, to thee. Thou art held fast by thy sins, and I fear me much thou wilt be held so till thou perish, perish everlastingly. Man, does not this concern you? I lay last night by the hour together on my bed awake, tossing with a burden on my heart, and I tell thee that only burden that I had was thy soul. I cannot endure it, man, that thou shouldst be cast into the "lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." I believe that book as thou dost; believing it, I am alarmed at the prospect which awaits the unconverted. The more I look into the subject of the world to come, the more I am impressed that all those who would lessen our ideas of the judgment that God will bring upon the wicked, are waging war against God and against virtue and the best interests of men. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Do not try it, my friend, I pray thee do not try it. Run not this risk, this certainty of endless misery, I beseech thee, dare it not! What sayest thou, "What then should I do?" I venture to reply in the words of one of old, "Break off thy sins by righteousness, for it is time to seek the Lord." But thou repliest, "How can I break them off? they are like cords and bonds." Ah, soul, here is another part of thy misery, that thou hast destroyed thyself, but thou canst not save thyself; thou hast woven the net, thou hast made it fast and firm, but thou canst not tear it in pieces. But there is One who can, there is One upon whom the Spirit of the Lord descended that he might loose the prisoner. There is a heart that feels for thee in heaven, and there is One mighty to save, who can rescue thee. Breathe that prayer, "O set me free,

thou Liberator of captive souls;" breathe the prayer now, and believe that he can deliver thee, and thou shalt yet, captive as thou art, go free, and this shall be thy ransom price, his precious blood; and this shall be the privilege of thy ransomed life, to love and praise him who hath redeemed thee from going down into the pit.

But I said the conclusion of the whole matter had something to do with the child of God. It has this to do with him. Dear brother and sister in Christ, by the love you bear to your fellow sinners, never help to make the bonds of their sins stronger than they are—you will do so if you are inconsistent. They will say, "Why, such a one professes to be a saved man, and yet see how he lives!" Will you make excuses for sinners? It was said of Judah, by the prophet, that she had become a comfort to Sodom and Gomorrah. O never do this; never let the ungodly have to say, "There is nothing in it; it is all a lie; it is all a mere pretense; we may as well continue in sin, for see how these Christians act!" No, brethren, they have bonds enough without your tightening them or adding to them.

In the next place, never cease to warn sinners. Do not stand by and see them die without lifting up a warning note. A house on fire, and you see it as you go to your morning's labor, and yet never lift up the cry of "Fire!" a man perishing, and yet no tears for him! Can it be so? At the foot of Mr. Richard Knill's likeness I notice these words, "Brethren, the heathen are perishing, will you let them perish?" I would like to have each of you apply to your own conscience the question, "Sinners are perishing, will you let them perish without giving them at least, a warning of what the result of sin must be?" My brethren, I earnestly entreat you who know the gospel to tell it out to others. It is God's way of cutting the bonds which confine men's souls; be instant, in season and out of season, in publishing the good news of liberty to the captives through the redeeming Christ.

And lastly, as you and I cannot set these captives free, let us look to him who can. O let our prayers go up and let our tears drop down for sinners. Let it come to an agony, for I am persuaded we shall never get much from God by way of conversion till we feel we must have it, until our soul breaketh for the longing that it hath for the salvation of souls: when your cry is like that of Rachel, "Give me children or I die I" you shall not long

be spiritually barren. When you must have converts, or your heart will break, God will hear you and send you an answer. The Lord bless you! May none of you be held by the cords of your sins, but may ye be bound with cords to the horns of God's altar as a happy and willing sacrifice to him that loved you. The Lord bless you for Jesus' sake.

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## **The Sinner's End**

Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. - Psalm 73:17-18

WANT OF UNDERSTANDING has destroyed many. The dark pit of ignorance has engulfed its thousands. Where the lack of understanding has not sufficed to slay, it has been able seriously to wound. Lack of understanding upon doctrinal truth, providential dealing, or inward experience, has often caused the people of God a vast amount of perplexity and sorrow, much of which they might have avoided had they been more careful to consider and understand the ways of the Lord. My brethren, if our eyes are dim, and our hearts forgetful as to eternal things, we shall be much vexed and tormented in mind, as David was when he understood not the sinner's end; for indeed it is a great mystery to ordinary reason to see the ungodly prospering and pampered while the righteous are chastened and afflicted. Let us, however, receive a clear understanding with regard to the death, judgment, and condemnation of the proud sinner, then at once our sorrows and suspicions are removed, and petulance gives place to gratitude. See the ox paraded through the streets covered with garlands; who envies its lot when he remembers the axe and the altar? The child may see nothing but the flowers, but from the man of understanding no childish ornament can conceal the victim's

misery.

The best place in which to be instructed with heavenly wisdom is the sanctuary of God. Until David went there he was in a mist, but entering its hallowed portals, he stood upon a mountain's summit, and the clouds floated far beneath his feet. You ask me what there could have been in the ancient sanctuary which could have enlightened David as to the end of the wicked. It may be, my brethren, that while he sat before the Lord in prayer, his spirit had such communion with the unseen God, that he looked into unseen things, and saw, as in an open vision, the ultimate doom of the graceless; or it may be that the hallowed songs of Israel's congregation foretold the overthrow of the foemen of Jehovah, and stirred the royal soul. Perhaps on that holy day the priests read in the scanty pages of the then written work some ancient story, such as refreshed the Psalmist in his happier seasons. It may have been that they rehearsed in the ears of the people the years beyond the flood, and the universal death which swept a world of sinners to their eternal prisons with a flood of wrath; or it may be that they read concerning Sodom and Gomorrah, and the fiery shower which utterly consumed the cities of the plain. It is not impossible that the theme of meditation led the devout monarch back to the plagues of Egypt, and the day of the Lord's vengeance, when he overthrew proud Pharaoh and his hosts in the midst of the Red Sea. The book of the wars of the Lord is full of notable records, all revealing most clearly that the right hand of the Lord hath sooner or later dashed in pieces all his enemies.

Possibly when David went into the sanctuary of God the Law was read in his ears. He heard the blessings for obedience, the curses for rebellion; and as he listened to the thundering anathemas of the law which curses none in vain, it may be that he said, "Now understand I their end." Certainly a due estimate of the law of God, and the justice which maintains its dignity will clear up all fears concerning the ultimate escape of the wicked. Such a law and such a judge allow not the slightest suspicion that sin will always prosper. Moreover, brethren, David could not well go up to the sanctuary without witnessing a sacrifice, and as he saw the knife uplifted and driven into the throat of the victim, and knew that he himself was preserved from destruction by the sufferings of a



substitute, represented by that lamb, he may have learnt that the wicked, having no such sacrifice to trust to, must be led as sheep to the slaughter, and as the bullock is felled by the axe, so must they be utterly destroyed. By some of these means, either by the sight of the sacrifice, or by his own meditations, or by the word read and the expositions given by prophets or priests in the sanctuary—it was in God's own house that he understood the end of the wicked. I trust, beloved, if you lack understanding in any spiritual matters, you will go up to the house of the Lord to inquire in his temple. The word of God is to us as the Urim and Thummim of the High Priest, prayer asks counsel at the hand of the Lord, and often the lip of the minister is God's oracle to our hearts. If you are vexed at any time because Providence seems to deal indulgently with the vile, and harshly with you, come ye to the spot where prayer is wont to be made, and while learning the justice of God, and the overthrow which he will surely bring upon the impenitent, ye shall go to your houses calmed in mind and disciplined in spirit. May you sing as Dr. Watts puts it—

"I saw the wicked rise,  
And felt my heart repine,  
While haughty fools, with scornful eyes,  
In robes of honor shine.  
The tumults of my thought  
Held me in dark suspense,  
Till to thy house my feet were brought,  
To learn thy justice thence.  
Thy word with light and power  
Did my mistakes amend;  
I view'd the sinner's life before,  
But here I learned their end."

This morning we have selected our subject for many ends, but more especially with the anxious desire that we may win souls for Christ; that we may see a feast of ingathering at the end of the year; that this may be the best of days to many, the birthday of many immortal souls. The burden of the Lord weighs down my soul this morning; my heart is filled even to bursting with an agony of desire that sinners may be saved. O Lord make bare thine arm this day, even this day.

In enlarging upon our solemn subject, first, let us understand the sinner's end; secondly, let us profit by our understanding of it; thirdly, let us, having received this understanding, anxiously and earnestly warn thou whose end this must be except they repent.

I. First, then, gathering up all our powers of mind and thought, LET US ENDEAVOR TO UNDERSTAND THE SINNER'S END. Let me rehearse it in your ears.

The end of the sinner, like the end of every man else in this world, is death. When he dieth, it may be, that he will die gently, for often there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. A seared conscience gives a quietude of stupidity just as a full forgiveness of sin gives a peacefulness of perfect rest. They talk about another world as though they had no dread; they speak of standing before God as though they had no transgression. "Like sheep they are laid in the grave," "He fell asleep like a child," say his friends; and others exclaim, "He was so happy, that he must be a saint." Ah! this is but their apparent end. God knoweth that the dying repose of sinners is but the awful calm which heralds the eternal hurricane. The sun sets in glowing colors, but O the darkness of the black tempestuous night. The waters flash like silver as the soul descends into their bosom, but who shall tell the tenfold horrors which congregate within their dreadful deeps. Frequently, on the other hand, the death of the wicked is not thus peaceful. Not always can the hypocrite play out his game to the end; the mask slips off too soon and conscience tells the truth. Even in this world, with some men, the storm of everlasting wrath begins to beat upon the soul before it leaves the shelter of the body. Ah, then, the cries, the groans! What dread forebodings of the unquiet spirits! What visions of judgment! What anxious peerings into the midnight of future banishment and ruin! Ah, then the cravings after a little longer span of life, the clutchings at anything for the bare chance of hope. May your ears be spared the dreadful outcry of the spirit when it feels itself seized by the hand invisible and dragged downward to its certain doom. Give me sooner to be shut up in prison for months and years than to stand by dying beds such as I have myself witnessed. They have written their memorial on my young heart; the scars of the wounds they gave me

are there still. Why the faces of some men, like mirrors, reflect the flames of hell while yet they live. All this, however, is but of secondary importance compared with that which follows death. To the ungodly there is awful significance in that verse of the Revelation, "I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.

One woe is past, but there are other woes to come. If death were all, I were not here this morning; for little mattereth it in what style a man dies, if it were not that he shall live again. The sinner's death is the death of all in which he took delight. No cups of drunkenness for thee again, no viol, no lute, no sound of music, no more the merry dance, no more the loud lascivious song, no jovial company, no highsounding blasphemies; all these are gone for ever. Dives, thy purple is plucked from off thee, the red games shall be thy mantle. Where now thy fine linen, wherefore is thy nakedness thus revealed to thy shame and contempt? Where now thy delicate tables, O thou who didst fare sumptuously every day? Thy parched lips shall crave in vain the blessed drop to cool thy tongue. Now where are thy riches, thou rich fool? Thy barns are indeed pulled down, but thou needest not build greater, thy corn, thy wine, thine oil have vanished like a dream, and thou art poor indeed, cursed with a depth of penury such as the dog-licked Lazarus never knew. Death removes every delight from the graceless. It takes away from his eye, his ear, his hand, his heart, everything which might yield him solace. The cruel Moabites of death shall cut down every fair tree of hope, and fill up with huge stones every well of comfort, and there shall be nothing left for the spirit but a dreary desert, barren of all joy or hope, which the soul must traverse with weary feet for ever and ever!

Nor is this all. Let us understand their end yet farther. No sooner is the sinner dead than he stands before the bar of God in his disembodied state. That impure spirit is set before the blazing eye of God. Its deeds are well known to itself; it needs no opening of the great books as yet. A motion of the eternal finger bids it go its way. Whither can it go? It dare not climb to heaven; there is but one road open: it sinks to its appointed place. The expectation of future torment plagues the soul with a self-kindled hell, conscience becomes a never-dying, ever-gnawing worm.

Conscience, I say, crieth in the souls of men, "Now where art thou? Thou art lost, and this thy lost estate thou hast brought upon thyself. Thou art not yet judged" says conscience; "yet thou art lost, for when those books are opened, thou knowest that their records will condemn thee." Memory wakes up and confirms the voice of conscience "'Tis true," she saith, "'tis true." Now the soul remembers its thousand faults and crimes. The judgment also shakes off its slumber, holds up its scales, and reminds the man that conscience clamours not amiss. Hope has been smitten down, but all the fears are living and full of vigor; like serpents with a hundred heads, they sting the heart through and through. The heart bowed down with unnumbered dreads moaneth within itself: "The awful trumpet will soon sound, my body will rise; I must suffer both in body and in soul for all my wrong-doings, there is no hope for me, no hope for me. Would God I had listened when I was warned! Ah! would to God that I had turned at the faithful rebuke, that when Jesus Christ was presented to me in the Gospel I had believed on him! But no, I despised my own salvation. I chose the fleeting pleasures of time, and for that poor price I have earned eternal ruin. I chose rather to drown my conscience than to let it lead me to glory. I turned my back upon the right, and now here I am, waiting like a prisoner in a condemned cell till the great assize shall come and I shall stand before the Judge."

Let us go on to consider their end. The day of days, that dreadful day has come. The millennial rest is over, the righteous have had their thousand years of glory upon earth. Hark! the dread trumpet, louder than a thousand thunders, startles death and hell. Its awful sound shakes both earth and heaven; every tomb is rent and emptied. From the teeming womb of earth, that fruitful mother of mankind, up start multitudes upon multitudes of bodies, as though they were new-born; lo, from Hades come the spirits of the lost ones—and they each enter into the body in which once it sinned, while the righteous sit upon their thrones of glory, their transformed bodies made like unto the glorious body of Christ Jesus the Lord from heaven. The voice of the trumpet waxes exceeding loud and long, the sea has given up her dead, from tongues of fire, from lion's jaws, and from corruption's worm, all mortal flesh has been restored, atom to atom, bone to bone, at the fiat of Omnipotence all bodies are refashioned. And now the great white throne is set with pomp of angels. Every eye

beholds it. The great books are open, and all men hear the rustling of their awful leaves. The finger of the hand that once was crucified turns leaf after leaf, and names of men are sounded forth—to glory, to destruction—"Come ye blessed;" "Depart ye cursed:"—these are the final arbiters of glory or of ruin. And now where art thou, sinner, for thy turn is come? Thy sins are read and published! Shame consumes thee. Thy proud face now mantles with a thousand blushes. Thou wouldst cover thyself, but thou canst not, and, most of all, thou art afraid of the face of him who to-day looks on thee with eyes of pity, but then with glances of fiery wrath, the face of Jesus, the face of the Lamb, the dying Lamb, then enthroned in judgment. Oh how ashamed thou wilt be to think thou hast despised him, to think that though he died for sinners, thou didst scorn and scoff him, didst malign his followers and slander his religion! How piteously wilt thou crave a veil of granite to hide thy shameful face from him. "Rocks hide me! Mountains fall upon me! Hide me from the face of him that sits upon the throne." But it must not—it must not be.

"Where now, oh, where shall sinners seek  
For shelter in the general wreck?  
Shall falling rocks be o'er them thrown?  
See rocks, like snow, dissolving down."

O, sinner, this is but the beginning of the end, for now thy sentence is read out, thy doom pronounced, hell opens her wide jaws, and thou fallest to destruction. Where art thou now? Body and soul re-married in an everlasting union, having sinned together must now suffer together, and that for ever. I cannot picture it; imagination's deepest dye paints not this tenfold night. I cannot pourtray the anguish which both soul and body must endure—each nerve a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on, each mental power a blazing furnace heated seven times hotter with raging flames of misery. Oh, my God, deliver us from ever knowing this in our own persons!

Let us now pause and review the matter. It behoves us to remember concerning the sinner's latter end, that it is absolutely certain. The same "word" which says, "he that believeth shall be saved," makes it also equally certain and clear that "he that believeth not shall be damned." If

God be true, then must sinners suffer. If sinners suffer not, then saints have no glory, our faith is vain, Christ's death was vain, and we may as well abide comfortably in our sins. Sinner, whatever philosophy may urge with its syllogisms, whatever scepticism may declare with her laughter and sneers, it is absolutely certain that, dying as thou art, the wrath of God shall come upon thee to the uttermost. If there were but a thousandth part of a fear that you or I might perish, it were wisdom to fly to Christ; but when it is not a "perhaps" or a "peradventure," but an absolute certainty that he who rejects Christ must be lost for ever, I do conjure you, if ye be rational men, see to it, and set your houses in order, for God will surely smite, though he tarry never so long. Though for ninety years thou avoid the arrows of his bow, his bolt will in due time find thee, and pierce thee through, and where art thou then?

And as it is certain, so let us recollect that to the sinner it is often sudden. In such an hour as he thinketh not, to him the Son of man cometh. As pain upon a woman in travail, as the whirlwind on the traveler, as the eagle on his prey, so suddenly cometh death. Buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, chambering and full of wantonness, the ungodly man saith, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee;" but as the frost often cometh when the buds are swelling ready for the spring and nips them on a sudden how often doth the frost of death nip all the hopeful happiness of ungodly men and it withers once for all. Hast thou a lease of thy life? Lives there a man who can insure that thou shalt breathe another hour? Let but thy blood freeze in its channels; let but thy breath stop for a moment, and where art thou? A spider's web is a strong cable when compared with the thread on which moral life depends. We have told you a thousand times, till the saying has become so trite that you smile when we repeat it, that life is frail, and yet ye live O men, as though your bones were brass, and your flesh were adamant, and your lives like the years of the Eternal God. As breaks the dream of the sleeper, as flies the cloud before the wind, as melts the foam from the breaker, as dies the meteor from the sky, so suddenly shall the sinner's joys pass from him for ever, and who shall measure the greatness of his amazement?

Remember, O sons of men, how terrible is the end of the ungodly. You

think it easy for me to talk of death and damnation now, and it is not very difficult for you to hear; but when you and I shall come to die, ah! then every word we have uttered shall have a weightier meaning than this dull hour can gather from it. Imagine the sinner dying. Weeping friends are about him; he tosses to and fro upon yon weary couch. The strong man is bowed down. The last struggle is come. Friends watch the glazing of the eyes; they wipe the clammy sweat from the brow. At last they say, "He is gone! He is gone!" Oh, my brethren, what amazement must seize upon the unsanctified spirit then! Ah, if his spirit could then speak, it would say, "It is all true that I was wont to hear. I spoke ill of the minister, the last sabbath in the year, for trying to frighten us, as I said, but he did not speak half so earnestly as he ought to have done. Oh, I wonder he did not fall down upon his and pray me to repent, but even if he had, I should have rejected his entreaties. Oh, if I had known! If I had known! If I had known all this; if I could have believed it; if I had not been such a fool as to doubt God's word and think it all a tale to frighten children with. Oh, if I had known all this! but now I am lost! lost! lost for ever!" I think I hear that spirit's wail of utter dismay, as it exclaims, "Yes, it has come; the thing whereof I was told it has all come to pass. Fixed is my everlasting state; no offers of mercy now; no blood of sprinkling now; no silver trumpet of the gospel now; no invitations to a loving Savior's bosom now! His terrors have broken me in pieces, and as a leaf is driven with the whirlwind, so am I driven I know not whither; but this I know, I am lost, lost, lost beyond all hope." Horrible is the sinner's end. I shudder while thus briefly I talk of it. O, believer, take heed that thou understandest this well.

Do not fail to remember that the horror of the sinner's end will consist very much in the reflection that he will lose heaven. Is that a little? The harps of angels, the company of the redeemed, the smile of God, the society of Christ—is this a trifle—to lose the saint's best rest, that heritage for which martyrs waded through rivers of blood, that portion which Jesus thought it worth while to die that he might purchase. They lose all this, and then they earn in exchange the pains of hell, which are more desperate than tongue can tell. Consider a moment! He that indicts the punishment is God. What blows must He strike! He did but put out his finger and he cut Rahab and wounded the dragon in the Red Sea. What

will it be when stroke after stroke shall fall from his heavy hand? Oh Omnipotence, Omnipotence, how dreadful are thy blows! Sinner, see and tremble; God himself comes out in battle against you? Why the arrows of a man, when they stick in your conscience, are very sharp, but what will the arrows of God be! How will they drink your blood and infuse poison into your veins. Even now, when you feel a little sickness you are afraid to die, and when you hear a heart-searching sermon, it makes you melancholy. But what will it be when God in thunderdressed, comes out against thee and his fire consumes thee like the stubble. Will God punish thee? O sinner, what punishment must that be which he inflicts? I tremble for thee. Flee, I pray thee, to the cross of Christ, where shelter is prepared.

Remember, moreover, it will be a God without mercy, who will then dash thee in pieces. He is all mercy to thee to-day, O sinner. In the wooing words of the Gospel he bids thee live, and in his name I tell thee as God lives he willeth not thy death, but would rather thou shouldst turn unto him and live; but if thou wilt not live; if thou wilt be his enemy; if thou wilt run upon the point of his spear, then he will be even with thee in the day when mercy reigns in heaven, and justice holds its solitary court in hell. O that ye were wise, and would believe in Jesus to the salvation of your souls!

I would have you know, O ye who choose your own destructions, that ye shall suffer universally. Now, if our head ache, or if our heart be palpitating, or a member be in pain, there are other parts of the body which are at ease; but then, every power of body and of mind shall suffer at one time. All the chords of man's nature shall vibrate with the discord of desolation. Then shall suffering be unceasing. Here we have a pause in our pain, the fever has its rests, paroxysms of agony have their seasons of quiet; but there in hell the gnashing of teeth shall be unceasing, the worm's gnawings shall know no cessation; on, on for ever—for ever a hot race of misery.

Then, worst of all, it shall be without end. When ten thousand years have run their course, thou shalt be no nearer to the end than at first. When millions have been piled on millions, still the wrath shall be to come—to



come, as much as if there had been no wrath at all. Ah! these are dreadful things to talk of, and you who hear or read my sermons know that I am falsely accused when men say that I dwell often upon this dreadful theme, but I feel as if there is no hope for some of you, unless I thunder at you. I know that often God has broken some hearts with an alarming sermon, who might never have been won by an inviting and wooing discourse. My experience goes to show that the great hammer of God breaks many hearts, and some of my more terrible sermons have been even more useful than those in which I lifted up the cross and tenderly pleaded with men. Both must be used, sometimes the love which draws, and anon the vengeance which drives. Oh, my hearers, I cannot bear the thought that you should be lost! As I meditate, I have a vision of some of you passing away from this world, and will you curse me? Will you curse me as you go down to the pit? Will you accuse me, "You were not faithful with me. Pastor, you did not warn me; minister, you did not strive with me?" No, by the help of my Lord, through whose grace I am called to the work of this ministry, I must, I will be clear of your blood. You shall not make your bed in hell without knowing what an uneasy resting place ye choose. Ye shall hear the warning. It shall ring in your ears. Who among us shall dwell with everlasting fire? Who among us shall abide with the eternal burnings?" I do assure you a true love speaks to you in every harsh word I utter, a love that cares too much for you to flatter you, a love which must tell you these things without mitigating them in any degree, lest ye perish through my trifling. "He that believeth not shall be damned." "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Why will ye reject your mercies? God help you by his Holy Spirit to understand your latter end and lay hold on Jesus now.

II. This brings us to our second remark—If we have understood the sinner's end, LET US NOW PROFIT BY IT. How can we do this?

We can profit by it, first, by never envying the ungodly again. If at any time we feel with the Psalmist that we cannot understand how it is that the enemies of God enjoy the sweets of life, let us cease at once from such questionings, because we remember their latter end. Let David's confession warn us—

"Lord, what a thoughtless wretch was I  
To mourn, and murmur, and repine,  
To see the wicked placed on high,  
In pride and robes of honor shine!  
But oh, their end! their dreadful end!  
Thy sanctuary taught me so:

On slippery rocks I see them stand,  
And fiery billows roll below,  
Now let them boast how tall they rise,  
I'll never envy them again;  
There they may stand with haughty eyes,  
Till they plunge deep in endless pain."

If the sinner's end be so terrible, how grateful ought we to be, if we have been plucked from these devouring names! Brothers and sisters, what was there in us why God should have mercy on us? Can we ascribe the fact that we have been washed from sin in Jesu's blood, and made to choose the way of righteousness—can we ascribe this to anything but grace-free, rich, sovereign grace? Come then, let us with our tears for others mingle joyous gratitude to God for that eternal love which has delivered our souls from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. Above all let us prize the sufferings of Christ beyond all cost. Oh, blessed cross, which has lifted us up from hell. Oh, dear wounds, which have become gates of heaven to us. Can we refuse to love that Son of man—that Son of God? Will we not to-day, at the foot of his dear cross, give ourselves to him anew, and ask him to bestow on us more grace, that we may live more to his honor, and spend and be spent in his service? Saved from hell, I must love thee, Jesus; and while life and being last, I must live and be prepared to die for thee.

Again, beloved friends, how such a subject as this should lead you that profess to be followers of Christ to make your calling and election sure! If the end of the impenitent be so dreadful, let nothing content us but certainties with regard to our own escape from this woe. Have you any doubts this morning? Have no peace of mind till those doubts are all solved. Is there any question upon your spirit as to whether you have real

faith in the living Savior? If so, rest not, I pray you, till in prayer and humble faith you have renewed your vows and come afresh to Christ. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove yourselves; build on the rock; make sure work for eternity, lest it should happen after all, that you have been deceived. Oh, if it should turn out so. Alas! alas! alas! for you to have been so near to heaven and yet to be cast down to hell.

Now this subject should teach Christians to be in earnest about the salvation of others. If heaven were a trifle we need not be zealous for the salvation of men. If the punishment of sin were some slight pain we need not exercise ourselves diligently to deliver men from it; but oh, if "eternity" be a solemn word, and if the wrath to come be terrible to bear, how should we be instant in season and out of season, striving to win others from the flames! What have you done this year, some of you? I fear me, brother Christians, some of you have done very little. Blessed be God, there are many earnest hearts among you; you are not all asleep; there are some of you who strive with both your hands to do your Master's work, but even you are not as earnest as you should be. The preacher puts himself here in the list, mournfully confessing that he does not preach as he desires to preach. Oh, had I the tears and cries of Baxter, or the fervent seraphic zeal of Whitfield, my soul were well content, but, alas! we preach coldly upon burning themes and carelessly upon matters which ought to make our hearts like flames of fire. But I say, brethren, are there not men and women here, members of this Church, doing nothing for Christ; no soul saved this year by you, Christ unhonoured by you; no gems placed in his crown? What have ye been living for, ye cumber-ground? Wherefore stand ye in the Church, ye fruitless trees? God make you—oh ye that do little for him—to humble yourselves before him, and to begin the next year with this determination, that knowing the terrors of the Lord, you will persuade men, and labor, and strive to bring sinners to the cross of Christ.

III. But we must leave that point of instruction and come to our last and pleading point, and that is very earnestly to **WARN THOSE WHOSE END THIS MUST BE EXCEPT THEY REPENT.**

And who are they? Please to remember we are not speaking now of

people in the street, of drunkards, and harlots, and profane swearers, and such like—we know that their damnation is sure and just—but, alas, I need not look far. If I glance along these seats and look into faces upon which my eye rests every Sabbath day, there are some of you, some of you who are unconverted still. You are not immoral but you are unregenerated; you are not unamiable but you are ungracious, you are not far from the kingdom, but you are not in the kingdom. It is your end I speak of now, yours ye sons of godly mothers, yours ye daughters of holy parents—your end, unless God give you repentance. I want you to see where you are standing to-day. "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places." If it has ever been your lot to tread the glaciers of the Alps you will have seen upon that mighty river of ice, huge wave-like mountains of crystal, and deep fissures of unknown depth, and of an intensely blue color. If condemned to stand on one of these icy eminences with a yawning crevasse at its base, our peril would be extreme. Sinner it is on such slippery place you stand, only the danger is far greater than my metaphor sets forth.

Your standing is smooth; pleasure attends you; yours are not the rough ways of penitence and contrition—sin's road is smooth—but ah how slippery from its very smoothness. O be warned, you must fall sooner or later, stand as firmly as you may. Sinner you may fall now, at once. The mountain yields beneath your feet, the slippery ice is melting every moment. Look down and learn your speedy doom. Yonder yawning gulf must soon receive you, while we look after you with hopeless tears. Our prayers cannot follow you; from your slippery standing place you fall and you are gone for ever. Death makes the place where you stand slippery, for it dissolves your life every hour. Time makes it slippery, for every instant it cuts the ground from under your feet. The vanities which you enjoy make your place slippery, for they are all like ice which shall melt before the sun. You have no foot-hold, sinner, you have no sure hope, no confidence. It is a melting thing you trust to. If you are depending on what you mean to do—that is no foot-hold. If you get peace from what you have felt or from what you have done—that is no foot-hold. It is a slippery place you stand in. I read yesterday of the hunter of the chamois springing from crag to crag after the game he had wounded. The creature leapt down many a frowning precipice, but the hunter fearlessly followed

as best he could. At last in his hot haste he found himself slipping down a shelving rock. The stone crumbled away as it came in contact with his thickly-nailed shoes, which he tried to dig into the rock to stop his descent. He strove to seize on every little inequality, regardless of the sharp edges; but as his fingers, bent convulsively like talons, scraped the stone, it crumbled off as though it had been baked clay, tearing the skin like ribands from his fingers and cutting into his flesh. Having let go his long pole, he heard it slipping down behind him, its iron point changing as it went; and then it flew over the ledge bounding into the depths below. In a moment he must follow, for with all his endeavors he is unable to stop himself. His companion looks on in speechless horror. But heaven intervenes. Just as he expects to go over the brink, one foot is arrested in its descent by a slight inequality. He hardly dares to move lest the motion might break his foot-hold, but gently turning his head to see how far he is from the brink, he perceives that his foot has stopped not a couple of inches from the edge of the rock; those two inches further and destruction had been his lot.

Ungodly man, in this mirror see thyself, you are sliding down a slippery place, you have neither foot-hold, nor hand-hold. All your hopes crumble beneath your weight. The Lord alone knows how near you are to your eternal ruin. Perhaps this morning you are scarce two inches from the edge of the precipice. Your drunken companion who died a few days ago, has just now gone over the edge. Did you not hear him falling—and you yourself are about to perish. Good God! the man is almost gone! Oh that I could stay you in your downward course. The Lord alone can do it, but he works by means. Turn round and gaze upon your past life; behold the wrath of God which must come on account of it. You are sliding down the slippery places to a fearful end, but the angel of mercy calls you, and the hand of love can save you. Hear how Jesus pleads with thee. "Put thy hand in mine," he says; "thou art lost, man, but I can save thee now." Poor wretch! wilt thou not do it. Then art thou lost. Oh wherefore wilt thou not, when love and tenderness would woo thee, wherefore wilt thou not put thy trust in him. He is able and willing to save thee, even now. Believe in Jesus, and though thou art now in slippery places thy feet shall soon be set upon a rock of safety. I know not how it is, the more earnestly I long to speak, and the more passionately I would set forth the danger of

ungodly men, the more my tongue refuses. These weighty burdens of the Lord are not to be entrusted it seems to the power of oratory. I must stammer and groan them out to you. I must in short sentences tell out my message and leave it with you. I have the solemn conviction this morning that there are scores and hundreds of you who are on the road to hell. You know you are. If conscience speaks truly to you, you know you have never sought Christ, you have never put your trust in him, you are still what you always were, ungodly, unconverted. Is this a trifle? Oh, I ask you, I put it to your own judgments, is this a thing of which you ought to think carelessly? I pray you let your hearts speak. Is it not time that some of you began to think of these things? Nine years ago we had some hopes of you, those hopes have been disappointed up till now. As each year rolls round you promise yourself that the next shall be different; but there has been no change yet. May we not fear that you will continue entangled in the great net of procrastination until at last you will have eternally to regret that you kept deferring, and deferring, and deferring, till it was too late. The way of salvation is not hard to comprehend; it is no great mystery, it is simply "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Trust Christ with thy soul and he will save it. I know you will not do this unless the Holy Spirit constrains you, but this does not remove your responsibility. If you reject this great salvation you deserve to perish. When it is laid so clearly before you, if you refuse it, no eye can pity you among all the thousands in hell or all the millions in heaven.

"How they deserve the deepest hell  
Who slight the joys above;  
What chains of vengeance must they feel  
Who break the cords of love."

May I ask all Christian people to join in prayer for the ungodly. When I cannot plead as a preacher, I bless God I can plead as an intercessor. Let us spend, all of us, a little time this afternoon in private intercession. May I ask it of you as a great favor-occupy a little time this afternoon, each child of God, in praying for the unconverted among us. Conversion work does go on; there are many always coming to be united to the Church, but we want more; and we shall have more, if we pray for more.

Make this afternoon a travailing time, and if we travail in birth God will give us the spiritual seed. It is to the Holy Spirit we must look for all true regeneration and conversion, therefore let us pray for the descent of his influence, and depend upon his omnipotence and the great work must and shall be done. Could I address you in the tones of an angel, yet I could not have more to say than this, "Sinner, fly to Christ. I am glad I am weak, for now the Master's power shall be the better seen. Lord, do thou the sinner turn, and make him feel the danger of his state, and find in Christ a ransom and a rescue, and to thy name be glory.—Amen.

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## **The Sinner's Friend**

A friend of publicans and sinners. - Matthew 11:19

Many a true word is spoken in jest, and many a tribute to virtue has been unwittingly paid by the sinister lips of malice. The enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ thought to brand him with infamy, hold him up to derision, and hand his name down to everlasting scorn, as "a friend of publicans and sinners." Short-sighted mortals! Their scandal published his reputation. To this day the Savior is adored by the title which was minted as a slur. It was designed to be a stigma, that every good man would shudder at and shrink from; it has proved to be a fascination which wins the heart, and enchants the soul of all the godly. Saints in heaven, and saints on earth delight to sing of him thus -

"Savior of sinners they proclaim,  
Sinners of whom the chief I am."

What the invidious Jews said in bitter spleen, has been turned by the Holy Spirit to the most gracious account. Where they poured out vials of hate, odours of sacred incense arise. Troubled consciences have found a sweet balm in the very sound. Jesus, "the friend of publicans and

sinner," has proved himself friendly to them, and they have become friends with him; so completely has he justified the very name which his enemies gave him in ribald affront.

We shall take this title of Jesus to-night as an order of distinction which sets forth his excellency, and as God helps us, we shall try to exalt his name and proclaim his fame, while we attempt to explain how he was the friend of sinners; and how he shows that he is still the same.

## I. OUR LORD PROVED HIMSELF IN HIS OWN TIME TO BE THE FRIEND OF SINNERS.

What better proof could he give of it than coming from the majesty of his Father's house to the meanness of Bethlehem's manger? What better proof could he give than leaving the society of cherubim and seraphim, to lie in the manger where the horned oxen fed, and to become the associate of fallen men? The incarnation of the Savior in the very form of sinners, taking upon himself the flesh of sinners, being born of a sinner, having a sinner for his reputed father—his very being a man, which is tantamount to being in the same form with sinners—surely this were enough to prove that he is the sinner's friend.

When you take up the roll of his earthly lineage and begin to read it through, you will be struck with the fact that there are but few women mentioned in it; and yet three out of those mentioned were harlots, so that even in his lineage there was the taint of sin, and a sinner's blood would have run in his veins if he had been the true son of Joseph; but inasmuch as he was begotten by the Holy Ghost, who overshadowed the Virgin, in him was no sin; yet his reputed pedigree ran through the veins of sinners. Tamar, and Rahab, and Bath-sheba are three names which bring to remembrance deeds of shame, and yet these stand in the records as the ancestors of the Son of Mary, the sinner's friend!

As soon as Jesus Christ, being born in the likeness of sinful flesh, has come to years of maturity, and has commenced his real life-work, he at once discloses his friendship for sinners by associating with them. You do not find him standing at a distance, issuing his mandates and his orders



to sinners to make themselves better, but you find him coming among them like a good workman who stands over his work; he takes his place where the sin and the iniquity are, and he personally comes to deal with it. He does not write out a prescription and send by another hand his medicines with which to heal the sickness of sin, but he comes right into the lazar-house, touches the wounded, looks at the sick; and there is healing in the touch; there is life in the look. The great Physician took upon himself our sicknesses and bare our infirmities, and so proved himself to be really the sinner's friend. Some people appear to like to have a philanthropic love towards the fallen, but yet they would not touch them with a pair of tongs. They would lift them up if they could, but it must be by some machinery—some sort of contrivance by which they would not degrade themselves or contaminate their own hands. Not so the Savior. Up to the very elbow he seems to thrust that gracious arm of his into the mire, to pull up the lost one out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay. He takes himself the mattock and the spade, and goes to work in the great quarry that he may get out the rough stones which afterwards he will himself polish with his own bitter tears and bloody sweat, that he may make them fit to shine for ever in the glorious temple of the Lord his God. He comes himself into direct, personal contact with sin, without being contaminated with it. He comes as close to it as a man can come. He eats and drinks with sinners. He sits at the Pharisee's table one day, and does not rise because there is a crowd of people no better than they should be coming near him. Another day he goes to the publican's house, and the publican had, no doubt, been a great extortioner in his time; but Jesus sits there, and that day does salvation come to that publican's house. Beloved, this is a sweet trait about Christ, and proves how real and how true was his love, that he made his associations with sinners, and did not shun even the chief of them.

Nay, he not only came among them, but he was always seeking their good by his ministry. If there was anywhere a sinner, a lost sheep of the house of Israel, Christ was after that sinner. Never such an indefatigable shepherd; he sought that which was lost till he found it. One of his earliest works of mercy we will tell you of in brief. He was once on a journey, and Samaria was a little out of his way; but there lived in a city of that country a woman—ah! the less said of her the better. She had had

five husbands, and he whom she then had was not her husband, nor were any of the others either. She was a disgrace to that city of Samaria. But Jesus, who has a keen eye for sinners, and a heart which beats high for them, means to save that woman, and he must and he will have her. Being weary, he sits down on a well to rest. A special providence brings the woman to the well. The conventionalities of society forbid him to talk with her. But he breaks through the narrow bigotry of caste. A Samaritan by birth, he cares not for that; but will that most holy being condescend to have familiar conversation with her—a dishonor to her sex? He will. His disciples may marvel when they come back and find him talking with her, but he will do it. He begins to open up the Word of life to her understanding, and that woman becomes the first Christian missionary we ever hear of, for she ran back to the city, leaving her water-pot, and crying, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" And they came and believed; and there was great joy in that city of Samaria. You know, too, that there was another sinner. He was a bad fellow—I fear him. He had been constantly grinding the faces of the poor, and getting more out of them by way of taxation than he should have done; but the little man had the bump of curiosity, and he must needs see the preacher, and the preacher must needs love him; for I say there was a wonderful attraction in Jesus to a sinner. That sinner's heart was like a piece of iron: Christ's heart was like a loadstone; and wherever there was a sinner the loadstone began to feel it, and soon the sinner began to feel the loadstone too. "Azccheus," said Christ, "make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house;" and down comes the sinner, and salvation has come to his house at that hour, Oh! Christ never seemed to preach so sweetly as when he was preaching a sinner's sermon. I would have loved to have seen that dear face of his when he cried, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" or, better still, to have seen his eyes running with whole showers of tears when he said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not even!" or to have heard him preach those three great sermons upon sinners when he described the woman as sweeping the house and taking away the dust, that she might find the lost piece of her money; and the shepherd going from hill to hill after the wandering sheep; and the father running to welcome that rag-clad prodigal; kissing

him with the kisses of love, clothing him with the best robe, and inviting him into the feast, while they did dance and make merry because the lost was found, and he who was dead was alive again. Why, he was the mightiest of preachers for sinners, beyond a doubt, Oh! how he loved them! Never mind the Pharisees: he has thunderbolts for them. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees!" But when publicans and harlots come, he always has the gate of mercy ajar for them. For them he always has some tender word, some loving saying, such as this—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" or such like words of tender wooing. The very chief of sinners was thus drawn into the circle of his disciples.

And you know, dear friends, he did not prove his love merely by preaching to them, and living with them, and by his patience in enduring their contradiction against himself, and all their evil words and deeds, but he proved it by his prayers too. He used his mighty influence with the Father in their behalf. He took their polluted names on his holy lips; he was not ashamed to call them brethren. Their cause became his own, and in their interest his pulse throbbed. How many times on the cold mountains he kept his heart warm with love to them! How often the sweat rolled down his face when he was in an agony of spirit for them I cannot tell you. This much I do know, that on that self-same night when he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, he prayed this prayer—after having prayed for his saints, he went on to say—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Here, truly, the heart of the Savior was bubbling up and welling over towards sinners. And you never can forget that almost his last words were, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Though wilfully and wickedly they pierced his hands and his feet, yet were there no angry words, but only that short, loving, hearty prayer—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Ah! friends, if there ever was a man who was a friend to others, Jesus was a friend to sinners his whole life through.

This, however, is but little. As for the river of the Savior's love to sinners, I have only brought you to its banks. You have but stood on the bank and dipped your feet in the flood; but now prepare to swim. So fond was he of

sinner that he made his grave with the wicked. He was numbered with the transgressors. God's fiery sword was drawn to smite a world of sinners down to hell. It must fall on those sinners. But Christ loves them. His prayers stay the arm of God a little while, but still the sword must fall in due time. What is to be done? By what means can they be rescued? Swifter than the lightning's flash I see that sword descending. But what is that in vision I behold? It falls—but where? Not on the neck of sinners; it is not their neck which is broken by its cruel edge; it is not their heart which bleeds beneath its awful force. No; the "friend of sinners" has put himself into the sinner's place! and then, as if he had been the sinner, though in him was no sin, he suffers, bleeds, and dies—no common suffering—no ordinary bleeding—no death such as mortals know. It was a death in which the second death was comprehended; a bleeding in which the very veins of God were emptied. The God-man divinely suffered. I know not how else to express the suffering. It was a more than mortal agony, for the divine strengthened the human, and the man was made vast and mighty to endure through his being a God. Being God and man he endured more than ten thousand millions of men all put together could have suffered. He endured, indeed, the hells of all for whom he died, the torments, or the equivalent for the torments, which all of them ought to have suffered—the eternal wrath of God condensed and put into a cup, too bitter for mortal tongue to know, and then drained to its utmost dregs by the loving lips of Jesus. Beloved, this was love. "Herein is love, that while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." This Christ has done, and he is, therefore demonstrated to be the friend of sinners.

But the trial is over; the struggle is passed; the Savior is dead and buried; he rises again, and after he has spent forty days on earth—in that forty days proving still his love for sinners—he rose again for their justification; I see him ascending up on high. Angels attend him as the clouds receive him.

"They bring his chariot from on high,  
To bear him to his throne;  
Clap their triumphant wings and cry,

'The glorious work is done.'

What pomp! What a procession! What splendor! He will forget his poor friends the sinners now, will he not? Not he! I think I hear the song, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in." The bars of massy light are all unloosed; the pearly gates are all wide open flung; and as he passes through, mark you, the highest joy which swells his soul is that he has opened those gates, not for himself, for they were never shut on him, but that he has opened them for sinners. It was for this, indeed, he died; and it is for this that he ascends on high, that he may "open the kingdom of heaven for all believers." See him as he rides through heaven's streets! "Thou hast ascended up on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts of men." Ah! but hear the refrain, for this is the sweetest note of all the hymn, "Yea, for the rebellious also—yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." The scattered gifts of his coronation, the lavish bounties of his ascension, are still for sinners. He is exalted on high—for what? To give repentance and remission of sins. He still wears upon his breastplate the names of sinners; upon his hands and upon his heart does he still bear the remembrance of those sinners; and every day for the sinner's sake he doth not hold his peace, and for the sinner's sake he doth not rest, but cries unto God until every sinner shall be brought safely home. Every sinner who believeth, every sinner who was given to him, every sinner whom he bought with blood—he will not rest, I say, till all such are gathered to be the jewels of his crown, world without end.

Methinks we cannot say more; and I think you will say we could not have said less concerning the way in which the Savior proved himself to be the sinner's friend. If there are any of you who dare to doubt him after this, I know not what further to advance. If there can be one who has proved himself your friend, surely Jesus did it, and he is willing to receive you now. What he has done he still continues to do. O that you might have grace to perceive that Jesus is the lover of your soul, that you might find the blessedness which all these tokens of friendship, of which we have been speaking, have brought for believing sinners.

II. While we change the subject a little, we shall still keep to the text, and notice WHAT CHRIST IS DOING NOW FOR SINNERS.

There is a deep principle involved here—a principle the Pharisee of old could not understand, and the cold heart of humanity is slow to embrace it to-day. I have two explanations to offer of the way in which Jesus personally discovers himself to be the friend of sinners, and I will just mention these before I come to the application of the subject I intend. Once upon a time a woman was brought to Jesus by the Scribes and Pharisees: she was an adulteress, she had been taken in the very act. They tell "the sinners friend" what sentence Moses would pronounce in such a case, and they ask him, how sayest thou? This they said tempting him. They were not much concerned about the unhappy creature; the accusation they were intent to lay was against the Man of Nazareth. You know how he disposed of the case, and put her accusers out of countenance. He did not bring the sinner up before the magistrate; nay, he would not act the judge's part, and pronounce sentence, rather would he act the neighbor's part; he acquitted himself as a friend. There is a proverb among a certain class of hard-dealing tradesmen, "We know no friendship in business;" and full well they carry it out, while they grind the faces of the poor without pity, and strive to over-reach one another without fairness. And there was in like manner no friendship, no mercy whatever, among those gentlemen of the long robe. Righteousness, to their idea, stood in exacting justice with rigid severity; and as for wickedness, it was only shameful when it was found out. She who was taken in the act must be stoned. They who had done it secretly must prosecute. The real friendship of Jesus appears in his singling out the object of pity; and where they accused him of winking at crime and harbouring the criminal, he was truly laying the axe at the root of the tree, and sheltering the victims while he upbraided the arrogant rulers, whose secret vices were the genuine cause of the wretchedness which had fallen upon the dregs of the nation. I commend this thought to your consideration. When it is said of him, he is a "friend of publicans and sinners," it was implied that he was not a friend of Scribes and Pharisees. Yet again, I want you to notice that the office which Christ came to fulfill towards sinners was that of pure, unmingled friendship. Let us give you an illustration. There is an awful story abroad: a murder has been

committed; and the poor wretch who committed it has cut his own throat. The policeman and the surgeon are quickly on the spot. The one comes there in the interest of law, the other attends in the interest of humanity. Says the officer of police, "Man, you are my prisoner;" says the doctor, "My dear fellow, you are my patient." And now he lays a delicate hand upon the wound, he stanches the blood, applies soft liniments, binds it up with plasters, and, bending down his ear, listens to the man's breathing: taking hold of his hand, he feels his pulse: gently raising his head, he administers to him some wine or stimulant, takes him to the hospital, gives the nurse instructions to watch him, and orders that he shall be given nutritious diet as he is able to bear it. Day after day he still visits him, and uses all his skill and all his diligence to heal the man's Wounds. Is that the way to deal with criminals? Certainly it is not the manner in which the police deal. Their business is to find out all the traces and evidences of his guilt. But the medical attendant is not concerned with the man as an evil doer, but as a sufferer. So is it with the sinner. Moses is the officer of justice who comes to arrest him. Christ is the good Physician who comes to heal him; he says, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself but in me is thy help." He deals with the disease, with the wounds, with the sufferings of sinners. He is therefore their friend. Of course the parallel will only go a little way. In the instance of the murderer, the surgeon would hand his patient over to the officers as soon as his wound was recovered; but in the conduct of our Savior he redeems the soul from under the law, and delivers it from the penalty of sin, as well as restores it from the self-inflicted injuries. But oh! if I could but show thee that Christ treats the sinner with pity, rather than with indignation; that the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them; that his visit to our world was mediatorial, not to condemn the world, but to give his life a ransom for many; surely, then, thou wouldst see reason enough why the sinner should look to him as a friend indeed.

Ah! then; I would go further. I would entreat thee to make the case thine own. Thou art a sinner; can I not convince thee that he is thy friend?

You were sick the other day. The physician looked very grave, and whispered something to your wife. She did not tell you what it was, but your own life trembled in the scale, and it is a wonder you are here to-

night. Shall I tell you why you are here? Do you see that tree yonder? It has been standing in its place for many years, but it has never yielded any fruit, and several times the master of the garden has said, "Cut it down." The other day the woodman came with his axe; he felt its edge, it was sharp and keen enough, and he began to cut, and the chips were flying, and he made a deep gash. But the gardener came by, one who had watched over the tree, and had hope of it even yet, and he said, "Spare it—spare it yet a little longer; the wound thou hast made may heal; and I will dig about it, and dung it, and if it bring forth fruit well; spare it another year, and if not then cut it down." That tree is yourself. The woodman is Death. That chipping at the trunk of the tree was your sickness. Jesus is he who spared you. You had not been here to-night—you had been there in hell among damned spirits, howling in unutterable woe, if it had not been that the friend of sinners had spared your life.

And where are you to-night? Perhaps, my hearers, you are in an unusual place for you. Your Sunday evenings are not often spent in the house of God. There are other places which know you, but your seat there is empty to-night. There has been much persuasion to bring you here, and it may be that you have come against your will; but some friend has asked you to conduct him to the spot, and here you are. Do you know why you are here? It is a friendly providence, managed by the sinner's friend which has brought you here, that you may hear the sound of mercy, and have a loving invitation tendered to you. Be grateful to the Savior that he has brought you to the gospel-pool. May you—O, may you this night be made to step in and be washed from sin! But it is kind of him, and proves how true a friend he is of sinners, that he has brought you here. I will leave you now where you are, and I will tell you how he has dealt with other sinners, for mayhap this may lead you to ask him to deal the same with you.

I know a sinner—while I live I must know him. Full well do I remember him when he was hard of heart and an enemy to God by a multitude of wicked works. But this friend of sinners loved him; and passing by one day, he looked right into his soul with such a look, that his hard heart began to break. There were deep throes as though a birth of a divine sort were coming on. There was an agony, and there was a grief unutterable;



and that poor soul did not think it kind of Jesus; but, indeed, it was kindness too intense ever fully to estimate, for there is no saving a soul except by making it feel its need of being saved. There must be in the work of grace an emptying and a pulling down before there can be a filling and a building up. That soul knew no peace for many a year, and the sole of its foot had no rest; but one day

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
Come unto me and rest;  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down,  
Thy head upon my breast.  
I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary, and worn, and sad,  
I found in him a resting-place,  
And he has made me glad!

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
Behold, I freely give  
The living water, thirsty one,  
Stoop down, and drink, and live.  
I came to Jesus and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
I am this dark world's light,  
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,  
And all thy days be bright.  
I look'd to Jesus and I found  
In him my star, my sun  
And in that light of light I'll walk,  
Till travelling days are done."

Ay, said I, Christ is the friend of sinners! So say I, and so will I say while this poor lispings stammering tongue can articulate a sound. And methinks God had a design of abundant mercy when he saved my soul. I

had not then believed it, though a mother's loving accents might have whispered it in my ears. But he seems to remind me of it over and over again, till love and terror mingle in my breast, saying, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." O my blessed Master, thou dost trust my lips when thou dost bear witness to my heart. Thou givest charge to my tongue when thou constrained my soul. "Am I a chosen vessel?" It is to bear his name to sinners. As a full bottle seeks vent, so must my testimony pant for utterance. O sinner, if thou trustest him, he will be such a friend to thee; and if thou hast now a broken heart and a contrite spirit, these are his work; and it is a proof of his great love to thee if he has made thee to hunger and thirst after him.

Let me impress upon you that Jesus is the friend of the friendless. She who had spent all her money on physicians without getting relief, obtained a cure gratis when she came to him. He who bath "nothing to pay" gets all his debts cancelled by this friend. And he who was ready to perish with hunger, finds not only a passing meal, but a constant supply at his hands.

We know of a place in England still existing, where there is a dole of bread served to every passer-by who chooses to ask for it. Whoever he may be he has but to knock at the door of St. Cross Hospital, and there is the dole of bread for him. Jesus Christ so loveth sinners that he has built a St. Cross Hospital, so that, whenever a sinner is hungry, he has but to knock and have his wants supplied. Nay, he has done better; he has attached to this hospital of the cross a bath; and whenever a soul is black and filthy it has but to go there and be washed. The fountain is always full, always efficacious. There is no sinner who ever went into it and found it, could not wash away his stains. Sins which were scarlet and crimson have all disappeared, and the sinner has been whiter than snow. As if this were not enough, there is attached to this hospital of the cross a wardrobe, and a sinner, making application simply as a sinner, with nothing in his hand, but being just empty and naked, he may come and be clothed from head to foot. And if he wishes to be a soldier, he may not merely have an under garment, but he may have armor which shall cover him from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Nay, if he wants a sword he shall have that given to him, and a shield too. There is nothing

that his heart can desire that is good for him which he shall not receive. He shall have spending-money so long as he lives, and he shall have an eternal heritage of glorious treasure when he enters into the joy of his Lord.

Beloved, I cannot tell you all that Christ has done for sinners, but this I know, that if he meets with you to-night, and becomes your friend, he will stand by you to the last. He will go home with you to-night. No matter how many pairs of stairs you have to go up, Jesus will go with you. No matter if there be no chair to sit down on, he will not disdain you. You shall be hard at work to-morrow, but as you wipe the sweat from your brow he shall stand by you. You will, perhaps, be despised for his sake, but he will not forsake you. You will, perhaps, have days of sickness, but he will come and make your bed in your sickness for you. You will, perhaps, be poor, but your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure, for he will provide for you. You will vex him much and grieve his Spirit. You will often doubt him—you will go after other lovers. You will provoke him to jealousy, but he will never cease to love you. You will, perhaps, grow cold to him, and even forget his dear name for a time, but he will never forget you. You may, perhaps, dishonour his cross, and damage his fair fame among the sons of men, but he will never cease to love you; nay, he will never love you less—he cannot love you more. This night he doth espouse himself unto you. Faith shall be the wedding-ring which he will put upon your finger. He plights his troth to you,

"Though you should him oft-times forget  
His lovingkindness fast is set."

His heart shall be so true to you that he will never leave you nor forsake you. You will come to die soon, but the friend of sinners, who loved you as a sinner and would not cast you off when your sinnership kept breaking up, will still be with you when you come to the sinner's doom, which is to die. I see you going down the shelving banks of Jordan, but the sinner's friend goes with you. Ah! dear heart, he will put his arm beneath you, and bid you fear not; and when in the thick shades of that grim night you expect to see a fearful visage—the grim face of Death—you shall see instead thereof, you shall see his sweet and smiling face, bright as an

evening star, by your soul, and you shall hear him say, "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed; I am thy God." You will land in the world of spirits by-and-by; but will the sinner's friend forsake you then? No; he will be pleased to own you; he will meet you on the other side the Jordan, and he will say, "Come, my beloved, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and have bought thee, though thou wast a sinner vile, and now I am not ashamed to confess thee before my holy angels; nay, come with me, and I will take thee to my Father's face, and will confess thee there." And when the day shall come in which the world shall be judged, he will be thy friend then. Thou shalt sit on the bench with him. At the right hand of the Judge shalt thou stand, accepted in him who was thine Advocate, and who is now thy Judge, to acquit thee. And when the splendours of the millennium shall come, thou shalt partake of them; and when the end shall be, and the world shall be rolled up like a worn-out vesture, and these arching skies shall have passed away like a forgotten dream; when eternity, with its deep-sounding waves shall break upon the mocks of time and sweep them away for ever—then, on that sea of glass mingled with fire, thou shalt stand with Christ, thy friend still, owning thee notwithstanding all thy misbehaviour in the world which has gone, and loving thee now, loving thee on as long as eternity shall last. Oh! what a friend is Christ to sinners, to sinners!

Now do recollect, that we have been talking about sinners; there is a notion abroad that Jesus Christ came into the world to save respectable people, and that he will save decent sort of folks; that those of you who go regularly to a place of worship, and are good sort of people, will be saved. Now Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; and who does that mean? Well, it includes some of us who have not been permitted to go into outward sin; but it also includes within its deep, broad compass those who have gone to the utmost extent of iniquity.

Talk of sinners! Walk the streets by moonlight, if you dare, and you will see sinners then. Watch when the night is dark, and the wind is howling, and the picklock is grating in the door, and you will see sinners then. Go to you jail, and walk through the wards, and see the men with heavy, over-hanging brows, men whom you would not like to meet out at night, and there are sinners there. Go to the Reformatories, and see those who

have betrayed an early and a juvenile depravity, and you will see sinners there. Go across the seas to the place where a man will gnaw a bone upon which is reeking human flesh, and there is a sinner there. Go you where you will, and ransack earth to find sinners, for they are common enough; you may find them in every lane and street, of every city and town, and village and hamlet. It is for such that Jesus died. If you will select me the grossest specimen of humanity, if he be but born of woman, I will have hope of him yet, because the gospel of Christ is come to sinners, and Jesus Christ is come to seek and to save sinners. Electing love has selected some of the worst to be made the best. Redeeming love has bought, specially bought, many of the worst to be the reward of the Savior's passion. Effectual grace calls out and compels to come in many of the vilest of the vile; and it is therefore that I have tried to-night to preach my Master's love to sinners.

Oh! by that love, looking out of those eyes in tears; oh! by that love, streaming from those wounds flowing with blood; by that faithful love, that strong love, that pure, disinterested, and abiding love; oh! by the heart and by the bowels of the Savior's compassion, I do conjure you turn not away as though it were nothing to you; but believe on him and you shall be saved. Trust your souls with him and he will bring you to his Father's right hand in glory everlasting.

May God give us a blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **Sleep Not**

Let us not sleep, as do others. - 1 Thessalonians 5:6

We do not usually sleep towards the things of this world. We rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, for Mammon's sake. In this age of competition, most men are wide enough awake for

their temporal interests; but, so is it, partly through our being in this body, and partly through our dwelling in a sinful world, that we are all of us very apt to sleep concerning the interests of our souls. We drive like Jehu for this present world, but loiter for the world to come. Nothing so much concerns us as eternity, and yet nothing so little affects us. We work for the present world, and we play with the world to come. Quaint old Quarles long ago likened us to roebucks as to earth, and snails as to hearer; and then he oddly enough rebuked this fault in rugged verse: -

"Lord, when we leave the world and come to thee,  
How dull, how slur, are we!  
How backward! How prepost'rous is the motion  
Of our ungain devotion!  
Our thoughts are millstones, and our souls are lead,  
And our desires are dead:  
Our vows are fairly promis'd, faintly paid,  
Or broken, or not made.

Is the road fair, we loiter; clogged with mire,  
We stick or else retire;  
A lamb appeals a lion, and we fear  
Each bush we see's a bear.  
When our dull souls direct our thoughts to thee,  
As slow as snails are we;  
But at the earth we dart our winged desire,  
We burn—we burn like fire!"

A piece of news about a fire in another continent makes a sensation in all our homes, but the fire that never shall be quenched is heard of almost without emotion. The discovery of a gold-field will affect half the markets in the world, and send a thrill through the public pulse; but when we speak of that blessed city where the streets are of gold, how coolly men take it all, regarding it as though it were a pretty fiction, and as if only the things which are seen were worthy of their notice.

We sleep when heavenly things and eternal things are before us. Alas! that it should be so. Even those choice spirits which have been awakened

by the Holy Ghost, and not only awakened into life, but aroused into ardor, have to complain that their fervor very frequently is chilled. I was recommended to try a pillow of hops to obtain sleep during my late illness, but I find now that I want a waking pillow rather than a sleeping pillow; and I am of the same mired as that ancient saint who preferred a roaring devil to a sleepy devil. How earnest, how diligent, how watchful, how heavenly ought he to be, but how much are we the reverse of all this. When in this respect we would do good, evil is present with us. We would have our hearts like a furnace for Christ, and, behold, the coals refuse to burn. We would be living pillars of light and fire, but we rather resemble smoke and mist. Alas! alas! alas! that when we would mount highest, our wings are clipped, and when we would serve God best, the evil heart of unbelief mars the labor. I knew it would be seasonable—I hoped it might be profitable if I spake a little to you to-night, and to myself in so doing, concerning the need that there is, that we shake ourselves from slumber, and leave the sluggard's couch.

I intend to take the text in reference first to those who are born again from the dead, and secondly, in reference to those who are still in the terrors slumber of their sin; and I shall gather my illustrations to-night from no remote region, but from the self-same Word of God, from which I take the text. The text says, "Let Us not sleep, as do others." We will mention some "others," whose histories are recorded in Scripture, who have slept to their own injury, and I pray you let them be warnings to you.

I. First, to those of you who are THE PEOPLE OF GOD, let me say, "Let us not sleep, as do others."

1. First, let us not sleep as those disciples did who went with their Lord to the garden, and fell a slumbering while he was agonizing. Let us not be as the eight who slept at a distance, nor as the highly-favored three, who were admitted into the more secret chamber of our Lord's woes, and were allowed to tread the precincts of the most holy place where he poured out his soul, and sweat as it were great drops of blood. He found them sleeping, and though he awakened them, they slept again and again. "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" was his gentle expostulation. They were slumbering for sorrow. Though our Lord might

in our case make an excuse for us as he did for them—"The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak,"—let us endeavor by his grace not to need such an apology, by avoiding their fault. "Let us not sleep, as do others." But, beloved fellow Christians, are not the most of us sleeping as the apostles did? Behold our Master's zeal for the salvation of the sons of men! Throughout all his life, he seemed to have no rest. From the moment when his ministry began he was ever toiling, laboring, denying himself. It was his meat and his drink to do the will of him that sent him. Truly he might have taken for his life's motto,— "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" So intent was he on saving souls, that he counted not his life dear unto him. He would lay it down, and that amidst circumstances of the greatest pain and ignominy; anything and everything would he do to seek and to save that which was lost. Zeal for his chosen church, which was God's house, had eaten him up: for his people's sakes he could bear all the reproaches of them that reproached God, and though that reproach broke his heart, yet still he persevered and ceased not till salvation's work was done. He was incessant in toil and suffering, but, what are we?

There is our Lord, our great Exemplar, before us now. Behold him in Gethsemane! imagination readily sees him amid the olives. I might say, that his whole life was pictured in that agony in the garden, for in a certain sense it was all an agony. It was all a sweating, not such as distils from those who purchase the staff of life by the sweat of their face, but such as he must feel who purchased life itself with the agony of his heart. The Saviour, as I see him throughout the whole of his ministry, appears to me on his knees pleading, and before his God agonising—laying out his life for the sons of men. But, brethren, do I speak harshly when I say that the disciples asleep are a fit emblem of our usual life? As compared or rather contrasted with our Master, I fear it is so. Where is our zeal for God? Where is our compassion for men? Do we ever feel the weight of souls as we ought to feel it? Do we ever melt in the presence of the terrors of God which we know to be coming upon others? Have we realised the passing away of an immortal spirit to the judgment bar of God? Have we felt pangs and throes of sympathy when we have remembered that multitudes of our fellow creatures have received, as their eternal sentence, the words— "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire in hell,



prepared for the devil and his angels?" Why, if these thoughts really possessed us, we should scarce sleep; if they became as real to us as they were to him, we should wrestle with God for souls as he did, and become willing to lay down our lives, if by any means we might save some. I see by the we of faith, at this moment, Jesus pleading at the mercy-seat. "For Zion's sake," he saith, "I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest;" and yet, we around him lie asleep, without self-denying activity, and almost without prayer, missing opportunities, or, when opportunities for doing good have been seized, using them with but a slothful hand, and doing the work of the Lord, if not deceitfully, yet most sluggishly. Brethren, "let us not sleep, as do others." If it be true that the Christian Church is to a great extent asleep, the more reason why we should be awake; and, if it be true, as I fear it is, that we have ourselves slumbered and slept, the more reason now that we should arise and trim our lamps, and go forth to meet the Bridegroom. Let us from this moment begin to serve our Master and his church more nearly after the example which he himself has set us in his consecrated life and blessed death. Let us not sleep then, as did the disciples at Gethsemane.

"O thou, who in the garden's shade,  
Didst wake thy weary ones again,  
Who slumbered at that fearful hour,  
Forgetful of thy pain;

Bend o'er us now, as over them  
And set our sleep-bound spirits free;  
Nor leave us slumbering in the watch  
Our souls should keep with thee!"

2. A second picture we select from that portion of the inspired page which tells us of Samson. Let us not sleep, as that ancient Hebrew hero did, who, while he slept, lost his locks, lost his strength, by-and-by lost his liberty, lost his eyes, and ultimately lost his life. I have spoken under the first head of our slumbering in respect to others; but, here, I come to ourselves. In our slumbering with respect to ourselves, Samson is the sad picture of many professors. We are about to sketch a portrait of one whom we knew in years gone by. He was "strong in the Lord, and in the

power of his might." Years ago, the man we picture—and it is no fancy portrait, for we have seen many such—when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, did mighty things, and we looked on and wondered, yea, we envied him, and we said, "Would God we had an hour of such strength as has fallen upon him." He was the leader among the weak, and often infused courage into faint hearts; but where is he now? All our Israel knew him, for his name was a tower of strength; and our enemies knew him too, for he was a valiant man in battle. Where is this hero now? We hear little of him now in the fields of service where once he glorified his God and smote the enemies of Israel; we do not meet him now at the prayermeeting, or in the Sunday-school, or at the evangelist station. We hear nothing of his seeking for souls. Surely, he has gone to sleep. He thinks that he has much spiritual goods laid up for many years, and he is now taking his rest. He has had his share, he says, of labor, and the time has come now for him to take a little ease. It is our loss and his peril that he has allowed himself to fall into such a drowsy condition. O that we could bestir him!

"Break his bonds of sleep asunder -  
Rouse him with a peal of thunder."

Alas! carnal security is a Delilah always. It gives us many a dainty kiss, and lulls us into tranquil slumbers which we imagine to be God's own peace, whereas the peace of fascination and of satanic enchantment is upon us. Yes, we have seen the good man: we could not doubt that he had been both good and great: yet we have seen him lying asleep. And, perhaps, some of us who have never been so distinguished or done so much, though, nevertheless, in our own small way we have done something for God, and yet we too lie in Delilah's lap. Blessed be his name who has not suffered us to lead quite a useless life; but possibly we are degenerating and getting now to take things more easily than we did. In our fancied wisdom, we half rebuke what we call our "juvenile zeal." We are prudent now and wise; would God we were not prudent and not wise, and were as foolish as we used to be when we loved our God with zeal so great, that nothing was hard and nothing was difficult, if we were called upon to do it for his name's sake. Now, what do I see in Samson while he lies asleep in Delilah's lap. I see peril of the deadliest sort. The

Philistines are not asleep. When the good man slumbers and ceases to watch, Satan does not slumber, and temptations do not cease to waylay him. There are the Philistines looking on, while you see the razor softly stealing over the champion's head. Those locks, bushy end black as a raven, fall thickly on the ground; one by one the razor shears them all away till the Nazarite has lost the hair of his consecration. I am terribly fearful lest this should happen to ourselves. Our strength lies in our faith. That is our Samsonian lock. Take that away, and we are as weak as other men, ay, and weaker still; for Samson was weaker than the weakest when his hair was gone, though aforetime stronger than the strongest. By degrees, it may be, Satan is stealing away all our spiritual strength. Oh! if it be my case, I shall come up into this pulpit and I shall preach to you, and shake myself, as I have done aforetime, and perhaps expect to see sinners saved, but there will be none. And, possibly, some of you also, when you awake a little, will go forth to preach in the streets or to seek after men's souls as you have done before, but, alas, you will find the Philistines will bind you, and that your strength has passed away while you slept; your glory has gone—gone amidst the deluding dreams which lulled you—gone not to come back except with bitterest grief, with eyes, perhaps, put out for ever. Many backsliders will die thanking God, if ever their strength returns to them, and perhaps it never may till their dying hour. Oh, brethren! warned by what has happened, not to Samson only, but to many of the Lord's greatest champions, "Let us not sleep, as do others."

3. Now we change the picture again. It is the same subject under other forms. You remember our Saviour's parable concerning the tares and the wheat. There was an enclosure which was reserved for wheat only, but, while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the good corn. Now, you who are members of the Church of Christ need not that I should enter into a full explanation of the parable; neither is this the time, but it will suffice to say that when false doctrines and unholy practices have crept into a church, the secret cause of the mischief has usually been that the church itself was asleep. Those who ought to have been watchmen, and to have guarded the field, slept, and so the enemy had ample time to enter and scatter tares among the wheat.

Now, my last illustration spoke to you of your own dangers, this ought to appeal to you with equal force, because it concerns dangers incident to that which is dearest to you, I hope, of anything upon earth, namely, the church of the living God. An unwatchful church will soon become an unholy church. A church which does not carefully guard the truth as it is in Jesus, will become an unsound church, and, consequently, a degenerate church. It will grieve the Holier Spirit, and cause him to remove his power from the ministry and his presence from the ordinances. It will open the door for Satan, and he is quite sure to avail himself of every opportunity of doing mischief. I believe that the only way after all in any church, to purge out heresy in it, is by having more of the inner life; by this fire in Zion shall the chaff be burned up. When the constitution of a man is thoroughly sound, it throws out many of those diseases which otherwise would have lingered in his system; and good physicians sometimes do not attempt to touch the local disease but they do their best to strengthen the general constitution' and when that is right, then the cure is wrought. So, here and there, there may be a defalcation in the one point—that of doctrine, or in the other— as to an affair of practice; and so it may be necessary to deal with the disordered limb of doctrine, or you may have to cut out the cancer of an evil custom; but, as a rule, the main cure of a church comes by strengthening its inner life. When we live near to Jesus, when we drink from the fountain-head of eternal truth and purity, when we become personally true and pure, then our watchfulness is, under God, our safeguard, and heresy, false doctrine, and unclean profession are kept far away. Sleeping guards invite the enemy. He who leaves his door unlocked asks the thief to enter. Watchfulness is always profitable, and slothfulness is always dangerous.

Members of this church, I speak to you in particular, and forget for the moment that any others are present. We have enjoyed these many years the abiding dew of God's Spirit, shall we lose it? God has been in our midst, and thousands of souls, By, tens of thousands of souls have been brought to Jesus, and God has never taken away his hand, but it has been stretched out still; shall we by sinful slumber sin away this blessing? I am jealous over you with a holy jealousy. Trembling has taken hold on me, lest ye lose your first love. "Hold fast," O church, "that which thou hast received, that no man take thy crown." Our sins will grieve the Spirit; our

sleepiness will vex the Holy One of Israel. Unless we wake up to more earnest prayerfulness and to closer fellowship with Christ, it may be we shall hear the sound such as Joseph us tells us was observed at the destruction of Jerusalem, when there was heard the rustling of wings and the voice that said "Let Us go hence." O Lord, though our sins deserve that thou shouldst forsake us, yet turn not away from us, for thy mercy sake! Tarry, Jehovah, for the sake of the precious blood! Tarry with us still! Depart not from us. We deserve that thou shouldst withdraw, but, oh! forsake not the people whom thou hast chosen! By all the love thou hast manifested towards us, continue thy lovingkindness to thine unworthy servants still. Is not that your prayer, you that love the Church of God? I know it is, not for this church only, but for all others where the power and presence of God have been felt. Pray continually for the church, but remember this is the practical exhortation arising out of it all—"Let us not sleep, as do others," lest in our case too, the enemy come and mar the harvest of our Master by sowing, tares among the wheat.

4. Only one other picture, and a very solemn one, still addressing myself to God's people. We are told that while the bridegroom tarried, the virgins who had gone out to meet him slumbered and slept. O virgin hearts! "Let us not sleep, as do others." When the cry was heard—"Behold, the bridegroom cometh," they were all slumbering, wise and foolish alike, O ye wise virgins who have oil in your vessels your lamps, "sleep not, as do others," lest the midnight cry come upon you unawares. The Lord Jesus may come in the night. He may come in the heavens with exceeding great power and glory, before the rising of another sun; or, he may tarry awhile, and yet though it should seem to us to be long, he will come quickly, for one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Suppose, however, he were to come to-night; if now, instead of going along to your homes and seeing once more the streets busy with traffic, the sign of the Son of Man should be revealed in the air, because the king had come in his glory, and his holy angels with him, would you be ready? I press home the question. The Lord may suddenly come; are you ready? Are you ready? You who profess to be his saints—are your loins girt up, and your lamps trimmed? Could you go in with him to the supper, as guests who have long expected him, and say, "Welcome, Welcome Son of God?" Have you not much to set in order? are

there not still many things undone? Would you not be afraid to hear the midnight cry? Happy are those souls who live habitually with Jesus, who have given themselves up completely to the power of his indwelling Spirit—who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. "They shall walk with him in white for they are worthy." Wise are they who live habitually beneath the influence of the Second Advent, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of God. We would have our window opened towards Jerusalem; we would sit as upon our watch-tower whole nights; we would be ready girt to go out of this Egypt at a moment's warning. We would be of that host of God who shall go out harnessed, in the time appointed, when the signal is given. God grant us grace to be found in that number in the day of his appearing; but, "Let us not sleep, as do others." I might say, let us not sleep as we have done ourselves. God forgive us and arouse us from this good hour.

I feel as if I did not want to go on to the second part of my subject at all, but were quite content to stand here and speak to you who love the Lord. Brethren and sisters, we must have an awakening among us. I feel within my soul that I must be awakened myself, and my own necessities are, I believe, a very accurate gauge of what is wanted by the most of you. Shall our season of triumph, our march of victory, come to an end? Will you turn back after all that God has done for you? Will you limit the Holy One of Israel? Will you cease from the importunities of prayer? Will you pause in the labors of zeal? Will you bring dishonor upon Christ and upon his cross? By the living God who sleepeth not, neither is weary in his deeds of love, I beseech you, slumber not, and be not weary nor faint in your mind. "Be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

II. But I must pass on to the second part of our subject. I have now to speak TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE NOT CONVERTED; and if I felt as I ought to feel, it would be sorrowful work even to remember that any of you are yet unsaved. I like to see these little children here. I pray God they may grow up to fear and love him, and that their young hearts may be given to our dear Lord and Master while they are yet boys and girls. But I overlook them just now, and speak to some of you who have had many years of intelligent hearing of the word, and are still unsaved. Pitiable objects! You do not think so; but I repeat the word, Pitiable objects! The

tears which flood my eyes almost prevent my seeing you. You fancy you are very merry and happy, but you are to be pitied, for "the wrath of God abideth on you." "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." You will soon be where no pity can help you, and where the Lord himself will not help you. May God give you ears to hear the words of affectionate warning which I address to you now! "Let us not sleep, as do others."

I beg you not to sleep, as did Jonah. He was in the vessel, you remember, when it was tossed with the tempest, and all the rest in the vessel were praying, but Jonah was asleep. Every man called upon his God except the man who had caused the storm. He was the most in danger, but he was the most careless. The ship-master and mate, and crew, all prayed, every man to his god, but Jonah carelessly slept on. Now, do you not some of you here live in houses where they all pray but you? You have a godly mother, but are yourself godless. John, you have a Christian father, and brothers and sisters, too, whom Christ has looked upon in love, and they pray for you continually. But the strange thing is, that your soul is the only one in the house which remains unblest, and yet you are the only one who feels no anxiety or fear about the matter. There are many of us in this house who can honestly say that we would give anything we have, if we could save your souls we do not know what we would not do, but we know we would do all in our power, if we could but reach your consciences and your hearts. I stand often in this pulpit almost wishing that I had never been born, because of the burden and distress it brings upon my soul to think of some of you who will die and be lost for ever. Lost, though you love to listen to the preacher! Lost, though you sometimes resolve to be saved! We are praying for you daily, but you,—you are asleep! What do you, while we are preaching but criticise our words, as if we discoursed to you as a piece of display, and did not mean to plead as for life and death with you, that you would escape from the wrath to come. Observations will be made by the frivolous among you during the most solemn words, about some-one's dress or personal appearance. Vain minds will be gadding upon the mountains of folly, while those, who are not, by far, so immediately concerned, are troubled and have deep searchings of heart about those very souls. I believe God is going to send a revival into this place; I have that conviction growing upon me, but it may be that though

the gracious wave may sweep over the congregation, it will miss you. It has missed you up to this hour. Around you all the door is wet, but you, like Gideon's fleece, are dry, and you sleep though the blessing comes not upon you,—sleep though sleep involves a certain and approaching curse. O slumbering Jonah, in the name of the Host High, I would say to thee, "Awake thou that sleepest, and call upon thy God. Peradventure, he shall deliver thee, and this great tempest shall yet be stayed." Yea, I would put it above a peradventure, for they that seek the Lord shall find him, if they seek him with full purpose of heart.

Let us change the illustration now, and take another. You remember Solomon's sluggard. What did he? It was morning, and the sun was up; ay, the dawning of the day had passed some hours, and he had not yet gone forth to labor. There was a knock at his door, and he opened his eyes a little; he listened and he said, "Leave me alone." "But will you never get up?" "Yes, I will be up soon; but I want a little more sleep—only a little." Then came another knock, for his master would have him in the field at work; but he turned over again, and he grumbled within himself, and said, "A little more slumber." He slept hour after hour. Yes, but he did not mean to sleep hours; all he intended was to sleep five minutes; but minutes fly rapidly to men who dream. If at the first onset he had known that if he fell asleep he would slumber till noon, he would have been shocked at such abominable laziness. But what harm could it be just to turn over once more? Who would deny him another wink or two? Surely there can be no fault found with one more delicious doze? Now, there are in this congregation persons who have said to themselves many times, "That appeal is right. My conscience gives assent to that gospel demand, it shall be attended to very soon. I must, however, enjoy a little pleasure first— not much. I do not mean to risk my soul another twelve months, but we will stay till next Sunday; then I shall have got over certain engagements which now stand in my way." Well, sirs, you know, some of you, that it has been Sabbath after Sabbath, and then it has grown to be year after year; and still you are saying a little more sleep and a little more slumber. I met one the other day: I do not see him here to-night, but I generally see him on the Sabbath. I think he heard the first sermon I preached in London; that is many years ago now. And that man loves me: I know he does; and I can say I love him; but if he dies as he is, he is a lost



man. He knows it. He has told me so, and he has said, "Pray for me." But, oh! what is the benefit of my praying for him if he never prays for himself! It is grievous to know that many of you are in the same dreadful way of procrastinating and putting off. You would do anything to help the church, too; and if you knew that I needed anything you would be among the first to do it for me, such is your kindness. You are kind to your minister, but you are cruel to your souls. You have held your soul over hell's mouth for these twenty years by your continual delays and indecisions. Yet you never meant it. No, you thought long ago that you would have given your hearts to Christ. One of these days I shall have to bury you, and it will be with no hope of your future happiness, for it has always been, "A little more sleep, and a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the hands," till your "poverty shall come upon you as one that travelleth, and your want like an armed man." Alas! it shall be eternal poverty, and the armed man shall be the arch-destroyer from whom none can escape! O young man and young woman, do not procrastinate. Delay is the devil's great net, and it is filled with exceeding great fishes; yet doth not the net break. Oh that you could break through it. May God help you to do it, for to you I would say, "Let us not," in this respect, "sleep, as do others."

Again, the picture changes. Do you remember the story in the Acts of the Apostles of the young man who sat in the third loft while Paul was preaching? It could not have been a dull sermon, I should think; but Paul preached till midnight. That was rather long. You do not allow me such liberal time. And when Paul preached on, Eutychus went to sleep, until he fell from the third loft, and was taken up dead. It is true that Paul prayed, and he was restored to life by miracle; but I have known many a Eutychus fall dead under the word, but he was never known to live again. I do not mean that I have known many go to sleep in the house of God, and fall from the third loft; but this, that they have heard the word, and heard the word, till they have been preached into sleep of the deepest kind, and at last preached into hell. If we by our preaching do not wake you, we rock your cradles, and make you more insensible every time we warn you. The most startling preaching in a certain time ceases to arouse the hearers. You know the great boiler factories over here in Southwark. I am told that when a man goes inside the boiler to hold the hammer, when they are

fixing rivets, the sound of the copper deafens him so that he cannot bear it, it is so horrible; but, after he has been a certain number of months in that employment, he hardly notices the hammering: he does not care about it. It is just so under the word. People go to sleep under that which once was like a thunderbolt to them. As the blacksmith's dog will lie under the anvil, where the sparks fly into his face, and yet go to sleep, so will many sinners sleep while the sparks of damnation fly into their faces. Horrible that it should be so. It would need an earthquake and a hurricane to move some of you stolid ones. I wish they would come if they would stir you; but even such terrors would be of no avail, only the trumpet which will arouse the dead will ever awaken you. Oh, dear hearers, remember that to perish under the gospel ministry is to perish with a vengeance. If I must be lost, let it be as a Zulu Kaffir, or as a Red Indian, who has never listened to the truth; but it is dreadful to go down to the pit with this as an aggravation: "You knew your duty, but you did it not; you heard the warning, but you would not receive it; the medicine was put to your lip, but you preferred to be diseased; the bread was placed before you, and the living water, but you would not take them. Your blood be on your own heads." Oh, may this never be said of any of us! May we never sleep under the word as do others, lest we die in our sins; and, as I told you the other Sunday night, I think that is one of the most dreadful words in the Bible where Christ said twice, one time after another—"If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." To die on a dunghill, or in a ditch, or on the rack, or on the gallows, is nothing compared with this—to die in your sins! to die in your sins! And yet this will be your lot if you continue much longer to sleep, as do others.

Another picture; not to detain you too long. Do you remember in David's life when he went with one of his mighty men at night into Saul's camp, and found the king and his guards all asleep? There were certain men of war who ought to have watched at Saul's bed head to take care of their master who lay in the trench, but no one was awake at all; and David and his friend went all among the sleepers, treading gently and softly lest they should wake one of them; till, by-and-by, they came to the center of the circle where lay the king, with a cruse of water at his bolster, and his spear stuck in the ground. Little did he know as he slept so calmly there that Abishai was saying to David: "Let me strike him; it shall be but this

once." How easily that strong hand with that sharp javelin would have pinned the king to the ground. One only stroke, and it would be done, and David's enemy would pursue him no more for ever. Methinks I see you, O ye sleeping sinners, lying in the same imminent peril. At this moment the evil one is saying: "Let me smite him; I will smite him but this once; let me prevent his hearing the gospel this night; let me thrust the javelin of unbelief into his soul but this once; and then the harvest will be past, the summer will be ended, and he will not be saved." Slumbering sinner, I would fain shout as the thunder of God, if thereby I could arouse you. Man, the knife is at your throat, and can you sleep? The spear is ready to smite you, and will you still doat and dream? I think I see the angel of justice who has long been pursuing the sinner who is rejecting Christ, and he cries: "Let me smite him! he has had time enough; let me smite him!" Or, as Christ puts it in the parable, there has come one into the vineyard who has looked at you, the barren tree, and seen no fruit; and he has come these three years, and now he is saying: "Cut it down! why cumbereth it the ground?" O mercy, stay the axe! O God, bid the enemy put by the spear, and let the sleeper wake, not in hell, but still on mercy's plains, where there is a Christ to forgive him and a Spirit to sanctify him! Imploringly, I, your brother, beseech you tonight to turn unto the living God. Even now in this your day, attend to the things which make for your peace:

"To-day, a pardoning God  
Will hear the suppliant pray  
To-day, a Saviour's cleansing blood  
Will wash thy guilt away.

But, grace so dearly bought  
If yet thou wilt despise,  
Thy fearful doom with vengeance fraught,  
Will fill thee with surprise."

The last picture is this (may it never be seen in you)—there Vent once into a tent, which he thought to be friendly, a mighty man who had fought a battle and lost the day. Hot of foot and full of fear, Sisera came into the tent of Jael to ask for water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth

butter in a lordly dish. He drank, and then, all weary, he threw himself along in the tent. He is a photograph of many ungodly men who have gone where they thought they had friends; for sinners think sinners their friends, and think sin their friend, and they have asked for pleasure, and they have had it; and, now, after having had their fill, and eaten butter in a lordly dish, they are tonight in contentment, sleeping in supposed security. They have gone into the house of the evil one to find pleasure, and they are going there again to-night, and they will continue there, and try to find rest in the house of their enemies. Sometimes it is the house of the strange woman, often the settle of the drunkard, or the chair of the scorner, where men think to rest in peace, Oh, hark thee, man, and beware! Fly the ways of the destroyer: fly the haunt of the strange woman, as for thy very life every den of sin; for, lo! she cometh stealthily, the tent pin is in her left hand, and in her right hand the workman's hammer. Many mighty has she slain aforetime, for she hunts for the precious life, and her chambers lead down to death. If thou sleepest on but another night, or even another hour, the destroyer may have done the deed, and thou mayst be fastened to the earth for ever, the victim of thine own delusions. I may be in error, but I think I speak; to some man to-night who must now immediately change his ways, or else the jaws of hell will close upon him. I do not desire to speak my own words, or my own thoughts, but to speak as the divine wind blows through my soul; and I think I am warning some one to-night of whom, if he turn not, it will soon be written, as of another in the Book of Proverbs, "He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." In the name of the Ever Blessed and Most Merciful, "turn thee! sinner, turn thee! Why wilt thou die?" Thy course is destruction, and is near its end. Awake! Why sleepest thou? Sleep to others is dangerous; to thee it is damnable. Awake, arise, or be for ever ruined. May God's grace bestir thee! Some of you to-night are like Lot and his daughters in the burning city. You must flee; you must flee at once out of Sodom, or you will perish in it. Behold, we would put our hand upon you to-night, and press you to flee, the Lord being merciful unto you. His servants and his Spirit constrain you to make haste. Linger not; look not back; hesitate not. To your knees! to your knees! "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while

he is near." To the cross! to the cross! There is your shelter, the mountain where the only refuge can be found from the vengeance of God. Behold the wounds of Jesus, God's beloved Son given for the guilty, slaughtered for the sinful -

"There is life in a look at the crucified One;  
There is life at this moment for thee!"

and for all who look. But it may be that if this night ye look not to Jesus, his cross may never appear before your eyes again, for they will be sealed in death. Ere long, Jael's tent-pin shall have passed through Sisera's skull; the sin shall have destroyed the sinner: the sin that is unto death shall have shut up the spirit in despair. Oh, may God, who is mighty to save, turn you to himself at this moment.

"Sound the trumpet in Zion: sound an alarm in my holy mountain," seems to ring in my ears; and I would fain sound that alarm to God's saints, and to sinners too. May he call many by his grace, and awaken us all; and his shall be the glory for ever and ever! Amen.

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## **The Snare Of The Fowler**

Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler. - Psalm 91:3

If Moses wrote this Psalm he might represent the fowler as being in his case the king of Egypt, who sought to slay him, or the Amalekites, who pounced upon Israel in the plain, when they little expected it. If David penned it, he might have compared Saul to the fowler, for he himself says, he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. But we believe, if the verse be applicable to either of those cases, it was intended by the Psalmist not to have a private interpretation, but to be applicable to all time; and we believe it is spoken concerning that arch-enemy of souls, the great deceiver, Satan, of whom we just now sang,

"Satan, the fowler, who betrays  
Unguarded souls a thousand ways."

"The prince of the power of this world, the spirit which still worketh in the children of disobedience," is like a fowler, always attempting to destroy us. It was once said by a talented writer, that the old devil was dead, and that there was a new devil now; by which he meant to say, that the devil of old times was a rather different devil from the deceiver of these times. We believe that it is the same evil spirit; but there is a difference in his mode of attack. The devil of five hundred years ago was a black and grimy thing well portrayed in our old pictures of that evil spirit. He was a persecutor, who cast men into the furnace, and put them to death for serving Christ. The devil of this day is a well-spoken gentleman: he does not persecute - he rather attempts to persuade and to beguile. He is not now so much the furious Romanist, so much as the insinuating unbeliever, attempting to overturn our religion, while at the same time he pretends he would make it more rational, and so more triumphant. He would only link worldliness with religion; and so he would really make religion void, under the cover of developing the great power of the gospel, and bringing out secrets which our forefathers had never discovered.

Satan is always a fowler. Whatever his tactics may be, his object is still the same - to catch men in his net. Men are here compared to silly, weak birds, that have not skill enough to avoid the snare, and have not strength enough to escape from it. Satan is the fowler; he has been so and is so still; and if he does not now attack us as the roaring lion, roaring against us in persecution, he attacks us as the adder, creeping silently along the path, endeavoring to bite our heel with his poisoned fangs, and weaken the power of grace and ruin the life of godliness within us. Our text is a very comforting one to all believers, when they are beset by temptation. "Surely he shall deliver them from the snare of the fowler."

First, *a few words concerning the snare of the fowler*; secondly, *the deliverance*; and, thirdly, *the certainty of it*; dwelling upon that word *surely*, for it seems to be the diamond wherewith this precious golden promise is embellished. "*Surely* he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler."

I. First, then, THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER. It is an illustration too suggestive for me thoroughly to unravel. I must leave it for your meditations at home to enumerate the divers ways in which a fowler attempts to take his birds, and then you will have suggested to you the divers means which the evil spirit employs for the destruction of souls. Allow me, however, just to begin, and pass over two or three points connected with the fowler and with the evil one.

1. First, *the fowler's snare is intimately connected with secrecy*. "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." Therefore the fowler carefully covers up his trap; or, if the trap itself be uncovered he doth well beguile the bird, so that it is utterly ignorant of his intention to take it in the trap, little thinking that the food laid there for its banqueting is really placed there for its enticement and destruction. The fowler, when he goes after his birds, is very careful lest they should discover him. We hear, for instance, that in the taking of wild ducks, in Lincolnshire, a man will hold before his mouth a piece of turf, in order that the smell of his breath may not be perceived by the birds, who are exceedingly wary. The temptations of the world are of this secret sort to a Christian, though not to the wicked man, for the wicked man sins with his eyes wide open; dashing into the

net knowing it is a net, laying hold of iniquity with both his hands, even when destruction stareth him in the face. He will commit a sin that he knows is condemned even by the law of the land; he will rush into a crime, concerning the guilt of which no doubt can be entertained. Not so the Christian: he is taken by secrecy. "Ah!" says one, "if I thought such-and-such a thing were really wrong; if I were perfectly convinced of its wrongfulness, I would give it up." It is just there the difficulty lies. So would the bird say: "If I thought that really were a trap, I would not enter it; if I were perfectly persuaded that net would entangle me, I would not fly to such-and-such a spot; I would not approach there at all, if I were sure it would be my destruction." How many a professor there is who asks the question, "May I go to this place? May I go to that place?" and some of us answer "No," and we are called Puritans for it; but let those who have attempted to keep their godliness intact, while they pursued the pleasures of this world, stand up and make the mournful confession, that the healthiness of the two things can never exist together. We must either serve God wholly, or serve the evil one wholly. "If God be God, serve him; If Baal be God, serve him." One, or else the other. Many a man has been entrapped into sin by Satan; not knowing that it was evil! Some one has hinted to him in business, for instance - "You may very safely do such-and-such a thing; all the shopkeepers in the street have done it; it is not actually dishonest; it improves the article, it really does; and although you can thus sell an article at a dearer rate than you ought to sell it, yet you need not tell the public; and if the article is all the better for it, it is quite fair and safe that you should adulterate it." And so the good easy man, not opening both his eyes, I think, but shutting one of them a little, lest he should see too well to be able to fill his pockets in the dark, is a little taken aside; and by-and-by he is led to discover that the act which he has done is the taking of him in the snare of the fowler, for he has been sinning against his God, and his God therefore punishes him for it with many stripes, and lays his rod upon him. I do not think that a Christian is so often betrayed into a sin that is palpable and known, as he is into a sin that is secret. If the devil comes to my door with his horns visible, I will never let him in; but if he comes with his hat on as a respectable gentleman, he is at once admitted. The metaphor may be very quaint, but it is quite true. Many a man has taken in an evil thing, because it has been varnished and glossed over, and not apparently an evil; and he has



thought in his heart, there is not much harm in it; so he has let in the little thing, and it has been like the breaking forth of water - the first drop has brought after it a torrent. The beginning has been but the beginning of a fearful end. Take care, Christian, of things that are secret; take care of the common doings of the world, which are well enough for them, perhaps. We would not deny them their pleasures, for they have no others; but they are not good for you, for you have a finer life - a life of a finer texture and order than can exist in the haunts of ungodly persons. Remember, you are not to be a judge for others. Some men, especially those who are unconverted, can, without being led into sin, indulge in many gayeties and merriments; but the Christian is like the Englishman, who can not hope to survive long where the jungle fever reigns. The native can live there, but he can not. And so you who are twice-born men will find your piety ruined, by that which, to a worldly man, does not lead him into greater evil than that which he would naturally commit. You are to have a stricter rule on yourselves than others, and are to be more stern in your piety than the world would have you be; for sin is usually hidden, and the snare is not often made apparent. "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler."

2. In the second place, *the snare of the fowler is generally noted for its adaptation*. You do not find a fowler setting the same snare for one bird as for another; he knows his bird and he adapts his bait to it. He would be an unwise fowler who should go to work with the same machinery to catch the lark that flies on high as the duck that swims along the stream. The fowler is wiser than that: he adapts his snare to the condition of the bird which he desires to take. Satan the fowler does just the same. There is one man here; he tempts him to drunkenness. Perhaps that would naturally be his sin, if left without grace in his heart; and Satan, knowing it to be his weak point, attempts to overcome him by surfeiting, gluttony, and drunkenness. Another man is utterly impervious to any temptation to that bestial habit; but, it may be, he is easily taken in another snare - the snare of lust; therefore Satan adapts his temptation to the hot blood of the man who naturally would be inclined to live a life of sin. Another one perhaps eschews every lascivious and sensual habit; then Satan comes to him, and adapts his temptation to the shape of pride. The man is naturally a melancholy man, full of solitude; Satan gets him, if he can,

to wrap himself up in a solitary dignity, to say, "I am holy." "Lord, I thank thee, I am not as other men are." Or if a man is not naturally inclined to a very high degree of pride, Satan takes him with sloth. The man likes an easy life; Satan therefore adapts his bait to him by letting him sit still, fold his arms, and so perish by slothfulness: and mark this, he who sitteth still in the frost, when the snow is on the ground, in the depths of the wild regions of the frozen zone, must as surely perish by his idleness as if he drove a dagger to his heart. Satan knows that, and so adapts his bait accordingly. O! how often it happens, beloved, that you and I condemn a thing in another person which we allow in ourselves, perhaps without knowing it. We say of such a one, How proud he is! Well, our pride is not exactly of that shape; we have got another shaped pride, but the same article; labeled differently, but the same thing. Satan adapts the pride to each particular case. We are rich: he does not perhaps tempt us to the pride of riches, but he tempts us to the pride of mastership, and makes us harsh masters to our servants. Or if he does not tempt us to that pride, he perhaps enchants us with the pride of generosity, and we are apt to boast of our kindness and of what we have given away. He will always adapt his trap to his man, and his bait to his bird. He will not tempt you all with the same temptation he would tempt me with; nor me with the temptation with which he would naturally assail another. "The snare of the fowler." A cunning enemy we have to deal with; he knows our weak points; he has been dealing with men for these last six thousand years; he knows all about them. He is possessed of a gigantic intellect; though he be a fallen spirit and he is easily able to discover where our sore places are, and there it is he immediately attacks us. If we be like Achilles, and can not be wounded anywhere but in our heel, then at the heel he will send his dart, and nowhere else. He will find out our easily besetting sin, and there, if he can, he will attempt to work our ruin and our destruction. Let us bless God that it is written, "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler."

3. In the next place, *the fowler's snare is frequently connected with pleasure, profit, and advantage*. In the bird's case it is for the seed scattered on the ground that he flies to the snare. It is some tempting bait which allures him to his death. And usually Satan; the fowler, uses a temptation wherewith to beguile us. "O!" says one, "I can not give up

such-and-such a thing, it is so pleasant. Sir, you never knew the charms of such-and-such a pursuit, otherwise you could never advise me to relinquish it." Yes, my friend, but it is just the sweetness of it to you that makes it the more dangerous. Satan never sells his poisons naked; he always gilds them before he vends them. He knows very well that men will buy them and swallow them, if he does but gild them beforehand. Take care of pleasures; mind what you are at when you are at them. Many of them are innocent and healthful, but many of them are destructive. It is said that where the most beautiful cacti grow, there the most venomous serpents are to be found at the root of every plant. And it is so with sin. Your fairest pleasures will harbor your grossest sins. Take care; take care of your pleasures. Cleopatra's asp was introduced in a basket of flowers; so are our sins often brought to us in the flowers of our pleasures. Satan offers to the drunkard the sweetness of the intoxicating cup, which rejoices him, when his brain is rioting in frolic, and when his soul is lifted up within him. He offers to the lustful man the scenes and pleasures of carnal mirth, and merriment, and delight, and so he leadeth him astray with the bait, concealing the hook which afterwards shall pain him. He gives to you and to me, each of us, the offer of our peculiar joy; he tickleth us with pleasures, that he may lay hold upon us, and so have us in his power. I would have every Christian be especially on his guard against the very thing that is most pleasing to his human nature. I would not have him avoid every thing that pleases him, but I would have him be on his guard against it. Just like Job, when his sons had been feasting in their houses. He did not forbid them doing it, but he said, "I will offer a sacrifice, lest my sons should have sinned in their hearts, and should have cursed God foolishly." He was more careful over them at the time of their feasting than at any other season. Let us be the same. Let us remember that the snare of the fowler is generally connected with some pretended pleasure or profit, but that Satan's end is not our pleasing, but our destruction.

4. In the next place, *sometimes the fowler very wisely employs the force of example*. We all know the influence of the decoy-duck, in endeavoring to bring others into the snare. How very often Satan, the fowler, employs a decoy to lead God's people into sin! You get with a man; you think him to be a true Christian; you have some respect for his character; he is a

high professor, can talk religion by the yard, and can give you any quantity of theology you like to ask for. You see him commit a sin; ten to one but you will do the same, if you have much respect for him; and so he will lead you on. And mark, Satan is very careful in the men whom he chooses to be decoys. He never employs a wicked man to be a decoy for a good man. It is very seldom, when Satan would decoy a Christian into a snare, that he makes use of an open reprobate. No; he makes use of a man who is pretendedly religious, and who looks to be of the same quality as yourself, and therefore entices you astray. Let a bad man meet me in the street, and ask me to commit sin! The devil knows better than to set him at any such work as that, because he knows I should pass by directly. If he wants his errand well done, he sends one to me whom I call brother; and so through the brotherhood of profession I am apt to give him credence and pay him respect; and then if he goeth astray, the force of example is very powerful, and so I may easily be led into the net too. Take care of your best friends; be careful of your companions. Choose the best you can; then follow them no further than they follow Christ. Let your course be entirely independent of every one else. Say with Joshua, let others do what they will, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

5. Note, once more, that *sometimes the fowler, when he faileth to take his bird by deceit and craft, will go a hawking after it* - will send his hawk into the air, to bring down his prey. It often happens, when the devil can not ruin a man by getting him to commit a sin, he attempts to slander him; he sends a hawk after him, and tries to bring him down by slandering his good name. I will give you a piece of advice. I know a good minister, now in venerable old age, who was once most villainously lied against and slandered by a man who had hated him only for the truth's sake. The good man was grieved; he threatened the slanderer with a lawsuit, unless he apologized. He did apologize. The slander was printed in the papers in a public apology; and you know what was the consequence. The slander was more believed than if he had said nothing about it. And I have learned this lesson - to do with the slanderous hawk what the little birds do, just fly up. The hawk can not do them any hurt while they can keep above him - it is only when they come down that he can injure them. It is only when by mounting he gets above the birds, that

the hawk comes sweeping down upon them, and destroys them. If any slander you, do not come down to them; let them slander on. Say, as David said concerning Shimei, "If the Lord hath given him commandment to curse, let him curse;" and if the sons of Zeruiah say, "Let us go and take this dead dog's head," you say, "Nay, let him curse;" and in that way you will live down slander. If some of us turned aside to notice every bit of a sparrow that began chirping at us, we should have nothing to do but to answer them. If I were to fight people on every doctrine I preach, I should do nothing else but just amuse the devil, and indulge the combative principles of certain religionists who like nothing better than quarreling. By the grace of God, say what you please against me, I will never answer you, but go straight on. All shall end well, if the character be but kept clean; the more dirt that is thrown on it by slander, the more its shall glisten, and the more brightly it shall shine. Have you never felt your fingers itch sometimes to be at a man who slanders you? I have. I have sometimes thought, "I can not hold my tongue now; I must answer that fellow;" but I have asked of God grace to imitate Jesus, who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again," and by his strength let them go straight on. The surest way in the world to get rid of a slander is just to let it alone and say nothing about it, for if you prosecute the rascal who utters it, or if you threaten him with an action, and he has to apologize, you will be no better off - some fools will still believe it. Let it alone - let it keep as it is; and so God will help you to fulfill by your wisdom his own promise, "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler."

And now, ere I close this point, let me observe once more, the fowler, when he is determined to take his birds, uses all these arts at once, perhaps, and *besets the bird on every side*. So, you will remember, beloved, it is with you. Satan will not leave a stone unturned to ruin your soul for ever.

"Amidst a thousand snares I stand,  
Upheld and guarded by thy hand."

Old Master Quarles says,

"The close pursuer's busy hands do plant

Snares in thy substance; snares attend thy want;  
Snares in thy credit; snares in thy disgrace;  
Snares in thy high estate; snares in thy base;  
Snares tuck thy bed; and snares surround thy board;  
Snares watch thy thoughts; and snares attach thy words;  
Snares in thy quiet; snares in thy commotion;  
Snares in thy diet; snares in thy devotion;  
Snares lurk in thy resolves, snares in thy doubt;  
Snares lie within thy heart, and snares without;  
Snares are above thy head, and snares beneath;  
Snares in thy sickness, snares are in thy death."

There is not a place beneath which a believer walks that is free from snares. Behind every tree there is the Indian with his barbed arrow; behind every bush there is the lion seeking to devour; under every piece of grass there lieth the adder. Everywhere they are. Let us be careful; let us gird ourselves with the might of God's omnipotence, and then shall his Holy Spirit keep us, so that we shall tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon shall we trample under our feet, and we shall be "delivered from the snare of the fowler."

II. Now we pass to the second point - THE DELIVERANCE. God delivers his people from the snare of the fowler. Two thoughts here: *from - out of*. First, he delivers them *from* the snare - does not let them get in it; secondly, when they do get in it, he delivers them *out of* it. The first promise is the most precious to some of us; the second is the best to others.

He shall deliver thee from the snare. How does he do that?

Very often by *trouble*. Trouble is often the means whereby God delivers us from snares. You have all heard the old story of the celebrated painter who was painting in St. Paul's, and who, looking at his work, went gradually back, inch by inch, to get a view of it, so that he might see the excellence of its proportions, until his feet were just on the edge of the platform upon which he stood; and he would have fallen down and been dashed in pieces upon the pavement beneath, but just at that moment a

workman who stood there, desirous to save his life, and not knowing how to do it, hit upon an expedient which proved to be a very wise one. Instead of shouting out to his master, "Sir, you are in danger," which would most certainly have sent him backward, he took up a brush and dipping it in a pot of paint, dashed it at the picture. The good man rushed forward in anger to chastise him; but when it was explained, he clearly saw that he had acted wisely. Just so with God. You and I have often painted a fine picture, and we have been walking backward admiring it. God knows that our backsliding will soon end in our destruction and he, by a sad providence, blasts our prospect, takes away our child from us, buries our wife, removes some darling object of our pleasures; and we rush forward and say, "Lord, why is this?" - utterly unconscious that if it had not been for trouble we might have been dashed in pieces, and our lives would have been ended in destruction. I doubt not, many of you have been saved from ruin by your sorrows, your griefs, your troubles, your woes, your losses, and your crosses. All these have been the breaking of the net that set you free from the snare of the fowler

At other times God keeps his people from the snare of the fowler *by giving them great spiritual strength, a spirit of great courage*; so that when they are tempted to do evil they say, with decision, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" O! that was a noble escape of Joseph, when his mistress laid hold of his garment; that was a noble escape of his, when his soul escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler; and I doubt not there are many here who have done deeds almost as noble as that of Joseph, who have had grace within their hearts, so that they have turned away their eyes from beholding folly, and when they have been tempted to evil they have put their foot upon it, and said, "I can not, I can not; I am a child of God; I can not and I must not;" and though the thing was pleasing to themselves yet they abjured it. You remember the case of Mr. Standfast in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Madame Bubble had greatly enticed poor Mr. Standfast with her offers. He says, "There was one in very pleasant attire, but old, who presented herself to me, and offered me three things, to wit, her body, her purse, and her bed. Now the truth is, I was both weary and sleepy: I am also as poor as an owlet, and that perhaps the witch knew. Well, I repulsed her once and again, but she put by my repulses and smiled. Then I began to

be angry; but she mattered that nothing at all. Then she made offers again, and said if I would be ruled by her, she would make me great and happy; for, said she, I am the mistress of the world, and men are made happy by me. Then I asked her her name, and she told me it was Madame Bubble. This set me further from her; but she still followed me with enticements. Then I betook me, as you saw, to my knees, and with hands lifted up, and cries, I prayed to him that had said he would help. So just as you came up the gentlewoman went her way. Then I continued to give thanks for this my great deliverance; for I verily believe she intended no good, but rather sought to make stop of me in my journey." Thus God delivers his people from the snares of the fowler, by giving them the spirit of prayer as well as the spirit of courage, so that they call upon God in the day of trouble, and he delivers them.

And I have noticed one more very singular thing. Sometimes I, myself, have been saved from the snare of the fowler (I can not tell you how exactly), in this way. I have felt that if the temptation had come a week before, my mind was in that peculiar condition, that I should almost inevitably have been led away by it; but when it came, the mind, by passing through some process, had become in such a condition that the temptation was no temptation at all. We were just brought to such a state, that what might have ruined us before, we would not then look at. "No," we have said, "if you had offered me this some time ago it might have been accepted; but now God has, by some mysterious influence of his Spirit, turned my heart in another direction, and it is not even a temptation to me at all - not worthy of a moment's thought." So God delivers his people from the snare of the fowler.

But the second thought was, that *God delivers his people, even when they get into the snare*. Alas! my hearer, you and I know something about the net; we have been inside it, we have; we have not only seen it spread, we have been in its folds. We know something about the cage, for we have, unfortunately, been in the cage ourselves, even since we have known the Lord. The fowler's hand has been upon our neck; it has only been the sovereign grace of God that has prevented him from utterly destroying us. What a blessed thing it is, that if the believer shall, in an evil hour, come into the net, yet God will bring him out of it! Poor Christian and Hopeful



got into the fowler's net when they entered into the castle of Giant Despair; but the key of promise picked the lock, and they escaped. They were in the fowler's net, too, when Flatterer cast a net over them, and left them in the lane; but there came one who, after he had beaten them full sore, took the net off, and then they went on their way, better men than they were before they were in the net. I know one who is in the net now. Some bird, one of God's own ones too, has been taken in the snare, and is now groaning and crying out, because, alas! alas! he has sinned. I have a person here, a good man, a professor of religion, and a truly worthy one! but alas! he has sinned, and at this hour the tears are in his eyes, and he is saying,

"The tumult of my thoughts  
Doth but increase my woe;  
My spirit languishes, my heart  
Is desolate and low."

"Turn, turn thee to my soul;  
Bring thy salvation near;  
When will thy hand release my feet  
Out of the deadly snare?"

O backslider, be cast down, but do not despair; God will restore thee yet. Wanderer though thou hast been, hear what he says! "Return, O backsliding children; I will have mercy upon you." But you say you can not return. Then here is still a promise - "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler." Thou shalt yet be brought out from all the evil into which thou hast fallen, and though thou shalt never cease to repent thy ways even to thy dying day, yet he that hath loved thee will not cast thee away; he will receive thee; he will admit thee into his dwelling-place, and will even now restore thee to the number of his people, and give thee joy and gladness, that the bones which he has broken may rejoice. "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler."

There have been very remarkable instances of God delivering his people out of the snare of the fowler, as the following illustration will show:

"A young lady, who belonged to a church in the city of New York, married a young man who was not a Christian. He was a merchant, engaged in a lucrative business, and the golden stream of wealth flowed in upon him till he had amassed a large fortune. He accordingly retired from business, and went into the country. He purchased a splendid residence; fine trees waved their luxuriant foliage around it; here was a lake filled with fish, and there a garden full of rare shrubbery and flowers. Their house was fashionably and expensively furnished; and they seemed to possess all of earth that mortal could desire. Thus prospered, and plied with an interchange of civilities among her gay and fashionable neighbors, the piety of the lady declined, and her heart became wedded to the world. And it is not to be wondered at, that her three children, as they grew up, imbibed her spirit and copied her example. 'A severe disease,' it is said, 'demands a severe remedy;' and that God soon applied. One morning intelligence came that her little son had fallen into the fish-lake, and was drowned. The mother's heart was pierced with the affliction, and she wept and murmured against the providence of God. Soon afterwards, her only daughter, a blooming girl of sixteen, was taken sick of a fever and died. It seemed then as if the mother's heart would have broken. But this new stroke of the rod of a chastening Father seemed but to increase her displeasure against his will. The only remaining child, her eldest son, who had come home from college to attend his sister's funeral, went out into the fields soon afterwards, for the purpose of hunting. In getting over a fence, he put his gun over first to assist himself in springing to the ground, when it accidentally discharged itself and killed him! What then were that mother's feelings in the extravagance of her grief, she fell down, tore her hair, and raved like a maniac against the providence of God. The father, whose grief was already almost insupportable, when he looked upon the shocking spectacle, and heard her frenzied ravings, could endure his misery no longer. The iron entered into his soul and he fell speedy victim to his accumulated afflictions. From the wife and mother, her husband and all her children were now taken away. Reason returned, and she was led to reflection. She saw her dreadful backslidings, her pride, her rebellion; and she wept with the tears of a deep repentance. Peace was restored to her soul. Then could she lift up her hands to heaven, exclaiming, 'I thank thee, O Father! - the Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.' Thus did her

afflictions yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, and her heavenly Father chasten her, 'not for his pleasure, but for her profit, that she might become partaker of his holiness.'"

So God delivered her soul out of the snare of the fowler. She started afresh in the ways of righteousness, serving God with diligence and zeal, and growing up in his fear. By trouble and trial, by some means or another, God will surely deliver his people out of the snare of the fowler, even when they are in it.

III. And now, to conclude, I am to dwell for a moment or two upon that word "SURELY." The assurance of every truth of Scripture is just the beauty of it. If it were not sure, it were not precious; and it is precious just because it is sure.

Now, it says, "surely he shall deliver thee." Why? First, because he has promised to do it; and God's promises are bonds that never yet were dishonored. If he hath said he will, he will. Secondly, because Christ Jesus hath taken an oath that he will do it. In ages long gone by Christ Jesus became the shepherd of the sheep, and the surety of them too. "If any of them perish," said he, "at my hand, thou shalt require it;" and, therefore, because Christ is responsible, because he is the heavenly sponsor for all God's people, they must be kept: for otherwise Christ's bond were forfeited, and his oath were null and void. They must be kept, again, because otherwise the union that there is between all of them and Christ would not be a real one. Christ and his church are one - one body; but if any of the members of my body were cut off, I should be maimed, and if Christ could lose one of his children he would be a maimed Christ. "We are his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." If, then, the whole church were not gathered in, Christ would be an incomplete Christ, seeing he would want his fullness. They must all be saved, for God the Father has determined that they shall be; nay, the Son has sworn they shall be; and God the Holy Spirit vouches for it they shall be. None of God's people shall be cast away, or else the Bible is not true. The whole stability of the covenant rest in their final perseverance. The whole covenant of grace rests upon this -

"He shall present our souls,  
Unblemished and complete,  
Before the glory of his face,  
With joys divinely great."

And therefore they must be preserved out of the snare of the fowler, because otherwise the covenant would be null and void. If one should perish the oath would be broken; if one should be cast away the covenant would be void; and therefore they must be kept secure.

"His honor is engaged to save  
the meanest of his sheep;  
All that his heavenly Father gave,  
His hands securely keep."

I have no time to enlarge upon that subject, which is big with glory, and might afford a topic for many discourses. I now close up by saying, Men and brethren, is this promise yours? "Surely he shall deliver thee." Are you the men? "How can I tell?" you say. Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you, as a guilty sinner, cast yourself wholly on the blood and righteousness of the immaculate Redeemer? I do not ask you whether you are a Wesleyan, a Churchman, a Baptist, an Independent, or a Presbyterian; my only question is, Are you born again? Have you passed from death unto life? Are you "a new creature in Christ Jesus?" Is all your trust put in the Lord Jesus Christ? Has his life become your model, and does his Spirit dwell in your mortal body? If so, peace be unto you; this promise is yours. You may have been the worst of men; but if you have faith in Christ those sins are all forgiven, and you may take this promise to be yours for ever. But if you are self-righteous, self-sufficient, ungodly, careless, worldly, there is no such promise for you; you are in the snare, you shall be there, and you shall perish, unless you repent; for it is written, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." May God save you from perishing, by giving you an interest in the blood of Christ; and to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be glory for ever and ever.

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## The Solar Eclipse

I form the light, and create darkness. - Isaiah 45:7

We are all expecting to-morrow to witness one of the greatest sights in the universe - the annular eclipse of the sun. It is possible that many of us shall have gone the way of all flesh before such a sight shall again be seen in this country and we are therefore looking for it with some degree of expectation. It is probable that hundreds and thousands of the human race will be attracted by it, to study for a few hours at least, the science of astronomy. Certain it is that our astronomers are making the most capital they possibly can of it by endeavouring to thrust it in every way under our notice, in order to induce us to make the sun, the moon, and the stars a little more the object of our attention than they have been hitherto. Surely I need offer no apology whatever if religion comes forward to-day, and asks that attention should be drawn to her, even by the eclipse itself. Without a doubt, if there be sermons in stones, there must be a great sermon in the sun; and if there be books in the running brooks, no doubt there is many a huge volume to be found in a sun suffering eclipse. All things teach us, if we have but a mind to learn. There is nothing which we can see, or hear, or feel, which may not be the channels of great instruction to us. Let us see whether this may not lead us this morning into a train of thought which may, under God's blessing, be something far better to us than the seeing of an eclipse.

I shall note this morning, in addressing you, that since the Lord creates darkness as well as light; first of all, *eclipses of every kind are part of God's way of governing the world*; in the second place, we shall notice that since God creates the darkness as well as the light, we may conclude beyond a doubt that *he has a design in the eclipse - in the darkness as*

*well as the light; and then, thirdly, we shall notice that as all things that God has created, whether they be light or whether they be dark, have a sermon for us, no doubt there are some sermons to be found in this.*

I. First of all, ECLIPSES ARE A PART OF GOD'S PLAN. In the olden times the ignorant people in England were frightened at an eclipse, they could not understand what it meant. They were quite sure that there was about to be a war, or a famine, or a terrible fire. They were absolutely certain that something fearful would happen; for they regarded it as being a prophecy of coming ills. They were totally at a loss to account for it, and knew nothing about the theory which now so satisfactorily sets our minds at rest. And you are aware, that till this day, in the East and in other parts of the world still in the ignorance of barbarism, an eclipse is looked upon as a very horrible and a very unaccountable thing. The Hindoos still believe that a great dragon swallows the sun, and they may be seen by thousands plunging into their sacred river, the Ganges, praying to the gods that they may set the sun at liberty, that the dragon may be compelled to disgorge him. Hundreds of other most stupid and absurd theories are still prominently believed and held in different parts of the world, and I believe that here amongst a very great number of us, an eclipse is looked upon as something contrary to the general law of nature. Now, beloved, all that understand anything of God's works, know very well that eclipses are as much a part of nature's laws as the regular sunshine, that an eclipse is no deviation from God's plan, but that it is a necessary consequence of the natural motion of the moon and the earth around the sun and each other, that there should at some stated periods be eclipses, and when we see the eclipse to-morrow, we shall not look upon it as a miracle or anything out of the ordinary course of God's providence, but we shall say it was a necessity involved in the very plan whereby God governs the earth.

And now, beloved, I have only said these things to draw your attention to other eclipses. There are certain eclipses which happen in God's providence as well as in God's grace. As in nature an eclipse is part of God's plan, and is in fact involved in it, so we believe that in providence the eclipse shall sometimes overshadow the earth. I mean, the adversities, the wars, the famines, which sometimes fall on the human

race, are but a part of God's divine plan of governing the earth, and have some beneficial object in their falling upon us.

First, let me invite your attention to *providence at large*. How many times have we seen providence itself eclipsed with regard to the whole race. Behold, the Lord creates the world, and placed man upon it. "Increase and multiply," is his law. Man multiplies, fills the earth, and replenishes it. The whole earth is populated, and its valleys and hills rejoice with the voice of song. On a sudden comes an eclipse. God sends a flood of rain; he draws the plugs of the great fountains of the mighty deep, and lets the water burst up upon the earth. He bids his rain descend, not in showers, but in whole cataracts at once, and the earth becomes a void waste covered with water, and afterwards a dreary swamp covered with mud, the whole human race, with the solitary exception of eight persons, having been swept away. This is what I mean by a providential eclipse. After that God again suffers man to multiply, and the earth to be replenished. Year after year the earth laughs with harvest, and the fields are made glad with God's bounties. For seven years following each other there is such an abundance of plenty on the earth that men know not how to gather up by handfuls the stores which God has east. These seven years are overpassed, and lo! there comes an eclipse of God's bounty. There is no calf in the stall, the olive fails, and the fields yield no meat, all the land goes to Egypt to buy corn, for only in Egypt is there corn to be found. There is a great eclipse of God's bounty which happens to the world. But I need not stop to particularize the thousand instances that have happened in history. Nations have grown strong and mighty; anon there has come an eclipse of their glories, and all that has been builded has crumbled to the earth. Vast empires have been builded, and they have become great, and beneath their sway some of their people have become happy. Some savage conqueror from the north has descended with his barbarous hordes, and swept away every vestige of civilization, and the earth seems to have gone back hundreds of years. There has been a dark eclipse. Or it may have happened differently. A city is prosperous and rich. In one unhappy night a fire seizes upon it, and like the stubble before the flame, the whole city is consumed, and over the ashes of their houses the inhabitants sit down to weep and die. At another time a plague is upon the multitudes, and the pits are filled with the dead.

Nations die and perish, and whole hosts of men are carried to their graves. Now, all these great eclipses of God's favour, these darkenings of the heavens, these sudden glooms that fall upon the human race, are parts of God's plan of providence. Beloved, believe me, it is God's providence, when his paths drop fatness, and when the valleys rejoice on every side. It is a part of his plan when the fields are covered with corn, and when there is grass for the cattle; but it is equally as much a part of the plan of his providence to reduce the earth to famine, and bring the human race to misery at certain stated seasons, when he sees that an eclipse is absolutely necessary for their good.

It is just the same with you in *your own private concerns*. There is a God of providence to you. Lo, these many years has he fed you, and has never denied you the supply of your wants. Bread has been given to you, and your water has been sure. Your children have been about you. You have washed your feet with butter, you have rejoiced; you have stood fast in the ways of God, and in the ways of happiness. You have been able to say, "Our ways are ways of pleasantness, and all our paths are peace." You have not been, of all men, the most miserable, but in some respects connected with your life, and blessed by God's providence, you have been the happiest amongst the human race; and now a dark cloud has fallen upon you. The sunlight of God's providence has set while it was yet noon. When you were rejoicing in the brightness of your light, on a sudden a midday-midnight has fallen upon you, to your horror and dismay. You are made to say, "Whence does all this evil come upon me? Is this also sent of God?" Most assuredly it is. Your penury, your sickness, your bereavement, your contempt, all these things are as much ordained for you, and settled in the path of providence, as your wealth, your comfort, and your joy. Think not that God has changed. It involves no change of the sun when an eclipse overshadows it. The sun has not moved from its predestined spot. There standeth it, fixed and secure; or if it be true that it moveth, still it moveth with such regularity that to us it seemeth still. Beloved, so it is with God. It may be that his purposes are moving onward to some great and distant goal, which yet we cannot see, circling around himself in some greater circle than human knowledge yet can guess; but this is certain, that, so far as we are concerned, God is the same, and of his years there is no end, and from his fixed and settled path he hath not



swerved. His glory is undimmed, even when eye cannot see it. His love is just as bright, even when the shinings of it are concealed. He hath not moved to the right hand nor to the left. With the Father of lights there is no variableness, neither the shadow of turning. He abideth fast and fixed, though all things pass away. Let me confide then in him. Eclipses in providence, like eclipses in nature, are but a part of his own grand plan, and necessarily involved in it.

I suppose that it is impossible that the earth should revolve around the sun, and that the moon should spin continually round the earth, in the same plane of their orbit, without there being eclipses. Since God has made the ellipse, or the circle, the great rule of nature, it is impossible but that eclipses should occur. Now, did you ever notice that in providence the circle is God's rule still. The earth is here to-day; it will be in the same place this day next year; it will go round the circle; it gets no further. It is just so in providence. God began the circle of his providence in Eden. That is where he will end. There was a paradise on earth, when God began his providential dealings with mankind; there will be a paradise at the end. It is the same with your providence. Naked came ye forth from your mother's womb, and naked must ye return to the earth. It is a circle. Where God has begun, there will he end; and as God has taken the rule of the circle in providence, as well as in nature, eclipses must be sure to occur. Moving in the pre destined orbit of divine wisdom, the eclipse is absolutely and imperatively necessary in God's plan of government. Troubles must come; afflictions must befall; it must, needs be that for a season ye should be in heaviness, through manifold temptations.

But I have said, that *eclipses must also occur in grace*, and it is so. God's rule in grace is still the circle. Man was originally pure and holy; that is what God's grace will make him at last, He was pure when he was made by God in the garden. That is what God shall make him, when he comes to fashion him like unto his own glorious image, and present him complete in heaven. We begin our piety by denying the world, by being full of love to God; we often decline in grace, and God will bring us back to the state in which we were when we first began, so that we shall rejoice in none but Christ, and give our hearts to him as we did at first. Hence, there must be an eclipse in grace, because even there the circle seems to

be the rule of God's gracious government.

Now beloved, you are in the eclipse some of you to-day. I hear you crying, "Oh that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me! I looked for light, but lo, darkness came; for peace, but behold, trouble. I said in my soul, my mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved. Lord, thou didst hide thy face, and I am troubled. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me. It was but yesterday that I could read my title clear; to-day my evidences are bedimmed, and my hopes clouded. Yesterday I could climb to Pisgah's top and view the landscape o'er, and count the fields that were flowing with milk and honey, and rejoice with confidence in my future inheritance. To-day my spirit sees no heaven, it has no hopes, but many fears; no joys, but much distress;" and you are apt to say, dear friends, "Is this a part of God's plan with me? Can this be the way in which God would bring me to heaven?" Yes, it is even so. The eclipse of your faith, the darkness of your minds, the fainting of your hopes, all these things are but the parts of God's plan for making you ripe for the great inheritance into which you shall soon enter. These trials are but waves that wash you on to the rocks; they are but winds that waft your ship the more swiftly towards the desired haven. As David says in the psalm, so might I say to you, "So he bringeth them to their desired haven." By honour and dishonour, by evil report and by good report, by plenty and by poverty, by joy and by distress, by persecution and by comforts, by all these things is the life of your soul, and by each of these are you helped to hold on your way, and to be brought at last to the great goal and haven of your hopes. Oh! think not, Christian, that your sorrows are out of God's plan; they are necessary parts of it; and inasmuch as he will bring many heirs of God unto glory, it is necessary that through much tribulation he should bring them thither.

I have thus tried to bring out the first truth, that the eclipse is a part of God's government, and that our temporal afflictions, and our own sorrows of heart, are but a part of that grand scheme. Permit me to trespass on your patience one minute more, when I notice, that in God's great plan of grace to the world, it is just the same. Sometimes we see a mighty reformation worked in the church. God raises up men who lead

the van of the armies of Jehovah. See! error flies before them like shadows before the sunlight. Behold! the strongest towers of the enemy are tottering to their fall. The shout of a King is heard in the midst, and the saints of the Lord take courage, that their great and final victory at last is come. A few more years and those reformers are dead, and their mantle has not fallen upon any. After great mountains come deep valleys. The sons of great men are often small and drivelling; so there cometh a poor lukewarm church. After the Philadelphian, state of love, there comes the Laodicean state of lukewarmness. The church sinks! and in proportion as she sinks the enemy advances. Victory! victory! victory! shout the hosts of hell; and pushing on their course, they drive back the Lord's host, and the world trembles as in the balances, for victory seems to be on the side of the enemy. Again there comes another time of refreshing, another Pentecost; some other leader is raised up of God. Another mighty judge is brought into Israel, to drive out the Hittites and the Amorites that have invaded God's Canaan.

Once more, the world rejoices and the creature that hath toiled so long, hopeth to be delivered from its bondage - alas! it sinks again. The rising hath its ebb, the summer hath its winter, and the joyous time hath its season of despondency to follow it; but, beloved, all this is a part of God's plan. Do you see how God governs the ocean? When he means to produce a flood-tide, he does not make the water come marching straight up upon the shore, but as you stand there you are absolutely certain that the sand will be covered, and that the flood will dash against the cliff at the foot of which you are standing. But you see a wave come marching up, and then it returns again, and then another wave, then it dies and rolls back and another follows it. Now, it is even so in the church of God. The day must be, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. But this must be accomplished by different waves, by up-growing and decrease, by multiplying and by division. It must be by triumph and by victory, by conquest and by defeat, that at last God's great purpose shall ripen, and the world shall become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ. Think not then that eclipses of our holy religion, or the failure of great men in the midst of us, or the decline of piety, is at all apart from God's plan; it is involved in it, and as God's great purpose moving in the circle to bring forth another gracious purpose on earth

must be accomplished, so beloved, an eclipse must necessarily follow, being involved in God's very way of governing the world in his grace.

II. But, secondly, EVERYTHING THAT GOD DOES HAS A DESIGN. When God creates light he has a reason for it, and when he creates darkness he has a reason for it too. God does not always tell us his reason; he always has one, We call him a sovereign God, because sometimes he acts from reasons which are beyond our knowledge; but he is never an unreasoning God. It is according to the counsel of his will that he works; not according to his will, but according to the counsel of his will, to show you that there is a reason, a wisdom and counsel in everything that he does. Now I cannot tell you what is God's design in eclipsing the sun to-morrow; we can see many gracious purposes answered by it in our minds, but I do not know of what use it is to the world. It may be that if there never were an eclipse some great change might happen in the atmosphere, something far beyond the reach of all philosophical knowledge at present, but which may yet be discovered. It may be that the eclipse, like the tornado and the hurricane, has its virtue in operating upon this lower world in some mysterious way, but that we know not. However, we are not left in any darkness about other kind of eclipses; we are quite certain that providential eclipses, and gracious eclipses, have both of them their reasons. When God sends a providential eclipse he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nought. When pestilence stalks through the land and sweeps away its myriads, think not that God has done an unthought-of act without an intention in it. When war, with its blood-red sword, sweeps the nations and lays the mother bleeding with her child, imagine not that this cometh in vain; God hath some design in all these things, and permit me to tell you what I believe to be God's design, when he sends troubles into the world, and when he sends troubles upon us. It is this, it is to draw our attention to himself. Well, said an old divine, "Nobody ever looks at the sun except when he is in an eclipse." You never thought about the sun yesterday; you will all of you be staring at him to-morrow. Pieces of smoked glass, telescopes, and all kinds of inventions down to a pail of water, will be used in order to look at the sun. Why don't you look at him when he is shining brightly? There is nothing interesting in that, because it is an ordinary object. Now do you not notice, that when everything goes well with the world they

never think about God? People always get religious when they get into trouble. The churches were fuller in London when we had the cholera here, than they had been for many a long day. There were more ministers went to see sick people in those times than had ever been known before. People that never read their Bible, never prayed, never thought of going to God's house, were hurrying off to a place of worship, or reading their Bibles, or pretending at least to pray, though, afterwards, when it went away, they forgot all about it; yet they did think a little of it when they were in trouble. "Surely in trouble they will seek the Lord; in the day of their distress they will seek me early." Doubtless, we should entirely forget God, if it were not for some of those eclipses which now and then happen. God would not have his name remembered on earth at all by the race of man if he did not make them recollect his name, when he scourged it into them with his rod. Famine, pestilence, the sword, the flood, all these must come upon us to be terrible remembrancers, to make us think of the dread King who holds the thunders in his hand, and keeps the lightnings in his power. Doubtless, this is God's great design in his afflictive providences, to make us think of him. But there is another design. Some times troublous times tend to prepare the world for something better afterwards. War is an awful thing; but I doubt not, it purges the moral atmosphere, just as a hurricane sweeps away a pestilence. It is a fearful thing to hear of famine, or to hear of plague; but each of these things has some effect upon the human race. An evil generally goes to make room for a greater good. Men may bewail the fire of London, but it was the greatest blessing God could have sent to London. It burnt down a set of old houses that were placed so close together that it was impossible for them to be without the plague; and when these old things had been burnt down, there was then room for a healthier action; and there has been less plague, and less disease ever since. Many of the troubles that come to the great wide world, are meant to be like axes, to cut down some deadly upas tree, and lay it level with the ground. That tree, when it stood, scattered greater evil, though it scattered it gradually, than the injury which God sent on a sudden, did inflict, though it was more apparent to the mind, having come all at once. Ah, my hearer, God has sent thee providential trouble. Thou art not his child; thou dost not fear his name nor love him. Thou art saying, "Why has this trouble happened to me?" God has a gracious design in it. There

are many men that are brought to Christ by trouble. Many a sinner has sought the Saviour on his sick bed who never would have sought him anywhere else. Many a merchant whose trade has prospered, has lived without God; he has been glad to find the Saviour when his house has tottered into bankruptcy. We have known many a person who could afford to despise God while the stream flowed smoothly on, but that same man has been compelled to bow his knee, and seek peace through the blood of Christ, when he has come into the whirlpool of distress, and the whirlwind of trouble hath got hold upon him. There is a story told, that in the olden times, Artaxerxes and another great king were engaged in a furious fight. In the middle of the battle a sudden eclipse happened, and such was the horror of all the warriors, that they made peace there and then. Oh, if an eclipse of trouble should induce you to ground arms and seek to be reconciled unto God! Sinner, you are fighting against God, lifting the arm of your rebellion against him. Happy shall you be if that trouble which is now fallen upon you should lead you to throw down the weapons of your rebellion, and fly to the arms of God and say, "Lord have mercy upon me a sinner." It will be the best thing that thou hast ever had. Thy trouble will be far better to thee than joys could have been, if thy sorrows shall induce thee to fly to Jesus who can make peace through the blood of his cross. May this be the happy result of thine own troubles and sorrows.

But furthermore, *eclipses of grace have also their end and design.* The Christian asks why it is that God does not seem to favour him in his conscience as much as he did aforetime. "Why is it that I have not more faith? Why have the promises lost their sweetness? Why has the Word of God seemed to fail in its power in operating upon my soul? Why has God hidden his face from me?" Christian, it is that thou mayest begin to search thyself, and say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." God's people are afflicted in order that they may not go astray. "Before I was afflicted," said the Psalmist, "I went astray, but now have I kept thy Word." Leave a Christian alone, and he becomes like a piece of iron covered with rust; he loses all his brightness. Take the file of affliction, and once more the brightness becomes apparent. Christians without trouble would be like oysters without the sickness; they would not have produced pearls. The pearl oyster would have no pearl unless some

disease had fallen upon it; and were it not that trouble lights upon the Christian, he would live without producing the pearl of a holy and contented piety. God's rods are improvers; when they are laid upon us they always mend us. God scarifies the Christian, that he may cleanse him of his weeds; he ploughs him deep that he may turn up the subsoil to the air, that the influence of the Divine Spirit may rest upon him. He puts us into the crucible and into the furnace, that the heat may burn away our dross, and may consume all our impurities. He sends us into the deep waters, that they may be like a sacred baptism to us, and may help in sanctifying us, by delivering us from our pride, our lust, our worldliness, and our conceit. Happy is the man who understands this - who knows that all things work together for good to them that love God, and believes that even an eclipse of God's countenance hath its end and design, in making him perfectly conformed to the image of Christ Jesus the Lord.

III. And now not to detain you longer, I have got a sermon or two more to preach to you from the eclipse. To-morrow, Christians, if you will just remember what I am about to say you will learn a useful lesson. What is that which will hide the sun from us to-morrow? It is the ungrateful moon. She has borrowed all her light from the sun month after month; she would be a black blot, if the sun did not shine upon her, and now see all the return she makes is, she goes impudently before his face and prevents his light from shining upon us. Do you know anything at all like that in your own history? Have you not a great many comforts which you enjoy upon earth that are just like the moon? They borrow all their light from the sun. They would be no comforts to you unless God shone in them and they reflected back the light from his countenance. What is your husband, your wife; what are your children, your friends, your house, your home? What are all these but moons that borrow their light from the sun? Oh how ungrateful it is when we let our comforts get before our God; no wonder that we get an eclipse when we put these things that God gave to be our comforts into God's own throne and make them our idols. Oh! if our children take half of our hearts, if our friends take away our souls from Jesus, if like it was with Solomon, the wife leads the heart astray, if our goods, our house, our lands become the object of our life, if we set our affections upon them instead of setting them upon the things above, no wonder that there is an eclipse. Oh ungrateful heart that allows

these moons of comfort to hide the sun. Old Master Brookes very prettily says, the husband gives his wife rings which she wears upon her finger as remembrances of his love. Suppose a wife should be so foolish as to love her jewels better than her husband, suppose she should set her heart more upon his love-tokens than upon his person, oh, what marvel if he should then take the rings and the jewels away that she might again love him. It is even so with us; God loves his children and he gives us strong faith and gives us joy and comfort, and then if we begin to set our hearts upon these more than upon him, he will come and take them away, for saith he, "I must have all thy love. I gave thee these to win thy love, not to rob me of it, and inasmuch as thou dost divert thine heart into them, instead of allowing thy love to flow in one channel towards me; I will stop up the channel of thy comfort, that thy heart may cleave to me, and to me alone." Oh. for a heart that is like Anacreon's lyre, that would sing of love alone, that whatever subject you tried to bring to it, it would not resound with anything save love! Oh, that our hearts were like that towards God, so that when we tried to sing of comforts and of mercies, our hearts would only sing of God! Oh, that every string were made so divine, that it would never trill to any finger but the finger of the chief player upon my stringed instruments, the Lord Jesus Christ! Oh, that we had a heart like David's harp, that none but David could play; a soul that none but Jesus could make glad and cause to rejoice! Take care Christian, lest thy comforts like the moon eclipse thy sun. That is a sermon for thee, remember it, and be wise from it.

And let the Christian recollect another sermon. Let him take his child out, and when he takes him outside the door, and he sees the sun begin to grow dark and all things fade away, and a strange colour coming over the landscape, the child will begin to cry and say, "Father the sun is going out, he is dying; we shall never have any light again." And as gradually the black moon creeps over the sun's broad surface and there remains only a solitary streak of light, the tears run down the child's eyes as he says, "The sun is nearly quenched; God has blown it out, it will never shine upon us again. We shall have to live in darkness;" and he would begin to weep for sorrow of heart. You would touch your child on the head, and say, "No, my little boy, the sun has not gone out; it is only the moon passing across its face; it will shine bright enough presently." And your boy would soon



believe you; and as he saw the light returning, he would feel thankful, and would believe what you had said, that the sun was always the same. Now, you will be like a child to-morrow. When you get into trouble you will be saying, "God has changed." Then let God's Word speak to you as unto children, and let it say, "No, he has not changed; with him is no variableness, neither shadow of a turning."

"My soul through many changes goes,  
His love no variation knows."

And now, last of all, a total eclipse is one of the most terrific and grand sights that ever will be seen. We shall not see the eclipse here in all its majestic terror, but when the eclipse of the sun is total it is sublime. Travellers have given us some records of their own experience. When the sun has been setting far away, the mountains seemed to be covered with darkness, except upon their summits, where there was just a streak of light, when all below was swathed in darkness. The heavens grew darker and darker and darker, until at last it became as black as night, and here and there the stars might be seen shining, but beside them there was no light, and nothing could be discerned. I was thinking that if on a sudden the sun should set in ten-fold darkness, and never should rise again, what a horrid world this would be! If to-morrow the sun should actually die out, and never shine any more, what a fearful world this would be to live in! And then the thought strikes me - ;Are there not some men, and are there not some here, who will one day have a total eclipse of all their comforts? Thank God, whatever eclipse happens to a Christian, it is never a total eclipse: there is always a ring of comfort left; there is always a crescent of love and mercy to shine upon him. But mark thee, sinner, when thou comest to die, bright though thy joys be now, and fair thy prospects, thou wilt suffer a total eclipse. Soon shall your sun set, and set in everlasting night. A few more months, and your gaiety shall be over; your dreams of pleasure shall be dissipated by the terrible wailing of the judgment-trump; a few more months, and this gay dance of revelry on earth shall all have passed away; and that passed away, remember, you have nothing to expect in the world to come but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." Can you guess what the Saviour meant, when he said "outer darkness, where there is wailing and

gnashing of teeth?" Can any tell except those eclipsed spirits that have been these many years writhing in the torments of eternal judgement; can any tell what is meant by that "Outer darkness !" It is darkness so thick, that hope, which lives anywhere, cannot dart even a feeble ray through its impenetrable gloom; it is a darkness so black that you have no candle of your own fancy, no fair imagination to illuminate. A horror thicker than the darkness of Egypt, a darkness that may be felt will get hold upon the spirit. "Depart, ye cursed," shall roll, like volumes of cloud and darkness over the accursed spirit. "Cursed, cursed, cursed," pronounced by the Sacred Trinity thrice, shall come, come like a three-fold ocean of unutterable depth, and shall in its caverns hide the soul beyond the reach of hope.

I am but talking in simile and figure of a matter which none of us can thoroughly understand, but which each of us must know, unless we are saved by grace. My fellow-sinner, hast thou to-day any hope that when death shall come thou shalt be found in Christ? If thou hast none, beware and tremble; if thou hast any, take care it is "a good hope through grace." If thou hast no hope, but art seeking one, hear me while I tell thee the way of salvation. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man; he lived in this world, he suffered and he died; and the object of his death was this - that all who believe may be saved. What you are required to believe is simply this. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: do you feel that you are a sinner? If so, he came to save you. All you have to do - and that grace makes you do - is to believe that he came to save sinners, and therefore came to save you. Mark, he did not come to save all; he came to save *sinners*. All men who can claim the title of sinners, Christ came to save. If you are too good to be a sinner, then you have no part in this matter; if you are too proud to confess that you are a sinner, then this has nothing to do with you; but if with a humble heart, with a penitential lip, you can say, "Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner," then Christ was punished for your sins, and you cannot be punished for them. Christ has died instead of you; believe on him, and you may go your way rejoicing that you are saved now, and shall be saved eternally. May God the Holy Spirit first teach you that you are a sinner, then lead you to believe that Christ died for sinners and then apply the promise, so that you may see that he died for you; and that done, you may "rejoice in hope of the glory

of God," and your sun shall never set in an eclipse, but shall set on earth to rise with tenfold splendour in the upper sphere where it shall never know a cloud, a setting, or an eclipse.

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## **A Solemn Deprival**

Without Christ. - Ephesians 2:12

We shall have two things to consider this evening—the misery of our past estate, and the great deliverance which God has wrought for us. As for: -

I. THE MISERY OF OUR PAST ESTATE, be it known unto you that, in common with the rest of mankind, believers were once without Christ. No tongue can tell the depth of wretchedness that lies in those two words. There is no poverty like it, no want like it, and for those who die so, there is no ruin like that it will bring. Without Christ! If this be the description of some of you, we need not talk to you about the fires of hell; let this be enough to startle you, that you are in such a desperate state as to be without Christ. Oh! what terrible evils lie clustering thick within these two words!

The man who is without Christ is without any of those spiritual blessings which only Christ can bestow. Christ is the life of the believer, but the man who is without Christ is dead in trespasses and sins. There he lies; let us stand and weep over his corpse. It is decent and clean, and well laid out, but life is absent, and, life being absent, there is no knowledge, no feeling, no power. What can we do? Shall we take the word of God and preach to this dead sinner? We are bidden to do so, and, therefore, we

will attempt it; but so long as he is without Christ no result will follow, any more than when Elisha's servant laid the staff upon the child—there was no noise, nor sound, nor hearing. As long as that sinner is without Christ, we may give him ordinances, if we dare; we may pray for him, we may keep him under the sound of the ministry, but everything will be in vain. Till thou, O quickening Spirit, come to that sinner, he will still be dead in trespasses and sins. Till Jesus is revealed to him there can be no life.

So, too, Christ is the light of the world. Light is the gift of Christ. "In him was light, and the light was the life of men." Men sit in darkness until Jesus appears. The gloom is thick and dense; not sun, nor moon, nor star appeareth, and there can be no light to illumine the understanding, the affections, the conscience. Man has no power to get light. He may strike the damp match of reason, but it will not yield him a clear flame. The candle of superstition, with its tiny glare, will but expose the darkness in which he is wrapped. Rise, morning star! Come, Jesus, come! Thou art the sun of righteousness, and healing is beneath thy wings. Without Christ there is no light of true spiritual knowledge, no light of true spiritual enjoyment, no light in which the brightness of truth can be seen, or the warmth of fellowship proved. The soul, like the men of Naphtali, sits in darkness, and seeth no light.

Without Christ there is no peace. See that poor soul hunted by the dogs of hell. It flies swift as the wind, but faster far do the hunters pursue. It seeks a covert yonder in the pleasures of the world, but the baying of the hell-hounds affright it in the festive haunts. It seeks to toil up the mountain of good works, but its legs are all too weak to bear it beyond the oppressor's rule. It doubles; it changes its tack; it goes from right to left but the hell-dogs are too swift of foot, and too strong of wind to lose their prey, and till Jesus Christ shall open his bosom for that poor hunted thing to hide itself within, it shall have no peace.

Without Christ there is no rest. The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, and only Jesus can say to that sea, "Peace, be still."

Without Christ there is no safety. The vessel must fly before the gale, for

it has no anchor on board; it may dash upon the rocks, for it has no chart and no pilot. Come what may, it is given up to the mercy of wind and waves. Safety it cannot know without Christ. But let Christ come on board that soul, and it may laugh at all the storms of earth, and e'en the whirlwinds which the Prince of the Power of the air may raise need not confound it, but without Christ there is no safety for it.

Without Christ again, there is no hope. Sitting wrecked upon this desert rock, the lone soul looks far away, but marks nothing that can give it joy. If, perchance, it fancies that a sail is in the distance, it is soon undeceived. The poor soul is thirsty, and around it flows only a sea of brine, soon to change to an ocean of fire. It looks upward, and there is an angry God—downward, and there are yawning gulfs—on the right hand, and there are accusing sounds—on the left hand, and there are tempting fiends. It is all lost! lost! lost! without Christ, utterly lost, and until Christ comes not a single beam of hope can make glad that anxious eye.

Without Christ, beloved, remember that all the religious acts of men are vanity. What are they but mere air-bags, having nothing in them whatever that God can accept? There is the semblance of worship, the altar, the victim, the wood laid in order, and the votaries bow the knee, or prostrate their bodies, but Christ alone can send the fire of heaven's acceptance. Without Christ the offering, like that of Cain's, shall lie upon the stones, but it shall never rise in fragrant smoke, accepted by the God of heaven. Without Christ your church-goings are a form of slavery, your chapel-meetings a bondage. Without Christ your prayers are but empty wind, your repentances are wasted tears, your almsgivings and your good deeds are but a coating of thin veneer to hide your base iniquities. Your professions are white-washed sepulchres, fair to look upon, but inwardly full of rottenness. Without Christ your religion is dead, corrupt, a stench, a nuisance before God—a thing of abhorrence, for where there is no Christ there is no life in any devotion, nothing in it for God to see that can possibly please him. And this, mark you, is a true description, not of some, but of all who are without Christ. You moral people without Christ, you are lost as much as the immoral. You rich and respectable people, without Christ, you will be as surely damned as the prostitute that walks the streets at midnight. Without Christ, though you should heap up your

charitable donations, endow your almshouses and hospitals, yea, though you should give your bodies to be burned, no merit would be imputed to you. All these things would profit you nothing. Without Christ, e'en if you might be raised on the wings of flaming zeal, or pursue your eager course with the enthusiasm of a martyr, you shall yet prove to be but the slave of your own passion, and the victim of your own folly. Unsanctified and unblest, you must, then, be shut out of heaven, and banished from the presence of God. Without Christ, you are destitute of every benefit which he, and he alone, can bestow.

Without Christ, implies, of course, that you are without the benefit of all those gracious offices of Christ, which are so necessary to the sons of men, you have no true prophet. You may pin your faith to the sleeve of man, and be deceived. You may be orthodox in your creed, but unless you have Christ in your heart, you have no hope of glory. Without Christ truth itself will prove a terror to you. Like Balaam, your eyes may be open while your life is alienated. Without Christ that very cross which does save some will become to you as a gallows upon which your soul shall die. Without Christ you have no priest to atone or to intercede on your behalf. There is no fountain in which you can wash away your guilt; no passover blood which you can sprinkle on your lintel to turn aside the destroying angel; no smoking altar of incense for you; no smiling God sitting between the cherubim. Without Christ you are an alien from everything which the priesthood can procure for your welfare. Without Christ you have no shepherd to tend, no King to help you; you cannot call in the day of trouble upon one who is strong to deliver. The angels of God, who are the standing army of King Jesus, are your enemies and not your friends. Without Christ, Providence is working your ill, and not your good. Without Christ you have no advocate to plead your cause in heaven; you have no representative to stand up yonder and represent you, and prepare a place for you. Without Christ you are as sheep without a shepherd; without Christ you are a body without a head; without Christ you are miserable orphans without a father, and your widowed soul is without a husband. Without Christ you are without a Saviour; how will you do? what will become of you when you find out the value of salvation at the last pinch, the dreary point of despair? and without a friend in heaven, you must needs be if you are without Christ. To sum up all, you

are without anything that can make life blessed, or death happy. Without Christ, though you be rich as Croesus, and famous as Alexander, and wise as Socrates, yet are you naked, and poor, and miserable, for you lack him by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, and who is himself all in all.

Surely this might be enough to arouse the conscience of the most heedless? But ah! without any of the blessings which Christ brings, and to miss all the good offices which Christ fills—this is only to linger on the side issues! The imminent peril is to be without Christ himself. Do you see, there, the Saviour in human form—God made flesh, dwelling among us? He loves his people, and came to earth to wipe out an iniquity which had stained them most vilely, and to work out a righteousness which should cover them most gloriously, but without Christ that living Saviour is nothing to you. Do you see him led away as a sheep to the slaughter, fastened to the cruel wood—bleeding, dying? Without Christ you are without the virtue of that great sacrifice; you are without the merit of that atoning blood. Do you see him lying in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, asleep in death? That sleep is a burial of all the sins of his people, but without Christ your sins are not atoned for; your transgressions are yet unburied; they walk the earth; they shall go before you to judgment; they shall clamour for your condemnation; they shall drag you down without hope. Without Christ, remember, you have no share in his resurrection. Bursting the bonds of death, you, too, shall rise, but not to newness of life, nor yet to glory, for shame and everlasting contempt shall be your portion if you be without Christ. See him as he mounts on high; he rides in his triumphal car through the streets of heaven; he scatters gifts for men, but without Christ there are none of those gifts for you. There are no blessings for those who are without Christ. He sits on that exalted throne, and pleads and reigns for ever, but without Christ you have no part in his intercession, and you shall have no share in his glory. He is coming. Hark! the trumpet rings. My ear prophetic seems to catch the strain! He comes, surrounded by majestic pomp, and all his saints shall reign with him, but without Christ you can have no part nor lot in all that splendour. He goes back to his Father, and surrenders his kingdom, and his people are for ever safe with him. Without Christ there shall be none to wipe away the tears from your eyes; no one to lead you to the fountain of living

waters; no hand to give you a palm-branch; no smile to make your immortality blessed. Oh! my dear hearers, I cannot tell you what unutterable abysses of wretchedness and misery are comprised here within the fulness of the meaning of these dreadful words—without Christ.

At this present hour, if you are without Christ, you lack the very essence of good, by reason of which your choicest privileges are an empty boast, instead of a substantial boon. Without Christ all the ordinances and means of grace are nothing worth. Even this precious Book, that might be weighed with diamonds, and he that was wise would choose the Book, and leave the precious stones—even this sacred volume is of no benefit to you. You may have Bibles in your houses, as I trust you all have, but what is the Bible but a dead letter without Christ? Ah! I would you could all say what a poor woman once said. "I have Christ here," as she put her hand on the Bible, "and I have Christ here," as she put her hand on her heart, "and I have Christ there," as she raised up her eyes towards heaven; but if you have not Christ in the heart, you will not find Christ in the Book, for he is discovered there in his sweetness, and his blessedness, and his excellence, only by those who know Him and love him in their hearts. Do not get the idea that a certain quantity of Bible-reading, and particular times spent in repeating prayers, and regular attendance at a place of worship, and the systematic contribution of a guinea or so to the support of public worship and private charities will ensure the salvation of your souls. No, you must be born again. And that you cannot be; for it is not possible that you could have been born again if you are still living without Christ. To have Christ is the indispensable condition of entering heaven. If you have him, though compassed about with a thousand infirmities, you shall yet see the brightness of the eternal glory; but if you have not Christ, alas! for all your toil, and the wearisome slavery of your religion, you can but weave a righteousness of your own, which shall disappoint your hope, and incur the displeasure of God.

And without Christ, dear friends, there comes the solemn reflection that ere long ye shall perish. Of that I do not like to talk, but I would like you to think of it. Without Christ you may live, young man—though, mark, you shall miss the richest joys of life. Without Christ you may live, hale,



strong man, in middle age—though, mark, without him you shall miss the greatest support amidst your troubles. Without Christ you may live, old man, and lean upon your staff, content with the earth into which you are so soon to drop, though, mark you, you shall lose the sweetest consolation which your weakness could have found. But remember, man, thou art soon to die. It matters not how strong thou art; death is stronger than thou, and he will pull thee down, even as the stag-hound drags down his victim, and then "how wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan," without Christ? How wilt thou do when the eyes begin to close, without Christ? How wilt thou do, sinner, when the death-rattle is in thy throat, without Christ? When they prop thee up with pillows, when they stand weeping round thine expiring form, when the pulse grows faint and few, when thou hast to lift the veil, and stand disembodied before the dreadful eyes of an angry God, how wilt thou do without Christ? And when the judgment-trump shall wake thee from thy slumber in the tomb, and body and soul shall stand together at that last and dread assize, in the midst of that tremendous crowd, sinner, how wilt thou do without Christ? When the reapers come forth to gather in the harvest of God, and the sickles are red with blood, and the vintage is cast into the wine-press of his wrath, and it is trodden until the blood runs forth up to the horse's girdles—how wilt thou do then, I conjure thee, without Christ? Oh! sinner, I pray thee let these words sound in thine ears till they ring into thy heart. I would like you to think of them tomorrow, and the next day, and the next. Without Christ! I would like to make thee think of dying, of being judged, of being condemned, without Christ! May God in his mercy enable thee to see thy state, and fly to him who is able to save, even unto the uttermost, all them that come unto God by him. Christ is to be had for the asking. Christ is to be had for the receiving. Stretch out thy withered hand and take him; trust him, and he will be thine evermore; and thou shalt be with him where he is, in an eternity of joy. Having thus reviewed the misery of our past estate, let us endeavour, with the little time we have left, to:—

## II. EXCITE THE THANKFULNESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE FOR WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE FOR THEM.

We are not without Christ now, but let me ask you, who are believers, where you would have been now without Christ? As for some of you, you

might, indeed you would have been, tonight in the ale-house or gin-palace. You would have been with the boisterous crew that make merriment on the Lord's Day; you know you would, for "such were some of you." You might have been ever worse; you might have been in the harlot's house; you might have been violating the laws of man as well as the laws of God, "for even such" were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified. Where might you not have been without Christ? You might have been in hell; you might have been shut out for ever from all mercy, condemned to eternal banishment from the presence of God. I think the Indian's picture is a very fair one of where we should have been without Christ. When asked what Christ had done for him, he picked up a worm, put it on the ground, and made a ring of straw and wood round it, which he set alight. As the wood began to glow the poor worm began to twist and wriggle in agony, whereupon he stooped down, took it gently up with his finger, and said, "That is what Jesus did for me; I was surrounded, without power to help myself, by a ring of dreadful fire that must have been my ruin, but his pierced hand lifted me out of the burning." Think of that, Christians, and, as your hearts melt, come to his table, and praise him that you are not now without Christ.

Then think what his blood has done for you. Take only one thing out of a thousand. It has put away your many, many sins. You were without Christ, and your sins stood like yonder mountain, whose black and rugged cliff threaten the very skies. There fell a drop of Jesu's blood upon it, and it all vanished in a moment. The sins of all your days had gone in an instant by the application of the precious blood! Oh! bless Jehovah's name that you can now say:—

"Now freed from sin I walk at large,  
My Saviour's blood my full discharge,  
Content at his dear feet I lay,  
A sinner saved, and homage pay."

Bethink you, too, now that you have Christ, of the way in which he came and made you partaker of himself. Oh! how long he stood in the cold, knocking at the door of your heart. You would not have him; you despised him; you resisted him; you kicked against him; you did, as it were, spit in

his face, and put him to open shame to be rid of him. Yet he would have you, and so, overcoming all your objections, and overlooking all your unworthiness, at length he rescued you and avouched you to be his own.

Consider, beloved, what might have been your case had he left you to your own free agency. You might have had his blood on your head in aggravation of your guilt. Instead of that, you have got his blood applied to your heart, in token of your pardon. You know right well what a difference that makes. Oh! that was a dreadful cry in the streets of Jerusalem, "His blood be on us and our children," and Jerusalem's streets flowing with gore witnessed how terrible a thing it is to have Christ's blood visited on his enemies. But, beloved, you have that precious blood for the cleansing of your conscience. It has sealed your acceptance, and you can, therefore, rejoice in the ransom he has paid, and the remission you have received with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

And I would not have you forget the vast expense which it cost to procure this priceless boon. Christ could not have been yours had he lived in heaven. He must come down to earth, and even then he could not be fully yours till he had bled and died. Oh! the dreadful portals through which Christ had to pass before he could find his way to you! He finds you now right easily, but before he could come to you he must himself pass through the grave! Think of that, and be astonished!

And why are you not left to be without Christ? I suppose there are some persons whose minds naturally incline towards the doctrines of free will. I can only say that mine inclines as naturally towards the doctrines of sovereign grace. I cannot understand the reason why I am saved, except upon the ground that God would have it so. I cannot, if I look ever so earnestly, discover any kind of reason in myself why I should be a partaker of divine grace. If I am not tonight without Christ, it is only because Christ Jesus would have his will with me, and that will was that I should be with him where he is, and should share his glory. I can put the crown nowhere but upon the head of him whose mighty grace has saved me from going down into the pit.

Beloved, let us mention one thing more out of the thousand things which

we must leave unsaid. Remember what you have got tonight now that you have got Christ. No, no, no, do not be telling me what you have not got. You have not got a certain income, you say; you have not got a competence; you have not got wealth; you have not got friends; you have not got a comfortable house. No, but you have got your Saviour; you have got Christ, and what does that mean? "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him, also, freely give us all things?" The man who has got Christ has got everything. There are all things in one in Christ Jesus, and if you once get him you are rich to all the intents of bliss. What, have Jesus Christ, and be discontented? Have Christ and murmur? Beloved, let me chide you gently, and pray you to lay aside that evil habit. If you have Christ, then you have God the Father to be your protector, and God the Spirit to be your comforter. You have present things working together for your good, and future things to unravel your happier portion; you have angels to be your servitors both on earth and in heaven. You have all the wheels of Providence revolving for your benefit; you have the stones of the field in league with you; you have your daily trials sanctified to your benefit; and you have your earthly joys hinged from their doors and hallowed with a blessing; your gains and your losses are alike profitable to you; your additions and your diminutions shall alike swell the tide of your soul's satisfaction; you have more than any other creatures can boast as their portion; you have more than all the world beside could yield to regale your pure taste, and ravish your happy spirits. And now, will you not be glad? I would have you come to this feasting-table this evening, saying within yourselves, "Since I am not without Christ, but Jesus Christ is mine, I do rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice."

And oh! dear Christian friends, if you have lost your evidences, go to Christ to find them all. Do not go striking your matches to light your candles, but go direct to the sun and get your light from his full orb. You who are doubting, desponding, and cast down, do not get foraging up the mouldy bread of yesterday, but go and get the manna which falls fresh today at the foot of the cross. Now you who have been wandering and backsliding, do not stay away from Jesus because of your unworthiness, but let your very sins impel you to come the faster to your Saviour's feet. Come, ye sinners; come, ye saints; come, ye who dare not say that ye are

his people; come, you whose faith is but as a grain of mustard seed; come, you who have not any faith at all; come now to Jesus, who says, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

May God grant that some who feel that they are without Christ, because they have no enjoyment, nor any sense of communion with him, may now take hold of his name, his covenant, his promises with a lively faith, nay more, may they find him to the rapture of their souls, and he shall have all the praise. Amen.

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## **A Solemn Embassy**

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. - 2 Corinthians 5:20

There has long been war between man and his Maker. Our federal head, Adam, threw down the gauntlet in the garden of Eden. The trumpet was heard to ring through the glades of Paradise, the trumpet which broke the silence of peace and disturbed the song of praise. From that day forward until now there has been no truce, no treaty between God and man by nature. Man has been at variance with God. His heart has been at enmity towards God. He would not be reconciled to God. Never in the heart of any natural man, unless divine grace has put it there, has a desire to re-establish peace been felt or entertained. If any of you long to be at peace with your Maker, it is because his spirit has made you long for it. Left to yourselves, you would go from conflict to conflict, from struggle to struggle, and perpetuate the encounter, until it ended in your eternal destruction. But though man will not make terms with God, nor sue for peace at his hands, God shows his unwillingness any longer to be at war

with man. That he anxiously desires man to be reconciled unto him, he proves by taking the first step. He, himself, sends his ambassadors. He does not invite them from the other party—that were grace—but he sends ambassadors, and he commands those ambassadors to be very earnest, and to plead with men, to pray them, to beseech them that they would be reconciled to God. I take this to be a sure pledge that there is love in the heart of God. Why, at the very announcement of these tidings, the rebellious sinner's ears should be opened! It were enough to make him say, "I will hearken diligently; I will hear what God the Lord shall speak, for if it be true that he takes the first step towards me, and that he is willing to make up this deadly quarrel, God forbid that I should turn away; I will even now hear and attend to all that God shall speak to my soul." "May he bless the message to you, that you may be reconciled to him without a moment's delay. John Bunyan puts it plainly enough." If a certain king be besieging a town, and he sends out the herald with a trumpet to threaten the inhabitants that, if they do not give up the town, he will hang every man of them, then straightway they come to the walls and give him back a reviling answer; they swear that they will fight it out, and will never surrender to such a tyrant. But if he sends an embassy with a white flag to tell them that, if they will but surrender and yield to their lawful king, he will pardon every one of them, even the very vilest of them will relent." Then, saith honest John, "do they not come trembling over the walls, and throw their gates wide open to receive their gracious monarch." Would that such a result might be accomplished to-night! While I speak of the great grace of this Prince of Peace, who now sends his ambassadors to the rebellious, may some rebel say, "Then I will be at peace with him; I will hold out no longer. So irresistible a love as this has dissolved my heart, resolved my choice, and constrained my allegiance."

Well now, let us speak awhile of the Ambassadors—the Commission with which they are entrusted—the duty they have to discharge—and close with a question—What then? First, then, we have to speak of:—

## I. THE AMBASSADORS.

Welcome messengers are they! All nations, with one accord, have agreed to honour ambassadors. Strange, then, that all nations and all people

should have conspired to dishonour the ambassadors of God! Which of God's ambassadors in the olden time was not persecuted, rejected, or slain? Were they not stoned, beheaded, sawn asunder? How continually they were maltreated, and made to wander about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, though of them the world was not worthy! But there have been some men to whom the ambassadors of God have always been welcome. The men whom God had ordained to eternal life. Those on whose behalf, from before all worlds, he had made an effectual covenant of peace. From them the ambassadors get a hearty welcome. Standing here to preach as an ambassador, I shall get but little attention from some of my audience. The proclamation of mercy will sound commonplace to many. They will turn on their heel and say, "There is nothing in it." But mark you, the ambassador of God will be very welcome to some of you, who have bitterly felt your estrangement, to some whose hearts are prepared by a sense of ruin for the good tidings of redemption; to some in whom the secret mystery of predestination begins to work by the overt energy of effectual calling. These shall find their souls greatly but surely drawn to the proclamation of mercy that shall be made, and they will say, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of peace, that publish salvation!"

Ambassadors are always specially welcome to a people who are engaged in a war which is beyond their strength, when their resources are exhausted, and the peril of defeat is imminent. If some tiny little principality has ventured to rebel against a great empire, when it is absolutely certain that its villages will be consumed, its provinces, ravaged, and that all its power will be crushed, ambassadors are pretty sure to receive a cordial welcome. Ah! man, thou best bid defiance to the King of Heaven, whose power is irresistible; by whom rocks are thrown down; whose voice breaketh the cedars of Lebanon; whose hand controlleth the great deep sea. He it, is who bindeth the clouds with a cord, and girdleth the earth with a belt! Angels that excel in strength cannot stand against him. From the lofty battlements of heaven he hurled down Satan, the great archangel, and the mighty host of rebellious morning stars! How canst thou stand against him; shall the stubble contend with the fire? Shall the potter's vessel resist the rod of iron? What art thou but a moth, easily crushed beneath his finger! The breath

is in thy nostrils, and that is not thine own; how then canst thou, poor mortal, contend with him who only hath immortality? With art thou but a moth, easily crushed beneath his finger! Thy breath broken more rapidly than a sear leaf by the wind! How canst thou venture to be at war with one who has heaven and earth at his command, who holds the keys of hell and of death, and who has Tophet as his source of ammunition against thee? Listen to his thunders, and let thy blood curdle! Let his lightning flash, and how art thou amazed! How, then, canst thou stand against the greatness of his power, or endure the terror of his wrath? Happy for thee that terms of peace are proclaimed in your ears. God is willing to cease the warfare; he would not have thee be his adversary. Wilt thou not gladly accept what he proposeth to thee? Never, surely, was war more charged with disaster than that into which thou hast madly rushed.

An ambassador is always welcome when the people have begun to feel the victorious force of the king. Yonder province has already yielded. Certain cities have been taken by the sword and given up to be sacked. Now the poor miserable inhabitants are glad enough to get peace. They dread the foot of the conqueror now that they have felt its weight. Doubtless there are some here present who have known the power of God in their conscience. Perhaps he has soared you with visions, and frightened you with dreams. Though it be but the voice of a man that you heard, yet the law has been very terrible to you, and now you find no pleasure in your pleasure; no joy in your joys. God has begun to break your bones with conviction; he has made you feel that sin is a bitter thing; he has made you drunken with wormwood, and broken your teeth with gravel stones. He has brought you down as the fool in the hundred and seventh Psalm, by affliction and by labour, and you are crying out in anguish, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Ay, doubtless, you that have once felt the weight of God's hand upon your conscience, will rejoice to hear that there is an embassy of peace sent to you.

An ambassador is likewise always welcome to those who are labouring under a few of total and speedy destruction. If none of you are in that plight, I remember when I was, when I thought every day it was a marvel of mercies that I was kept alive, and wondered as I woke at morn that I was not lifting up my eyes with Dives in hell. Everything about Christ was



precious to me then! I think I would have stood in the most crowded chapel, nor would I have been weary had I sat upon the hardest seat; no length of service would have wearied me, might I but have had an inkling that God would peradventure have mercy upon my soul. My eyes were full of tears. My soul was faint with watching, and I would have kissed the feet of any man who would have told me the way of salvation. But, alas! it seemed as if no man cared for my soul, till at last God blessed an humble instrument to give light to his poor dark child. Hence I know that the news of mercy will be exceedingly welcome to you who stand upon the jaws of hell, fearing that the gates will soon be bolted upon you, and that you will be for ever lost. You will be ready to cry like our Methodist friends, "Hallelujah! Glory! Hallelujah! Bless the Lord!" whilst you hear that God still sends an embassy of peace to your soul.

Most acceptable, too, is a messenger of peace if the people know that he brings no hard terms. When a certain king sent to the inhabitants of a town that he would make peace with them, provided he put out their right eyes and cut off their right hands, I am sure the tidings must have caused the utmost consternation, and the ambassador could not be very popular. But there are no hard terms in the gospel. In fact, there are no terms, no conditions at all. It is an unconditional peace which God makes with men. It is a gospel which asks nothing of men, but gives them everything. The Lord saith, "My oxen and my fatlings are killed; all things are ready, come ye to the supper." There is nothing for man to get ready; all things are prepared. The terms—if I must use a word I do not like—are simple and easy. "Believe, and live." With what joy should a rebellious sinner hear the voice of the ambassador who brings no hard conditions from God.

And should not the fame of the King increase the zest with which the embassy is received? Comes it not from him who cannot lie! No temporary peace is proposed that may presently be broken, but a peace that shall stand fast for ever and ever. No temporary armistice, no brief interlude between the deeds of battle do we herald. Peace; eternal, unbroken peace; peace that shall endure in life and outlive death; peace which shall endure throughout eternity, we testify and make known to you.

This peace is proclaimed to all men. It is proclaimed without exception." Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." None are excluded hence but those who do themselves exclude. Such an ambassador bringing such a message must surely be a welcome messenger from his God. Let us ask now, What is:—

II. THE COMMISSION OF PEACE which God has entrusted us to proclaim? The words are concise, the sense is transparent." To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespass unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. "Let us open the commission. It lies in a nutshell." Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool, though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow. Our commission begins with the announcement that God is love, that he is full of pity and compassion, that he is desirous to receive his creature back, that he willeth to forgive, and that he electeth, if it be consistent with the high attribute of his justice, to accept even the most rebellious, and to put them amongst his children. Our commission goes on to disclose the manner, as well as the motive, of mercy. Inasmuch as God is love, he, in order to remove all difficulties in the way of pardoning rebels, has been pleased to give his only begotten Son that he might stand in the room, place, and stead of those whom God has chosen; their sins he engaged to take; to carry their sorrows, and to make an atonement on their behalf. Thus the justice of God should be satisfied, and his love flow over to the human race. We declare, therefore, that God has given Christ, and he has made it a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that he came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief. Christ, the Son of God, has become man. Cheerfully and willingly he took upon himself our nature; veiled the form of Deity in a humble garb of clay; was born of the Virgin Mary, lived a life of holiness, and died a death of sacrifice. Through this marvellous death of the Man, the God, Christ Jesus, God is at peace with his people. The peace is made already, for he is our peace. God is at peace with every man for whom Jesus died. Jesus Christ stood in the room, place, and stead of

his chosen people. Christ was punished for their sins. Justice cannot punish twice for one offense. Christ, the substitute, being punished, the sinner cannot be amenable for his own offences. Those for whom Jesus died go free. The proclamation is that God is willing to be reconciled, that he is reconciled. It is an announcement, not that you may have peace merely, but that peace is made with God by Jesus Christ for you—full peace, without condition, not half-made, but wholly made; the penalty being completely paid to the last doit, and the sacrifice completely slaughtered till the last drop of blood had expiated the last offence.

But the proclamation needs something more to give us any satisfaction. Are there any tidings in it for you and me? Well, our message goes on to announce that whosoever in the wide world will come to Jesus Christ, and commit his cause to him as Redeemer, Saviour, and Friend, shall forthwith be at peace with God, receive full pardon for all offences, and be welcomed as a favourite of the Most High. He shall know that for him Jesus Christ did die in his stead, and as surety did stand for him when he appeared before God. From condemnation he is, therefore, free; of salvation he is, therefore, sure. This proclamation, I say, is to be made universally. Though every man will not be blessed by it, the preacher cannot discriminate between those who must and those who will not inherit the blessing. Though only some will accept it, the preacher is not warranted in showing any partiality. It is the Holy Spirit's work to impress the Word on the conscience, and to arouse the conscience by the Word. As for us, we are willing enough to turn our face to the north or to the south, to the east or to the west. Gladly would we proclaim it to the red man who hunts the savannahs of America, to the swarthy man who never heard the name of Christ before, or to the white man who has often heard, but never heeded it. The same message, that God has accepted Christ as a substitute for every man that will believe in Christ, and that whosoever trusts Christ to save him is in that moment saved, will suffice for all. Yea, we would tell them that before the sinner does trust Christ he is reconciled unto God by his death, because the atonement which he offered had been accepted, and there was peace forestalled between God and that sinner. What a message I have to present! What a proclamation I have to make! Nothing is necessary on your part. God expects nothing of you to merit his esteem, or to enhance the value of his gift. If repentance

be indispensable, he is prepared to give it to you. If a tender heart be needed, he is ready to give you a heart of flesh. If you feel that you have a heart of stone, he has engaged to take it away. Does your guilt oppress you, he says, "I will sprinkle clean water, water of pure fountains, upon them, and they shall be cleansed from all their filthiness, and from all their uncleanness will I save them." Know, all men, that there is no exception made. When Charles II came back to England there was an amnesty, except for certain persons, and these were mentioned by name—Hugh Peters and others were proscribed; but there is no exception here. I find not any traitors singled out and denounced by name. I have to proclaim an indemnity of such universal import that it is indiscriminate, "Whosoever believeth on him shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life."

Moreover, there is no exception made in my commission to any form of sin—unless it be the sin against the Holy Ghost—which carries its own evidence as well as its consequence. Those to whom I now speak, if they feel any drawings of heart towards God have not committed that mortal crime. Murder, theft, forgery, felony, fornication, adultery, and covetousness, which is idolatry—black and hideous as is the catalogue—here is pardon for the whole. Ransack the kennels, however filthy; rake the slums, however odious; drag out the abominations of the age, however degrading; here is pardon not only possible, probable, but positive. Bring a man here who has stained himself crimson all over with every sort of infamy, though it be not the lapse of an hour, but the habit of a life, yet God is still able to forgive. Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.

I do not know whether you find it very good to hear the proclamation, but I do know that I feel it most gratifying to utter it. Thrice happy am I to have such an announcement to make to rebels. Unwonted hearers, listen to my voice. By what strange chance have yon reckless, heedless, unconverted souls mingled with this throng of worshippers? Not often do you darken the floor of a place of worship. You hardly know how you were led to come in hither. To what depths of sin you have run, to what extremities of iniquity you have gone! You marvel to find yourself in the company of God's people. But since you are here, give heed to the

message," Thus saith the Lord, I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins. Return unto me, for I am married unto thee. I have given my blood to redeem thee. Return, O wandering child of man; return, return, and I will have mercy upon thee, for I am God, and not man." Having thus opened my commission, I will endeavour to perform:—

### III. A VERY SOLEMN DUTY.

My text supplies me with a warrant. It says, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." Then it seems we have not merely to read our commission, but we have to beseech you to accept it. Why should we beseech you? Is it not because you are rational creatures, not automata, men not machines. A machine might be compelled to perform functions without persuasion, but the Spirit of God often acts upon the heart of man by the sound arguments and affectionate entreaties of his servants whom he commissions. We are to beseech you because your hearts are so hard that you are prone to defy God's power, and resist his grace. Therefore, we pray you to put down your weapons. We are to beseech you because you are unbelieving, and will not credit the tidings. You say it is too good to be true that God will have mercy on such as you are. Therefore, we are to put our hand on you, to go down on our knees to you, and to beseech you not to put away this blessed embassy. We are to beseech you because you are so proud and self-satisfied that you will sooner follow your own righteousness and cling to your own works, than accept a peace already and freely proffered to you. We are to beseech you because you are careless. You give little heed to what is spoken: you will go your way and forget all our proclamations; therefore, are we to press you urgently, instantly, importunately, And to beseech you as when a mother pleadeth for her child's life, as when a condemned criminal beseeches the judge to have pity on him, so are we to beseech you. I think I never feel so conscious of my own weakness as when I have to ply you thus with exhortations. Oh! there have been a few times in my ministry when I could with flowing eyes beseech you to be reconciled to God, but these dry eyes of mine are not so often fountains of tears as I could wish. We need such an one as Richard Baxter to dilate upon this last part of the text. Perhaps we could handle the former part

better than he, but he could handle this last far better than we can. Oh! how he would have summoned you by the terrible reality of things to come! With what glaring eyes and seething words he would say, "Oh! men, turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? By the need of a Saviour you will feel in the pangs of parting life, when the pulsings shall be few and feeble, till with a gasp you shall expire; by the resurrection when you will wake up, if not in his likeness, to everlasting shame and contempt; by the judgment-seat, where your sins shall be published, and you shall be called to account for the deeds done in the body; by the dread decree which casteth into the pit for ever those that repent, not; by the heaven you will lose:, and by the hell into which you will fall; by eternity, that dread eternity whose years never waste; by the wrath to come, the burning indignation of which shall never cool; by the immortality of your own souls, by the perils you now run, by the promises you despise, by the provocations you multiply, by the penalties you accumulate, we do beseech you to be reconciled to God." Fly to Jesus. Call upon his name. Trust him; his word; his work, his goodness and his grace. This is the way of reconciliation. Bow the knee and kiss the Son. We do conjure you to do so. Acquaint yourselves now with God, and be at peace with him. My text bangs like a crushing weight upon my soul at this moment. It is awful in its grandeur, and it is majestically full of divine love. I must read the words again in your hearing. Oh! that the sense might break in on your understanding!

We are to beseech you as though God did beseech you, and we to do it in Christ's stead. You see God speaks when his ambassadors speak. I wonder, oh! I wonder, whether I have brain enough to compass the thought of how God would beseech you to be reconciled! 'Tis the Father's own self-pleading with his prodigal son. Can you imagine the father in the parable going after his son, and finding him in rags feeding swine? Can you conceive him saying, "My son, my dear son, come back! come back and I will forgive you all!" You think you hear that son saying to his father "Get you gone, I will not hear of it", till his father says "My dear son, why will you prefer the company of swine to your father's house? Why will you wear rags when you might be clothed in the best robe? Why will you starve in a far-off country when my house shall be full of feasting on your return?" What if that son should utter some indignant word, and tell his

father to his face he never would go back! Oh! I think I see the venerable, loving man falling on his son's neck and kissing him, in his filth just as he is (for "the great love wherewith he loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins!")—and he says to the rebel that insults him and resents his tenderness, "My dear son, you must come back; I must have you; I cannot be without you. I must have you; come back!" In such a style we ought to plead with men. Ah! then, I cannot plead with you as I would. As though God himself, your offended Maker, came to you now as he did to Adam in the cool of the day, and said to you, "Oh! return to me, for I have loved thee with an everlasting love," even so, as though God spoke, would I woo you, ye chiefest sinners, to return to him. You know, dear friends, that the great God did send another ambassador, and that great ambassador was Christ. Now the Apostle says that we, the ministers, are ambassadors for Christ in Christ's stead. Christ is no more an ambassador; he has gone to heaven; we stand in his stead to the sons of men, not to make peace, but to proclaim it. What! am I then to speak in Christ's stead! But how can I picture my Lord Jesus standing here? Alas, my imagination is not equal to the task. Would that I had sympathy enough with him to put myself in his case so as to use his words. Methinks I see him looking at this great throng as once he looked at the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He turns his head round to these galleries, and about on yonder aisles, and at last he bursts into a flood of tears, saying, "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." He is choked with tears, and when he has paused a moment, he cries, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; a bruised reed I will not break, nor quench the smoking flax."

Again, I think I see him, as he looks at you again, and when he observes some hearts so obdurate and hard that they will not melt, he unwraps his mantle, and exclaims, "See here." Do you mark the gash in his side? As he lifts his hands and shows the nail-prints, and points downward to his pierced feet, he says, "By these, my wounds, which I endured when suffering for you, O my people, return unto me; come, bow at my feet, and take the peace which I have wrought out for you. Oh! be not faithless,

but believing! Doubt no longer! God is reconciled! Tremble no more! Peace is established. Toil no more at the works of the law, cling not to your own doings. Cease to consult your feelings. It is finished. When I bowed my head upon the tree, I finished all for you. Take salvation: take it now! Come to me; come now to me just as you are." Alas! this is but a poor representation of my Lord and Master. I could wish myself laid among the clods of the valley, sleeping in my grave, rather than that I should be so poor an ambassador. But, Lord, wherefore didst thou choose thy servant, and why givest thou this people still to hear his voice, if thou wilt not more mightily enable him to plead with men. I have no more words, oh! let these, tears plead with you. I feel that I could freely give my life if it would avail for the saving of your souls. Fain would I meet a martyr's death, if you would be persuaded thereby to come to Christ, for life. But oh! sinners, no pleading of mine will ever prevail if the pleading of Christ prove ineffectual with you. To each one of you, a distinct proclamation of salvation is addressed. Whosoever among you will believe that Christ died, and that he is able to save you, and will trust your soul upon what he did, shall be saved. Oh! why reject him? He will not hurt nor harm you. Do lay hold of this good hope, for your time is short! Death is hastening on; eternity is near! Do lay hold of it, for hell is hot, the flames thereof are terrible! Lay hold of it, for heaven is bright, and the harps of angels are sweet beyond compare! Lay hold of it. It shall make your heart glad on earth, it shall charm away your fears and remove your griefs! Lay hold of it! It shall bear you through Jordan's billows, and land you safe on Canaan's side. Oh! by the love of the Father, by the blood of Jesus, by the love of the Spirit, I beseech you, sinner, believe and live! By the cross and the five wounds, by the agony and bloody sweat, by the resurrection, and by the ascension, sinner, believe and live! By every argument that would touch your nature, by every motive that can sway your reason or stir your passions, in the name of God that sent me, by the Almighty that made you, by the Eternal Son that redeemed you, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, sinner, I command you, with divine authority to sanction my vehemence, that ye be reconciled to God through the death of his Son! And:—

#### IV. WHAT THEN?



When we have answered this question we shall have done. What then? Are there not some of you with whom this peace is made at this good hour? I will go back and tell my Master so. Then there shall be fresh ratifications between you and him. The angels will hear of it, and they will strike their harps anew to sweeter lays than they have known before.

Others there are of you that will not be reconciled. I must have an answer from you. Do you hesitate? Do you delay? Do you refuse? You shall never have another warning, some of you! No tears of pity shall be wept for you again; no loving heart shall ever bid you come to Christ again must have your answer now. Yes or no. Wilt thou be damned or not? Wilt thou be saved or not? I will not have thee say, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." Sinner, it cannot be a more convenient one than this. This is a convenient place; it is God's house. It is a convenient time; it is the Lord's day. Now, sinner, wilt thou be reconciled, restored, forgiven? "Wilt thou be made whole?" said Jesus, and I say the same to thee, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Do you say, "No"? Must I take that for an answer? Mark you, sinner, I have to tell my Master must tell him when I seek the closet of the King to-night; I must tell him your reply that you would not. What then remains for an ambassador to do when he has spoken to you in the name of the Sovereign? If you will not turn, we must shake off the dust of our feet against you. I am clear, I am clear, of the blood of you all, I am clear. If you perish, being warned, you perish wantonly. The wrath cometh upon you, not on him who, to the best of his power, has told his Master's message. Yet again, I beg you to accept it. Do you still say no? The white flag will be pulled down. It has been up long enough. Shall I pull it down, and run up the red flag now? Shall I hurl threatenings at you because you heed not entreaties?

"If your ears refuse  
The language of his grace,  
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,  
That unbelieving race,  
The Lord in anger drest,  
Shall lift his trend and swear  
Ye that despised my promised rest  
Shall have no portion there."

But no, I cannot pull it down, that white flag! My heart will not let me do so; it shall fly there still, it shall fly there as a sign and a symbol of the day of grace. Mercy is still held out to you. But there is one coming—I can hear his footsteps—who will pull down that white flag. The vision haunts my eyes. That grim, heartless skeleton whom men call Death will rend the white flag from its place, and up will go the blood-red flag, with the black escutcheon of the thunderbolts. Where are you then, sinners? Where will you be then? You shudder at the thought. He lays his hand on you. There is no escape. Oh! turn ye, turn ye, turn ye! Come and welcome, sinner, come now while you are welcome. 'Tis love invites you. Jesus stretches out his hand to you all the day long. He has stretched out his hands to a rebellious, and a gainsaying generation. Do not say, "I will think of it," but yield to his love who around you now the bands of a man doth cast. Do not make a resolution, but commit yourself to the good confession. Now, even now, may sovereign grace constrain, and irresistible love draw you. May you believe with your heart, may you record your profession at once. Before you close your eyes in sleep, just as you would wish before your eyes are closed in death, may you be at peace with God. I pray God, as I entreat you, that this may come to pass, for his Son, Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **A Solemn Warning For All Churches**

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. - Revelation 3:4

My learned and eminently pious predecessor, Dr. Gill, is of opinion that the different churches spoken of in the Book of Revelation are types of different states through which the church of God shall pass until it comes into the Philadelphia state, the state of love, in which Jesus Christ shall

reign in its midst, and afterwards, as he thinks, shall pass into the state of Laodicea, in which condition it shall be when suddenly the Son of Man shall come to judge the world in righteousness and the people in equity. I do not go with him in all his suppositions with regard to these seven churches as following each other in seven periods of time; but I do think he was correct when he declared that the church in Sardis was a most fitting emblem of the church in his days, as also in these. The good old doctor says, "When we shall find any period in which the church was more like the state of Sardis as described here, than it is now?" And he points out the different particulars in which the church of his day (and I am sure it is yet more true of the church at the present day) was exactly like the church in Sardis. I shall use the church in Sardis as a figure of what I conceive to be the sad condition of Christendom at the present moment. My first point will be general defilement—there were but "a few names" in Sardis who had not "defiled their garments;" secondly, special preservation—there were a few who had not defiled their garments; and thirdly, a peculiar reward—"And they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy."

I. GENERAL DEFILEMENT. The holy apostle, John, said of the church in Sardis, "These things saith he that hath the Seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou has a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou has received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments."

The first charge of general defilement he brings against the church in Sardis was that they had a vast deal of open profession, and but little of sincere religion. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." That is the crying sin of the present age. I am not inclined to be morbid in my temperament, or to take a melancholy view of the church of God. I would wish at all times to exhibit a liberality of spirit, and to speak as well as I can of the church at large; but God forbid that any minister should shrink from declaring what he believes to be the

truth. In going up and down this land, I am obliged to come to this conclusion, that throughout the churches there are multitudes who have "a name to live, and are dead." Religion has become fashionable. The shopkeeper could scarcely succeed in a respectable business if he were not united with a church. It is reckoned to be reputable and honorable to attend a place of worship; and hence men are made religious in shoals. And especially now that parliament itself doth in some measure sanction religion, we may expect that hypocrisy will abound yet more and more, and formality everywhere take the place of true religion. You can scarcely meet with a man who does not call himself a Christian, and yet it is equally hard to meet with one who is in the very marrow of his bones thoroughly sanctified to the good work of the kingdom of heaven. We meet with professors by hundreds; but we must expect still to meet with possessors by units. The whole nation appears to have been Christianized in an hour. But is this real? Is this sincere? Ah! we fear not. How is it that professors can live like other men? How is it that there is so little distinction between the church and the world? Or, that if there is any difference, you are frequently safer in dealing with an ungodly man than with one who is professedly righteous? How is it that men who make high professions can live in worldly conformity, indulge in the same pleasures, live in the same style, act from the same motives, deal in the same manner as other do? Are not these days when the sons of God have made affinity with the sons of men? And may we not fear that something terrible may yet occur unless God shall send a voice, which shall say, "Come out of them, my people, lest ye be partakers of their plagues?" Take our churches at large—there is no lack of names, but there is a lack of life. Else, how is it that our prayer-meetings are so badly attended? Where is the zeal or the energy shown by the apostles? Where is the Spirit of the living God? Is he not departed? Might not "Ichabod" be written on the walls of many a sanctuary? They have a name to live, , but are dead. They have their piety? Where is sincere religion? Where is practical godliness? Where is firm, decisive, puritanical piety? Thank God, there are a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; but charity itself will not allow us to say that the church generally possesses the Spirit of God.

Then the next charge was, that there was a want of zeal throughout the

church of Sardis. He says, "Be watchful." He looked on the church and saw the bishops slumbering, the elders slumbering, and the people slumbering; they were not, as once they were, watchful for the faith, striving together and earnestly contending for it, not wrestling against the enemy of souls, labouring to spread their Master's kingdom, but the apostle saw sleepiness, coldness, lethargy; therefore he said, "Be watchful." Oh! John, if from thy grave thou couldst start up, and see the church as thou didst at Sardis, having thine eyes anointed by the Spirit, thou wouldst say it is even so now. Ah! we have abundance of cold, calculating Christians, multitudes of professors; but where are the zealous ones? where are the leaders of the children of God? where are your heroes who stand in the day of battle? where are your men who "count not their lives dear unto them," that they might win Christ, and be found in him? where are those who have an impassioned love for souls? How many of our pulpits are filled by earnest, enthusiastic preachers? Alas! look, at the church. She has builded herself fine palaces, imitating popery; she hath girded herself with vestments; she has gone astray from her simplicity; but she has lost the fire and the life which she once had. We go into our chapels now, and we see everything in good taste: we hear the organ play; the psalmody is in keeping with the most correct ear; the gown and the noble vestments are there, and everything is grand and goodly, and we think that God is honored. Oh for the days when Whitfields would preach on tubs once more, when their pulpits should be on Kennington Common, and their roofs the ceiling of God's sky. Oh for the time when we might preach in barns again, or in catacombs either, if we might but have the life of God that once they had in such places. What is the use of garnishing the shell when you have lost the kernel. Go and whitewash, for the life is gone. Garnish the outside of your cups and platters; but ye have lost the pure word of God. Ye have it not for a piece of bread; they flinch to speak the whole truth, or if they seem to speak it, it is with cold, meaningless, passionless words, as if it were nothing whether souls were damned or saved, whether heaven were filled or heaven depopulated, or whether Christ should see of the travail of his would and be satisfied. Do I speak fierce things? I can say as Irving once did, I might deserve to be broken on the wheel if I did not believe what I say to be the truth; for the utterance of such things I might deserve the stake; but God is my witness, I have endeavoured to judge and to speak

impartially. With all that universal cant of charity now so prevalent I am at arm's length; I care not for it. Let us speak of things as we find them. WE do believe that the church has lost her zeal and her energy. But what do men say of us? "Oh! you are too excited." Good God! excited! when men are being damned; Excited! When we have the mission of heaven to preach to dying souls. EXCITED! preaching too much! when souls are lost. Why should it come to pass that one man should be perpetually labouring all the week, while others are lolling upon their couches, and preach only upon the Sabbath-day? Can I bear to see the laziness, the slothfulness, the indifference of ministers, and of churches, without speaking. No! there must be a protest entered, and we enter it now. Oh! Church of God, thou has a name to live, and art dead; thou art not watchful. Awake! awake! arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

The third charge which John brought against Sardis was that they did not "look to the things that remained and were ready to die." I take it that this may related to the poor feeble saints, the true children of God, who were sorrowing, mourning, and groaning in their midst, who were so oppressed with sorrow on account of the state of Sardis, that they were "ready to die." And what does the church do now? Do the shepherds go after those that are wounded and sick, and those that are weary? Do they carry the lambs in their bosom, and gently lead those that are with young? Do they see to poor distressed consciences, and speak to those who feel their deadness in trespasses and sins? Yes, but how do they speak? They tell them to do things they cannot do—to perform impossible duties—instead of "strengthening the things that remain and are ready to die" In how much contempt are the truly new-born children of God held in these times! They are called peculiar men, scouted as Antinomians, hissed at as being oddities, high doctrine men who have departed from the usual mode of pulling down God's word to men's fancies; they are called bigots, narrow-minded souls, and their creed is set down as dry, hard, rough, severe Calvinism. God's gospel called hard, rough, and severe! The things for which our fathers died are not called infamous things! Mark whether, if ye stand out prominently in the truth, you will not be abhorred and scouted. If you go into a village, and hear of poor people who are said to be doing a deal of mischief, are they not the people

who understand most of the gospel? Go and ask the minister who are the persons that he most dislikes? and he will say, "We have a nasty lot of Antinomians here." What does he mean by that? Men who love the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and will have it, and are therefore called a nasty set of Antinomians. Ah! we have lost what once we had. We do not now "strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die;" they are not looked after as they ought to be, not beloved, not fostered. The salt of the earth are now the offscouring of all things; men whom God has loved, and who have attained a high standing in godliness—these are the men who will not bow the knee to Baal, and who therefore are cast into the fiery furnace of persecution and slander. O Sardis! Sardis! I see thee now. Thou hast defiled thy garments. Thank God, there are a few who have not followed the multitude to do evil, and who shall "walk in white, for they are worthy."

Another charge which God has brought against the church is, that they were careless about the things which they heard. He says, "Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast; and repent." If I am wrong upon other points, I am positive that the sin of this age is impurity of doctrine, and laxity of faith. Now you know you are told every Sunday that it does not signify what you believe; that all sects and denominations will be saved; that doctrines are unimportant things; that as to the doctrines of God's grace, they are rather dangerous than otherwise, and the less you inquire about them the better; they are very good things for the priests, but you common people cannot understand them. Thus they keep back a portion of the gospel with cautious reserve; but having studied in the devil's new Jesuitical college, they understand how to call themselves particular Baptists, and then preach general doctrines, to call themselves Calvinists, and preach Arminianism, telling the people that it does not signify whether they preach damnable heresies instead of the truth of God. And what do the congregations say? "Well, he is a wise man, and ought to know." So you are going back into as bad a priestcraft as ever. Presbyter has become priest written large, and minister has become priest in many a place because persons do not search for themselves and endeavour to get hold of the truth of God. It is everywhere proclaimed that we are all right; that though one says God loved his people from before the foundation of the world, and the other

that he did not; though one says that God is changeable and turns away from his people, and the other, that he will hold them fast to the end; though the one says that the blood of Christ avails for all for whom it was shed and the other, that it is inefficacious for a large number of those for whom he died; though one says that the works of the law are in some measure necessary, or at any rate that we must endeavour to improve what we have, and then we shall get more, while the other says, that "by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God," yet both are right. A new age this, when falsehood and truth can kiss each other! New times these when fire and water can become friendly! Glorious times these when there is an alliance between hell and heaven, though God knows, we are of vastly different families. Ah! now, who cares for truth except a few narrow-minded bigots as they are called. Election—horrible! Predestination—awful! Final perseverance—desperate! Yet, turn to the pages of the Puritans, and you will see that these truths were preached every day. Turn to the Fathers; read Augustine, and you will see that these were the truths for which he would have bled and died. Read the Scriptures, and if every page is not full of them I have not read them aright, or any child of God either. Ay, laxity of doctrine is the great fault now; we solemnly protest against it. You may fancy that I am raising an outcry about nothing at all. Ah! no; my anxious spirit sees the next generation—what will that be. This generation—Arminianism. What next? Pelagianism. And what next? Popery. And what next? I leave you to guess. The path of error is always downward. We have taken one step in the wrong direction; God knows where we shall stop. If there had not been sturdy men in ages gone by, the Lord would not have left to us a remnant even now; all grace must have died, and we had become like unto Gomorrah and unto Sodoma. Oh, church of the living God, awake! awake! Once more write truth upon thy banner; stamp truth upon thy sword; and for God and for his word, charge home. Ye knights of truth, and truth alone, shall sit king over the whole world!

But now I have lifted up the whip, I must have another lash. Look on any section of the church you like to mention, not excepting that to which I belong; and let me ask you whether they have not defiled their garments. Look at the church of England. Her articles are pure and right in most respects; yet see how her garments are defiled. She hath made the Queen



her Head instead of God; she bows before the state, and worships the golden calf that is set up before her. Look at her abominations, her pluralities, her easy living bishops doing nothing; look at her ungodly clergymen in the country, living in sin. The churchman who does not know that his church has defiled her garments is partial to his mother, as indeed he ought to be, but he is too partial to speak the truth. But good churchmen themselves weep, because what I say is true. Then look at John Wesley's body; have not they defiled their garments? See how they have lately been contending with a despotism as accursed as any that ever brooded over the slaves in America? See how they have been rent in sunder, and how imperfect in doctrine they are too after all, professedly at least, not holding the truth of God. Look into what denomination you please, Independent, or Baptist, or any other—have they not all defiled their garments in some way or other? Look at the churches around, and see how they have defiled their garments by giving baptism to those whom it was never intended, and degrading a holy church ordinance to become a mere sop with which they feed their babes. And see how they have taken away Christ's honor, how they have taken the bread that was meant for the children, and cast it to ungodly persons. Look at our own denomination: see how it has deserted the leading truths of the gospel. For a proof hereof, I refer you to hundreds of our pulpits. Oh church of God! I am but a voice crying in the wilderness, but I must cry still, "How art thou fallen from heaven, thou son of the morning! how art thou fallen!" "Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." If thou dost not watch, thy Master will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know in what hour he will come unto thee.

II. But now we come to far easier work; not because we would shun what we conceive to be our duty, even at the expense of offending many now present, but because we always delight to speak well if we can. "Thou has a few names even in Sardis that have not defiled their garments." He we have SPECIAL PRESERVATION. Mark, "Thou hast a few names." Only a few; not so few as some think, but not as many as others imagine! A few compared with the mass of professors; a few compared even with the true children of God, for many of them have defiled their garments. They were but a few, and those few were even I Sardis. There is not a church on earth that is so corrupt but has "a few." You who are always fighting so

much for your denomination, you think other denominations are Sardis; but there are a few even in Sardis. Even if the denomination is the worst of all Protestant sections, there are a few in Sardis; and perhaps that is as much as we can say of our denomination: so we will treat them all alike. There are a few in Sardis—mark that. Not in what you conceive to be Philadelphia, your own blessed church, but in Sardis—there are a few there. Where there is heresy and false doctrine, where there are many mistakes about rites and ceremonials, there are a few there; and even where they cringe before the state, there are a few there—ay, and a goodly few too, a few whom we love, with whom we can hold communion. This makes us severe against the whole body, but it makes us very loving towards all the dear people of God everywhere. There are a few even in Sardis. Well, when I meet a brother who lives in Sardis, I will hope he is one of the few; and when you meet such, do you say, "Ah! well, I know my brother comes out of a bad church, but there are a few in Sardis, and very likely he is one of them." That is the kind of charity God loves; not the universal charity which says Sardis is all right, but that which says, some in her are sincere. We stand this morning like old Elijah, when he stood before God and said, "I, only I, am left, and they seek my life." But God whispers, "I have yet reserved unto myself seventy thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal." Take heart, Christian, there are a few in Sardis—do not forget that—who have not defiled their garments. Take heart. It is not all rotten yet; there is a soundness in the core after all; there is "a remnant according to the election of grace;" there is "salt," and for the sake of that salt, many who have defiled their garments in a measure will be saved. They will enter into heaven even as these few will; but unto the few there will be special honor and special blessing. Take heart then; and whenever you go to your chamber and mourn over the sad condition of the church, think you hear that good old woman in her closet groaning and crying; think you hear that minister faithfully dispensing the word; think you see that valiant deacon standing up for God's truth; think you see that young man strong in the midst of temptation; think of these few in Sardis, and they will cheer you. Do not be quite downcast. Some heroes have not turned their backs in the day of battle; some mighty men still fight for the truth. Be encouraged; there are a few in Sardis. But be careful, for perhaps you are not one of the few. Since there are but a few, there ought to be great searchings of heart. Let

us look to our garments and see whether they be defiled. If they be not, we shall walk in white, for we are worthy through Jesus. Be active; be prayerful. The fewer the workmen to do the work the greater reason is there that you should be active. Be instant in season and out of season, because there are so few. Oh! if we had hundreds behind us, we might say, "Let them do the work;" but if we stand with only a few, how should each of those few rush hither and thither! A city is besieged: it is full of inhabitants; half of them are asleep; the others watch the walls, and thus they relieve each other. Another city has but a few defenders: see how that champion rushes first to that breach and routs the enemy; now he brings his might to another place; a bastion is assaulted, and he is there; now a postern is attacked—there he is with all his force behind him; he is here, he is there, he is everywhere, because he feels there is but a handful of men who can gather round him. Take courage, take heart; stir yourselves up to the sternest activity, for verily there are but a few in Sardis who have not defiled their garments. Above all, be prayerful. Put up your earnest cries to God that he would multiply the faithful, that he would increase the number of chosen ones who stand fast, that he would purify the church with fire in a furnace seven times heated, so that he might bring out her third part through the fire; cry unto God that the day may come when the much fine gold shall be no longer dim, when the glory shall again return unto Zion. Beg of God to remove the cloud, to take away "the darkness that may be felt." Be doubly prayerful, for there are but a few in Sardis who have not defiled their garments.

III. This brings us to the third point, which is a PECULIAR REWARD. "They shall walk in white, for they are worthy." The attentive reader will observe, that in quoting the passage just now, I left out two of the sweetest words in the passage. It reads: "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." That is the very pith of the honor; if the rest of it be gold this is the jewel. "They shall walk with me in white." That is to say, communion with Christ on earth shall be the special reward of those who have not defiled their garments. Now, I must say a very hard thing again, but it is a true one. Go into what company you please, do you meet with many men who hold communion with Christ? Though they may be godly men, upright men, ask them if they hold communion with Christ, and will they understand you? If you give them some of those

sweetly spiritual books, that those who hold fellowship love to read, they will say they are mystical, and they do not love them. Ask them whether they can spend an hour in meditation upon Christ, whether they ever rise to heaven and lay their head on the breast of the Saviour, whether they ever know what it is to enter into rest and get into Canaan; whether they understand how he has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; whether they can often say,

Abundant sweetness while I sing  
Thy love, my ravish'd heart o'erflows;  
Secure in thee my God and King  
Of glory that no period knows."

Ask them that, and they will say, "We don't comprehend you." Now, the reason of it is in the first part of my sermon—they have defiled their garments, and therefore Christ will not walk with them. He says, "Those that have not defiled their garments shall walk with me." Those who hold fast the truth, who take care to be free from the prevailing sins of the times, "These," he says, "shall walk with me; they shall be in constant fellowship with me; I will let them see that I am bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh: I will bring them into the banqueting-house; my banner over them shall be love; they shall drink wine on the lees well refined; they shall have the secrets of the Lord revealed unto them, because they are the people who truly fear me: they shall walk with me in white." Oh, Christian! if thou wouldst have communion with Christ, the special way to win it is by not defiling thy garments, as the church has done.

But we must dwell on the rest of the passage. "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." A good old author says there is a reference here to that fact, that the rabbis allowed persons to walk in white who could trace their pedigree without a flaw; but if they found any blot on their escutcheon, and could not trace their birth up to Abraham, they were not allowed to walk in white on certain days. Well, he says he thinks the passage means that those who have not defiled their garments will be able to prove their adoption, and will walk in white garments as being sure they are the sons of God. If we would be certain that we are the

people of God, we must take care that we have no blots on our dress, for each one of those splatterings of the mire of this earth will cry out, and say "Perhaps you are not a child of God." Nothing is such a father of doubts as sin; sin is the very mother of our distress. He who is covered with sin must not expect to enjoy full assurance, but he who liveth close to his God, and keeps his garments unspotted from the world—he shall walk in white, knowing that his adoption is sure.

But chiefly we should understand this to refer to justification. "They shall walk in white;" that is, they shall enjoy a constant sense of their own justification by faith; they shall understand that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them, that they have

A matchless robe which far exceeds  
What earthly princes wear;"

that they have been washed and make whiter than snow, and purified and made more cleanly than wool.

Again, it refers to joy and gladness: for white robes were holiday dresses among the Jews. They that have not defiled their garments, shall have their faces always bright; they shall understand what Solomon meant when he said, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart. Let thy garments be always white, for God hath accepted thy works." He who is accepted of God shall wear white garments, being received by the Father—garments of joy and gladness. Whence so many doubts, so much distress, and misery, and mourning? It is because the church has defiled her garments; they do not here below walk in white, because they are not worthy.

And lastly, it refers to walking in white before the throne of God. Those who have not defiled their garments here, shall most certainly walk in white up yonder, where the white-robed hosts sing perpetual hallelujahs to the Most High. If thou hast not defiled thy garments, thou mayest say, "I know whom I have believed;" not for my works, not by way of merit, but as the reward of grace. If there be joys inconceivable, happiness beyond a dream, bliss which imagination knoweth not, blessedness which

even the stretch of desire hath not reached, thou shalt have all these: thou shalt walk in white, since thou art worthy. Christ shall say to thee "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

But what shall be done with such persons as live in the church, but are not of it having a name to live, but are dead? What shall be done with mere professors who are not possessors? What shall become of those who are only outwardly religious but inwardly are in the gall of bitterness? We answer, as good Calvin did once: "They shall walk in black, for they are unworthy." They shall walk in black—the blackness of God's destruction. They shall walk in black—the blackness of hopeless despair. They shall walk in black—the blackness of incomparable anguish. They shall walk in black—the blackness of damnation. They shall walk in black for ever, because they were found unworthy. O professors, search yourselves. O ministers, search yourselves. O ye, who make a profession of religion now, put your hands within your hearts, and search your souls. You live in the sight of a rein-trying God. Oh! try your own reins, and search your own hearts. It is not a matter of half-importance for which I plead, but a matter of double importance. I beseech you, examine and cross-examine your own souls, and see whether ye be in the path, for it will go ill with you if ye shall find at last that ye were in the church, but not of it, that ye make a profession of religion, but it was only a cloak for your hypocrisy—if ye should have entered into his courts below, and be shut out of the courts above. Remember, the higher the pinnacle of profession the direr your fall of destruction. Beggared kings, exile princes, crownless emperors, are always subjects of pity. Professor, what wilt thou think of thyself when thy robes are taken from thee, when thy crown of profession is taken from thy head, and thou standest the hiss of even vile men, the scoff of blasphemers, the jeer of those who, whatever they were, were not hypocrites, as thou art? They will cry to thee, "Art thou become like one of us? Thou professor, thou high-flying man, art thou become like one of us?" And ye will hide your guilty heads in the dark pit of perdition, but all in vain, for you never will be able to avoid that hiss which shall ever greet you. "What! thou!" the drunkard whom you told to drink no more will say "Art thou become like one of us?" And the harlot whom you scorned, and the young debauched man whom you warned, will stare you in the face, and say, "What! you! You who talked of religion. A pretty fellow you were!

Art thou become one of us?" Oh! I think I hear them saying in hell, "Here's a parson, come here; here's a deacon; here's a church member; here's a man who has had the sacramental wine within his lips; here's a man that has had the baptismal water on his garments." Ah! take care. There are but a few names in Sardis who shall walk in white. Be ye of that few. May God give you grace that ye be not reprobates, but may be accepted of the Lord in that day! May he give you mercy, that when he severs the chaff from the wheat, you may abide as the good corn, and may not be swept away into unquenchable fire! The Lord in mercy bless this warning, and hear our supplication, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **Solitude, Silence, Submission**

He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope. - Lamentations 3:28-29

Thus the prophet describes the conduct of a person in deep anguish of heart. When he does not know what to do, his soul, as if by instinct, humbles itself. He gets into some secret place, he utters no speech, he gives himself over to moaning and to tears, and then he bows himself lower and yet lower before the Divine Majesty, as if he felt that the only hope for him in the extremity of his sorrow was to make complete submission to God, and to lie in the very dust before him.

It seems to me that such conduct as this, which is characteristic of every truly gracious man in his hour of trouble, should also be the mark of all who are seeking God's grace, those who are not yet saved, but who are conscious of their need of salvation. I must, surely, be speaking right into the heart of some who are feeling the crushing weight and heavy burden of their guilt. If you cannot do anything else, dear friends, do what these two verses say, in order that, afterwards, you may be able to take that grand gospel step of faith in Jesus Christ which will certainly bring you

into peace and joy.

Those of you who have the Revised Version will notice a correction which has been made long ago by all competent scholars:—"Let him sit alone and keep silence, because he hath laid it upon him. Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope." It does not matter which way you read the passage, because the conduct of one gracious man is virtually a precept to another; yet it is satisfactory to find that, if we are under the burden of sin, we are here commanded to do as the prophet did in his time of need.

My object just now is to explain this line of conduct, in the hope that some who are in trouble will at once heartily follow it.

I. First, then, observe that, in the time of great trouble HOLY SOLITUDE is commended to us: "Let him sit alone."

I earnestly advise you who are under concern of soul to seek to get alone, and to be quiet and thoughtful in your solitude; not merely to be alone, but to sit by yourself like a person in the posture of thought. When a soul is under a deep sense of sin, the more it can be alone, the better. That sense of sin will be increased by the loneliness; and when it becomes intolerable, it is highly probable that, in that loneliness, the way of its removal will be discovered in this age, we all live too much in company; and in a great city like this, we are busy from morning to night, and we do not get the opportunities for quiet reflection which our forefathers were wont to take. I am afraid, therefore, that our religion is likely to become very superficial and flimsy for the want of solitary, earnest thought. Men, nowadays, usually go in flocks; someone leads the way, and the rest follow him like sheep that rush through a gap in the hedge. It would be better for us if we deliberated more, if we used our own judgment, if we drew near to God in our own personality, and were resolved that, whatever others might do, we would seek to be personally guided by the Lord himself.

I commend solitude to any of you who are seeking salvation, first, that you may *study well your case as in the sight of God*. Few men truly know



themselves as they really are. Most people have seen themselves in a looking-glass, but there is another looking-glass, which gives true reflections, into which few men look. To study one's own self in the light of God's Word, and carefully to go over one's condition, examining both the inward and the outward sins, and using all the tests which are given us in the Scriptures, would be a very healthy exercise; but how very few care to go through it! Yet, beloved friends, if it be a wise thing to look well to your business, how much more ought you to look to the business which concerns your immortal souls! If a true shepherd will not neglect his flocks and his herds, should not a wise man care about his thoughts, his feelings, and his actions? Must it not be a wretched condition not to know whether one is saved or not? I sometimes hear people express surprise if they are asked whether they are saved; yet in what ignorance of your own soul's state must you be if you have never put that question to yourself, or if, when it is put, you feel inclined to give no answer to it! I press this matter home upon you, and if you would be saved, you must know first that you are lost. If you would seek to be healed, you must first learn that you are sick. It is not possible that you will repent unless you are aware of your sin; it is not likely that you will look to Christ unless you first know what it is for which you are to look to him. Therefore, I pray you, set apart some season every day, or at least some season as often as you can get it, in which the business of your mind shall be to take your longitude and latitude, that you may know exactly where you are. You may be drifting towards the rocks, and you may be wrecked before you know your danger. I implore you, do not let your ship go at full steam through a fog; but slacken speed a bit, and heave the lead, to see whether you are in deep waters or shallow. I am not asking you to do more than any kind and wise man would advise you to do; do I even ask you more than your own conscience tells you is right? Sit alone a while, that you may carefully consider your case.

Get alone again, dear friend,—especially dear young friend,—that you may *diligently search the Scriptures*. I am often astounded at the ignorance there still is of what is written in God's Word. Many persons who have even been in Sunday-schools for years, seem to be totally unaware of the plainest truths of the gospel of God's grace; but how can we know what is revealed unless we read and study it for ourselves? Alas,

the dust upon many men's Bibles will condemn them! God has been pleased, in this Book, to give us the revelation of the way of salvation, and we ought to rush to the Book with eager anxiety to know what God has said in it; but, instead of doing so, though we can get a Bible for sixpence, and perhaps have a copy in every room in our house, how little do we read it! If you truly desire to be saved, get alone for the earnest and hearty study of the Word of God. How often you may meet with persons who profess to be infidels, yet if you press them closely enough, you will find that they have never even read the New Testament through. There are many more who are in doubt and anxiety, yet they have never gone to see what are the promises of God, and what the Lord is ready to do for them that seek him. I beseech you, as sensible and reasonable beings, do not let God speak to you, and you refuse to hear. You need to be saved from sin, in this Book God has revealed the way of salvation, therefore do not shut up the Book, and fasten the clasps, and leave it neglected. Oh, Book of books, the map of the way to glory; that man invokes a terrible curse upon his own head who refuses to study thee! He does, in effect, shut the gate of heaven against himself, and bar the road to everlasting bliss. If you would be saved, dear friend, sit alone, and consider your case, and then study God's thoughts concerning it.

Get alone, further, that you may *commune with your God*. After we have once learnt the way, we can commune with God anywhere,—amidst the roar and turmoil of the crowded city, or on the top of the mast of a ship; but, to begin with, it is best to be alone with the Lord. My dear hearer, have you ever spoken to God in all your life? Have you ever realized that there is such a King in the room with you? There is such a King; it is he who made you, and who has preserved you up to this good hour. You are, surely, not prepared to deny his existence; and if you are not, I beseech you, do not ignore that existence, and live as if there were no God. Oh, speak with him at once! Perhaps five minutes' earnest speech with him may be the turning-point of your life. "I will arise and go to my Father," was the turning-point with the prodigal; and it may be the same with you. "Oh, but I feel so guilty!" Then get alone, and say that to the Lord. "But I do not feel as I ought." Then get alone, and tell that to God. "Oh! but I—I am such an unbelieving being." Get alone, and tell out all the truth to the Lord; do not entertain a thought or a feeling which you dare not tell to

him. Do not imagine that you can hide anything from him, for he reads your inmost heart. Then take that heart, and lay it bare before him, and say with the psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." As one of God's creatures, I could not bear to think that I had seen the glory of the midnight stars, or warmed myself in the brightness of the noonday sun, and yet had never spoken to him who made them all and myself as well. One of our sweetest joys on earth is to speak with him in prayer and praise, to call him Friend, and to be on terms of sweet familiarity with the Most High. I do pray you, then, get alone for these three purposes, first, to consider your case, next, to study the Scriptures concerning your case, and then, that you may speak with God in prayer.

Get alone also for one other reason, and that is, that you may *avoid distraction*. I think that, on the Lord's-day, when people go home, after service, they sometimes make a mistake in talking with those who do not feel as they feel. If the arrows of God have entered your heart, go home alone. If there has been anything in the sermon which has been for your comfort as a Christian, go home alone. If there was anything in the sermon which has been for your warning as a sinner, go home alone. How often may even godly and gracious people talk upon some theme that may rob their fellow-believers of all the good they have received in God's house; and, as for unconverted persons, I am sure that, if they ever feel impressed under the Word, it will be their utmost wisdom to take care of that first impression, and not let it be driven away by foolish or frivolous conversation.

Some of us are old enough to recollect the day before there were matches of the kind we now use, and early on a frosty morning some of us have tried to strike a light with flint and steel, and the old-fashioned tinder-box. How long we struck, and struck, and watched, and waited, and at last there was a little spark in the tinder, and then we would hold the box up, and blow on it very softly, that we might keep that little spark alight till we had kindled the fire that we wanted. That tenderness over the first spark is what I invite everyone to practice in spiritual matters. If you would be saved, if there is anything like feeling in your heart, if there is

any good desire in your soul, do not begin to talk as soon as you get out of the Tabernacle; that would be like placing the lid on the tinder, and putting the spark out; but get alone, blow on that spark, for peradventure it may come to a flame, and you may find salvation. I advise all persons under sorrow of soul somehow or other to break right away from their companions; when the day's work is done, let them each one say to themselves, "I am not going out with that frivolous person, nor shall I sit in the house with those who will be talking of trifling matters; I have a soul that needs salvation, and I must have my soul saved now. I cannot afford to be in this giddy company."

"Let him sit alone." That is good advice which the prophet gives in the text, and I desire to press it upon every awakened person who desires to find the Savior.

II. The text goes on to say, in the next place, that we should practice SUBMISSIVE SILENCE: "Let him sit alone and keep silence."

In what respects should seeking souls keep silence? I answer, first, if the burden of sin is pressing upon thee, be sure to abstain from all *idle talk*; for if the idle talk of others, as I have reminded thee, can distract thy thoughts, how much more would thine own! It ill becomes a man, who is on the brink of hell, to be laughing and jesting. When God is angry with thee, canst thou make mirth? I can understand how thou canst be merry when once thou hast come back to the great Father's house, and the fatted calf is killed, and thy Father rejoices over thee; but whilst thou art still covered with thy sins, and art not yet sure of God's forgiveness, sit silent. It is the best thing thou canst do; quietness becomes thee. Lay thy finger on thy lip till thou hast something better to speak of than thou hast as yet. Keep silence, then, from all idle talk.

Keep silence also in another respect. Do not attempt to make any *excuse for your sin*. Oh, how ready sinners are with their excuses! A man says, "But, sir, I have a besetting sin." Do you not think that a great many people make a mistake about besetting sins? There was a negro who used to get drunk, and he said that it was his besetting sin; but his brother negro said, "No, Sambo, it is your upsetting sin;" and so it was. If I were

to go to-night across Clapham Common, and half-a-dozen men were to surround me, and rob me of my purse, then I should be beset; but if I were to know that there were thieves there, and yet I walked across the common on purpose to meet with them, you could not say that they had beset me, you would say that I was a fool to walk into their hands. The besetting sin is that which a man fights against, and wars against with all his soul, yet he is overcome by it. Do not lay any stress upon that, as though thy being beset by sin was any excuse to thee, especially if thou goest into the ways of sin. You go and sit with those who drink, and then wonder that you get drunk! You go and associate with those who swear or sing lewd songs, and then you wonder that, the next time you try to pray, a nasty verse of a bad song comes up! It is your own fault; if you go and wilfully mingle with sinners, how can you be a child of God? No, when you know that anything is a sin, keep out of the temptation. He that does not want to get wet should not go out into the rain. Instead of your excuse making your case any better, it makes it worse; therefore, keep silence before thy God.

And next, keep silence from all *complaining of God*. No man is truly saved while he sets himself up as the judge of God; yet this is the practice of many men. If you give them the Word of God, they begin to pull it to pieces. They ask, "Is God so severe that he will mark our faults? Does he even take notice of our evil thoughts? Can it really be true that, for every idle word that a man shall speak, he will have to give an account in the day of judgment?" And then, after judging God to be austere, and too harsh in his dealings with poor fallible flesh and blood, they go on to snatch from his hand the balance and the rod, and sit upon their little throne, and dare to impugn the decrees of the great Judge of all. "It would be wrong," they say, "to cast men into hell, and to punish with eternal wrath the sins of a short life." And then they begin to traverse all the teaching of Scripture, and to cavil at this and object to that. O sirs, if you would be saved, you must give up this wickedness! This kind of conduct will damn you as surely as you live.

When prisoners are tried by an earthly judge, and are condemned to die, if they are permitted to speak, they can have no hope of obtaining mercy by criticising the judge, and cavilling at the law. Of course they are not

guilty, poor innocents!" It is the harsh law," they say, "that is to blame." But the law must maintain its majesty against such cavillers, and it cannot stoop to mercy, or sheath its sword, while a man is in that humor. So, sinner, sit thou alone, and keep thou silence; presume not to judge thy God. Behold, he cometh with clouds! The trumpet will soon proclaim his appearing, and they who were so free to judge their Maker will cry in another tone when that great day has at last come. With the earth reeling beneath their feet, and the heavens themselves on fire, they will beg the rocks to fall on them, and the hills to hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. Go, thou guilty one, sit thee still, and hold thy tongue, and bring thy rebellious heart to submission. Shall the flax contend with the fire, or the stubble fight with the flame? What canst thou do in warring with thy Maker?

Sit thou alone, and keep silence, next, from all *claims of merit*. I know that the tendency of the human heart is to say, "I am no worse than other people, I am a good chapel-going, church-going, psalm-singing person. I give to the poor, I say my prayers, and attend to all that sort of thing." Thou wilt never obtain mercy whilst thou hast a word of that kind to plead. Till thou art like a vessel turned upside down, and drained of every drop of human merit, there is no hope of salvation for thee. Thou must sit alone, and keep silence about those good works of thine, for they are all a lie, and thou knowest it. Thou hast never done a good work in thy life; thou hast either spoilt it by thy selfish motives before it, or by some carelessness in it, or else by some vainglorious pride after it. At the best, thou art nothing but a boasting Pharisee; and though thou mayest wash the outside of thy cup and platter, yet thine heart is full of wickedness, thy soul is steeped in sin. O man, talk no more so exceeding proudly, but sit thou still, and hold thy tongue about merit and deservings before the holy God. There is no way of mercy for any one of us until we shut our mouths, and utter not a single boastful word, but stand guiltily silent before the Lord.

I think it is well, too, when a poor sin-burdened soul is silent before God, and unable to make any *bold speeches*. I recollect that, when I first was seeking the Lord, I heard some good people talking about their confidence in God. I had to hold my tongue then, for I could not say a

word about that matter. I heard a young friend say that he had found Christ; but I had to hold my tongue then, for I knew that I had not found him, and even after I had found him, there were times when I dared not say so. I felt in my spirit the question, "Am I self-deceived, or am I not? And if I have spoken pretty boldly since that time, even now, occasionally, I feel that same silence creeping over me. It would have been well if Peter had been silent when he said to his Lord, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." I like a man who knows, not only how to speak, but how to sit still; but that latter part is hard work to many. There came a young man to Demosthenes to learn oratory; he talked away at a great rate, and Demosthenes said, "I must charge you double fees." "Why?" he asked. "Why," said the master, "I have first to teach you to hold your tongue, and afterwards to instruct you how to speak." The Lord teaches true penitents how to hold their tongues. They open not their mouth when he has laid trouble upon them, and even in the company of good people they are sometimes dumb with silence, and they hold their tongue even from good. It is not an ill thing that they should act thus, for often the will of the Lord is not done with words; and sometimes, that silence which is frost of the mouth is thaw of the soul, and the heart flows best before God when even praise sits silent on our tongues. O beloved, in thine hour of darkness because of thy sin, sit thou still, and hold thy tongue, for it is oftentimes the way of peace to the soul!

III. Now I shall ask your special and patient attention for just a few minutes to the third point, which is, **PROFOUND HUMILIATION**: "Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope." Upon this matter, I would earnestly address those who are not yet saved, but who desire to be.

Dear friends, it often happens that men do not obtain peace with God because they have not come low enough. The gate of heaven, though it is so wide that the greatest sinner may enter, is nevertheless so low that pride can never pass through it. Thou must stoop if thou wouldst enter heaven. "Let him put his mouth in the dust." I do believe that this precept is needed by very many; and That, when they obey it, they will get peace, but never till then. "Let him put his mouth in the dust." Oriental monarchs require very lowly reverence from their subjects; it is out of

keeping with our manners and customs, but the similitude holds good in our relation to the Lord God. When we come before him, we must prostrate ourselves till we bow our mouths in the dust. What can this expression mean? "Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope."

It means, first, that there must be *true, humble, lowly, confession of sin*. You say that you have been praying, yet you have not found peace; have you confessed your sins? This is absolutely necessary, confess your sins to me? you ask. No, thank you; I do not want to hear your confession. It would do me much harm, and it could do you no good to tell them to me; it is to God alone that this confession should be made. Some men have never really made a confession of their sin to God at all; they have done it in such general and insincere terms that it did not amount to a confession. Go you, enter your chamber, shut the door, and get alone; and there, with words or without words, as you find it best, acknowledge before God your omissions and commissions, what you have done and what you have not done. Pour out the whole story before God, and cry with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Do not cloak or dissemble before the Almighty. Let all your sins appear. Take a lowly place; not simply be a sinner in name, but confess that thou art a sinner in fact and deed. I do believe that some of you are in darkness much longer than you need to be, because you do not stoop to a humble confession of your sin. Let the lances into this ugly gathering of yours that brings you so much inflammation of mind and pain of spirit. Let your confession flow like water before God; pour out your heart before him. Own to your sins, take the place of a sinner, for this is a great way towards finding salvation: "If so be there may be hope."

Further than that, dear friends, when it is said that we are to put our mouths in the dust, it means that we are to give up the habit of *putting ourselves above other people*, and finding fault with others. How often is the value of our penitence destroyed because we have looked at Mistress Somebody, and said, "Well, I am guilty, but still,—well, I am not such a hypocrite as Mrs. So-and-so." What have you to do with her? "Oh!" says another, "I know I have been a bad man, but then I—I—I have never been as bad as old So-and-so." What have you to do with him? Here are you



pretending to be humble, yet you are as proud as Lucifer. I know you; you are like that man who went up to the temple, and pretended that he was going to pray, and then he said, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are," and so forth;" nor even as this publican;" turning his eye in disdain towards the true penitent. There is many a man who says, "I am a sinner, but then I am a total abstainer and wear the blue ribbon; that is a good thing, is it not?" Yes, it is, but not if you trust in it for salvation. "Oh, but!" says another, "I know that I have not lived as I ought, but I have always paid 20s. in the pound." So ought every honest man, but what is there to be proud about in that? Are you going to get to heaven by paying 20s. in the pound to a man, and not a penny in the pound to God? Yet that is often the way of men. Or else perhaps we are accusing others while we pretend that we are ourselves humble. We must get rid of all such bad habits if we want the Lord to have mercy upon us. I believe a sincere penitent thinks himself to be the worst man there is, and never judges other people, for he says in his heart, "That man may be more openly guilty than I am, but very likely he does not know as much as I do, or the circumstances of his case are an excuse for him." A woman, convinced of sin, says, "It is true, that woman has fallen, and her life is full of foulness; but perhaps if I had been tempted as she was, and had been deceived as she was, I should have been even worse than she is." Oh, that we might all give up that habit of cavilling at other people, and put our mouths in the dust in self-abasement before God!

I think that putting our mouths into the dust also means that we realize *our own nothingness in the presence of God*. We have nothing to say, nothing to claim, nothing to boast of; if the Lord should never look upon us in mercy, yet we could not complain of him. If he were to banish us from his presence for ever, yet could we not open our mouths to accuse him, but must say, "Thou art just when thou judges; thou art clear when thou condemnest." That, dear friends, is putting your mouth in the dust; feeling that, in God's sight, you are only like the dust. If you have sought the Lord, and have not found him, I do exhort you to sink yourself lower. Believe that you have no strength, that you have no righteousness, that you are truly lost and ruined and undone, that you are nothing but a mass loathsomeness before the thrice-holy God; and bow before him with this conviction in your heart, "if so be there may be hope."

I am not going to preach upon that last part of the text, because the time has almost gone, and also for another reason, because I have not to say to you, "*If so be* there may be hope." There is hope for any man, or woman, or child here,—I like to say "child" as well as "man, or woman," because I believe that children are often the best part of my congregation. Last Monday week, we had five children before the church, one after the other, whose testimony for Christ was quite as clear as that of any of the elders among us. What an important part of the congregation the boys and girls make up! I believe that there are almost as many saved among the little ones now in this congregation as there are of grown-up people, perhaps even more. Well now, if any of you who are guilty,—whether old or young,—come before the Lord, and confess your sin, and trust in Christ for mercy, you shall have mercy. I do not know who you are, and I do not care who you are; but whosoever shall come, and confess his sin in all lowliness of heart, and in faith believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall have mercy. Christ sits on his throne of grace, and stretches out the silver scepter. Bow before him, and he will forgive your sin. The fountain is opened for sin and for uncleanness; if thou art sinful and unclean, come to the fountain that Christ has opened, and which the devil cannot close, and wash and be clean this very hour. God in infinite mercy is ready to forgive, his heart yearns over the wanderers. He stretches out his hands, and entreats thee to come back, and he is grieved until thou dost return. If there be in thy heart any sorrow for having sinned against thy God, if there be any anxiety to come back to him, come back. If thou dost but turn thy face towards him, whilst thou art yet a great way off, he sees, he has compassion upon thee, he runs to thee, he embraces thee. Fall into his arms now. Believe thou in his Son; trust thyself with Jesus, for he never yet failed any who trusted him. Make him the Trustee of thy soul, for he is a Trustee who can be trusted. Deposit in his hands thy spirit, for he is able to keep that which thou committest unto him against that day.

We are getting into summer, and I feel very anxious that none of my hearers should have to say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Then, before the harvest comes, now that the summer is just beginning, may the Lord incline your hearts to come and put your trust in Jesus! Many of you are from the country; you have come

to see London. Of all the sights possible to you, the best will be first to see yourselves, and then to see your Savior. There is no exhibition like the exhibition of the love of God in Jesus Christ to guilty sinners. May this be the best day you have ever lived because it shall be the first day you have ever truly lived with the life of God in your soul! I pray the Lord to bless my words to every one of you without exception. Surely, there is not anybody here who would wish to be left out. God bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **A Song Among The Lilies**

My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies. - Song of Solomon 2:16

Last Sabbath, in our morning's sermon, we began at the beginning and described the turning point in which the sinner sets his face towards his God, and for the first time gives practical evidence of spiritual life in his soul. He bestirs himself, he goes to his Father's house, and speedily is pressed to his Father's bosom, forgiven, accepted, and rejoiced over. This morning we are going far beyond that stage, to a position which I may call the very crown and summit of the spiritual life. We would conduct you from the door-step to the innermost chamber, from the outer court to the Holy of Holies, and we pray the Holy Spirit to enable each one of us who have entered in by Christ Jesus, the door, to pass boldly into the secret place of the tabernacles of the Host High, and sing with joyful heart the words of our text, "My beloved is mine, and I am his."

"For he is mine and I am his,  
The God whom I adore;  
My Father, Savior, Comforter,  
Now and for evermore."

The passage describes a high state of grace, and it is worthy of note that the description is full of Christ. This is instructive, for this is not an exceptional case, it is only one fulfillment of a general rule. Our estimate of Christ is the best gauge of our spiritual condition; as the thermometer rises in proportion to the increased warmth of the air, so does our estimate of Jesus rise as our spiritual life increases in vigor and fervency. Tell me what you think of Jesus and I will tell you what to think of yourself. Christ us, yea, more than all when we are thoroughly sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost. When pride of self fills up the soul, there is little room for Jesus; but when Jesus is fully loved, self is subdued, and sin driven out of the throne. If we think little of the Lord Jesus we have very great cause to account ourselves spiritually blind, and naked, and poor, and miserable. The rebel despises his lawful sovereign, but the favored courtier is enthusiastic in his praise. Christ crucified is the revealer of many hearts, the touchstone by which the pure gold and the counterfeit metal are discerned; his very name is as a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap; false professors cannot endure it, but true believers triumph therein. We are growing in grace when we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let everything else be gone, and let Christ fill up the entire space of our soul, then, and only then, are we rising out of the vanity of the flesh into the real life of God.

Beloved, the grandest facts in all the world to a truly spiritual man are not the rise and fall of empires, the marches of victory, or the desolations of defeat; he cares neither for crowns nor mitres, swords nor shields; his admiring gaze is wholly fixed upon Christ and his cross and cause. To him Jesus is the center of history, the soul and core of providence. He desires no knowledge so much as that which concerns his Redeemer and Lord; his science deals with what Jesus is and what he is to be, what he has done, what he is doing, and what he will do. The believer is mainly anxious as to how Jesus can be glorified, and how sinners can be brought to know him. That which concerns the honor of Jesus is our chief concern from day to day; as for other matters let the Lord do as he wills with them, only let Jesus Christ be magnified, and all the rest of the world's story has small significance for us. The Beloved is the head and front, the heart and soul of the Christian's delight when his heart is in its best state. Our text is the portrait of a heavenly-minded child of God, or rather, it is

the music of his well stringed harp when love as minstrel touches the tenderest chords: "My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies."

We shall note then, first, that here is a delighting to have Christ; secondly, a delighting to belong to Christ; and thirdly, a delighting at the very thought of Christ.

I. First, here is A DELIGHTED TO HAVE CHRIST. "My beloved is mine." The spouse makes this the first of her joy notes, the cornerstone of her peace, the fountain of her bliss, the crown of her glory. Observe here that where such an expression is truthfully used the existence of the Beloved is matter of fact. Scepticism, and questioning have no place with those who thus sing. There are dreamers now-adays who cast doubt on everything; taking to themselves the name of philosophers, and professing to know something of science, they make statements worthy only of idiots, and demand for their self-evidently false assertions the assent of rational men. The word "philosopher" will soon come to mean a lover of ignorance, and the term "a scientific man" will be understood as meaning a fool, who has said in his heart there is no God. Such attacks upon the eternal verities of our holy faith can have no effect upon hearts enamoured of the Son of God, for, dwelling in his immediate presence, they have passed the stage of doubt, left the region of questioning far behind, and in this matter have entered into rest. The power of love has convinced us; to entertain a doubt as to the reality and glory of our Well-beloved would be torment to us, and therefore love has cast it out. We use no perhapses, buts, or ifs concerning our Beloved, but we say positively that he is, and that he is ours. We believe that we have better evidence of his being, power, Godhead, and love to us than can be given for any other fact. So far from being abashed by the cavils of sceptics, or quailing beneath the question, "Is there such a Beloved?" we are not careful to answer in this matter, for we know that there is; our love laughs at the question, and does not condescend to answer it save by bidding those who seriously inquire to "come and see" for themselves. We have ever found, beloved, that when a time of chilling doubt has come over us—and such ague fits will come—we have only to return to meditations upon Jesus and he becomes his own evidence by making our hearts burn

within us with love of his character and person, and then doubt is doomed. We do not slay our unbelief by reason, but we annihilate it by affection. The influence of love to Jesus upon the soul is so magical—I wish I had a better word—so elevating, so ravishing, so transporting, it gives such a peace, and withal inspires such holy and lofty aspirations, that the effect proves the cause. That which is holy is true, and that which is true cannot rise out of that which is false. We may safely judge a tree by its fruit, and a doctrine by its result: that which produces in us self-denial, purity, righteousness, and truth, cannot itself be false, and yet the love of Jesus does this beyond everything else. There must be truth for a cause where truth is the effect; and thus love, by the savor which it spreads over the soul by contemplation of Christ, puts its foot upon the neck of doubt and triumphantly utters bold, confident declarations, which reveal the full assurance of faith. New-born love to Jesus, while yet in its cradle, like a young Hercules, takes the serpents of doubt and strangles them. He who can say from his heart "My Beloved," is the man who is in the way to confirmed faith. Love cannot, will not doubt; it casts away the crutches of argument and flies on the wings of conscious enjoyment, singing her nuptial hymn, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his."

In the case before us the love of the heavenly-minded one is perceived and acknowledged by herself. "My beloved," saith she; it is no latent affection, she knows that she loves him, and solemnly avows it. She does not whisper, "I hope I love the peerless one," but she sings, "My beloved." There is no doubt in her soul about her passion for the altogether lovely one. Ah, dear friends, when you feel the flame of love within your soul, and give it practical expression, you will no longer inquire, "Do I love the Lord or no?" Then your inner consciousness will dispense with evidences. Those are dark days when we require evidences; well may we then fast, for the Bridegroom is not with us; but when he abides with us, enjoyment of his fellowship supersedes all evidences. I want no evidence to prove that food is sweet when it is still in my month; I want no evidence of the existence of the sun when I am basking in his beams, and enjoying his light, and even so we need no evidence that Jesus is precious to us when, like a bundle of myrrh, he perfumes our bosom. We are anxious doubters as to our safety, and questioners of our own condition, because we are not living with Jesus as we ought to be; but when he brings us to his

banqueting house, and we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with him and with the Father, and then we believe and are sure, and our love to Jesus is indisputable, because it burns within too fervently to be denied. Why, when a Christian is in a right state, his love to Jesus is the mightiest force in his nature, it is an affection which, like Aaron's rod, swallows up all other rods; it is the mainspring of his action, and sways his whole body, soul, and spirit. As the wind sweeps over all the strings of the Alolian harp, and causes them all to vibrate, so does the love of Jesus move every power and passion of our soul, and we feel in our entire being that our Beloved is indeed ours, and that we love him with all our hearts. Here, then, is the Beloved realized, and our love realised too.

But the pith of the text lies here, our possession of him is proven, we know it, and we know it on good evidence—"My beloved is mine." You know it is not a very easy thing to reach this point. Have you ever thought of the fact that to claim the Lord and call him "my God," is a very wonderful thing? Who was the first man in the Old Testament who is recorded as saying "My God"? Was it not Jacob, when he slept at Bethel, and saw the ladder which reached to heaven? Even after that heavenly vision it took him touch effort to reach to "My God." He said "If God will be with me and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put On, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God." Only after long experience of divine goodness could he climb up to the height of saying "My God." And who is the first man in the New Testament that calls Jesus "My Lord and My God"? It was Thomas, and he must needs have abundant proofs before he can speak thus: "Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Only when he had received such proofs could he exclaim "My Lord and my God." Blessed are they who reach it by simpler faith, who have not seen and yet have believed. "My Beloved" is a strong expression. "Beloved" is sweet, but "MY Beloved" is sweetest of all. If you think of it, it is no little thing to claim God as ours, to claim Jesus the Beloved as ours, yea, to put it in the singular, and call him mine; and yet, when the believer's heart is in the right condition, he makes the claim, and is warranted in so doing; for Jesus Christ is the portion of all

believers. His Father gave him to us, and he has given himself to us. Jesus was made over to every believing soul, as his personal possession, in the eternal covenant ordered in all things and sure; Jesus actually gave himself for us in his incarnation, becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; he has made himself ours by his passion and death, loving us and giving himself for us, to save us from our sins; he has also given us power to appropriate him by the gracious gift of faith, by which we are in very deed married to him, and are enabled to call him the husband of our souls, who is ours to have and to hold, for better for worse, for life and for death, by a bond of marriage union which neither death nor hell, time nor eternity, can break. Jesus is ours by the promise, the covenant, and oath of God; a thousand assurances and pledges, bonds and seals, secure him to us as our portion and everlasting heritage.

This precious possession becomes to the believer his sole treasure. "My beloved is mine," saith he, and in that sentence he has summed up all his wealth. He does not say "My wife, my children, my home, my earthly comforts are mine." He is almost afraid to say so, because while he is yet speaking, they may cease to be his: the beloved wife may sicken before his eyes, the child may need a tiny coffin, the friend may prove a traitor, and the riches may take to themselves wings, therefore the wise man does not care to say too positively that anything here below is his; indeed, he feels that in very truth they are not his, but only lent to him "to be returned anon"; but the Beloved is his own, and his possession of him is most firm. Neither doth the believer when his soul is in the best state so much rejoice even in his spiritual privileges as in the Lord from whom they come. He has righteousness, wisdom, sanctification and redemption; he has both grace and glory secured to him, but he prefers rather to claim the fountain than the streams. He clearly sees that these choice mercies are only his because they are Christ's, and only his because Christ is his. Oh, what would all the treasures of the covenant be to us if it were possible to have them without Christ? Their very sap and sweetness would be gone. Having our Beloved to be ours, we have all things in him, and therefore our main treasure, yea, our sole treasure, is our Beloved. O ye saints of God, was there ever possession like this? You have your beloveds, ye daughters of earth, but what are your beloveds compared with ours? He is the Son of God and the Son of Man! The darling of



heaven and the delight of earth! The lily of the valley and the rose of Sharon! Perfect in his character, powerful in his atoning death, mighty in his living plea! He is such a lover that all earthly loves put together are not worthy to touch the hem of his garment, or loose the latchet of his shoes. He is so dear, so precious, that words cannot describe him nor pencil depict him, but this we will say of him, he is "the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely," and he is ours. Do you wonder that we glory in this fact, and count this the crowning delight of our lives, "My beloved is mine"?

The very tenure upon which we hold this priceless possession is a matter to glory in. O worldlings, you cannot hold your treasures as we hold ours. If you knew all, you would never say of anything, "It is mine," for your holding is too precarious to constitute possession. It is yours till that frail thread of life shall snap, or that bubble of time shall burst. You have only a leasehold of your treasures, terminable at the end of one frail life; whereas ours is an eternal freehold, an everlasting entail. "My beloved is mine,"—I cannot lose him, nor can he be taken from me; he is mine for ever, for "who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? "So that, while the possession is rare, the tenure is rare also, and it the life of our life, and the light of our delight that we can sing -

"Yea, thou art mine, my blessed Lord,  
O my Beloved, thou art mine!  
And, purchased with thy precious blood,  
My God and Savior, I am thine.

"MY CHRIST! Oh, sing it in the heavens,  
Let every angel lift his voice;  
Sound with ten thousand harps his praise,  
With me, ye heavenly hosts, rejoice.

"The gift unspeakable is given,  
The grace of God has made him mine;  
And, now, before both earth and heaven,  
Lord, I will own that I am thine."

Now, beloved friends, I cannot talk about this as I feel, I can only give you hints of that which fills me to the full with joy. I beg you to contemplate for a single moment the delight which is stored up in this fact, that the blessed Son of God, the "brightness of the Father's glory," is all our own. Whatever else we may have, or may not have, he is ours. I may not exhibit in my character all the grace I could wish, but "My beloved is mine"; I may have only one talent, but "My beloved is mine"; I may be very poor and very obscure, but "My beloved is mine"; I may have neither health nor wealth, but "My beloved is mine"; I may not be what I want to be, but "My beloved is mine." Yea, he is altogether mine, his Godhead and his manhood, his life, his death, his attributes, and prerogatives, yea, all he is, all he was, all he ever will be, all he has done, and all he ever will do, is mine. I possess not a portion in Christ, but the whole of him. All his saints own him, but I own him as much as if there were never another saint to claim him. Child of God, do you see this? In other inheritances, if there are many heirs, there is so much the less for each, but in this great possession every one who has Christ has a whole Christ all to himself, from the head of much fine gold, down to his legs, which are as pillars of marble. The whole of his boundless heart of love, his whole arm of infinite might, and his whole head of matchless wisdom,—all is for thee, beloved. Whoever thou mayst be, if thou dost indeed trust in Jesus, he is all thine own.

My beloved is all mine, and absolutely mine; not mine to look at and talk about merely, but mine to trust in, to speak to, to depend upon, to fly to in every troublous hour, yea, mine to feed upon, for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. Our beloved is not ours only to use in certain ways, but ours outright, without restriction. I may draw what I will from him, and both what I take and what I leave are mine. He himself in his ever glorious person is mine, and mine always; mine when I know it, and mine when I do not know it, mine when I am sure of it, and mine when I doubt it; mine by day, and mine by night; mine when I walk in holiness, ay, and mine when I sin, for "if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He is mine on the hill Mizar, and mine in the swellings of Jordan; mine by the grave where I bury those I love, mine when I shall be buried there myself, mine when I

rise again; mine in judgment, and mine in glory; for ever mine.

Note well that it is written, "My beloved is mine," in the singular. He is yours, I am glad of it; but still to me it is most sweet that he is mine. It is well to bless God that others have a possession in Christ, but what would that avail if we were strangers to him ourselves? The marrow and the fatness lie in the personal pronoun singular, "My beloved is mine." "I am so glad that Jesus loves me." Oh for a blessed grip with both hands on such a Christ as this! Observe well that he is ours as our Beloved, so that he is ours as whatever our love makes of him. Our love can never praise him enough, or speak well enough of him, she thinks all descriptions fall short of his deservings; well, then, Jesus is ours at his best; if we think him so glorious, he is ours in all that glory. Our love says that he is a fair, lovely, sweet, and precious Christ, and let us be sure that, however lovely, sweet, and precious he is, he is all ours. Our love says there is none like him, he is King of kings and Lord of lords, he is the ever blessed; well, as the King of kings and Lord of lords he is yours. You cannot think too much of him, but when you think your best he is yours at that best. He has not a glory so high that it is not yours, nor a lustre so brilliant that it is not yours. He is my beloved, and I would fain extol him, but never can I get beyond this golden circle, when I most extol him he is still mine.

Here, then, is the basis of Christian life, the foundation on which it rests: to know that most surely Christ is altogether ours is the beginning of wisdom, the source of strength, the star of hope, the dawn of heaven.

II. The second portion of the text deals with DELIGHTING TO BELONG TO CHRIST. "I am his." This is as sweet as the former sentence. I would venture to put a question to each loving wife here present—when you were married which was the sweetest thought to you, that you were your husband's, or that he was yours? Why, you feel that neither sentence would be sweet alone: they are necessary to each other. Ask any fond, loving heart which of these declarations could best be parted with, and they will tell you that neither can be given up. Christ is mine, but if I were not his it would be a sorry case, and if I were his and he were not mine it would be a wretched business. These two things are joined together with diamond rivets—"My beloved is mine, and I am his." Put the two

together, and you have reached the summit of delight.

That we are his is a fact that may be prove—yea, it should need no proving, but be manifest to all that "I am his." Certainly we are his by creation: he who made us should have us. We are his because his Father gave us to him, and we are his because he chose us. Creation, donation, election are his triple hold upon us. We are his because he bought us with his blood, his because he called us by his grace, his because he is married to us, and we are his spouse. We are his, moreover, to our own consciousness, because we have heartily, from the inmost depths of our being, given ourselves up to him, bound by love to him for ever. We feel we must have Christ, and be Christ's, or die—"For me to live is Christ." Brethren and sisters, mind you attend to this clause, I am sure you will if the former one is true to you. If you can say, "My beloved is mine," you will be sure to add, "I am his, I must be his, I will be his: I live not unless I am his, for I count that wherein I am not his I am dead, and I only live wherein I live to him." My very soul is conscious that I am his.

Now this puts very great honor upon us. I have known the time when I could say "My beloved is mine" in a very humble trembling manner, but I did not dare to add "I am his" because I did not think I was worth his having. I dared not hope that "I am his" would ever be written in the same book side by side with "My beloved is mine." Poor sinner, first lay hold on Jesus, and then you will discover that Jesus values you. You will prize him first, and then you will find out that he prizes you, and that though you do not feel worthy to be flung on a dunghill, yet Jesus has put a value upon you, saying "Since thou wert precious in my sight thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee." It is no small joy to know that we poor sinners are worth Christ's having, and that he has even said, "They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels."

This second part of the text is true as absolutely as the first. "I am his"—not my goods only, nor my time, nor my talents, nor what I can spare, but "I am his." I fear that some Christians have never understood this. They give the Lord a little of their surplus, which they never miss. The poor widow who gave all her living, had the true idea of her relation to her Lord. She would have put herself into the treasury if she could, for she

felt "I am his." As for myself, I wish I could be dropped bodily through the little slit of Christ's treasure box, and be in his casket for ever, never to be heard of any more as my own, but to be wholly my Lord's. Paul desired to spend and be spent. It is not easy to do those two things distinctly with money, for when you spend a thing it is spent at one and the same time, but the apostle meant that he would spend himself by activity, and then when he could do no more, he would be glad to be spent by passive endurance for Christ's sake. The believer feels that he belongs to Jesus absolutely; let the Lord employ him as he may, or try him as he pleases; let him take away all earthly friends from him or surround him with comforts; let him either depress him or exalt him, let him use him for little things or great things, or not use him at all, but lay him on the shelf; it is enough that the Lord does it, and the true heart is content, for it truthfully confesses, "I am his. I have no mortgage or lien upon myself, so that I can call a part of my being my own, but I am absolutely and unreservedly my Lord's sole property." Do you feel this, brethren and sisters? I pray God you may.

Blessed be God, this is true evermore—"I am his," his to-day, in the house of worship, and his to-morrow in the house of business; his as a singer in the sanctuary, and his as a toiler in the workshop; his when I am preaching, and equally his when I am walking the streets; his while I live, his when I die; his when my soul ascends and my body lies mouldering in the grave; the whole personality of my manhood is altogether his for ever and for ever.

This belonging to the Well-beloved is a matter of fact and practice, not a thing to be talked about only, but really to be acted on. I am treading on tender ground now, but I would to God that every Christian could really say this without lying: "I do live unto Christ in all things, for I am his. When I rise in the morning I wake up as his, when I sit down to a meal I eat as his, and drink as his. I eat, and drink, and sleep unto the Lord, in everything giving thanks unto him. It is blessed even to sleep as the Lord's beloved, to dream as his Abrahams and Jacobs do, to awake at night and sing like David, and then drop off to "sleep in Jesus." "It is a high condition," say you. I grant it, but it is where we ought to abide. The whole of our time and energy should be consecrated by this great master

principle, "I am his." Can you say it? Never rest till you can. And if you can, beloved, it involves great privilege. "I am his," then am I honored by having such an owner. If a horse or a sheep is said to belong to the Queen, everybody thinks much of it: now you are not the Queen's, but you are the Lord's, and that is far more. Through belonging to Christ you are safe, for he will surely keep his own. He will not lose his own sheep, he paid too dear a price for them to lose them. Against all the powers of earth and hell the Redeemer will hold his own and keep them to the end. If you are his he will provide for you. A good husband careth for his spouse, and even thus the Lord Jesus Christ cares for those who are betrothed unto him. You will be perfected too, for whatever Christ has he will make worthy of himself and bring it to glory. It is because we are his that we shall get to heaven, for he has said, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." Because they are his he would have them with him.

Now, give your thoughts licence to wonder that any one of us should be able to say, "I am his." "I who used to be so giddy and thought" less, So sceptical, and perhaps profane, I am his." Ay, and some of you can say, "I who used to be passionate and proud, I who was a drunkard, I whose lips were black with blasphemy, I am his." Glory he unto thee, O Jesus Christ, for this, that thou hast taken up such worthless things as we are and made us thine. No longer do we belong to this present evil world, we live for the world to come. We do not even belong to the church, so as to make it our master; we are part of the flock, but like all the rest we belong to the Great Shepherd. We will not give ourselves up to any party, or become the slave of any denomination, for we belong to Christ. We do not belong to sin, or self, or Satan; we belong entirely, exclusively, and irrevocably to the Lord Jesus Christ. Another master waits upon us and asks us to give our energies to his services, but our answer is, "I am already engaged." "How is that?" "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus, and therefore from henceforth trouble me no more." "But can you not serve me in part?" "No, sir, I cannot serve two masters; I am not like a man who can do as he pleases, I have no time to call my own." "How is that?" "I belong to Christ, I am wholly his. If there is anything to be done for him I am his man to the best of my ability; I decline no service to which he calls me, but I can serve no other Lord." Lord Jesus, help each one of

us now to say -

"I am thine, and thine alone,  
This I gladly, fully own;  
And in all my works and ways,  
Only now would seek thy praise."

III. To conclude: the saint feels DELIGHT IN THE VERY THOUGHT OF CHRIST. "He feedeth among the lilies." When we love any persons, and we are away from home, we delight to think of them, and to remember what they are doing. You are a husband travailing in a foreign land; this morning you said to yourself, "At this time they are just getting up at home." Perhaps the time is different, for you are in another longitude, and you say to yourself, "Ah, now the dear children are just getting ready to go to the Sabbath-school;" and by-and-by you think they are at dinner. So delight in the thought of Christ made the church say, "He feedeth among the lilies." She was pleased to think of where he was and what he was doing.

Now, where is Jesus? What are these lilies? Do not these lilies represent the pure in heart, with whom Jesus dwells? The spouse used the imagery which her Lord had put into her mouth. He said "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters," and she appropriates the symbol to all the saints. A preacher who is great at spiritualizing has well said on this verse, "The straight stalk, standing up erect from the earth, its flowers as high from the ground as possible, do they not tell us of heavenly-mindedness? Do they not seem to say, 'set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth'? And if the spotless snow of the leaves teaches us of grace, then the gold of the anthers tells us of that crown which shall be the reward of grace." The violet and the primrose in spring nestle close to the earth, as if in sympathy with her chill condition, but the lily lifts up itself towards heaven in sympathy with the summer's light and splendor. The lily is frail, and such are the saints of God; were not Jesus among them to protect them the wild beast would soon tread them down. Frail as they are, they are surpassingly lovely, and their beauty is not that which is made with hands. It is a beauty put upon them by the Lord, for "they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his

glory was not arrayed like one of these." The saints work not for life, and spin no righteousness of their own, and yet the royal righteousness which adorns them far surpasses all that wisdom could devise or wealth procure.

Where, then, is my Lord to-day? He is up and away, among the lilies of Paradise. In imagination I see those stately rows of milkwhite lilies growing no longer among thorns: lilies which are never soiled with the dust of earth, which for ever glisten with the eternal dews of fellowship, while their roots drink in unfading life from the river of the water of life which waters the garden of the Lord. There is Jesus! Can you see him? He is fairer even than the lilies which bow their heads around him. But he is here too where we are, like lilies which have scarce opened yet, lily buds as yet, but still watered by the same river, and yielding in our measure the same perfume. O ye lilies of Christ's own planting, he is among you; Jesus is in this house to-day, the unction which has made his garments so fragrant is discerned among us.

But what is he doing among the lilies? It is said, "He feedeth among the lilies." He is feeding himself, not on the lilies, but among them. Our Lord finds solace among his people. His delights are with the sons of men; he joys to see the graces of his people, to receive their love, and to discern his own image in their faces. As he said to the woman of Samaria, "Give me to drink," so does he say to each one of his people, "Give me to drink," and he is refreshed by their loving fellowship. But the text means that he is feeding his people. He feedeth that part of his flock redeemed by blood of which we read that "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them into living fountains of waters." Nor does he forget that part of his flock which is in the low lands of earth, but he gives them also their portion of food. He has fed us this morning, for he is the good Shepherd, and leaves none of his sheep to famish.

Then what shall I do? Well, I will abide among the lilies. His saints shall be my companions. Where they flourish I will try to grow. I will be often in their assemblies. Ay, and I will be a lily too. By faith I will neither toil nor spin in a legal fashion, but I will live by faith upon the Son of God, rooted in him. I would be pure in life, and I would have the golden anther



of looking to the recompense of the reward. I would lift up my soul aloft" towards heaven as the lily lifts up its flower. Jesus will come and feed by my side if I am a lily, and even I may yield him some pleasure by my humble gratitude.

Beloved, this is a choice subject, but it is more sweet as a matter of fact than mere hearing can make it. "He feedeth among the lilies." This is our joy, that Christ is in his church, and the pith of all I want to say is this; never think of yourself or of the church apart from Jesus. The spouse says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his", she weaves the two into one. The cause of the church is the cause of Christ; the work of God will never be accomplished by the church apart from Christ, her power lies in his being in her midst. He feedeth among the lilies, and therefore those lilies shall never be destroyed, but their sweetness shall make fragrant all the earth. The church of Christ, working with her Lord, must conquer, but never if she tries to stand alone or to compass any end apart from him.

As for each one of us personally, let us not think of ourselves apart from Christ, nor of Christ apart from us. Let George Herbert's prayer be ours.

"Oh, be mine still, still make me thine,  
Or rather make nor mine nor thine."

Let mine melt into thine. Oh, to have joint stock with Christ, and to trade under one name; to be married to Christ and lose our old name, and wast his name, and say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." As the wife is lost in the husband, and the stone in the building, and the branch in the vine, and the member in the head, we would be so amalgamated with Christ, and have such fellowship with him that there shall be no more mine nor thine.

Last of all, poor sinner, you will say, "There is nothing in all this for me," and I should not like to send you away without a word. You are saying "This is a day of good tidings, but it is only for God's own people." I beg you to read through the first and second chapters of the Song, and see who it was that said, "My beloved is mine," because I should not wonder but what you are very like her. She was one who confessed, "I am black",

and so are you. Perhaps grace will, one of these days, help you to say, "I am comely." She was one with whom her mother's children were angry—perhaps you, too, are a speckled bird. She had done servile work, for they made her a keeper of the vineyards. I should not wonder but what you are doing servile work, too, trying to save yourself instead of accepting the salvation which Jesus has already wrought out for sinners. So it came to pass that she became very sorrowful and passed through a winter of rain and cold. Perhaps you are there; and yet you know she came out of it her winter was past, and the birds began to sing. She had been hidden in the secret places of the stairs, as you are now; but she was called out from the dust and cobwebs to see the face of her Lord.

One thing I wish to whisper in your ears—she was in the clefts of the rock. O soul, if thou canst but get there, if thou canst shelter in the riven side of our Beloved, that deep gash of the spear from which flowed blood and water, "to be of sin the double cure"; if thou canst get there, I say, though thou be black and grimed with sin, and an accursed sinner, only fit to be a firebrand in hell, yet shalt thou, even thou, be able to sing with all the rapture of the liveliest saint on earth, and one day with all the transport of the brightest ones above, "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies." There, go your way with those silver bells ringing in your ears; they ring a marriage peal to saints, but they ring also a cheery invitation to sinners, and this is the tune they are set to—Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Sinner, come! God bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **The Song Of A City, And The Pearl Of Peace**

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. - Isaiah 26:3

This is no dry, didactic statement, but a verse from a song. We are among the poets of revelation, who did not compose ballads for the passing hour, but made sonnets for the people of God to sing in after days. I quote to you a stanza from the song of a city. Judah has not aforetime thus chanted before her God, but she has much to learn, and one day she shall learn this psalm also:—"We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Into the open country the adversary easily advances, but walled cities are a check upon the invading foe. Those people who had been hurried to and from as captives, and had frequently been robbed of their property by invaders, were glad when they saw builded among them a city, a well-defended city, which should be the centre of their race, and the shield of their nation.

This song of a city may, however, belong to us as much as to the men of Judah, and we may throw into it a deeper sense of which they were not aware. We were once unguarded from spiritual evil, and we spent our days in constant fear; but the Lord has found for us a city of defence, a castle of refuge. We have a burgess-ship in the new Jerusalem which is the mother of us all; and within that strong city we dwell securely. Let us sing this morning, "We have a strong city." The man that hath come into fellowship with God through the atoning sacrifice, hath gotten into a place of perfect safety, where he may dwell, ay, dwell for ever, without fear of assault. We are no longer hunted by hosts of fears, and trodden down by dark despairs; but "We have a strong city" which overawes the foe, and quiets ourselves. Our gospel hymns are the songs of men who, in the truest sense, have seen an end of alarm, by accepting God's provision against trouble of heart.

Observe how the song goes on to dilate upon the city's strength.

"Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Our refuge will repay a close examination. We are doubly defended. Its lofty walls are the mainstay of a city's security; when they are strong, and high, they keep out the foe, whether he assail by scaling-ladder, or battering-engine. Outside the wall, on the other side of the moat, lies what is called the bulwark; the earthwork where, in times of peace, the citizens delight to take their walks. The bulwark of their confidence is the boulevard of their communion. The Lord our God has set ring upon ring, defence upon defence, around His people. All the powers of providence and grace protect the saints. Material and spiritual forces alike surround her. The Lord keeps His people doubly fenced by walls and bulwarks, and hence He speaks of a double peace. "Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace," saith the Hebrew. God does nothing by halves, but everything by doubles. His salvation is decreed and appointed, and this is made the basis for the unbroken serenity of all His chosen.

The song, however, does not end with verses concerning the city, but it conducts us within its walls. "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." Entrance into this grace, wherein we stand, is a choice privilege. The greatest joy of true godliness lies in our being able to enter into it. If the City of God were shut against us, it were sad, indeed, for us. If, to-day, you and I were outside of her, of what value would her walls and bulwarks be to us? Whatever God has done to His people, it is just so much additional sorrow rather than increased joy to ourselves if we are not partakers therein. That there should be a Christ, and that I should be Christless; that there should be a cleansing, and I should remain foul; that there should be a Father's love, and I should be an alien; that there should be a heaven, and I should be cast into hell, is grief embittered, sorrow aggravated. Come, then, let us sing of personal entrance into the City of God. The music and the feasting are not outside the door: to enjoy them we must enter in. Our citizenship is now in heaven. Nothing is barred against us, for the Son of David has set before us an open door, and no man can shut it. Let us not neglect our opportunities. Let it not be said, "They could not enter in because of unbelief." No, let it be ours to sing of salvation because we enjoy it to the full. Let our music never cease.

Now, when we get as far as this,—a strong city, and a city into which we have entered, we are still further glad to learn who the keeper and garrison of that city may be, for a city needs to be kept while there are so many foes abroad. To render all secure there needs to be some leader and commander for the people, who has strength with which to man the walls, and drive off besiegers. Our text tells us how securely this strong city will be held—so securely that none of her citizens shall ever be disturbed in heart,—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Permit me to remind you again that my text is the verse of a song. I earnestly desire you to feel like singing all the time while I am preaching, and let the words of the text ring in your heart with deep mysterious chimes, as of a land beyond these clouds and tempests,—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." I do not want you to be thinking, "I wish that the Lord would keep me in peace;" I would have you now enter into rest before the Lord. Do not say, "I am fretting and worrying, because I cannot reach this peace;" but pray to enjoy it this morning. O Lord and Giver of peace, vouchsafe it to our faith at once! O ye trustful ones, enter at once into the opened gates of the city of peace, and then bless God that you cannot be driven out again, for the Lord promises to be your garrison and safeguard. May the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter, and whose fruit is peace, now work peace in each of us!

I. First, we are going to answer this question as best we can, WHAT IS THIS PERFECT PEACE? The text in the original, as I have told you, is—"Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace." It is the Hebrew way of expressing emphatic peace; true and real peace; double peace, peace of great depth and vast extent. Many of you know what it is; and you will probably think my answer a very poor one. I shall give the best I can, I can do no more; and if you try to make up for my deficiencies, our brethren will be gainers. I confess that I cannot to the full describe the peace that may be enjoyed if our faith is strong, and our confidence in God has reached its appropriate height. We are not limited as to quality or measure of this precious thing. Peace is a jewel of so rare a price that he only hath valued it aright who has sold all that he hath to buy it.

Describe it? Nay, verily, there we fail.

This "peace, peace" means, I think, an absence of all war, and of all alarm of war. You who can imagine the full meaning of siege, storm, sack, and pillage, can also guess the happier state of things when a city hears no longer the tramp of armies, when from her ramparts and towers no sign of adversary can be discovered; but all is peace. That is very much the condition of the people of God when the Lord keepeth them in peace. God Himself, at one time, seemed to be against us: the ten great cannon of His Law were turned against our walls; all heaven and earth mustered for battle; God Himself was against us, at least, so conscience reported from her look-out. But, now, at this moment, having believed in Jesus Christ, we have entered into rest, and we have perfect peace as to our former sins. Who is he that can harm you, O ye that are reconciled to God? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" We have by faith arrived at a state of perfect reconciliation with God. The divine Fatherhood has covered us. We inherit the spirit of children, the spirit of love and of unquestioning confidence. Everything is quiet, for we dwell in our Father's house. Look upward, and you will perceive no seat of fiery wrath to shoot devouring flame. Look downward, and you discover no hell, for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Look back, and sin is blotted out. Look around, and all things work together for good to them that love God. Look beyond, and glory shineth through the veil of the future, like the sun through a morning's mist. Look outward, and the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field, are at peace with us. Look inward, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. The Lord leadeth us by still waters at such happy times, along that road of which we read, "No lion shall be there." If you who are believers in Jesus do not usually enjoy this peace, the blame must be laid to your own door: you make your own disquietude, for God saith to you, "Peace, peace," and He will keep you there if your mind is stayed on Him. Happy is he whose conflict is ended, and whose warfare is accomplished by faith in Christ Jesus.

Further, this perfect peace reigns over all things within its circle. Not only is no enemy near, but the inhabitants of the city are all at rest, and all

their affairs are happy. No man can be said to be at perfect peace who has any cause of disquietude at all. Yet the child of God has this perfect peace according to our Lord's own statement; and, therefore, it must be true that the believer is raised above all disquietude. "What," say you, "has he not an evil heart of unbelief?" Yes, and that demands his watchfulness, but should not create in him any kind of terror, for God is greater than our hearts, and where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound. The flesh has received its death-warrant, and unbelief is but a part of the flesh doomed to die. The holy life within us must triumph. "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." Though we be as yet like the smoking flax, we shall soon shine forth, and He will bring forth judgment unto victory. "Ah," saith one, "but I have disquietude in my family: I have a wild, unruly son; or, I have a sick, pining child, who will soon be taken away from my by consumption!" Yes, friend, but if your mind is stayed on God, and you can trust God with such matters, you should not lose your perfect peace even through this. For, what if your heart be troubled? Will that make the consumptive child any the stronger? Or will your melancholy be likely to restrain your rebellious son? No, but "The just shall live by faith," and shall triumph by faith, too. It shall be your strength to bring your sick, and lay them at Jesus feet; it shall be your hope to bring your unruly one, and say, "Lord, cast out the devil from my child, and let him live unto Thee." Nothing ought to avail to break the peace of the believer; the shield of faith should quench every fiery dart. For, observe, that your sin is forgiven you for Christ's sake, and that is done once for all. Observe, that Christ has taken possession of you, and you are His; neither will He lose you, but He will hold you single-handed against the world, and death, and hell. Observe, too, that your heavenly Father rules in providence, giving you what you need, for He has said, "No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly." He reigns in power, anticipating every danger, for He hath declared, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." God's peace covers the whole extent of the territory. Tell it out through every street of Mansoul that the Prince Emmanuel has come, and to every creature within the city walls the peace of God is granted, to be possessed with gladness and delight.

We are getting some idea, I trust, of this peace, though words cannot fully convey it; we must know it ourselves. Yet it is pleasant to note that this peace is deeply real and true. No perfect peace can be enjoyed unless every secret cause of fear is met and removed. Whisper it at the gates, and in the hostelrys, that the city might be taken by surprise, and that spies had been seen in the meadows, down by the East gate; and straightway the city would be in a ferment. No; peace cannot breathe while suspicion haunts the streets. Our peace may be a false peace, a fools peace; we may be lulled into a carnal security. Politically, nations have become self-confident, have dreamed of peace when the forges were ringing with the hammers of war; and so ill has happened unto them. Spiritually, there are multitudes of persons who think that all is right with their souls, when, indeed, all is wrong, for eternity. It is to be feared that some have received a "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Now, we cannot call that perfect peace which lies only on the surface, and will not bear to be looked into. We desire a peace which sits in open court, and neither blindfolds nor muzzles ambassadors. The peace which requires that there should be a hushing-up of this and that is an evil thing. Such is the direct opposite of the peace of God. If there be any charge against God's people, men are challenged to bring it,— "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" The pardon which God gives us is not a smothering-up of our sins, nor a blinding of justice. God is as just in His pardons as in His punishments. It shall be seen at the last, when believers enter into their glory, that they rise there by law, just as surely as the lost sink down to hell by law: that is to say, that the Lord Jesus Christ hath rendered to the law such recompense by His perfect obedience, and His matchless atonement, that it shall be as just on God's part to save His elect as to condemn the unbelieving world. We claim that our peace is just and right. It may be examined and tested; for here we have NO FICTION. If truth is to be found beneath the stars, it is in the peace which come through the precious blood of the Son of God. The peace which God gives goes through the very bottom of things, and brings us into the eternal harmonies.

We may gaze upon this truth with the most attentive eye, but we shall see only the more clearly that he that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ hath salvation for walls and bulwarks. Under any light believers in Jesus are



secure. You may be put in circumstances of a very trying kind, especially you may be brought to the brink of death, and near to the bar of God; and yet, dear friend, the God in whom ye trust will not fail you. Your heart rests on His promises and faithfulness, and there is no reason why its peace should be broken.

Is not this a perfect peace? If I stood here to preach up a sort of enthusiastic confidence, which would not bear the test, I would be ashamed of myself; but in preaching this peace of God, which passeth all understanding, which has no back-reckonings to disturb it, which has nothing behind that can come in ultimately to break it up, I preach something worth the having. I do desire and pray that every man and woman here may know it as I know it; for I have peace with God, and therefore my heart is glad. Oh that all of you here present might now believe God, and stay yourselves upon Him; then would you hear the Lord say "Peace! peace!"

One thing more, peace in a city would not be consistent with the stoppage of commerce. During perfect peace intercourse goes on with all surrounding places, and the city by its trade is enriched. Where there is perfect peace with God, commerce prospers between the soul and heaven. Good men commune with the good, and thereby their sense of peace increases. If you have perfect peace, you have fellowship with all the saints: personal jealousies, sectarian bitternesses, and unholy emulations are all laid aside. Oh, it is a happy state of mind when we have no prejudices which can wall out the godly from fellowship with us! Oh, how blessed to say spontaneously, "If he is a child of God, I love him; if he is a member of the heavenly family, he is my brother, and I welcome him!" When we are at one with all the people of God, we are quit of a world of wars.

Better still, there is a sweet peace between the heart and its God when from day to day, by prayer and praise, we commune with the Most High. Any peace that is linked with forgetfulness of God is a horrible thing: it is the peace of the miasma, which is brooding in quiet before it strikes with the arrow of death; it is that dead calm which precedes the cyclone or the earthquake. The perfect peace which God giveth sunneth itself in the

presence of God; it is a tropical flower, which lives in the flaming sunlight; a bird with rainbow-wings, which is at home in the high-noon of heavens summertide. God gives us to know more and more of this perfect peace, by enabling us to plunge more and more completely into His own self! One with God in Christ Jesus, we have reached everlasting peace.

Further let me speak upon this peace that God gives to us. It consists in rest of the soul. You know how the body casts all the limbs upon the bed, and they lie at ease; so does our spiritual nature stretch itself at ease. The heart reclines upon God's love, and the judgment leans on His wisdom; the desires recline, the hopes repose, the expectations rest, the soul throws all its weight and all its weariness upon the Lord, and then a perfect peace follows. To this absolute recumbency add a perfect resignation to the divine will. If you quarrel with God, your peace is at an end; but when you say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good," you have obtained one of the main elements of perfect peace. When the Lord's will is owned and love, all ground for quarrel is over: the peace must be deep. It consists also in sweet confidence in God, when there is not the shadow of doubt about anything God does, for you are sure of this, if of nothing else, that He must be true, and He must be right and kind, and in all things better to you than you are to yourself. Then to leave everything with God, trusting in Him for ever, because in Him there is everlasting strength—this is peace. It means, in fact, the swallowing up of self in the great sea of God, the giving up of all we are, and all we have, so entirely to God that henceforth we cannot be troubled, or be disturbed, because that which could make trouble is already bound over to keep the peace. Then comes a blessed contentment; we want no more, we have enough. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." Having Him, my desires all stay at home with Him. Let me but know Him better, and I shall grow even more satisfied with unutterable beauties, His indescribable perfections.

I hope you know this peace; and if you do, I need not tell you it means freedom from everything like despondency. The mind cannot yield to mistrust, for the Lord's peace keeps it. The compass on board an iron steam-vessel is placed aloft, so that it may not be so much influenced by the metal of the ship: though surrounded by that which would put it out

of place, the needle faithfully adheres to the pole because it is set above the misleading influence. So with the child of God, when the Lord has given him peace: he is lifted beyond the supremacy of his sorrowful surroundings, and his heart is delivered from its sad surroundings.

Thus we are kept from everything like rashness: resting in God, we are not in sinful haste; we can wait God's time to deliver us, knowing that there is love in every second of the delay. We do not kick, as the untutored bullock kicks against the goad, but we push on the more eagerly with our furrow, toiling on to the end, till God shall appear for us. Thus we are saved from the temptations which come with our trials. We get the smelting of the furnace without its smut. We endure the sorrow, but escape the sin, and this is joy enough for a pilgrim in this vale of tears.

O friends, he that hath this perfect peace is the richest man in the world! What are broad acres if you have a troubled spirit? What are millions of gold, laid by in the bank, if you have no God to go to in the hour of distress? What would it be to be a prince, a king, an emperor, if you had no hope for the hereafter, no treasure of eternal love? I, therefore, charge you to get and keep this "peace,"—this perfect peace.

II. May the Lord strengthen me, in this time of painful weakness, while I speak upon another question. WHO ALONE CAN GIVE US THIS PEACE, AND PRESERVE IT IN US? The answer is in the words of the song, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace." See, it is God Himself that can give us this peace, and keep us in it. The answer is one and indivisible. I know that while I was speaking some of you were saying, "The pastor is setting forth a high style of living; how can we reach to it?" But if peace be God's gift, and if the Lord Himself is to keep us in it, how easily can we attain it by putting ourselves into His hands! To be striving after peace is hard work, for by our very anxiety to find it we miss its trail. How differently does the matter appear when we read, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace!"

How does the Lord keep His people in peace? I answer, first, by a special operation upon the mind in the time of its trial. We read in the 12th verse,

"Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us." If this be so, we can understand how the Lord can work peace in us among all the other works. There is an operation of God upon the human mind, mysterious and inscrutable, of which the effects are manifest enough; and among those effects is this, a quiet of heart, a calm of spirit, which never comes in any other way. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace." The Creator of our mind knows how to operate upon it by His Holy Spirit. Let the heart and will be allowed to be as free as you choose, yet is the Lord free to act upon them. As we can tune the strings of an harp, so can the Lord adjust the chords of our heart to joyous serenity. Not only by the Word of God, and by our meditation thereon, but by His own direct operation, the Lord can create peace within the land-locked sea of the human spirit. The Lord can get at men, and influence them for the highest ends, apart from the outward means. I have noticed that, altogether apart from the subjects of my reflections, I have, on a sudden, received a singular calm and peace of spirit directly from God. I can remember occasions when I had been hurried through broken water; the winds were wild, and my little vessel was at one instant lifted out of the water, and at the next beaten under the waves. Then, in a moment, everything was calm as a summer's evening, quiet as when the hush of Sabbath falls on a hamlet in the lone Highlands. My heart was royally glad, for it had entered into perfect peace. I think you must have noticed such matters in your own case. Generally, I grant you, we are led into this peace by the consideration of the promises of God; but sometimes, apart from that, without our knowing why or wherefore, we have upon a sudden glided from darkness into light, by the distinct operation of the Spirit of God upon the mind.

But usually the Lord keeps His people in perfect peace by the operation of certain considerations, intended by His infinite wisdom to work in that manner. For instance, if sin be before the mind, it may well disquiet us, but when a man considereth that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, he hath that before him which allayeth the disquietude. When he considereth that, in dying, the Lord Jesus rendered unto God a full and satisfactory atonement for all the sin of all His believing people, then the man is at once, by that consideration, brought into perfect peace. Or suppose that a temporal trial ruffles the mind; the uneasy one turns to

Scripture, and he finds that affliction is not sent as a legal punishment, but only as a fatherly chastisement of love: then is the bitterness of it passed away. Let a man know that all his trials work together for his good, and every sufficient reason for discontent is removed. The man noteth that there is good in the evil which surrounds him; indeed, he perceives the Lord to be at work everywhere, and henceforth he accepts the arrangements of providence without mistrust, and his heart is at peace. Depend upon it, dear friend, if you are tossed up and down, like the locust, you will only find peace by flying to the fields of Scripture. In this garden of the Lord, flowers are blooming which yield a balm for every wound of the heart. Never was there a lock of soul-trouble yet, but what there was a key to open it in the Word of God. For our pain, here is an anodyne; for our darkness, a lamp; for our loneliness, a friend. It is like the garden of Eden: a double river of peace glideth through it. Turn you then to the Lord's Word, to communion with His people, to prayer, to praise, or some form of holy service, and God will thus keep you in perfect peace.

I believe, also, that the Lord keeps His people in perfect peace by the distinct operations of His providence. When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. By secret workings he can quiet foes so that they are as still as a stone till Thy people pass over, O Lord. When one providence apparently fights against you, another will come in to deliver you. The Lord's thoughts towards His people are thoughts of good, and not of evil; and they shall see it to be so. Either the afflicted shall reach a place of rest, or else double strength shall be given for the double trial. God will allow no war in His providence against His own child, all must be for you there. If you are God's Jonah, and are thrown into the sea, a whale must wait upon you; and if you are God's servant, and are brought into the lowest dungeon in Egypt, Pharaohs own self must send and fetch you out of it to sit upon a throne. Lift up now your eyes, O you that crouch among the ashes because of your daily fret! Be no longer grovellers in the dust! The Lord is your King; nothing can break your peace. The Creator of yon stars and clouds, Lord of the universe, Monarch of all nature: thinkest thou that He cannot speedily send thee deliverance? All these ages has He loved thee; canst thou mistrust Him? Knowest thou not that He feeds the sparrows, ay, and

the fish of the sea, and the myriads of living creatures which only His eye can see? There is no limit to His stores, nor bounds to His power. Canst thou not trust in Him, that He will help thee through, and give thee rest? Thus, you see, our peace comes from God in some way or other; and I therefore the more earnestly ask you never to seek peace elsewhere. Do not seek peace by praying for the absence of trial. You may be just as happy in affliction as out of it, if the Lord be with you. Do not seek peace by cultivating hardness of heart, and indifference of spirit. No, when you are afflicted, you ought to feel it: God means you should; and you must learn to feel it, and yet be fully at peace. Do not imagine you can get peace by philosophy, or by considerations derived from reason, or by knowledge fetched from experience. There is but one well from which you can draw the sweet waters of perfect peace, and it bears about its rim this dainty inscription—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, O Jehovah." Such peace as God giveth makes us like to God, it fills us with His love, it sets us acting according to His holiness; and, meanwhile, it prepares us for His palace, where everlasting peace perfumes every chamber, and covers the whole fabric with glory.

III. I have to answer another question this morning, and that is—WHO SHALL OBTAIN THIS PEACE? "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." The Hebrew is very involved and difficult to understand, but we shall not err if we permit it to teach us this,—that the whole of our being is stayed upon God in order to this peace. The word for "mind" is very vague, but it must include our thoughts. If your thoughts are stayed on God, you will have perfect peace: our misery comes from stray, vagabond, unsettled thoughts. If you will think of nothing except in connection with God, if you will only think of your sin in connection with a merciful God, if you will only think of tribulation in connection with a faithful God, if you will set the Lord always before you, so that he is at your right hand, you shall not be moved; but you certainly cannot be perfectly at peace till each thought, being held captive, learns to stay itself on Him. This includes the imagination. The imaginations are most untamable wild beasts, and cause a world of terror in timid minds. Oh for grace to fasten up imagination in the Lord's own cage! We must not imagine anything to be possible which would make the Lord appear to be unkind or untrue. Pray that your imagination may be stayed on

God, that you may never again imagine anything contrary to the grace, goodness, and love of your heavenly Father. What peace would rule if this were the case! I think our text includes especially the desires. Desires are very grasping things. It is utterly impossible to satisfy a worldly man's heart: if he had all he now wishes for, he would be sure then to enlarge his desires as hell, and ask for more. But you, dear friend, must stay your desires at some bound or other, and what more fit than to stay them upon God? Say, "I want nothing but what God wills to give me; I desire to have nothing but what He thinks is for His glory, and for my profit." When you once come to this point, when your imaginations and desires all pitch their tents within the compass of God Himself, Who is your heavenly portion, then you will be kept in perfect peace.

What else is meant by being stayed? Does it not mean rested? When your thoughts recline at their ease in God's revealed will, that is staying upon God. When your desires are filled, and no longer open their greedy mouths for more, because God has filled them, that is staying. Does it not mean stopping there? We speak of staying at a place. Well, when our minds are stayed upon God, we just stop at God; we do not propose any further journeying; we do not wish to push on in advance of where He leads the way. Our heart is rooted and grounded in the great Father's love, and so we stay our souls on Him.

Staying means upholding. We speak of a stay, and of a mainstay; it is something upon which we are depending. Such a person is the stay of the house,—its chief upholder and support. See, then, what it is to stay your souls on God, and mind that you daily carry it out. Some are staying themselves upon a friend, others are staying themselves upon their own ability, but blessed is the man who stays himself upon God. We are to have no confidence except in the Almighty arm; our reliance must be placed there only. When in our God we live, and move, and have our being, this is the crowning condition of a creature. Oh, to feel to the utmost that we are wholly the Lord's, and that, whether His will appoints us joy or woe, we shall be equally satisfied, for we have come to lie down on His will, and go no further. I like staid persons—you know what they are and where they are. They are not easily put about, neither do they readily forsake a cause which they have espoused. He that is stayed upon God is

the most staid in the world; he is steadfast, grounded, settled, and he cannot be removed from the blessed hope of the gospel. He that is fully staid is the man that shall have perfect peace. Oh, whither away, ye undecided ones? Oh, whither away, poor hearts? Will ye wander over every mountain? Will ye never take up lodging with your God, and dwell at ease in Him? Of this be ye well assured, your souls are on the wing, and are bound to fly on and on for ever unless they make bold to settle down upon the Lord their God. In God is rest, but in none else. All earth and heaven, time and eternity, cannot make up a peace for a bruised spirit, and yet a word from the Lord bestows it beyond recall.

Observe, it says, "stayed on thee." Dwell with emphasis upon that, for there are many ways of staying yourself, but you must mind that all your staying is on God; on your heavenly Father, who will withhold no good thing from you; on your divine Saviour, who pleads for you at the right hand of God; on the Holy Ghost, who dwells in you; on the triune God, who hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Now, instead of saying more, I should like, if God the Holy Spirit would help us, for each one to go through the mental act of rolling our care upon the Lord. Let us commit ourselves, and all that we are, and all that we have, and all that we have to do, and all that we have to suffer, to the guardian care of our loving God, casting all our care upon Him, for He careth for us. Here we are in God, and here we mean to abide. We are not regretting the grace of yesterday, nor sighing for the grace of to-morrow. We stay where we are—at home with God. Our anchor is down, and we do not mean to draw it up again. "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." "Oh," saith one, "you do not know my troubles!" No, but I remember the story of a poor Methodist at the battle of Fontenoy. He had both his legs shot away, and when the surgeon came to attend to him, he was evidently bleeding to death, but he cried, "I am as happy as I can be out of Paradise!" Well, if in the very article of death, and suffering as he was, he could overflow with happiness, surely you and I can rejoice in perfect peace. I want you all to be like Dr. Watts, who said that for many years he went to his bed without the slightest solicitude as to whether he should wake up in this world, or in the next. To rest in God's Word, to rejoice in God's covenant, to trust in the divine sacrifice,



to be conformed to God's will, to delight in God's self—this is to stay yourself upon God, and the consequence of it is perfect peace.

IV. WHY IS IT THAT THE LORD WILL KEEP THAT MAN IN PERFECT PEACE WHO STAYS HIMSELF ON HIM? The answer is, "because he trusteth in thee." Dear friends, that means surely this, that in faith there is the tendency to create and nourish peace. In all other ways of trying to live before God there is a tendency to produce uneasiness; but he that believes shall rest. Faith lays a cool hand upon a burning brow, and removes the fever of the fearful heart. Faith hath a voice of silver, wherewith she whispers, "Peace, be still." Nothing can conduce so much to a quiet life as a firm, unwavering confidence in the faithfulness of God's promise, and in the fact that what He has promised He is able also to perform.

Further, the text means this, that when a man stays himself upon God it is not only his faith that brings him peace, but his faith is rewarded by peace, which the Lord gives him as a token of approval. A kind of discipline is going on in our heavenly Father's family, not rewards and punishments such as judges award to criminals, but such as fathers give to their children. By this we are being trained for the many mansions in the Father's house above. If we will stay ourselves on God, we shall have peace; if we will not do so, we shall have no rest, and shall be in sore disquietude. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." The pressure of the trouble comes with the decline of faith. If thou believest more, it may not make thee richer, but thou wilt not feel thy poverty so keenly. If thou believest more, it may not make thee healthy in body, but thou shalt not fret because of thy sickness: if thou believest more, it will not give thee back thy buried ones, but it shall fill thy heart with a still higher love. "All things are possible to him that believeth," and peace, peace is among those possibilities; but if thou wilt not believe, neither shalt thou be established, thine unbelief shall be a rod for thine own back, a bitter for thine own cup. If thou wilt not trust thy God, thou shalt wander into a weary land, seeking rest and finding none. Come, brothers and sisters, let us fly from such a fate, and win perfect peace as the reward of perfect confidence.

I think, lastly, this peace comes out of faith, because it is faiths way of proclaiming herself. If God gives you perfect peace, you will not need, when you go home, to shout to your friends, "I am a believer." They will soon see it. You have lost one that was very dear to you, and instead of fretting and repining, you kiss the hand of God, and go about your daily duties with patience. That is a very wonderful fruit of the Spirit, wrought by faith, and thus faith is seen. A man has had a fire, or some other form of loss, and his comforts are destroyed. If he is an unbeliever, we do not wonder that he tears his hair, and curses God, and rages and fumes. But if he has stayed himself on God, he will be at peace, and he will say, "The Lord hath done it. It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." By this will you be known to be the disciples of Christ, when in patience ye possess your souls. Faith which only operates when all goes well, is the mockery of faith; the love that praises God when God gives thee according to thy desire is no more than the love of some dogs to their masters, who care just as much for them as the number of the scraps may be. Wilt thou have such a cupboard love as that? It were far better to get to this state, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." If thou hast this faith within thee, then shall thy peace be like a river. The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep thy heart and mind by Christ Jesus.

I am very much concerned in leaving you, that you, dear friend, should aim much at the possession of this peace. It is a mode of propagating the gospel never to be despised. Multitudes of people have been converted by seeing the holy patience of God's people: they have been impressed by it, and have said, "There must be something in a religion that can give such a peace as this." When you are fretting and worrying, you are undoing your ministers work. When the people of God are over and above troubled, when they count life to be a burden to them because things are not as they would wish them to be, they are really slandering their heavenly Father, and they are preventing the wandering from coming back. The unconverted say, "Why should we go to God to be made miserable?" O ye banished seed, be glad! O ye troubled ones, rejoice! Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, yet lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. Within a short time you shall put on the garments of your

excellency and beauty, and the weeds of your mourning shall be laid aside. Wherefore play the man: better still, play the Christian; and let all men know where God is, and where the Lord rules the heart, there is, there must be, a deep and profound peace. May God bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **Songs In the Night**

But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night? -  
Job 35:10

Elihu was a wise man, exceeding wise, though not as wise as the all-wise Jehovah, who sees light in the clouds, and finds order in confusion; hence Elihu, being much puzzled at beholding Job thus afflicted, cast about him to find the cause of it, and he very wisely hit upon one of the most likely reasons, although it did not happen to be the right one in Job's case. He said within himself—"Surely, if men be tried and troubled exceedingly, it is because, while they think about their troubles and distress themselves about their fears, they do not say, 'Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?'" Elihu's reason was very right in the majority of cases. The great cause of the Christian's distress, the reason of the depths of sorrow into which many believers are plunged, is simply this—that while they are looking about, on the right hand and on the left, to see how they may escape their troubles, they forget to look to the hills whence all real help cometh; they do not say, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" We shall, however, leave that inquiry, and dwell upon those sweet words, "God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night."

The world hath its night. It seemeth necessary that it should have one. The sun shineth by day, and men go forth to their labors; but they grow

weary, and nightfall cometh on, like a sweet boon from heaven. The darkness draweth the curtains, and shutteth out the light, which might prevent our eyes from slumber; while the sweet, calm stillness of the nights permits us to rest upon the lap of ease, and there forget awhile our cares, until the morning sun appeareth, and an angel puts his hand upon the curtain, and undraws it once again, touches our eyelids, and bids us rise, and proceed to the labors of the day. Night is one of the greatest blessings men enjoy; we have many reasons to thank God for it. Yet night is to many a gloomy season. There is "the pestilence that walketh in darkness;" there is "the terror by night;" there is the dread of robbers and of fell disease, with all those fears that the timorous know, when they have no light wherewith they can discern objects. It is then they fancy that spiritual creatures walk the earth; though, if they knew rightly, they would find it to be true, that -

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth,  
Unseen, both when we sleep and when we wake,"

and that at all times they are round about us—not more by night than by day. Night is the season of terror and alarm to most men. Yet even night hath its songs. Have you never stood by the seaside at night, and heard the pebbles sing, and the waves chant God's glories? Or have you never risen from your couch, and thrown up the window of your chamber, and listened there? Listened to what? Silence—save now and then a murmuring sound, which seems sweet music then. And have you not fancied that you heard the harp of God playing in heaven? Did you not conceive, that yon stars, that those eyes of God, looking down on you, were also mouths of song—that every star was singing God's glory, singing, as it shone, its mighty Maker, and his lawful, well-deserved praise? Night hath its songs. We need not much poetry in our spirit, to catch the song of night, and hear the spheres as they chant praises which are loud to the heart, though they be silent to the ear—the praises of the mighty God, who bears up the unpillared arch of heaven, and moves the stars in their courses.

Man, too, like the great world in which he lives, must have his night. For it is true that man is like the world around him; he is a little world; he

resembles the world in almost every thing; and if the world has its night, so hath man. And many a night do we have—nights of sorrow, nights of persecution, nights of doubt, nights of bewilderment, nights of anxiety, nights of oppression, nights of ignorance—nights of all kinds, which press upon our spirits and terrify our souls. But, blessed be God, the Christian man can say, "My God giveth me songs in the night."

It is not necessary, I take it, to prove to you that Christian men have nights; for if you are Christians, you will find that *you* have them, and you will not want any proof, for nights will come quite often enough. I will, therefore, proceed at once to the subject; and I will speak this evening upon songs in the night, *their source*—God giveth them; songs in the night, *their matter*—what do we sing about in the night? songs in the night, *their excellence*—they are hearty songs, and they are sweet ones; songs in the night, *their uses*—their benefits to ourselves and others.

I. First, songs in the night—WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF THEM? "*God*," says the text, our "Maker:" *he* "giveth songs in the night."

Any man can sing in the day. When the cup is full, man draws inspiration from it; when wealth rolls in abundance around him, any man can sing to the praise of a God who gives a plenteous harvest, or sends home a loaded argosy. It is easy enough for an AEolian harp to whisper music when the winds blow; the difficulty is for music to come when no wind bloweth. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but the skillful singer is he who can sing when there is not a ray of light to read by—who sings from his heart, and not from a book that he can see, because he has no means of reading, save from that inward book of his own living spirit, whence notes of gratitude pour out in songs of praise. No man can make a song in the night himself; he may attempt it, but he will feel how difficult it is. Let all things go as I please—I will weave songs, weave them wherever I go, with the flowers that grow upon my path; but put me in a desert, where no flowers are, and wherewith shall I weave a chorus of praise to God? How shall I make a crown for him? Let this voice be free, and this body be full of health, and I can sing God's praise; but stop this tongue, lay me upon the bed of languishing, and it is not so easy to sing from the bed, and chant high praises in the fires. Give me the bliss of

spiritual liberty, and let me mount up to my God, get near the throne, and I will sing, ay, sing as sweet as seraphs; but confine me, fetter my spirit, clip my wings, make me exceeding sad, so that I become old like the eagle—ah! then it is hard to sing. It is not in man's power to sing, when all is adverse. It is not natural to sing in trouble—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name:" for that is a daylight song. But it was a divine song which Habakkuk sang, when in the night he said—"Though the fig-tree shall not blossom," and so on, "yet will I trust in the Lord, and stay myself in the God of Jacob." Methinks in the Red Sea any man could have made a song like that of Moses—"The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea;" the difficulty would have been, to compose a song before the Red Sea had been divided, and to sing it before Pharaoh's hosts had been drowned, while yet the darkness of doubt and fear was resting on Israel's hosts. Songs in the night come only from God; they are not in the power of man.

But what does the text mean, when it asserts that God giveth songs in the night? We think we find two answers to the question. The first is, that usually in the night of a Christian's experience *God is his only song*. If it be daylight in my heart, I can sing songs touching my graces—songs touching my sweet experience—songs touching my duties—songs touching my labors; but let the night come—my graces appear to have withered; my evidences, though they are there, are hidden; I can not

"read my title clear  
To mansions in the skies;"

and now I have nothing left to sing of but my God. It is strange, that when God gives his children mercies, they generally set their hearts more on the mercies than on the Giver of them; but when the night comes, and he sweeps all the mercies away, then at once they say, "Now, my God, I have nothing to sing of but thee; I must come to thee; and to thee only. I had cisterns once; they were full of water; I drank from them then; but now the created streams are dry; sweet Lord, I quaff no stream but thine own self, I drink from no fount but from thee." Ay, child of God, thou knowest what I say; or if thou dost not understand it yet, thou wilt do so by-and-by. It is in the night we sing of God, and of God alone. Every string is

tuned, and ever power hath its attribute to sing, while we praise God, and nothing else. We can sacrifice to ourselves in day light—we only sacrifice to God by night; we can sing high praises to our dear selves when all is joyful, but we can not sing praise to any save our God, when circumstances are untoward, and providences appear adverse. God alone can furnish us with songs in the night.

And yet again: not only does God give the song in the night, because he is the only subject upon which we can sing then, but because *he is the only one who inspires songs in the night*. Bring me up a poor, melancholy, distressed child of God: I come into the pulpit, I seek to tell him sweet promises, and whisper to him sweet words of comfort; he listeneth not to me; he is like the deaf adder, he listens not to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. Send him round to all the comforting divines, and all the holy Barnabases that ever preached, and they will do very little—they will not be able to squeeze a song out of him, do what they may. He is drinking the gall of wormwood; he says, "O Lord, thou hast made me drunk with weeping, I have eaten ashes like bread;" and comfort him as you may, it will be only a woeful note or two of mournful resignation that you will get from him; you will get no psalms of praise, no hallelujahs, no sonnets. But let God come to his child in the night, let him whisper in his ear as he lies on his bed, and how you see his eyes flash fire in the night! Do you not hear him say, -

"'Tis paradise, if thou art here;  
If thou depart, 'tis hell"

I could not have cheered him: it is God that has done it; and God "giveth songs in the night." It is marvelous, brethren, how one sweet word of God will make whole songs for Christians. One word of God is like a piece of gold, and the Christian is the gold-beater, and he can hammer that promise out for whole weeks. I can say myself, I have lived on one promise for weeks, and want no other. I want just simply to hammer that promise out into gold-leaf, and plate my whole existence with joy from it. The Christian gets his songs from God: God gives him inspiration, and teaches him how to sing: "God may Maker, who giveth songs in the night." So, then, poor Christian, thou needest not go pumping up thy

poor heart to make it glad. Go to thy Maker, and ask him to give thee a song in the night. Thou art a poor dry well: thou hast heard it said, that when a pump is dry, you must pour water down it first of all, and then you will get some up; and so, Christian, when thou art dry, go to God, ask him to pour some joy down thee, and then thou wilt get some joy up from thine own heart. Do not go to this comforter or that, for you will find them Job's comforters, after all; but go thou first and foremost to thy Maker, for he is the great composer of songs and teacher of music; he it is who can teach thee how to sing: "God, my Maker, who giveth me songs in the night."

II. Thus we have dwelt upon the first point. Now the second. WHAT IS GENERALLY THE MATTER CONTAINED IN A SONG IN THE NIGHT? What do we sing about?

Why, I think, when we sing by night, there are three things we sing about. Either we sing about the yesterday that is over, or else about the night itself, or else about the morrow that is to come. Each of these are sweet themes, when God our Maker gives us songs in the night. In the midst of the night the most usual method for Christians is to sing about *the day that is over*. "Well," they say, "it is night now, but I can remember when it was daylight. Neither moon nor stars appear at present; but I can remember when I saw the sun. I have no evidence just now; but there was a time when I could say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' I have my doubts and fears at this present moment; but it is not long since I could say, with full assurance, 'I know that he shed his blood for me; I know that my Redeemer liveth, and when he shall stand a second time upon the earth, though the worms devour this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God.' It may be darkness now; but I know the promises *were* sweet; I know I had blessed seasons in his house. I am quite sure of this; I used to enjoy myself in the ways of the Lord; and though now my paths are strewn with thorns, I know it is the King's highway. It was a way of pleasantness once; it will be a way of pleasantness again. 'I will remember the days of old; I will meditate upon the years of the right hand of the Most High.'" Christian, perhaps the best song thou canst sing, to cheer thee in the night, is the song of yester-morn. Remember, it was not always night with thee: night is a new thing to thee. Once thou hadst a



glad heart, a buoyant spirit; once thine eye was full of fire; once thy foot was light; once thou couldst sing for very joy and ecstasy of heart. Well, then, remember that God, who made thee sing yesterday, has not left thee in the night. He is not a daylight God, who can not know his children in darkness; but he loves thee now as much as ever: though he has left thee a little, it is to prove thee, to make thee trust him better, and serve him more. Let me tell you some of the sweet things of which a Christian may make a song when he is in the night.

If we are going to sing of the things of yesterday, let us begin with what God did for us in past times. My beloved brethren, you will find it a sweet subject for song at times, to begin to sing of electing love and covenanted mercies. When thou thyself art low, it is well to sing of the fountain-head of mercy; of that blessed decree wherein thou wast ordained to eternal life, and of that glorious Man who undertook thy redemption; of that solemn covenant signed, and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well; of that everlasting love which, ere the hoary mountains were begotten, or ere the aged hills were children, chose thee, loved thee firmly, loved thee fast, loved thee well, loved thee eternally. I tell thee, believer, if thou canst go back to the years of eternity; if thou canst in thy mind run back to the years of eternity; if thou canst in thy mind run back to that period, or ere the everlasting hills were fashioned, or the fountains of the great deep scooped out, and if thou canst see thy God inscribing thy name in his eternal Book;—if thou canst read in his loving heart eternal thoughts of love to thee, thou wilt find this a charming means of giving thee songs in the night. No songs like those which come from electing love; no sonnets like those that are dictated by meditations on discriminating mercy. Some, indeed, can not sing of election: the Lord open their mouths a little wider! Some there are that are afraid of the very term; but we only despise men who are afraid of what they believe, afraid of what God has taught them in his Bible. No, in our darker hours it is our joy to sing:

"Sons we are through God's election,  
Who in Jesus Christ believe;  
By eternal destination,  
Sovereign grace we now receive.

Lord, thy favor,  
Shall both grace and glory give."

Think, Christian, of the yesterday, I say, and thou wilt get a song in the night. But if thou hast not a voice tuned to so high a key as that, let me suggest some other mercies thou mayest sing of; and they are the mercies thou hast experienced. What! man, canst thou not sing a little of that blessed hour when Jesus met thee; when, a blind slave, thou wast sporting with death, and he saw thee, and said: "Come, poor slave, come with me?" Canst thou not sing of that rapturous moment when he snapped thy fetters, dashed thy chains to the earth, and said: "I am the Breaker; I came to break thy chains, and set thee free?" What though thou art ever so gloomy now, canst thou forget that happy morning, when in the house God thy voice was loud, almost as a seraph's voice, in praise? For thou couldst sing: "I am forgiven! I am forgiven:"

"A monument of grace,  
A sinner saved by blood."

Go back, man; sing of that moment, and then thou wilt have a song in the night. Or if thou hast almost forgotten that, then sure thou hast some precious milestone along the road of life that is not quite grown over with moss, on which thou canst read some happy inscription of his mercy toward thee! What! didst thou never have a sickness like that which thou art suffering now, and did he not raise thee up from that? Wast thou never poor before, and did he not supply thy wants? Wast thou never in straits before, and did he not deliver thee? Come, man! I beseech thee, go to the river of thine experience, and pull up a few bulrushes, and weave them into an ark, wherein thine infant faith may float safely on the stream. I bid thee not forget what God hath done. What! Hast thou buried thine own diary? I beseech thee, man, turn over the book of thy remembrance. Canst thou not see some sweet hill Mizar? Canst thou not think of some blessed hour when the Lord met with thee at Hermon? Hast thou never been on the Delectable Mountains? Hast thou never been fetched from the den of lions? Hast thou never escaped the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear? Nay, O man, I know thou hast; go back, then, a little way, and take the mercies of yesterday; and though it is dark now, light up the lamps of yesterday, and they shall glitter through the

darkness, and thou shalt find that God hath given thee a song in the night.

"Ay," says one, "but you know, that when we are in the dark, we can not see the mercies God has given us. It is all very well for you to tell us this; but we can not get hold of them." I remember an old experimental Christian speaking about the great pillars of our faith; he was a sailor; we were then on board ship, and there were sundry huge posts on the shore, to which the ships were usually fastened, by throwing a cable over them. After I had told him a great many promises, he said, "I know they are good strong promises, but I can not get near enough to shore to throw my cable around them; that is the difficulty. Now, it often happens that God's past mercies and loving kindnesses would be good sure posts to hold on to, but we have not got faith enough to throw our cable round them, and so we go slipping down the stream of unbelief, because we can not stay ourselves by our former mercies.

I will, however, give you something that I think you can throw your cable over. If God has never been kind to you, one thing you surely know, and that is, he has been kind to others. Come, now; if thou art in ever so great straits, sure there were others in greater straits. What! art thou lower down than poor Jonah was, when he went down to the bottoms of the mountains? Art thou more poorly off than thy Master, when he had not a place where to lay his head? What! conceivest thou thyself to be the worst of the worst? Look at Job there scraping himself with a potsherd, and sitting on a dunghill. Art thou as bad as he? And yet Job rose up, and was richer than before; and out of the depths Jonah came, and preached the Word; and our Saviour Jesus hath mounted to his throne. O Christian! only think of what he has done for others! If thou canst not recollect that he has done any thing for thee, yet remember, I beseech thee, what his usual rule is, and do not judge hardly by my God. You remember Benhadad, when he was overcome and conquered, and Ahab was after him. Some said to him, "We know that the kings of Israel are merciful kings; let us send therefore unto Ahab, and it may be he will spare our lives." Benhadad sent to the king; he had received no kindness from Ahab before, he had only heard that he was a merciful king; so to the king he went; and what said the king? "Is my brother, Benhadad, yet alive?"

Truly, poor soul, if thou hast never had a merciful God, yet others have had; the King is a merciful King; go and try him. If thou art ever so low in thy troubles, look to "the hills, from whence cometh thy help." Others have had help therefrom, and so mayest thou. Up might start hundreds of God's children, and show us their hands full of comforts and mercies; and they could say, "the Lord gave us these without money and without price; and why should he not give to thee also, seeing that thou also art a king's son?" Thus, Christian, thou wilt get a song in the night out of other people, if thou canst not get a song from thyself. Never be ashamed of taking a leaf out of another man's experience book. If thou canst find no good leaf in thine own, tear one out of some one's else; and if thou hast no cause to be grateful to God in darkness, or canst not find cause in thine own experience, go to some one else, and, if thou canst, harp his praise in the dark, and like the nightingale sing his praise sweetly when all the world has gone to rest. We can sing in the night of the mercies of yesterday.

But I think, beloved, there is never so dark a night, but there is something to sing about, even *concerning that night*; for there is one thing I am sure we can sing about, let the night be ever so dark, and that is, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not." If we can not sing very loud, yet we can sing a little low tune, something like this—"He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." "O!" says one, "I do not know where to get my dinner from to-morrow. I am a poor wretch." So you may be, my dear friend; but you are not so poor as you deserve to be. Do not be mightily offended about that; if you are, you are no child of God; for the child of God acknowledges that he has no right to the least of God's mercies, but that they come through the channel of grace alone. As long as I am out of hell, I have no right to grumble; and if I were in hell I should have no right to complain, for I feel, when convinced of sin, that never creature deserved to go there more than I do. We have no cause to murmur; we can lift up our hands, and say, "Night! thou art dark, but thou mightst have been darker. I am poor, but if I could not have been poorer, I might have been sick. I am poor and sick—well, I have some friend left, my lot can not be so bad, but it might have been worse." And therefore, Christian, you will always have one thing to sing about—"Lord,

I thank thee, it is not all darkness!" Besides, Christian, however dark the night is, there is always a star or moon. There is scarce ever a night that we have, but there are just one or two little lamps burning up there. However dark it may be, I think you may find some little comfort, some little joy, some little mercy left, and some little promise to cheer thy spirit. The stars are not put out, are they? Nay, if thou canst not see them, they are there; but methinks one or two must be shining on thee; therefore give God a song in the night. If thou hast only one star, bless God for that one, perhaps he will make it two; and if thou hast only two stars, bless God twice for the two stars, and perhaps he will make them four. Try, then, if thou canst not find a song in the night.

But, beloved, there is another thing of which we can sing yet more sweetly; and that is, we can sing of *the day that is to come*. I am preaching to-night for the poor weavers of Spitalfields. Perhaps there are not to be found a class of men in London who are suffering a darker night than they are; for while many classes have been befriended and defended, there are few who speak up for them, and (if I am rightly informed) they are generally ground down within an inch of their lives. I suppose their masters intend that their bread shall be very sweet, on the principle, that the nearer the ground, the sweeter the grass; for I should think no people have their grass so near the ground as the weavers of Spitalfields. In an inquiry by the House of Commons last week, it was given in evidence, that their average wages amount to seven or eight shillings a week; and then they have to furnish themselves with a room, and work at expensive articles, which my friends the ladies are wearing now, and which they buy as cheaply as possible; but perhaps they do not know that they are made with the blood and bones and marrow of the Spitalfields weavers, who, many of them, work for less than man ought to have to subsist upon. Some of them waited upon me the other day; I was exceedingly pleased with one of them. He said, "Well, sir, it is very hard, but I hope there is better times coming for us." "Well, my friend," I said, "I am afraid you can not hope for much better times, unless the Lord Jesus Christ comes a second time." "That is just what we hope for," said he. "We do not see there is any chance of deliverance, unless the Lord Jesus Christ comes to establish his kingdom upon earth; and then he will judge the oppressed, and break the oppressors in pieces with an iron rod, and dash them in

pieces like a potter's vessel." I was glad my friend had got a song in the night, and was singing about the morning that was coming. Often do I cheer myself with the thought of the coming of the Lord. We preach now, perhaps, with little success; "the kingdoms of this world" are not "become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ;" we send out missionaries; they are for the most part unsuccessful. We are laboring, but we do not see the fruit of our labors. Well, what then? Try a little while; we shall not always labor in vain, or spend our strength for naught. A day is coming, and now is, when every minister of Christ shall speak with unction, when all the servants of God shall preach with power, and when colossal systems of heathenism shall tumble from their pedestals, and mighty, gigantic delusions shall be scattered to the winds. The shout shall be heard, "Alleluia! Alleluia! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." For that day do I look; it is to the bright horizon of that second coming that I turn my eyes. My anxious expectation is, that the sweet Sun of righteousness will arise with healing beneath his wings, that the oppressed shall be righted, that despotisms shall be cut down, that liberty shall be established, that peace shall be made lasting, and that the glorious liberty of the gospel of God shall be extended throughout the known world. Christian! If thou art in a night, think of the morrow; cheer up thy heart with the thought of the coming of thy Lord. Be patient, for

"Lo! he comes, with clouds descending."

Be patient! The husbandman waits until he reaps his harvest. Be patient; for you know who has said, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his works shall be."

One thought more upon that point. There is another sweet to-morrow of which we hope to sing in the night. Soon, beloved, you and I shall lie on our dying-bed, and we shall want a song in the night then; and I do not know where we shall get it, if we do not get it from the to-morrow. Kneeling by the bed of an apparently dying saint, last night, I said, "Well, sister, he has been precious to you; you can rejoice in his covenant mercies, and his past loving-kindnesses." She put out her hand, and said, "Ah! sir, do not talk about them now; I want the sinner's Saviour as much now as ever; it is not a saint's Saviour I want; it is still a sinner's Saviour that I am in need of, for I am a sinner still." I found that I could not

comfort her with the past; so I reminded her of the golden streets, of the gates of pearl, of the walls of jasper, of the harps of gold, of the songs of bliss; and then her eye glistened; she said, "Yes, I shall be there soon; I shall meet them by-and-by;" and then she seemed so glad! Ah! believer, you may always cheer yourself with that thought; for if you are ever so low now, remember that

"A few more rolling suns, at most,  
Will land thee on fair Canaan's coast."

Thy head may be crowned with thorny troubles now, but it shall wear a starry crown directly; thy hand may be filled with cares—it shall grasp a harp soon, a harp full of music. Thy garments may be soiled with dust now; they shall be white by-and-by. Wait a little longer. Ah! beloved, how despicable our troubles and trials will seem when we look back upon them! Looking at them here in the prospect, they seem immense; but when we get to heaven, we shall then,

"With transporting joys, recount  
The labors of our feet."

Our trials will seem to us nothing at all. We shall talk to one another about them in heaven, and find all the more to converse about, according as we have suffered more here below. Let us go on, therefore; and if the night be ever so dark, remember there is not a night that shall not have a morning; and that morning is to come by-and-by. When sinners are lost in darkness, *we* shall lift up our eyes in everlasting light. Surely I need not dwell longer on this thought. There is matter enough for songs in the night in the past, the present, and the future.

III. And now I want to tell you, very briefly, WHAT ARE THE EXCELLENCES OF SONGS IN THE NIGHT ABOVE ALL OTHER SONGS.

In the first place, when you hear a man singing a song in the night—I mean in the night of trouble—you may be quite sure it is *a hearty one*. Many of you sang very prettily just now, didn't you? I wonder whether you would sing very prettily, if there were a stake or two in Smithfield for

all of you who dared to do it? If you sang under pain and penalty, that would show your heart to be in your song. We can all sing very nicely indeed when every body else sings. It is the easiest thing in the world to open your mouth, and let the words come out; but when the devil puts his hand over your mouth, can you sing then? Can you say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him?" That is hearty singing; that is real song that springs up in the night. The nightingale singeth most sweetly because she singeth in the night. We know a poet has said, that if she sang by day, she might be thought to sing no more sweetly than the wren. It is the stillness of the night that makes her song sweet. And so doth a Christian's song become sweet and hearty, because it is in the night.

Again, the songs we sing in the night will be *lasting*. Many songs we hear our fellow-creatures singing in the streets will not do to sing by-and-by; I guess they will sing a different kind of tune soon. They can sing now-a-days any rollicking, drinking songs; but they will not sing them when they come to die; they are not exactly the songs with which to cross Jordan's billows. It will not do to sing one of those light songs when death and you are having the last tug. It will not do to enter heaven singing one of those unchaste, unholy sonnets. No; but the Christian who can sing in the night will not have to leave off his song; he may keep on singing it forever. He may put his foot in Jordan's stream, and continue his melody; he may wade through it, and keep on singing still, and land himself safe in heaven; and when he is there, there need not be a gap in his strain, but in a nobler, sweeter strain, he may still continue singing his power to save. There are a great many of you that think Christian people are a very miserable set, don't you? You say, "Let me sing my song." Ay, but, my dear friends, we like to sing a song that will last; we don't like your songs; they are all froth, like bubbles on the breaker, and they will soon die away and be lost. Give me a song that will last; give me one that will not melt. O, give me not the dreamster's gold! He hoards it up, and says, "I'm rich;" and when he waketh, his gold is gone. But give me songs in the night, for they are songs I sing forever.

Again, the songs we warble in the night are those that show we have *real faith* in God. Many men have just enough faith to trust God as far as they can see him, and they always sing as far as they can see providence go



right: but true faith can sing when its possessors can not see. It can take hold of God when they can not discern him.

Songs in the night, too, prove that we have *true courage*. Many sing by day who are silent by night; they are afraid of thieves and robbers; but the Christian who sings in the night proves himself to be a courageous character. It is the bold Christian who can sing God's sonnets in the darkness.

He who can sing songs in the night, too, proves that he has *true love* to Christ. It is not love to Christ to praise him while every body else praises him; to walk arm in arm with him when he has the crown on his head is no great deed, I wot; to walk with Christ in rags is something. To believe in Christ when he is shrouded in darkness, to stick hard and fast by the Saviour when all men speak ill of him and forsake him—that is true faith. He who singeth a song to Christ in the night, singeth the best song in all the world; for he singeth from the heart.

IV. I am afraid of wearying you; therefore I will not dwell on the excellences of night songs, but just, in the last place, **SHOW YOU THEIR USE.**

Well, beloved, it is very useful to sing in the night of our troubles, first, *because it will cheer ourselves*. When you were boys living in the country, and had some distance to go alone at night, don't you remember how you whistled and sang to keep your courage up? Well, what we do in the natural world we ought to do in the spiritual. There is nothing like singing to keep your spirits alive. When we have been in trouble, we have often thought ourselves to be well-nigh overwhelmed with difficulty; and we have said, "Let us have a song." We have begun to sing; and Martin Luther says, "The devil can not bear singing." That is about the truth; he does not like music. It was so in Saul's days: an evil spirit rested on Saul; but when David played on his harp, the evil spirit went away from him. This is usually the case: if we can begin to sing we shall remove our fears. I like to hear servants sometimes humming a tune at their work; I love to hear a plowman in the county singing as he goes along with his horses. Why not? You say he has no time to praise God; but he can sing a song—surely he can sing a Psalm, it will take no more time. Singing is the best

thing to purge ourselves of evil thoughts. Keep your mouth full of songs, and you will often keep your heart full of praises; keep on singing as long as you can; you will find it a good method of driving away your fears.

Sing in trouble, again, because *God loves to hear his people sing in the night*. At no time does God love his children's singing so well as when they give a serenade of praise under his window, when he has hidden his face from them, and will not appear to them at all. They are all in darkness; but they come under his window, and they begin to sing there. "Ah!" says God, "that is true faith, that can make them sing praises when I will not look at them; I know there is some faith in them, that makes them lift up their hearts, even when I seem to take away all my tender mercies and all my compassions." Sing, Christian, for singing pleases God. In heaven, we read, the angels are employed in singing: do you be employed in the same way; for by no better means can you gratify the Almighty One of Israel, who stoops from his high throne to observe the poor creature of a day.

Sing, again, for another reason: because *it will cheer your companions*. If any of them are in the valley and in the darkness with you, it will be a great help to comfort them. John Bunyan tells us, that as Christian was going through the valley he found it a dreadful dark place, and terrible demons and goblins were all about him, and poor Christian thought he must perish for certain; but just when his doubts were the strongest, he heard a sweet voice; he listened to it, and he heard a man in front of him saying, "Yea, when I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Now, that man did not know who was near him, but he was unwittingly singing to cheer a man behind. Christian, when you are in trouble, sing; you do not know who is near you. Sing! Perhaps you will get a good companion by it. Sing! Perhaps there will be many a heart cheered by your song. There is some broken spirit, it may be, that will be bound up by your sonnets. Sing! There is some poor distressed brother, perhaps, shut up in the Castle of Despair, who, like King Richard, will hear your song inside the walls, and sing to you again, and you may be the means of getting him a ransom. Sing, Christian, wherever you go; try, if you can, to wash your face every morning in a bath of praise. When you go down from your chamber, never go to look on man till you have first looked on

your God; and when you have looked on him, seek to come down with a face beaming with joy; carry a smile, for you will cheer up many a poor way-worn pilgrim by it. And when thou fastest, Christian—when thou hast an aching heart, do not appear to men to fast; appear cheerful and happy; anoint thy head, and wash thy face; be happy for thy brother's sake; it will tend to cheer him up, and help him through the valley.

One more reason; and I know it will be a good one for you. Try and sing in the night, Christian, for *that is one of the best arguments in all the world in favor of your religion*. Our divines, now-a-days, spend a great deal of time in trying to prove Christianity against those who disbelieve it. I should like to have seen Paul trying that! Elymas the sorcerer withstood him: how did our friend Paul treat him? He said "O, full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" That is about the politeness such men ought to have who deny God's truth. We start with this assumption: we will prove that the Bible is God's word, but we are not going to prove God's word. If you do not like to believe it, we will shake hands, and bid you good-by; we will not argue with you. The gospel has gained little by discussion. The greatest piece of folly on earth has been to send a man round the country, to follow another up who has been lecturing on infidelity just to make himself notorious.

Why, let them lecture on; this is a free country; why should we follow them about? The truth will win the day. Christianity need not wish for controversy; it is strong enough for it, if it wishes it; but that is not God's way. God's direction is, "Preach, teach, dogmatize." Do not stand disputing; claim a divine mission; tell men that God says it, and there leave it. Say to them, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;" and when you have done that, you have done enough. For what reason should our missionaries stand disputing with Brahmins? Why should they be wasting their time by attempting to refute first this dogma, and then another, of heathenism? Why not just go and say, "The God whom ye ignorantly worship, I declare unto you; believe me, and you will be saved; believe me not, and the Bible says you are lost." And then, having thus asserted God's word, say, "I leave it, I declare it unto you; it is a thing for you to believe, not a thing for you to

reason about." Religion is not a thing merely for your intellect; a thing to prove your own talent upon, by making a syllogism on it; it is a thing that demands your faith. As a messenger of heaven, I demand that faith; if you do not choose to give it, on your own head be the doom, if there be such; if there be not, you are prepared to risk it. But I have done my duty; I have told you the truth; that is enough, and there I leave it. O, Christian, instead of disputing, let me tell thee how to prove your religion. Live it out! live it out! Give the external as well as the internal evidence; give the external evidence of you own life. You are sick; there is your neighbor, who laughs at religion; let him come into your house. When he was sick, he said, "O, send for the doctor;" and there he was fretting, and fuming, and whining, and making all manner of noises. When you are sick, send for him; tell him that you are resigned to the Lord's will; that you will kiss the chastening rod; that you will take the cup, and drink it, because your Father gives it. You need not make a boast of this, or it will lose all its power; but do it because you can not help doing it. Your neighbor will say, "There is something in that." And when you come to the borders of the grave—he was there once, and you heard how he shrieked, and how frightened he was—give him your hand, and say to him, "Ah! I have a Christ that will do to die by; I have a religion that will make me sing in the night." Let him hear how you can sing, "Victory, victory, victory!" through him that loved you. I tell you, we may preach fifty thousand sermons to prove the gospel, but we shall not prove it half so well as you will through singing in the night. Keep a cheerful frame; keep a happy heart; keep a contented spirit; keep you eye up, and your heart aloft, and you will prove Christianity better than all the Butlers, and all the wise men that ever lived. Give them the analogy of a holy life, and then you will prove religion to them; give them the evidence of internal piety, developed externally, and you will give the best possible proof of Christianity. Try and sing songs in the night; for they are so rare, that if thou canst sing them, thou wilt honor thy God, and bless thy friends.

I have been preaching all his while to the children of God, and now there is a sad turn that this subject must take, just one moment or so, and then we have done. There is a night coming, in which there will be no songs of joy—a night in which no one will even attempt to lead a chorus. There is a night coming when a song shall be sung, of which misery shall be the

subject, set to the music of wailing and gnashing of teeth; there is a night coming when woe, unutterable woe, shall be the matter of an awful terrific *miserere*—when the orchestra shall be composed of damned men, and howling fiends, and yelling demons; and mark you, I speak what I do know, and testify the Scriptures. There is a night coming for a poor soul within this house to-night; and unless he repent, it will be a night wherein he will have to growl, and howl, and sigh, and cry, and moan and groan forever. "Who is that?" sayest thou. Thyself, my friend, if thou art godless and Christless. "What!" sayest thou, "am I in danger of hellfire?" In danger, my friend! Ay, more: thou art damned already. So saith the Bible. Sayest thou, "And can you leave me without telling me what I must do to be saved? Can you believe that I am in danger of perishing, and not speak to me?" I trust not; I hope I shall never preach a sermon without speaking to the ungodly, for O! how I love them. Swearer, your mouth is black with oaths now; and if you die, you must go on blaspheming throughout eternity, and be punished for it throughout eternity. But list to me, blasphemer! Dost thou repent to-night? Dost thou feel thyself to have sinned against God? Dost thou feel a desire to be saved? List thee! thou mayest be saved; thou mayest be saved as much as any one that is now here. There is another: she has sinned against God enormously, and she blushes even now, while I mention her case. Dost thou repent of thy sin? There is hope for thee. Remember him who said, "Go, and sin no more." Drunkard! But a little while ago thou wast reeling down the street, and now thou repentest. Drunkard! There is hope for thee. "Well," sayest thou, "What shall I do to be saved?" Then again let me tell thee the old way of salvation. It is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou art saved." We can get no further than that, do what we will; this is the sum and substance of the gospel. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved. So saith the Scripture. Dost thou ask, "What is it to believe?" Am I to tell thee again? I can not tell thee, except that it is to look at Christ. Dost thou see that Saviour there? He is hanging on the cross; there are his dear hands, pierced with nails, nailed to a tree, as if they were waiting for thy tardy footsteps, because thou wouldst not come. Dost thou see his dear head there? It is hanging on his breast, as if he would lean over, and kiss thy poor soul. Dost thou see his blood, gushing from his head, his hands, his feet, his side? It is running after thee; because he well knew that thou wouldst never run after it. Sinner!

To be saved, all that thou hast to do is, to look at that Man. Canst thou do it now? "No," sayest thou, "I do not believe it will save me." Ah! my poor friend, try it; and if thou dost not succeed, when thou hast tried it, I am bondsman for my Lord—here, take me, bind me, and I will suffer thy doom for thee. This I will venture to say: if thou castest thyself on Christ, and he deserteth thee, I will be willing to go halves with thee in all thy misery and woe. For he will never do it: never, *never*, NEVER!

"No sinner was ever empty sent back,  
who came seeking mercy for Jesus' sake."

I beseech thee, therefore, try him, and thou shalt not try him in vain, but shalt find him "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." Thou shalt be saved now, and saved forever.

May God give you his blessing! I can not preach as earnestly as I could wish; but, nevertheless, may God accept these words, and send them home to some hearts this night! and may you, my dear brethren and sister, have songs in the night!

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## **Songs Of Deliverance**

They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates. - Judges 5:11

Deborah sang concerning the overthrow of Israel's enemies, and the deliverance vouchsafed to the tribes: we have a far richer theme for music; we have been delivered from worse enemies, and saved by a greater salvation. Let our gratitude be deeper; let our song be more

jubilant. Glory be unto God, we can say that our sins, which were like mighty hosts, have been swept away, not by that ancient river, the river Kishon, but by streams which flowed from Jesus' side. Our great enemy has been overcome, and his head is broken. Not Sisera, but Satan has been overthrown: the "seed of the woman has bruised his head" for ever. We are now ransomed from the galling yoke; we walk at liberty through the power of the great Liberator, the Lord Jesus.

The results which accrued from the conquest achieved by Barak, are upon a small scale similar to those which come to us through the deliverance wrought out by the Lord Jesus Christ. I shall take our text and spiritualize it, viewing its joyous details as emblematic of the blessings granted to us through our Redeemer. Those who went to draw water at the wells after Barak's victory, were no longer disturbed by the robbers who lurked at the fountains for purposes of plunder; and instead of drawing the water by stealth and in hasty fear, the women joined their voices around the well head, and sang of the mighty acts of God; and the citizens who had been cooped up within the town walls, and dared not show themselves in the suburbs, ventured beyond the gates into the open country, transacted their business openly, and enjoyed the sweets of security. I think we can readily see that this is an instructive type of the condition into which our Lord Jesus Christ has brought us, through the destruction of our sins and the overthrow of the powers of darkness.

We shall, this morning, first, for a little time, think of the wells of salvation as cleared of enemies; then we shall talk together upon the songs of praise to be rehearsed at the wells; and, thirdly, we shall have a little to say upon the visitation of the gates, which we can now enjoy with safety.

I. Our text tells us of WELLS CLEARED FROM THE FOE, and speaks of those who "are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water."

We thank God that we who are the children of the Most High, have wells to go to. The world is a wilderness; say what we will of it, we cannot make it into anything else. "This is not our rest; it is polluted." We are passing

through the desert of earth to the Promised Land of heaven, but we praise God that we have wells to drink of on the road. As Israel drank at Elim, and as the patriarchs drank at Beersheba, so have we wells of salvation, out of which we joyfully draw the living water. Our great inexhaustible well is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is, indeed, the great "deep that lieth under," the "deep that coucheth beneath," the secret spring and source from which the crystal streams of life flow, through the wells of instrumentality and ordinance. "All my fresh springs are in thee." Whenever we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, we drink and are refreshed. No thirst can abide where he is. "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him," saith he, "shall never thirst." Glory be to his name, we know the truth of this—

"I came to Jesus, and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in him."

As often as we muse upon his person, commune with him in holy fellowship, think of his wounds, triumph in his ascension, and long for his second advent, so often doth our spirit drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, and we lift up our head.

Arising out of this greatest fountain, we have wells from which we draw the waters of comfort. First there is this book, this golden book, this book of God, this god of books, the word of God, with its thousands of promises, suitable to every case, applicable to all seasons, faithful and true, yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. Oh! how frequently when we have been fainting and ready to die, we have found that promise true, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground I" when we have turned to the word, and searched there and found the promise, and fed upon it, as one that findeth great spoil have we rejoiced in God's word. The doctrines of this book are inexpressibly reviving to us. He that understandeth them shall find them to be a well of life and comfort. I need not instance those doctrines, for you know them, you feed upon them, they are your daily bread. Beloved, when we think of God's eternal love to his people, when we meditate upon redemption by blood,



when we consider the truth of effectual calling by the Holy Spirit, when we remember the immutable faithfulness of the Most High, the covenant suretyship of our Lord Jesus, when we look forward to the perfection which will be ultimately ours, and to the haven of eternal rest to which every one of the Lord's people shall be brought, we do indeed find that—

"Here in the fair gospel-field,  
Wells of free salvation yield  
Streams of life, a plenteous store,  
And our soul shall thirst no more."

As the word read is thus precious, so is the word preached. If we listen to one whom God helps to speak in his name, we shall often find ourselves returning from the place of worship in a very different state from that in which we entered it. How often have you lost your burdens when you have been sitting in the assembly of the saints! I know, ye feeble ones, ye have oftentimes been refreshed; ye have bowed yourselves down to Siloah's brook that flows hard by the oracle of God, and as you drank of its cooling streams, you have felt as though you could face the enemy once more, and go back to a world of toil and trouble, strong for labor, and patient for the endurance of suffering. Happy are ye to whom the word has come with demonstration of the Spirit and with power. The fruitful lips of the preacher who speaks experimentally, who speaks clearly, who speaks of that which he has tasted and handled of the good word of truth—these sanctified lips, I say, "drop as the rain," and "distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb." The mouth of the righteous becometh a well of life unto the people of God.

So, my brethren, it is also with the well of the ordinances. I think we shall never forget the time when we drew water out of the well of baptism—when we were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, upon our profession of faith. We found believers' immersion to be a most instructive emblem of our death, burial, and resurrection with the Lord Jesus; and we have not forgotten, to this day, that we then avowed ourselves to be dead to the world, dead to the law, dead to self, dead with Christ; nor has the thought of resurrection with Jesus, as typified by the uplifting out of the pool, been forgotten by us.

We know and feel that we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God, and we rejoice that he "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The recollection of that happy day when we gave ourselves up publicly and unreservedly to Jesus, is still fragrant. Oh! how sweet to sing humbly but heartily—

"'Tis done! the great transaction's done;  
I am my Lord's, and he is mine:  
He drew me, and I followed on,  
Charm'd to confess the voice divine."

So with the Lord's Supper. My witness is, and I think I speak the mind of many of God's people now present, that coming as some of us do, weekly, to the Lord's table, we do not find the breaking of bread to have lost its significance—it is always fresh to us. I have often remarked on Lord's-day evening, whatever the subject may have been, whether Sinai has thundered over our heads, or the plaintive notes of Calvary have pierced our hearts, it always seems equally appropriate to come to the breaking of bread. Shame on the Christian church that she should put it off to once a month, and mar the first day of the week by depriving it of its glory in the meeting together for fellowship and breaking of bread, and showing forth of the death of Christ till he come. They who once know the sweetness of each Lord's-day celebrating his Supper, will not be content, I am sure, to put it off to less frequent seasons. Beloved, when the Holy Ghost is with us, ordinances are wells to the Christian, wells of rich comfort and of near communion.

But I must not forget the mercy seat. What a well that is to the Christian when he can draw nigh unto God with true heart! It is a glorious thing to have such a well as that in the family, where, in prayer with the children, you can bring all the necessities of the household before God, and mention each child if you will, and all the troubles of the past, or all the expected difficulties of the coming day. Let us never give up that well. But, as for private prayer, brethren, this world were drear indeed if we could not pour out our sorrows into our Father's ear. This is the poor man's riches; this is the sick man's medicine; this is the faint man's cordial; this is the weak one's strength; this is the ignorant man's school;

this is the strong man's confidence. Neglect prayer, and you will soon discover that all your spiritual powers wax weak; but be much in supplication—and he that is mighty on his knees, is mighty everywhere. He that looketh God in the face every morning, will never fear the face of man; and he who looketh Christ in the face each evening, may well close his eyes in sweet repose, feeling that, if he should never wake to this world of care, he shall wake up in the likeness of his Lord. Oh, yes! the mercy seat is a well of refreshment indeed! Over and above this, every form of fellowship with Jesus, wrought in us by the Spirit, is a well of salvation. This is an unknown thing to the ungodly, he entereth not into this secret; but you, my fellow Christians, know what communion with God means, for ofttimes, even when we are in business, or taken up with the world's cares, our hearts are away with our Beloved on the mountains of myrrh and in the beds of spices; we get us away from the world's toils to lean our head upon his bosom, to set in his banqueting-house, and see the love-banner waving over our heads. Beloved, we are no strangers to Jesus Christ, blessed be his name, and he is no stranger to us; we have seen him through the lattices of the ordinances; we have found the means of grace to be like windows of agate and gates of carbuncle, through which we have beheld him; we have him in our hearts full often, he embraces our soul—we carry the fire of his love flaming on the altar of our affections. He is our dear companion, our ever present help in time of trouble.

Thus have I mentioned some of the wells. Now, concerning them all, it may be said, that they can never be stopped up by our foes. We read that in old times the enemies stopped up the wells, but neither hell nor its infernal train can ever fill up one of the wells which the Lord has digged and filled by his Spirit. If outward ordinances be stopped, yet the great deep that lieth under will find a vent somewhere; and if we were forbidden to draw near to the Lord's table, or to meet to listen to the word, yet, blessed be God, we could pray, and we could have secret fellowship with Jesus, and so the wells could not so be stopped that the thirsty Christian should be deprived of his drink in due season.

Moreover, as they cannot be stopped, so neither can they be taken away from us. The Philistine king, Abimelech, strove with Abraham and with

Isaac to take away the wells; but these are ours by covenant engagements, these are given to us in the eternal council, they are guaranteed to us by the solemn league of the eternal Three; and none of these covenant blessings shall be wrested from the heirs of life, who are heirs of all things in Christ Jesus.

Though these fountains cannot be stopped up or taken away, yet we can be molested in coming near to them. It seems that archers and wells frequently go together. It was the blessing of Joseph—"Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall." But what next? "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him." And so in the text: here are wells, but there is the noise of archers, which greatly disturbs those who go to draw water. Brethren and sisters—I think you know, but I will refresh your memories—you know what the noise of archers has been to you when you have tried to draw water. Years ago, with some of us, our sins were the archers that shot at us when we would fain come to Christ and drink of his salvation. When we bowed the knee in prayer, a fiery arrow would dart into our hearts—"How dare you pray? God heareth not sinners!" When we read the word of God, another barbed shaft would be shot against us—"What hast thou to do with God's word? There can be no promise there for such as thou art. Knowest thou not that thou art a condemned sinner, and that book curses thee solemnly? Turn away from it, of what service can it be to thee?" Do you not remember how you were wont to come up to this house sighing for comfort, and though the preacher frequently invited you to Christ, and tried to exhibit a crucified Saviour before your eyes, yet the noise of the archers prevented you drawing from the well? Arrow after arrow of remorse, conviction, terror, and alarm, pierced your soul, so that you could not obtain peace with God. You used to envy the very least of the Lord's people when you saw them rejoicing in Christ, while you could not so much as hope yourself. You were told to believe, but faith seemed impossible to you. You were hidden to rest upon the finished work, but you only could say, "I would, but cannot trust." The twanging of the bow and the whizzing of the shaft were a terrible noise which prevented all drawing of water; while sometimes Satan beat the big hell drum in your ears: "The wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come!" And as you thought about the judgment day, and the great white throne, and

the resurrection, and the dividing of the sheep from the goats, and the "Depart, ye cursed," and the everlasting fire, and all the terrors of a dread eternity, divested of every beam of hope, it seemed impossible for you to draw water out of any one of the wells, though perhaps you tried them all, and tried them again and again, as I did, year after year, and yet could not obtain so much as a single drop to cool your parched tongue, while it seemed as if it would cleave to the roof of your mouth in utter despair. Ah! but beloved, you are delivered from the noise of archers now; your sins which are many, are forgiven you; now you can come to Jesus, now you can come to the ordinances, now you can read the Bible, now you can hear the word, and you find that God's paths drop fatness. There is to you a river, the streams whereof make glad all your powers. Oh! how precious now these wells have become, because you can in unmolested peace draw water; and though sometimes the devil would fain shoot at you, yet you know you have a glorious shield, who is the Lord's anointed, and has turned away all wrath from you, so that none can lay anything to your charge, for you are accepted in the Beloved, justified by faith, and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Will not you who are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, bless the Lord?

But I should not wonder if since that first race of archers called sins has died out, some of you have been much molested by another tribe of bowmen, who a great deal trouble me at times, namely, the archers called doubts and fears. These sad villains will, if they can, attack every soul that desires to enjoy the means of grace and the grace of the means. "Ah!" says Satan, even to God's child, "remember your slips and your failings! Recollect your shortcomings, your slackness in prayer, your indifference to God's glory, your hardness of heart! How can you think of receiving a promise?" Just as you are going to grasp some divine word out of your Bible and suck out its honey, it seems as though something smote your hand, and you were obliged to drop the text altogether, lest you should be acting presumptuously. No hymn of joyful assurance suited you, but you began moaning out—

"'Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought,

Do I love the Lord or no?  
Am I his or am I not?"

It is poor work coming to the Lord's table when you are afraid that you are none of his; it is wretched work even listening to the ministry when you dare not claim the precious things which are delivered; yes, and even the word of God is a comfortless book when you cannot feel that you have a saving interest in its promises. Yet I thank God, when our faith is in exercise, and our hope is clear, we can see our interest in Christ; we come to him just as we came at first, and cast ourselves wholly upon him. Then we no longer fear the archers, but are rid of every fear; we "know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him;" and, no longer disturbed by our enemies, we sit by the well's brink, and are refreshed.

Yet, I should not wonder if another band of archers has sometimes attacked you when you have been at the wells, namely, your cares. Dear mother, the thought of the children at home, has frequently disturbed your devotions in the assembly of the saints. Good friend engaged in business, you do not always find it easy to put a hedge between Saturday and Sunday. The cares of the week will stray into the sacred enclosure of the day of rest, and thus the cruel archers worry you. Ay, and perhaps in the case of those of us who are engaged in God's work, even our solemn engagements enlist against us a set of archers unknown to others; I mean anxieties about the right conducting of services, and arranging the various departments of the church. We become, like Martha, cumbered with much serving, even though we are serving the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and this deprives us of the delightful sitting at his feet, which is heaven below. It is well to be able to cast all our cares on him who careth for us, and thus, by an act of faith in our heavenly Father, to be delivered from the noise of these archers.

One thing you have, dear friends, for which you cannot be too thankful, namely, you have a deliverance from the archers of ecclesiastical discord. We have peace within our borders. We have not this bickering and that division, we are not divided brother against brother, as some of our churches are, which are rent by schisms, torn in pieces by stripes, which

might well cause them great searchings of heart; when we do come together, we come to edify one another in peace, for we love each other in the Lord. We have not to lament that the house of God is a place of our sorest wounding; it is to us a place of rest—where our best friends, our kindred dwell, where God our Saviour reigns. We are delivered from that noise of archers at church-meetings; and you who know how sharply some can shoot, may well be glad of rest.

Again, we are happily delivered from political persecutions. We have not to set scouts upon the mountains, as the covenants of old, when they met in some lonely glen for worship. We have not to put one of the deacons at the door to warn us when the constables were coming to arrest us, as the members of this very church did according to our records, in years gone by. The minister has not to escape and hide himself from the officers, and the members have no need to hasten to their homes like scattered sheep, hunted by the wolf in the form of an armed band, but every man under his own vine and fig tree we sit, none making us afraid, for which we are not thankful enough, I am quite sure. May God grant that, recollecting our peaceful privileges in being now screened from persecutions, from ecclesiastical troubles, from carnal cares, from inward doubts, and above all, from the plague of sin, we may be like those who in the days of Deborah, were delivered from the noise of archers in the places of the drawing of water.

Enough upon that, only make sure that you pay your need of gratitude to your gracious God. This reminding you of your mercies I am afraid is dull work to some of you, but if you had them taken away, you would think differently. One might almost sigh for a brush of persecution to wake some of you up! Just a little salt cast here and there to make some of the sore places smart! Surely we go to sleep unless the whip be now and then laid on. A stake or two at Smithfield might once again give back the old fire of enthusiasm to the church, but in these warm sunny days we forget our mercies. We go to sleep upon the bench, instead of tugging at the oar; and when we ought to be serving God with all our might and soul, I fear that the most of us who are saved are dreaming our lonely way to heaven, indifferent to a very great extent to the glory of God, and forgetful of our indebtedness to Christ for what he has done for us.

## II. Now we turn the subject, and come secondly to notice THE SONGS BY THE WELL.

As when the people came to the wells of old, they were wont to talk with one another if all was peaceful, so when we come up to the ordinances of God's house, and enjoy fellowship with Jesus, we should not spend our time in idle chat, but we should rehearse the works of the Lord. In Deborah's day, when one friend came to the well and met another, and half-a-dozen gathered together, one would say, "Delightful change this! We could not come to the well a month ago without being afraid that an arrow would pierce our hearts." "Ah!" said another, "our family went without water for a long time. We were all bitten with thirst because we dare not come to the well." Then, another would say, "But have you heard how it is? It was that woman, the wife of Lapidoth, Deborah, who called out Barak, and went with him to the battle. Have you not heard of the glorious fight they had, and how the river Kishon swept Jabin away, and Jacl smote Sisera through the temples?" "The Lord hath done it," said another. "It was the Lord's doing, and is not it marvelous in our eyes?" And so, around the well's brink, when they were delivered from the noise of archers, they rehearsed the works of God; and before they wended their way to their several homes, they said one to another, "Let us sing unto the praise of God who has set our country free;" and so, catching the tune, each woman went back to her village home, bearing the pitcher for her household, and singing as she went. This is very much what we ought to do. When we come together, we ought to rehearse the work that Jesus Christ has done for us, the great work which he did on Calvary; the great work which he is doing now, as he stands before the Father's throne. We should talk experimentally, and tell one another of what we have known, what Christ has done for us; through what troubles we have been sustained; in what perils we have been preserved; what blessings we have enjoyed; what ills, so well deserved, have been averted from us. We have not enough of this rehearsing the works of the Lord. It was a sign of the saints in the olden times, that "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard." O let us get back to that primitive simplicity of conversation, and let us rehearse, as the text says, the righteous acts of Jehovah; let us go through our rehearsals for the



grand orchestra of the skies. Let us begin to praise God and stir each other up to gratitude here, that we may be getting ready to join the overwhelming hallelujah with the ten thousand times ten thousand who for ever praise God and the Lamb. Around all the wells, whichever they may be, of which we drink, let our conversation be concerning Christ and his dying love; concerning the Holy Spirit and his conquering power; concerning the providence of God and its goodness and its faithfulness; and then, as we wend our way to our different homes, let us go with music in our hearts, and music on our lips, to take music to our households, each man and woman magnifying the name of the Lord.

Did you observe carefully what it was they sang of? "The acts of the Lord." But there is an adjective appended, "The righteous acts of the Lord." Righteousness is that attribute which the carnal man fears but he who sees the righteousness of God satisfied by the atonement of Christ, is charmed even by the severe aspect of God dressed as a judge. The justified child of God is not afraid of the righteousness of God, for he can meet all its demands. He likens it to the golden lions which stood in pairs upon the steps of the throne of Solomon—not meant to drive away the petitioner, but to let him see how strong, how powerful, was that throne upon which Israel leaned. I see the righteousness and holiness of God like huge colossal lions, as I look at his throne, and I delight, as I ascend the steps to bow before the glorious Father's face, to know that his righteousness is engaged to save those for whom Jesus died. Let us recount the righteous vengeance of Calvary, the terrors that God cast forth upon his Son when he cursed our sins by making Christ to be a curse for us, though he knew no sin. This is a subject upon which we should delight to dwell.

Then, if you observe, it was "the righteous acts of the Lord toward his people." Yes; the very marrow of the gospel lies in special, discriminating, distinguishing grace. As for your universal grace, let those have it who care for such meatless bones; but the special gospel of electing love, of distinguishing grace, this is the gospel which is like butter in a lordly dish to a child of God, and he that has once fed on it will take no meaner fare. I delight to believe in the universal benevolence of God—he is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works; but his saints shall bless

him, for they are not received with benevolence merely, but with complacency; they are not only his servants, but his sons; not so much the works of his hands, as the children of his loins, the darlings of his bosom, the favourites of his heart, the objects of his eternal choice, the delight of his eyes, his peculiar treasure, his chosen portion, his precious jewels, his rest and delight. The Lord prizes his saints above all the world beside. He gave Egypt and Ethiopia for them—he did more, he gave his Son for them; he gave heaven's brightest jewel, heaven's glory, heaven's heaven he gave that he might redeem them from all iniquity, to be his own peculiar people. Thus, my beloved brethren, take care when you converse upon the Lord's acts, that you speak of his peculiar favor towards Israel, his chosen, his elect.

Note with care that the works which are to be rehearsed are done towards the inhabitants of the villages of Israel. Does not this suggest that we ought frequently to magnify the Lord's choice favor and tender indulgence towards the least and feeblest of his family? Those villagers, those who knew so little, those who possessed so little, those who could do so little, those who were so weak, so undefended, these were rescued by the divine hand. Speak, then, of the mercy of God towards the little ones of Israel, and you will have no narrow field of speech. Why, if there be a choice word in the Bible, it is always for the weak ones; if there be a peculiarly precious promise, it is generally for the feeble minded. The best carriage in all the world that I ever heard of is Jesus' bosom, but then that is for the lamb, not for those who are strong, but for the tender and frail. Those most compassionate of sentences in which Jesus seems to have most fully expressed his gentleness, and to have employed the tenderest similes, are evidently spoken with an eye to the trembling and timid. Take for instance that one, "The bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Such words as these we may well talk of together when we meet at the wells of ordinances, and so rehearse the praise of God and his righteous acts, even his righteous acts towards the villagers of Israel.

III. Lastly, the text says, "Then shall the people of the Lord GO DOWN TO THE GATES;" by which, several things may be intended.

First, when the people of God are altogether delivered from their sins, and their cares, and their troubles, by the great redemption of the Lord Jesus and the power of his Spirit, then they enjoy great liberty. At times we are like Jeremiah, who said, "I am shut up and cannot come forth;" or like another whose way was hedged up with thorns; but when we live in great nearness to Christ, the gates are all opened, and we are the Lord's freemen: instead of needing to keep within the limits which fear prescribes, we take our walks abroad in the fields of blessed liberty and gospel privilege. We walk from Dan to Beersheba in covenant mercies. Do you know what the liberty of a child of God is, dear friends, or are you all your lifetime subject to bondage? If you are a child of God, you do know something of it, but if you are not initiated into the mystery of the inner life, you will very probably confound liberty with license. The liberty of the man of the world is liberty to commit evil without restraint: the liberty of a child of God is to walk in holiness without hindrance. When the believer's ways are enlarged, he delights to run in the statutes of the Lord; obedience is freedom to the Lord's servant. Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden is light. I fear that very many of you who are present this morning are slaves—some of you slaves to fashion, you wear the fetters most conspicuously. You are the serfs of custom, and you have not the moral courage to rebel. You bow your necks to human dictation, and own that you must do what others do. You have neither the manhood nor the grace to strike out a path of your own. Now, the true child of God does not care one snap of his finger what others may do, to his own Master he stands or falls. He does what is right, and would sooner take the lion of hell by the beard than do wrong. If others like his integrity, so much the better for them; if they do not like it, they are condemned out of their own mouths. I take it that the genuine Christian who has once come to fear God, fears nobody else; that he scorns to hamper himself with the sinful customs which sway the slavish hordes of mankind. He chooses for himself by the light of God's word, and when he sees a thing to be right, he does it, and he asks no man liberty on that account. It is a most glorious liberty which a man possesses when he is no longer in bondage to men, to smart under their threats or to fatten in their smiles. Glorious was that ancient father who threw back the threatenings of his enemies, and laughed them to scorn. "We will banish you!" said they. "No!" said

the Christian hero, "you cannot do that, because I shall be at home anywhere; I am a citizen of heaven; I am a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth." "But we will shut you out from all your friends!" "No!" he said, "you are not able even to do that, since my best Friend will always be with me." "We shall deprive you of your goods!" But he replied, "That I know you cannot do, for I gave them all away to the poor but yesterday." "Well, we will take away your life!" "In that, too, I am undismayed," said he, "for death will only give me the life for which I long." No wounds could be inflicted upon a warrior so invulnerable; just so secure is every man who is clad in the armor of faith. He is above the molestation of mankind, for his life is hidden with Christ; his Conversation is in heaven; he is free from fear, since he has nothing to fear; all his interests are secure. He has cast himself upon his God in Christ, and since God has made him free, he is free indeed. "He is the freeman whom the truth makes free, and all are slaves beside." You do not know what a joy it is to walk erect in conscious, mental, moral, spiritual, God-given freedom. Slaves of priest-craft, we pity you, your chains we would not wear for all the wealth of India! Bondslaves of the law, we mourn for you, for your service is heavy, and your captivity is terrible. Serfs of custom, you are more to be scorned than pitied: break your bands asunder, and wear the yoke no more. This day we feel as emancipated slaves must have felt when the last fetter fell to the ground. O glorious liberty, no price can show thine excellence, and all the things which we can desire are not to be compared with thee.

To go down to the gates, however, means something else, for citizens went down to the gates to exercise authority and judgment. He that is in Christ discerneth spirits, and separateth between the excellent and the reprobate. "The spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." The saints, being led of the Spirit, discern between the precious and the vile; they know the voice of their Shepherd, but a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers. The saints judge this world, and by their living testimony condemn its sin. "Know ye not that we shall judge angels" in the day of the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ? Instead of being judged and following others, they who love God become the leaders in right, and are as God's mouth rebuking iniquity.

To go down to the gates signified also to go forth to war. When a

Christian man is saved, he is not content with his own safety, he longs to see others blessed. He can now go out of the gates to attack the foe who once held him in bondage, and therefore he girds on his weapon. When will the church of God be inflamed by the sacred desire of carrying the war for Christ into the enemy's territory? I think I see a great deal in our churches now of a dangerously lethargic conservatism, a settling down contented with our churches, delighted to strengthen our own hands to keep together what we have, and careless about enlargement. The object of many churches of considerable age seems to be consolidation, and nothing more: but rest assured that the truest consolidation is enlargement, the best conservatism is progress, the truest way to keep what you have is to get more, the best way to retain the grace you now possess is to crave for more and more of the blessed spiritual gift. Brethren, if Christ has delivered us from the noise of archers, and we are at perfect peace with heaven, do not let us fold our arms and say, "The work is done, let us sleep in peace." O you saved men, hasten to the armoury, array yourselves in the panoply, and grasp the sword, for now you are called by Christ to a holy warfare. If you are saved, you must seek to save others; if you have received the light, carry it into the dark places. If you have escaped from the jaw of the lion, and the paw of the bear, now go forth to fight with the monster and tear others from his power. I trust that the most of you are engaged in some Christian service, but so often as I come into this pulpit and think of the numbers of believers in this church, I feel concerned that we should not suffer any part of our territory to lie idle as waste ground, that we should not have a single member in this church who is doing nothing. I shall be satisfied, perfectly satisfied, if each one is doing what he can; we cannot expect more, neither does the Lord expect according to what a man has not, but according to what he has. But are you, my brethren, who have been lifted up into the glorious position of saved souls, are you glorifying Christ and finishing the work which is given you to do? I fear that some of you are not. You can eat the fat and drink the sweet, but you make but small return unto your Lord. I speak to you as a loving brother in Christ, and I pray you think how life will look in the light of its last hour. Think of your residence on earth as you will view it from those summits of bliss beyond the river! Will you wish then to have wasted time, to have lost opportunities? If you could know regrets in the realm of blessedness,

would not these be the regrets that you have not served Christ better, loved him more, spoken of him oftener, given more generously to his cause, and more uniformly proved yourselves to be consecrated to him? I am afraid that such would be the form of the regrets of paradise, if any could intrude within those gates of pearl. Come, let us live while we live! Let us live up to the utmost stretch of our manhood! Let us ask the Lord to brace our nerves, to string our sinews, and make us true crusaders, knights of the blood-red cross consecrated men and women, who, for the love we bear Christ's name, will count labor to be ease, and suffering to be joy, and reproach to be honor, and loss to be gain! If we have never yet given ourselves wholly up to Christ as his disciples, now hard by his cross, where we see his wounds still bleeding afresh, and himself quivering in pain for us, let us pledge ourselves in his strength, that we give ourselves wholly to him without reserve, and so may he help us by his Spirit, that the vow may be redeemed and the resolve may be carried out, that we may love Christ, and dying may find it gain.

Brethren and sisters, I cannot press this home to you as I would; I must leave it with your own consciences and with the eternal Spirit. If Jesus be not worthy, do not serve him; but if he be right honorable, serve him as he ought to be served. If heaven and eternal things be not weighty, then trifle with them; but if they be solemn realities, I beseech you as honest men treat them as realities. If there be a day coming when all your business, and your worldly cares, and your fleeting pleasures, will seem to be mere children's toys, if there be an hour coming when to have served God will be glory, when to have won souls will be renown, then live as in the light of that truth, and God help you by his blessed Spirit. Amen and Amen.

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## **The Song Of Songs**

Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.  
- Isaiah 44:23

No doubt this prophecy had a fulfillment in the restoration of the captive Jews from Babylon, in the rebuilding of the temple, and the completion of the walls of Jerusalem. This made the nation rejoice with unspeakable joy, and made them cry, "Sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem." This was a fulfillment, but not the fullest accomplishment of the soul-stirring prophecy before us, a larger blessing was yet to come, to make every word emphatic and to enlarge the area of the joy till all the earth and all the spheres of heaven should take part in it. I shall spend no time upon the minor meanings of the passage, but speak at once of that redemption, of which all the rest are but types, the redemption of the true Israel of God by Christ Jesus our Lord. To that redemption the words of our text are preeminently applicable. "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

In considering the text we shall first survey the scenery of the prophecy; secondly, we shall contemplate the exceedingly glorious subject for joy. Having attended to both of these matters, we will for a little while listen to the song; and then, in the last place, if the Spirit of God shall graciously help us, we will join in the universal chorus.

I. LET US SURVEY THE SCENE. The scene of our text is noteworthy. We saw its earthly parallel yesterday. The heavens were overcast, the clouds were dense, the sky was black, the sun was obscured, and albeit it is near Midsummer a chill came over us. Far over head rolled the loud thunder, the dread artillery of heaven pealed forth as in the day of the Lord's battle. We expected a terrific tempest, and timid hearts began to quail. Who knew where the bolts of heaven might fall, and what mischief the flames of fire might work? The coward's fears were groundless, the storm had gathered for other fields than ours. There fell a shower which blessed

the earth.

"Down, down they come, those fruitful showers!  
Those earth-rejoicing drops!  
A momentary deluge pours,  
Then thins, decreases, stops.  
And ere flee dimples on the stream  
Have circled out of sight,  
Lo! from the sun a joyous gleam  
Breaks forth, of amber light."

Then the ever gracious Lord hung out across the heavens his bow of beauty the covenant token, as if to assure us that he was not about to destroy the earth with a flood. Anon the swift winds blew, and cloud after cloud disappeared, till as we went forth to walk beneath the gladsome trees, and amidst the laughing flowers, the thick clouds had gone and above us was the blue serene of heaven. Tempest and bolt of terror were far removed, heaven shone on earth, and earth smiled back on heaven. On such a spiritual scene the prophet fixed his eye, and he pictured it in the verse which precedes my text. A cloud, even a thick cloud of sin shut out the light of God's countenance from his people, and turned its dark side on their upward gazing eyes. Sins and transgressions interposed like a curtain, nay, rather like a wall of brass, between the sinful people and their God, so that their prayers could not pass through to him, nor could his favor shine down on them. They cowered down in terror, as they heard the voice of God threatening judgment, and they expected every moment that he would overthrow them in his wrath. Lo instead thereof, the Lord hung out the covenant rainbow, gospel promises were seen, Jesus was set forth as the great atoning sacrifice; and as men looked upon him gleams from the light of God's countenance filled them with hope. Nor did they hope in vain, for anon the Lord fulfilled, as in a moment, the word wherein it is written, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." So, going forth and returning to their God beneath that clear sky, from which the Sun of Righteousness shone down with beams of love, the forgiven people were filled with rejoicing, and by the mouth of the prophet they cried aloud, "Sing, O heaven, clouds veil thee no longer; shout, ye lower parts of the earth,



which have been refreshed with fertilising showers; shout, O ye forest trees, whose every bough has been hung with diamond drops; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." Thus the scenery of the text is helpful to the full understanding of it. Read the two verses together, and their beauty is seen.

When did the joyous event take place which we are bidden to celebrate with song? We may consider it as virtually accomplished in the eternal counsels of God, for our Lord is "the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world." When the covenant was made between the Father and the Son, and Jesus undertook to die as a substitute for his chosen people, then the cloud was gone and the Lord could look upon his elect with complacency, as redeemed by their Surety's pledge. Viewing them as guilty, his holy eyes could endure them, but looking upon them as in Christ Jesus, regarding them through the atonement, he cast their iniquities behind his back, and was well pleased with them "for his righteousness' sake." At the thought of the covenant "ordered in all things and sure" the universe of intelligent beings may well rejoice, for therein man's redemption and God's glory are joined together by an eternal decree. On the strength of that covenant multitudes entered heaven before the great Surety had shed his blood; it was therefore a legitimate theme for holy song before the long appointed day had dawned.

The clouds were actually removed when the atonement was presented. In the fullness of time Jesus appeared, and up to the tree carried all the sins of his people. Having all his life long carried their sicknesses and sorrows, he bore the burden of sin to the place of its annihilation, and by his death he made an end of it. Apart from the atonement, the chosen of God, like other men, lay under sin; the black cloud was over all the race, but Jesus took the dense mass of all the transgressions of his people, past, present, and to come, and obliterated the whole, even as a cloud is blotted out from the face of heaven. Jesus took the whole incalculably ponderous load, all charged with tempest as it was, and bore it all upon those shoulders, which must have been crushed to the earth had they not been divine: on the tree he bore that sin and the wrath which was due to it, feeling all its crowded tempests in his own soul, until in that moment when he had borne all, and ended all, he sent up the victorious shout of

"It is finished." Then shone forth the unclouded glory of boundless love; then was gone for ever the threatened storm; then righteousness sprang out of the earth, and peace looked down from heaven, and the reconciled ones might well exclaim, "Sing, O heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." Sin was put away, transgression was cast into the depths of the sea, and loud o'er all rang out the jubilant challenge—"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? who is he that condemneth, now that Christ hath died?"

The text also receives an actual fulfillment to each one of God's people in the moment when the eye of faith is first turned to the crucified Savior. I scarcely need to sketch that experience, for, my brethren, you know it well. Oh, the blackness of the darkness above; oh, the horror of the tempest within, in the dreadful hour of conviction of sin, when my weary soul longed for nothingness, that it might escape from its own hell. Oh the dread of the wrath to come. I saw all God's indignation gathering up to spend itself upon me, but glory be to God it spent itself elsewhere!

"The tempest's awful voice was heard;  
O Christ, it broke on thee!  
Thy open bosom was my ward,  
It braved the storm for me.  
Thy form was scarr'd, thy visage marr'd,  
Now cloudless peace for me."

Well do I remember the day in which I looked to Jews was lightened in a moment; the rain was over and gone, and all was peace and joy. Oh, that blessed day! I went forth with joy, and was led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills brake forth before me into singing, and all the trees of the field did clap their hands. Nor has the joy departed: for me the mountains still are singing, and the trees still clap their hands; for still my heart is glad within me at every mention of the precious name of Jesus, his blood still speaketh peace within my conscience, and his finished sacrifice is still my joy.

This also comes true not only at first, but frequently during the Christian life; for there are times when our unbelief makes new clouds, and threatens new storms. Though our sin was all forgiven at the very first, and when we were first washed we were clean every whit, so that we needed not ever afterwards to wash again, except to wash our feet, yet unbelief can revive the memories of sin, and defile the conscience with dead works, and so it can create clouds between us and God: nevertheless, when our Lord reveals himself he blotteth out our sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud our transgressions, and again we return unto him and rejoice in him. We need not come under these returning glooms, and we ought not to do so; but should it happen to us that we come under a cloud, it will be a blessed thing to look up and remember that the Lord can clear the skies in a moment, and turn our dreariest shades into the brightness of the morning.

The text will obtain its best fulfillment, methinks, at the day of the Lord's appearing,—that day around which our chief hopes must ever center. The day will come when the gospel shall have been preached for the last time, when the chosen of God shall have been all gathered out from among men, and the dispensation shall be fulfilled. Then shall all the saints rise to glory at the call of God. The elect multitude shall be all there, every one according to the purpose of the Father, every one according to the redemption of the Son, every one according to the calling of the Spirit, all there; upon their faces there shall be no spot nor wrinkle, and on their garments no stain nor defilement, for they are without fault before the throne of God. Then as the books are opened, and the transgressions of the ungodly are published under heaven, they shall stand without trembling, for

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness  
Their beauty are, their glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall they lift up their head."

Yes, and we shall be there who have believed in Jesus, every one of us; and with what delight, as we reflect upon our sins, shall we see the all-covering atonement, the cross which crucified our sins, the sepulcher

which swallowed up in an eternal death all our transgressions, the ascension which led captivity captive, and the second coming which gave to us the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body, and perfected us so that no trace of sin's mischief can be found upon us. No damage shall be sustained by our humanity; we shall come up out of the furnace of life's trial with not the smell of fire upon us. Though the temptation and the guilt were like a seven times heated furnace, yet, because he, the Son of God, came into the burning furnace with us, we shall live and come forth unscathed, and in the last day our humanity shall have suffered no harm, but shall even be brighter and better than if it had never fallen. Ah, what notes will be heard; not the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, as in the days of Babylon's idolatries, but blessed songs of holy adoration shall be heard, to which angels' harmonies shall keep tune, and this shall be the hymn—"Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

II. We have now reached the second part of our subject, and therefore LET US CONTEMPLATE THE GLORIOUS SUBJECT FOR JOY. The great subject of joy is redemption—the redemption of God's Israel. This is a stupendous work. It was a simple matter for man to sell himself into slavery, but to redeem him was another matter. This is the work, this is the labor! To redeem man from his iniquity is a work which all the cherubim and seraphim could not have accomplished, a work indeed which all creatureship would have failed to perform. My brethren, our slavery was terrible, and the price of deliverance was far beyond mountains of silver and gold. The redemption of the soul is precious; "it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold." As there needed a price, so there was needed a power, to redeem; for with a high hand and an outstretched arm must Israel be brought out of Egypt; and where could such power be found? Neither angel nor archangel possessed it, and as for the sons of man, the insects which dance through a summer's eve are not more feeble. Hopeless is human bondage unless the malice and craft and power of Satan can be matched by love and wisdom and force superior at all points. The price has been found, the power has been displayed. Sing, O

ye heavens, for the Lord has found a ransom! We were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, and that price has effectually set us free. Break forth into singing, ye mountains, for the Lord hath also found the power: his own right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory! He has brought up his people out of the house of bondage and made them free indeed.

Of redemption, redemption by price and by power, we are bidden to sing, a redemption so pre-eminently desirable that we can never sufficiently value it, a redemption which has delivered us from sin, of all slaveries the worst. "Sin shall not have dominion over you;" Christ has effectually redeemed you from its tyrannic sway. You enjoy also deliverance from the curse of the law, by Christ's being made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." You are blest with deliverance from misery; wherever there is sin misery is sure to follow, but Jesus has borne the penalty for your sins and turned it aside from you. You are delivered from carking care, and unbelieving anxiety; the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps your heart and mind by Jesus Christ. And you are delivered from death and hell. Let this thought thrill you with delight: in your ear can never ring the doleful sentence, "Depart, ye cursed": for you there is no bottomless pit, no fire which cannot be quenched, no worm which never can die. Christ has delivered you; you are no longer slaves to sin and victims to death, for you are set free from the thralldom of Satan's power, who hath the power of death. He may tempt, but he cannot force; he provoke, but he cannot subdue: Christ has undone the devil's work, has cast him down from his throne, and torn up his stronghold; his empire over you is ended, never to be renewed. In you who have believed the Lord has set up his throne, and there will he reign for ever. Glory be to God for this. The Lord's redemption is the theme of ceaseless praise, for it is a redemption which brings in its train hope, holiness, and heaven, deliverance from sin, likeness to Christ, and eternal glory with Christ. Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth!

Brethren, the very center and emphasis of the song seems to me to lie in this: "The Lord hath done it." How my heart delights in those five words, "The Lord hath done it!" Look at them for a minute. Whatever God does

is the subject of joy to all pure beings. God in action is the delight of an intelligent universe. When God created the world, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. I can well conceive that they kept a more than ordinarily joyous festival on that Seventh Day, when the Lord "rested and was refreshed." Wondrous expression! If we were perfect, everything that God did would cause us to sing, and as he is always acting we should be always singing. Ay, if he smote us, it would make us bless him, if Eve were clean divorced from sin. If salvation were the work of man, our scantiest notes might suffice, for what is man but a worm, a creature that is crushed before the moth? Wherein is he to be accounted of? But when we sing of redemption it is the Lord's redemption. He planned it from the beginning, he carried it out in the person of his Son, he applies it by his Holy Spirit. Salvation is of the Lord. "The Lord hath done it." You who choose may invent a salvation that is partly by man and partly by God, and you may cry this up much as you please; as for me, I have no desire for any salvation but that which is all of God, neither is there any other. This one note shall occupy my entire being—"The Lord hath done it:" "The Lord hath done it." Every new convert who has newly found peace knows that the Lord has done it; every man who has been for years a believer, and has learned his own weakness, will say clearly, "The Lord hath done it;" ay, and the aged Christian just about to depart is the man to say, "The Lord hath done it." Grace reigns without a rival, the Lord alone is exalted. Sing, O heavens, and be joyful O earth, for redemption is Jehovah's work.

It is sweet to reflect that redemption is an accomplished fact. It is not "The Lord will do it," but "The Lord hath done it." If I were sent this morning as a prophet to tell you that the Lord would become incarnate, and bleed, and die on Golgotha, I hope that some would believe it; but it may be you would find it difficult to realize it, and as Abraham did to see Christ's day, and be glad; for it is a marvel not to be believed at all except upon divine testimony that God himself should make atonement for injury done to his own moral government. But I have to-day to speak of a matter of history—"The Lord hath done it"; he who was the offended one has provided a propitiation; his own deed of transcendent grace has scattered the thick clouds of sin, and poured eternal day upon the darkened earth. Jesus has bled and died, and vanquished sin thereby.

Our glorious Samson lay asleep in the Gaza of the tomb, and his foes thought they had him fast for ever; but he awoke before the morning light, and he pulled up the gates of death and hell, post and bar and all, and carried them away, leading captivity captive. He hath done it, our divine deliverer has spoiled death and the grave for us. "Sing, O ye heavens: shout, ye lower parts of the earth." The Breaker is gone up before us, and our King at the head of us; he hath broken up and cleared a pathway straight from the tomb to the throne of God. Glory be to his name, he has done it.

We may lay peculiar force upon the word, "The Lord hath done it," for he has finished the work. In the matter of the redemption of his people nothing remains to be done. There is no mortgage on the church of God to be ultimately discharged, the Lord has made us his unencumbered freehold, and we are his own portion for ever. There is not a little left of human merit for the sinner to work out for himself, or some little point in which the work of salvation is incomplete; but "The Lord hath done it." No, brethren, even the fringe of the robe of righteousness is all there; you have not a thread to add to it, it is without seam, and woven from the top throughout, all of one piece. Consummatum est. "It is finished," every type fulfilled, every commandment kept, every sin abolished, the wrath of God and everything that hindered put away. "The Lord hath done it." The heavens sang when Jesus came to do the deed, they woke the silence of the sheepfolds when the heavenly babe was born; how must they sing now that he has finished the work which was committed to him, and perfected for ever all those who were set apart! I cannot speak on such a theme; language is too poor a medium for the expression of my grateful joy. I wish that we could pause and sing the text—"The Lord hath done it: he hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

A very important part of the song, however, lies in the fact that what God has done glorifies himself. Infinite mercy and condescending love reflect glory upon God. What a subject for a Dr. Owen to write upon—the attributes of God as displayed and glorified in redemption. He would need a score of volumes, all crowded with such condensed thought as he was wont to give forth. What a chapter should be written on the wisdom of redemption! What another chapter upon the justice of it! How the Lord

would not pardon sin without a sacrifice, because he was just, and could not tolerate iniquity. What another chapter, nay, what tomes upon tomes, might be composed upon the love of redemption! The fear would be that our finite minds, in beholding the brightness of one divine attribute, would be so dazzled as to forget the rest. Who can tell us, concerning the atonement, which of its letters best is writ, the wisdom, the justice, or the grace? In redemption you see all the attributes of God, blended in harmony, shining with benignant radiance, not with the flash and flame of Sinai, but with the soft beams of peace and love from Calvary. God is never so gloriously seen as at the cross; no, not even amidst the flaming seraphim do the saints above enjoy such a view of God as when they see him in the wounds of Jesus, and putting their finger into the print of the nails, exclaim with transport, "My Lord and my God."

Why, my brethren, the Lord has not only illustrated every one his attributes in the great plan of redemption, but he has been pleased to show how the goodness of his nature triumphs over all the power of evil. Satan seemed to have gained a great advantage over God when he poisoned our race with his venom; the advantage was but temporary, and it ended in his greater defeat. Little did he know that by his craft and malice he was preparing a black background for divine love to lay its lovely tints upon, that they might be the more conspicuous. How art thou baffled in thy dark designs, O Lucifer! How art thou vanquished, O thou enemy! How art thou spoiled, O thou spoiler! How art thou led captive, O captivity! Thou thoughtest that man would be thy weak and willing instrument with which to show thy spite against the Most High, but lo, man, whom thou didst disgrace and dishonor, triumphs over thee on God's behalf. The seed of the woman whom thou didst beguile has been wiser than thou; his bruised heel has been the breaking of thy head; while he hath all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea. The man Christ Jesus is Lord of all, and at his name all creatures bow the knee. Even the devils are subject unto him, and evil is overruled for good. See how the Lord "frustrateth the token of the liars, and maketh diviners mad." Let the Lord be praised for ever and ever.

The Lord has also glorified himself by raising up a race of creatures such



as could not have been created by mere power, at least, so far as we can judge. God has a company of angels to worship him, but they never knew evil, and consequently their choice of good is not so marvellous. They are also of an ethereal nature, and are not cumbered with material bodies of flesh and blood. The Lord might have created myriads more of pure spirits like the angels, but he desired to be served and loved by beings who should be in part material, and yet should be akin to himself: beings who should possess freedom of will and should know both good and evil, and yet should for ever choose good alone. Behold how such creatures have been produced! Not so much by creation as by redemption. The glorified once plunged deep into sin, but they were, without a violation of their free agency, recovered to their allegiance by the love of Jesus, and then lifted up into such a position that in Christ Jesus they are akin to God himself, so that no order of beings intervenes between them and God; and yet they never will nor can presume, nor take ambitious advantage of their elevated position. If God were to create free agents, knowing both good and evil, and put them where men will be in heaven, without their undergoing any preparatory process, it would be a dangerous experiment; but for him to let them know evil to the full, and yet be for ever bound to perfect holiness, because infinite love sways them with omnipotent obligations of gratitude,—this is to make creatures which bring exceeding glory to their author. These are not merely fashioned on his wheel, but dipped into the blood of his own suffering and indwelt by his own mighty power, and well may they be precious in his sight. "Glory, glory, how the angels sing"; but far louder are the notes of the redeemed. "Glory, glory," thrice and sevenfold told is that which comes from those loud harps of ransomed ones, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Lord hath glorified himself in Israel.

I cannot linger here, though the subject fascinates me, for I have to say somewhat upon the third point, which is,

III. LET US LISTEN TO THE SONG. The angels sing, for they have deep sympathy with the redemption of man, the redeemed in glory sing, for they have been the recipients of this mighty mercy, the material heavens themselves also ring with the sweet music, and every star takes up the

refrain, and with sun and moon praise the Most High.

Descending from heaven, the song charms the lower earth, and the prophet calls upon materialism to share in the joy; mountains and valleys, forests and trees, are charged to join the song. Why should they not? This round earth of ours has been overshadowed by the curse through sin; she has yet to be unswathed of all the mists which iniquity has cast upon her, for the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Therefore let creation sing. What mountain is there that has not been defiled with idolatry? Lo, the altars of Chemosh and the high places of Baal! But sing, ye mountains, for the God of the hills is revealed, and has purged you, by the blood of Calvary. What valley is there which man has not polluted with sin? In the plains, which should have been sacred to peaceful harvests, men have shed the blood of their fellows in fierce battle, and cities have been builded which have become the strongholds of iniquity. But sing, ye valleys and ye fruitful plains, for the Lord shall walk through you, and make you as the valley of Barachah, where the men of Judah sang, "Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever"; therefore the name of the place was called the valley of Blessing unto this day. Ye forests, where wild beasts have been invaded by still wilder men, break forth into singing, for no more shall the destroying hand of the Lord be upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan! Ye groves, which have witnessed the cruel rites of bloody worship, sing; for adown your aisles shall now be heard the holy hymn which chants redeeming love. O ye green trees, under which men have polluted themselves, beneath your shade shall saintly spirits find retreats prepared for prayer and praise. Break forth into singing, ye mountains! Sing, O Moriah, on whose summit the patriarch drew his knife to slay his son, for the true Isaac has been offered up, God has provided for himself a lamb! Sing, O Sinai, for the law proclaimed from thy awful summit has now been magnified and rendered honorable! Sing, O Pisgah, for now that Christ has died, from thy peak may be seen a promised land into which the servants of the Lord shall not be denied an entrance! Sing, O Carmel, for the controversy between God and Baal has been decided once

for all! Sing, O Hermon, for now the gentle dews of brotherly love shall fall upon and keep not silent, O Gilboa, once accursed, for the Son of David gives thee back thy dew! Sing, O Tabor, for Messiah transfigured has become the image of the future race! Sing, O Olivet, for where Jesus groaned and bled he comes to plant his foot to establish for ever bliss and holiness! The text exhorts the lower parts of the earth to shout, and well they may, for in the hands of the redeeming Lord are the deep places of the earth. Let the valleys respond to the song of the hills. Shout, O valley of Shaveh, thou that are called the king's vale, for now the great Melchizedek hath brought forth the true bread and wine for the seed of Abraham! Shout, O Eshcol, for thy richest clusters are outdone by the true vine, which the Lord hath planted! O valley of the Jordan shout, for in thy river the Redeemer was baptised! O valley of Baca rejoice, for the Lord Jesus has filled thy pools! O vale of Achor shout, for thou art now a door of hope! O ye wildernesses and solitary places, be glad, for redemption shall make you blossom as the rose! Let every tree in the forest bless the Lord, let each one yield boughs with which to strew the way before the lowly prince. Fruitful trees and all cedars, praise ye the Lord! Adown the fir trees' pillared shade let the soft murmur of praise be heard; and beneath our island's giant oaks let the glorious gospel be proclaimed. Praise ye the Lord ye elms, as peace sports adown your ancient avenues; praise him ye far-spreading beeches, as beneath your umbrageous boughs the flocks feed in plenty; and you, ye pines, for ever clad in verdure, join ye the song. Let not a single herb be silent, nor even the hyssop upon the wall be dumb. I cannot reach "the height of this great argument," nor can any man beside, I ween, unless he were a Milton, and had a soul inspired at once with loftiest poetry and grace divine.

The meaning of the whole seems to be this, that wherever saints are they ought to praise God for redeeming love, whether they climb the Alps or descend into the plains; whether they dwell in the cities or walk in the quietude of the woods. In whatever state of mind they feel themselves they still should praise redeeming grace and dying love; whether on the mountain top of communion, or in the valley of humiliation; whether lifted up by prosperity or cast down by adversity. They should leave a shining trail of praise behind them in their daily course even as does the vessel when it ploughs the sea.

The text calls upon all classes and conditions of men to praise God for redemption. Ye that are lifted up like mountains,—magistrates, princes, kings, and emperors; and ye who lie beneath like plains, ye who eat bread in the sweat of your faces, ye children of poverty and toil, rejoice in redeeming love. Ye who dwell in the midst of sin as in a tangled forest, ye who have transgressed against God and plunged into the deep places of vice, be glad, for ye may be restored. All ye of woman born, together praise the Redeemer of Israel, for he has accomplished the salvation of his people!

IV. LET US JOIN THIS SONG. Mr. Sankey is now behind me, but he cannot sing sweetly enough to set forth to the full the majesty of this song, nor could the choicest choir of singing men and singing women; nay, this task exceeds the reach of the seraphim themselves. Praise is silenced, O Lord, by the glory of thy love. Yet, brethren, let us give forth such music as we have.

Let us consider how we sing this song. We sing it when by faith we see the grand truth that Jesus Christ took his people's sin upon him, and so redeemed them. Understanding this fact, which is the heart of the gospel, we begin to sing for joy. Get a grip of that, my brethren, and hold it fast: your hearts will then sing; you cannot help it. Not all the harps of heaven can be more melodious than your song will be when your heart fully understands this fact—that Jesus Christ did actually stand in his people's stead, and finished transgression, and brought in everlasting righteousness for them. You will sing it better still if the Holy Spirit has applied it to your own soul, so that you can say, "My sins are blotted out like a cloud, and like a thick cloud my transgressions." "Through Jesus' blood I am clean, I am accepted in the Beloved, I am dear to the heart of God, on me there remaineth now no spot nor wrinkle, for I am cleansed through Jesus Christ." Nothing else can bring forth such charming music from any man's mind as a sense of redeeming grace and dying love.

You will be still better able to sing this if you every day realize the blessings of redemption and pardon, by drawing near to God, using the privilege of prayer, trusting the Lord for everything, enjoying sonship,

and communing with your heavenly Father if you seek to bear the image of the heavenly as truly as you have borne the image of the earthly, if you are fully consecrated to the Lord's service, and are borne along by the irresistible current of divine love: oh, if it be so with you beloved, you will be for ever crying, "Sing, O heavens, for the Lord hath done it."

I think I hear from different parts of the building the lament, "Alas, we cannot sing, for we have not believed in Jesus, and Christ has not put away our sin." Listen a minute, and I have done. Sinner, though you have not this redemption, yet I would have you sing about it, for it is precisely what you want. You are slaves to sin, and ought you not to bless God that there can be such a thing as redemption? If I had been a slave in the old slave days, even though I had small chance of being redeemed, yet the word redemption would have been a sweet morsel to me, and if I heard of others being redeemed, if I sang at all, I should choose for my theme redemption. So may you, poor soul. Many are redeemed, and are rejoicing in it; why should it not come to you? At any rate, begin to hope.

Rejoice, because salvation is a work done for you by another hand. "The Lord hath done it." A redemption in which you had to find a part of the price would not make you sing, for you are too poor to contribute a farthing, but the Lord has found the whole cost to the utmost penny. If ever you are saved, it must be by power beyond your own, for you are weak as water; be glad, then, that the Lord has done it. If you can ever get that thought into your mind (and I pray the Holy Ghost to put it there), that your salvation was completed on the tree by the Lord Jesus, why, methinks, you will with joy shout forth the Redeemer's praise.

Think again "the Lord hath done it," even he whom you have offended. The God whom you have grieved has condescended to work out your redemption. Ought not this to make your soul say, "Would God it were for me"? and then begin to sing even at the bare possibility of such a thing.

Then, sinner, listen. Your sin can be blotted out. You have tried to remove the stain, but all in vain; that scarlet stain abides, and though you were to wash your hand in the Atlantic till you reddened every wave, that blot would never disappear: no finite power can ever remove the accursed

spot. But it can be got out, for the text says he has blotted it out in the case of others. Why not, then, for you? This disease is not absolutely unto death: it may be cured. O man, those fetters are not, after all, eternal, they may be snapped; the bars in yonder window may be torn out, so that you can escape into liberty. Begin to sing, then! Alas, I know you will not because I bid you, nor at any man's bidding, till grace sets you free. The only thing to make you sing is for you to realize salvation, and oh may you do so at this moment by believing in Jesus. Have done with everything but Christ, and drop into his arms! Rest in him, trust him, depend upon him, and all is well, and then will you cry aloud, "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it."

"Come every soul by sin oppressed,  
There's mercy with the Lord;  
And he will surely give you rest,  
By trusting in his word.  
Only trust him! Only trust him!  
Only trust him now!  
He will save you. He will save you.  
He will save you now."

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## **The Sons Of God**

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. - Romans 8:16-17

My brethren, what a contrast there is between the present and future estate of the child of God! The believer is here the brother to the worm; in

heaven he shall be next of kin to the angels. Here he is covered with the sweat and dust which he acquired by Adam's fall; there his brow shall be bright with the immortality which is conferred upon him by the resurrection of Christ. Here the heir of heaven is unknown; he is in disguise, full often clad in the habiliments of poverty, but there his princely character shall be discerned and acknowledged, he shall be waited upon by angels, and shall share in the admiration which the universe shall pour upon the glorified Redeemer. Well said our poet just now,

"It doth not yet appear, how great we must be made."

I think I need not remind you of your condition here below; you are too conversant with it, being hourly fretted with troubles, vexed with your own infirmities, with the temptations of Satan, and with all the allurements of this world. You are quite conscious that this is not your rest. There are too many thorns in your nest, to permit you to hope for an abiding city below the skies. I say, it is utterly needless for me to refresh your memories about your present condition; but I feel it will be a good and profitable work if I remind you that there are high privileges of which you are possessors even now; there are divine joys which even this day you may taste. The wilderness has its manna; the desert is gladdened with water from the rock. God hath not forsaken us; the tokens of his goodness are with us, and we may rejoice in full many a gracious boon which is ours this very day. I shall direct your joyous attention to one precious jewel in your treasury, namely, your adoption into the family of God.

There are four things of which I shall speak this morning. First, *a special privilege*; second, *a special proof of it*, the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit; then thirdly, *a special privilege*, that of heirship; and fourthly, the practical part of the sermon and the conclusion shall be *a special manner of life demanded of such persons*.

I. First, then, my brethren, a SPECIAL PRIVILEGE mentioned in the text. "*We are the children of God.*" And here I am met upon the very threshold by the opposition of certain modern theologians, who hold

that sonship is not the special and peculiar privilege of believers. The newly discovered negative theology, which, I fear, has done some damage to the Baptist denomination, and a very large amount of injury to the Independent body - the new heresy is to a large degree, founded upon the fiction of the Universal Fatherhood of God. The old divines, the Puritans, the Reformers, are now in these last days, to be superseded by men whose teaching flatly contradicts all that we have received of our forefathers. Our old ministers have all represented God as being *to his people* a father, to the rest of the world a judge. This is styled by our new philosophers as old cumbersome scheme of theology, and it is proposed that it be swept away - a proposition which will never be carried out, while the earth remaineth, or while God endureth. But, at any rate, certain knight-errants have set themselves to do battle with windmills, and really believe that they shall actually destroy from the face of the earth that which is a fundamental and abiding distinction, without which the Scriptures are not to be understood. We are told by modern false prophets, that God in everything acts to all men as a father, even when he cast them into the lake of fire, and send upon them all the plagues that are written in his book. All these terrible things in righteousness, the awful proofs of holy vengeance in the judge of all the earth, and successfully neutralized in their arousing effect, by being quietly written among the loving acts and words of the Universal Father. It is dreamed that this is an age when men do not need to be thundered at; when everybody is become so tender-hearted that there is no need for the sword to be held "in terrorum" over mortals; but that everything is to be conducted now in a new and refined manner; God the Universal Father, and all men universal sons. Now I must confess there is something very pretty about this theory, something so fascinating that I do not wonder that some of the ablest minds have been wooed and won by it. I, for my part, take only one objection to it, which is that it is perfectly untrue and utterly unfounded, having not the lightest shadow of a pretence of being proved by the Word of God. Scripture everywhere represents the chosen people of the Lord, under their visible character of believers, penitents, and spiritual men, as being "the children of God," and to none but such is that holy title given. It speaks of the regenerate, of a special class me as having a claim to be God's children. Now, as there is nothing like Scripture, let me read you a few texts, Romans viii. 14. - "As many are led



by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Surely no one is so daring as to say, that all men are led by the Spirit of God; yet may it readily enough be inferred from our text, that those who are not led by the Spirit of God are not the sons of God, but that they and they alone who are led, guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit, are the sons of God. A passage from Galatians iii. 26. - "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," declaring as it seems to me, and rightly enough, that all believers, all who have faith in Christ are the children of God, and that they become actually and manifestly so by faith in Christ Jesus, and implying that those who have no faith in Christ Jesus, are not God's sons, and that any pretence which they could make to that relationship would be but arrogance and presumption. And hear ye this, John i. 12. - "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." How could they have been the sons of God before, for "to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, who were born *not of blood*," - then they were not make the sons of God by mere creation - "nor of the will of the flesh," that is to say, not by any efforts of their own "but of God." If any text can be more conclusive than this against universal sonship, I must confess I know of none, and unless these words mean nothing at all, they do mean just this, that believers are the sons of God and none besides. But listen to another word of the Lord in the first epistle of John, iii. 1-. - "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth no righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Here are two sorts of children, therefore all are not the children of God. Can it be supposed that those who are the children of the devil are nevertheless the children of God? I must confess my reason revolts against such a supposition, and though I think I might exercise a little imagination, yet I could not make my imagination sufficiently an acrobat to conceive of a man being at the same time a child of the devil, and yet a real child of God. Hear another, 2 Corinthians, vi. 17. - "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Is not that "coming out" necessary to sonship, and were they his sons, were they his daughters, had they any claim or right to call him Father, until they came out from the midst of a wicked world, and were separate? If so, why doth God

promise them what they have already. But again, Matthew v. 9. - "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." A fine title indeed if it belongs to every man! Where is the blessedness of the title, for they might be lovers of strife, and yet according to modern theologians they might still be the sons of God. Let us mark a yet more positive passage, Romans ix. 8. - "The children of the flesh, these are not the children of God." What then is to be said to this, "These are not the children of God." If any man will contradict that flatly - well, be it so. I have no argument with which to convince the man who denies so strong and clear a witness. Listen to the divine apostle John, where in one of his epistles he is carried away in rhapsody of devout admiration, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." And then he goes on giving a description of those who are the sons of God, who could not mean any but those who by a living faith in Christ Jesus, have cast their souls once for all on him. As far as I can guess, the main text on which these people build the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood, is that quotation which the apostle Paul took from a heathen poet - "As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." The apostle endorses that sentiment by quoting it, and against that endorsement we can of course have no contention; but the word there used for "offspring," expresses no idea of Fatherhood in the majestic sense of the term, it is a word which might be used as appropriately for the young of animals, the young of any other creature, it has not about it the human sympathies which belong to a father and a son. I know, besides this, nothing which could support this new theory. Possibly they fancy that creation is a paternal act, that all created things are sons. This is too absurd to need an answer, for if so, horses and cows, rats and mice, snakes and flies are children of God, for they are surely creatures as well as we. Taking away this corner-stone, this fancy theory tumbles to the ground, and that theory which seemed to be as tall as Babel, and threatened to make as much confusion, may right soon be demolished, if you will batter it with the Word of God. The fact is, brethren, that the relationship of a son of God belongs only to those who are "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of the Father's will:" Ephesians i. 5. The more you search the Bible, the more sure will you be that sonship is the special privilege of the chosen people of God and of none beside.

Having thus, as far as I can, established my point, that the privilege of our text is a special one, let me dwell upon it for a moment and remark that, as a special one, it is an act of pure unmistakeable grace. No man has any *right* to be a son of God. If we are born into his family it is a miracle of mercy. It is one of the ever-blessed exhibitions of the infinite love of God which without any cause in us, has set itself upon us. If thou art this day an heir of heaven, remember, man, thou wast once the slave of hell. Once thou didst wallow in the mire, and if thou shouldst adopt a swine to be thy child, thou couldst not then have performed an act of greater compassion than when God adopted thee. And if an angel could exalt a gnat to equal dignity with himself, yet would not the boon be such-an-one as that which God hath conferred on thee. He hath taken thee from the dunghill, and he hath set thee among princes. Thou hast lain among the pots, but he hath made thee as a dove whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. Remember that this is grace, and parentage, - look back to the hole of the pit whence thou art digged, and the miry clay whence thou wast drawn. Boast not, if thou art in the true olive. Thou art not there, because of thine original, thou art a scion from an evil tree, and the Divine Spirit hath changed thy nature, for thou wast once nothing but a branch of the vine of Gomorrah. Ever let humility bow thee to the very earth while thine adoption lifts thee up to the third heaven.

Consider again, I pray you, what a dignity God hath conferred upon you - even upon *you* in making you his son. The tall archangel before the throne is not called God's Son, he is one of the most favoured of his servants, but not his child. I tell thee, thou poor brother in Christ, there is a dignity about thee that even angels may well envy. Thou in thy poverty art as a sparkling jewel in the darkness of the mine. Thou in the midst of thy sickness and infirmity art girt about with robes of glory, which make the spirits in heaven look down upon the earth with awe. Thou movest about this world as a prince among the crowd. The blood of heaven runs in thy veins; thou art one of the blood royal of eternity - a son of God, descendant of the King of kings. Speak of pedigrees, the glories of heraldry - thou hast more than heraldry could ever give thee, or all the pomp of ancestry could ever bestow.

II. And now I press forward to notice that in order that we may know whether we are partakers of this high - this royal relationship of children of God, the text furnishes us with a SPECIAL PROOF - "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. You will notice here, my beloved, that there are two witnesses in court - two who are ready to prove our filiation to the eternal God. The first witness is *our spirit*; the second witness is *The Spirit*, the eternal Spirit of God, who beareth witness with our spirit. It is as if a poor man were called into court to prove his right to some piece of land which was disputed. He standeth up and beareth his own faithful testimony; but some great one of the land - some nobleman who lives near - rises, stands in the witness box, and confirms his witness. So is it with our text. The plain, simple spirit of the humble-minded Christian cries, "I am God's child." The glorious Spirit, one with God, attests the truth of the testimony, and beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Let us notice in the first place, how it is that *our spirit* is able to bear witness; and as this is a matter of experience, I can only appeal to those who are the true children of God; for no others are competent to give testimony. Our spirit bears witness that we are the children of God, when it feels a filial love to God. When bowing before his throne we can boldly say "Abba Father." - "Thou art my father," then our spirit concludes that we are sons, for thus it argues, "I feel to thee as a child feeleth to its parent, and it could not be that I should have the feeling of a son if I had not the rights of a son - if I were not a child thou wouldst never have given to me that filial affection which no dares to call thee "Father."

Sometimes, too, the spirit feels that God is its Father not only by love but by trust. The rod has been upon our back and we have smarted very sore, but in the darkest hour we have been able to say, "The time is in my Father's hands; I cannot murmur; I would not repine; I feel it is but right that I should suffer, otherwise my Father would never have made me suffer." He surely doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of man for nought; and when in these dark gloomy times we have looked up to a Father's face, and have said, "Though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee; thy blows shall not drive thee from me; they shall but make me say,

"Show me wherefore thou contendest with me, and purge me from my sin." Then our spirit beareth witness that we are the children of God.

And are there not times with you, my dear friends, when your hearts feel that they would be emptied and void, unless God were in them. You have perhaps received an increase to your wealth, and after the first flush of pleasure which was but natural, you have said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity; this is not my joy." You have had many mercies in your family, but you have felt that in them all there was a lack of something which could satisfy your heart, and you have felt that that something was God. My God, thou art my all in all - the circle where my passions move, the centre of my soul. Now these longings - these pantings for something more than this world can give you - were but the evidences of a child-like spirit, which was panting after its Father's presence. You feel you must have your Father, or else the gifts of his providence are nothing to you. That is, *your* spirit beareth witness that you are the child of God. But there are times when the heir of heaven is as sure that he is God's child as he is sure that he is his own father's son. No doubt can make him question. The evil one may whisper, "*If* thou be the son of God." But he says, "Get thee hence, Satan, I know I am the son of God." A man might as well try to dispute him out of the fact of his existence as out of that equally sure fact that he has been born again, and that by gracious adoption he has been taken into the family of God. This is our witnessing that we are born of God.

But the text, you see, furnishes us with a higher witness than this. God that cannot lie, in the person of the Holy Ghost, graciously condescendeth to say "Amen" to the testimony of our conscience. And whereas our experience sometimes leads our spirit to conclude that we are born of God, there are happy times when the eternal Spirit from off the throne, descends and fills our heart, and then we have the two witnesses bearing witness with each other, that we are children of God. Perhaps you ask me, how is this. I was reading a passage by Dr. Chalmers the other day, in which he says, that his own experience did not lead him to believe that the Holy Spirit ever gave any witness of our being the children of God, apart from the written Word of God, and his ordinary workings in our hearts. Now, I am not sure that the doctor is perfectly right. As far as his

own experience went I dare say he was right, but there may be some far inferior to the doctor in genius, who nevertheless were superior in nearness of fellowship with God, and who could therefore go a little farther than the eloquent divine. Now, I do believe with him this morning, that the chief witness of God the Holy Spirit lies in this - the Holy Spirit has written this book which contains an account of what a Christian should be, and of the feelings which believers in Christ must have. I have certain experiences and feelings; turning to the Word, I find similar experiences and feelings recorded; and so I prove that I am right, and the Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am born of God. Suppose you have been enabled to believe in Jesus Christ for your salvation; that faith has produced love to Christ; that love to Christ has led you to work for Christ; you come to the Bible, and you find that this was just the very thing which was felt by early believers; and then you say, "Good Lord, I am thy son, because what I feel is what thou has said by the lips of thy servant must be felt by those who are thy children." So the Spirit confirms the witness of my spirit that I am born of God.

But again, everything that is good in a Christian you know to be the work of God the Holy Ghost. When at any time then the Holy Spirit comforts you - sheds a sweet calm over your disturbed spirit; when at any period he instructs you, opens to you a mystery you did not understand before; when at some special period he inspires you with an unwonted affection, an unusual faith in Christ; when you experience a hatred of sin, a faith in Jesus, a death to the world, and a life to God, these are the works of the Spirit. Now the Spirit never did work effectually in any but the children of God; and inasmuch as the Spirit works in you, he doth by that very working give his own infallible testimony to the fact that you are a child of God. If you had not been a child he would have left you where you were in your natural state; but inasmuch as he hath wrought in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure, he that put his stamp on you as being one of the family of the Most High. But I think must go a little further than this. I do believe that there is a supernatural way in which apart from means, the Spirit of God communicates with the spirit of man. My own little experience leads me to believe that apart from the Word of God, there are immediate dealings with the conscience and soul of man by the Holy Spirit, without any instrumentality, without even the agency of the truth.

I believe that the Spirit of God sometimes comes into a mysterious and marvellous contact with the spirit of man, and that at times the Spirit speaketh in the heart of man by a voice not audible to the ear, but perfectly audible to the spirit which is the subject of it. he assures and consoles directly, by coming into immediate contact with the heart. It becomes our business then to take the Spirit's witness through his Word, and through his works, but I would seek to have immediate, actual, undivided fellowship with the Holy Ghost, who by his divine Spirit, should work in my spirit and convince me that I am a child of God.

Now let me ask my congregation, do any of you know that you are God's children? Say not, "In my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, and a child of God." There are not many in England, I think, who believe those words. There may be a few who do, but it has never been my misfortune to meet with them. Every one knows that it is a disgrace to a matchless prayer-book, that such words should be permitted to stand there-words so infamously untrue that by their gross untruthfulness they cease to have the destructive effect which more cunning language might have produced, because the conscience of man revolts against the idea that the sprinkling of drops of water upon the infants's brow can ever make it a member of Christ, and a child of God. But I ask you, does your spirit say to-day "I am God's child." Do you feel the longings, the loves, the confidences of a child? If not, tremble, for there are but two vast families in this world. They are the family of God, and the family of Satan - their character how different - their end, how strangely divided! But let me say again to thee, hast thou ever felt that the Holy Ghost has borne witness with thy spirit in his word, and in his work, in thee; and in that secret whisper has he ever said to thee, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." I conjure thee, give no sleep to thine eyes, no slumber to thine eyelids, till by this divine mysterious agency, thou art new made, new born, and new begotten, and so admitted not only nominally but really into the living family of the living God.

III. I shall now pass on to my third point. If it be settled in our mind by the true witness - the spirit within us, and the Spirit of God, - that we are God's children, what a NOBLE PRIVILEGE now appears to our view. "HEIRS OF GOD, and joint heirs with Christ." It does not always follow

in human reasoning "if children, then heirs," because in our families but one is the heir. There is but one that can claim the heir's rights, and the heir's title. It is not so in the family of God. Man as a necessary piece of political policy, may give to the heir that which surely he can have not more real right to in the sight of God, than the rest of the family - may give him all the inheritance, while his brethren, equally true born, may go without; but it is not so in the family of God. All God's children are heirs, however numerous the family, and he that shall be born of God last, shall be as much his heir as he who was born first. Abel, the protomartyr, entering alone into heaven, shall not have a more secure title to the inheritance than he who, last of woman born, shall trust in Christ, and then ascend into his glory. In heaven's logic it is true, "if children, then heirs."

And see what it is that we are heirs of. The apostle opens with the grandest part of the inheritance first - *heirs of God* - heirs not of God's gifts, and God's works, but heirs of God himself. It was said of king Cyrus, that he was a prince of so amiable a disposition, that when at any time he sat down at meat, if there were aught that pleased his appetite, he would order it to be taken away and given to his friends with this message, "King Cyrus found that this food pleased his palate, and he thought his friend should feed upon that which he enjoyed himself." This was thought to be a singular instance of his affability, and his kindness to his courtiers. But our God doeth more than this, he doth not send merely bread from his table, as in the day when man did eat angel's food; he doth not give us merely to drink the wines on the lees well refined - the rich wines of heaven - but he gives himself *himself* to us. And the believer is to be the heir, I say, not merely of God's works, not simply of God's gifts, but of God himself. Talk we of his omnipotence? - his Allmightiness is ours. Speak we of his omniscience? - all his wisdom is engaged in our behalf. Do we say that he is love? - that love belongs to us. Can we glory that he is full of immutability, and changes not? - that eternal unchangeableness is engaged for the defence of the people of God. All the attributes of divinity are the property of God's children - their inheritance entailed upon them. Nay, he himself is ours. Oh what riches! If we could say this morning, that all the stars belong to us; if we could turn the telescope to the most remote of the fixed stars, and then could say with the pride of possession,



so natural to man, "That star, a thousand times bigger than the sun, is mine. I am the king of that inheritance, and without me doth not a dog move his tongue." If we could then sweep the telescope along the milky way, and see the millions upon millions of stars that lie clustered together there, and could cry, "All these are mine," yet these possessions were but a speck compared with that which is in the text. Heir of God! He to whom all these things are but as nothing, gives himself up to the inheritance of his people.

Note yet a little further concerning the special privilege of heirship, - we are *joint heirs with Christ*. That is, whatever Christ possesses, as heir of all things, belongs to us. Splendid must be the inheritance of Jesus Christ. Is he not very God of very God, Jehovah's only begotten Son, Most High and glorious, though he bowed himself to the grave and became the Servant of servants, yet God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

Oh! what angelic tongue shall hymn his glory? What fiery lips shall ever speak of his possessions, of his riches, - the unsearchable riches of God in Christ Jesus. But, beloved, all that belongs to Christ belongs to Christ's people. It is as when a man doth marry. His possessions shall be shared by his spouse; and when Christ took his Church unto himself he endowed her with all his goods, both temporal and eternal. He gives to us his raiments, and thus we stand arrayed. His righteousness becomes our beauty. He gave to us his person, it has become our meat and our drink; we eat his flesh and drink his blood. He gave to us his inmost heart; he loved us even to the death. He gave to us his crown; he gave to us his throne; for "to him that overcometh will I give to sit upon my throne, even as I have overcome, and have sat down with my Father upon his throne." He gave to us his heaven, for "where I am, there shall my people be." He gave to us the fulness of his joy, for "my joy shall be in you, that your joy may be full." I repeat it, there is nothing in the highest heaven which Christ has reserved unto himself, "for all things are yours, and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's."

I cannot stay longer on that point, except just to notice, that we must never quarrel with this divine arrangement. "Oh," say you, "we never shall." Stay, stay, brother; I have known you do so already, for when all

that is Christ's belongs to you, do ye forget that Christ once had a cross, and that belongs to you? Christ once wore a thorny crown, and if you are to have all that he has, you must bear the thorny crown too? Have you forgotten that he had shame and spitting, the reproach, the rebuke of men, and that he conceived all those to be greater riches than all the treasures of this world? Come, I know as you look down the inventory, you are apt to look a little askance on that cross, and you think, "Well, the crown is glorious, but I love not the spittle, I care not to be despised and rejected of men." Oh! you are quarreling with this divine arrangement, you are beginning to differ with this blessed policy of God. Why, one would have thought you would rejoice to take your Master for better or for worse, and to be partaker with him, not only in his glories but in his sufferings. So it must be, "If so be that we suffer with him that we also may be glorified together." Is there a place into which your Master went that you would be ashamed to enter? If so, methinks your heart is not in a right state. Would you refuse to go with him to the garden of his agony? Believer, would you be ashamed to stand and be accused as he was, and have false witness born against you? And would you blush to sit side-by-side with him, and be made nothing of as he was? Oh, when you start aside at a little jest, let your conscience prick you, and say, "Am I not a joint heir with Christ, and am I about to quarrel with the legacy? Did he not say, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world?" And oh, would you be ashamed to die for Christ; methinks, if you are what you should be, you will glory in tribulations also, and count it sweet to suffer for Christ. I know the world turns this into ridicule and says, "That the hypocrite loves persecution;" no, not the hypocrite, but the true believer; he feels that though the suffering must ever be painful, yet for Christ's sake, it becomes so glorious that the pain is all forgotten.

Come, believer, will you be partaker with Christ to-day in the battle, and then divide this spoil with him? Come, will you wade with him through the deep waters, and then at last climb up the topless hills with him? Are you prepared now to be despised and rejected of men that you may at last ascend up on high, leading captivity captive? The inheritance cannot be divided; if you will have the glory, you must have the shame. He that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. Come, men, put your

face against all weathers; be ready to come up hill, with the snow blowing in your face, be ready to march on when the tempest howls, and the lightnings flash over head, and the snow becomes knee-deep; nay, be ready to go into the crevasse with him, and perish, if need be. Who quarrels with this sacred regulation? Certainly no true child of God; he would not have it altered, even if he might.

IV. And now I come to my last point, upon which briefly but I hope interestingly. The SPECIAL CONDUCT naturally expected from those who are partakers of the peculiar privileges of being the children of God. In the golden age of Rome, if a man were tempted to dishonesty, he would stand upright, look the tempter in the face, and say to him, "I am a Roman." He thought that a sufficient reason why he should neither lie nor cheat. It ought to be ten times more than sufficient answer to every temptation, for a man to be able to say, "I am a son of God; shall such a man as I yield to sin?" I have been astonished in looking through old Roman history at the wonderful prodigies of integrity and valour which were produced by idolatry, or rather, which were produced by patriotism, and that principle which ruled the Romans, namely, love of fame. And I say it this morning, it is a shameful thing that ever idolatry should be able to breed better men than some who profess Christianity. And I think I may stand firmly while I argue here, that if a Roman, a worshipper of Jupiter or Saturn, became great or glorious, a Son of God ought to be nobler far. Look ye, sirs, at Brutus; he has established a republic, he has put down tyranny, he sits upon the judgment seat; his two sons are brought before him, they have been traitors to the commonwealth. What will the father do? He is a man of a loving heart and loves his sons, but there they stand. Will he execute justice as a judge, or will he prefer his family to his country? He covers his face for a moment with his hands, and then looking down at his sons, and finding that the testimony is complete against them, he says, "Lictors, do your work." They bare their backs, the rod scourgeth them. "Complete the sentence, lictors;" and their heads are smitten off in the father's presence. Stern justice swayed his spirit, and no other feeling could for a single moment make him turn aside. Christian men, do you feel this with regard to your sins. When you have been sitting on the judgment bench; there has been some favourite sin brought up, and you have, oh, let me blush to say it, you have wished

to spare it, it was so near your heart, you have wished to let it live, whereas should you not as the son of God have said, "If my eye offend me, I will pluck it out and cast it from me, if my right hand offend me, I will cut it off, rather than I should in anything offend my God." Brutus slays his sons; but some Christians would spare their sins. Look again at that noble youth, Mutius Scaevola. He goes into the tent of King Pyrrhus with the intention to put him to death, because he is the enemy of his country; he slays the wrong man; Pyrrhus orders him to be taken captive. A pan of hot coals is blazing in the tent; Scaevola puts out his right hand and holds it; it crackles in the flame; the young man flinches not, though his fingers drop away. "There are 400 youths," says he, "in Rome as brave as I am, and that will bear fire as well; and tyrant," he says "you will surely die." Yet here are Christian men, who, if they are a little sneered at, or snubbed, or get the cold shoulder for Christ's sake, are half ashamed of their profession, and would go and hide it. And if they are not like Peter - tempted to curse and swear to escape the blessed imputation - they would turn the conversation, that they might not suffer for Christ. Oh for 400 Scaevolans, 400 men who for Christ's sake would burn, not their right hands, but their bodies, if indeed Christ's name might be glorified, and sin might be stabbed to the heart. Or, read you that old legend of Curtius, the Roman knight. A great gulf had opened in the Forum, perhaps caused by an earthquake, and the auspices had said that the chasm could never be filled up, except the most precious thing in Rome could be cast into it. Curtius puts on his helmet, and his armour, mounts his horse and leaps into the cleft, which is said to have filled at once, because courage, valour, and patriotism, were the best things in Rome. I wonder how many Christians there are who would leap like that into the cleft. Why, I see you, sirs, if there is a new and perilous work to be done for Christ, you like to be in the rear rank this time; if there were something honourable, so that you might ride on with your well caparisoned steeds in the midst of the dainty ranks ye would do it; but to leap into certain annihilation for Christ's sake - Oh! heroism, where is it fled - whither has it gone. Thou Church of God, surely it must survive in thee; for to whom should it more belong to die and sacrifice all, than to those who are the sons of God. Look ye again at Camillus. Camillus had been banished from Rome by false accusations. He was ill-treated, abused, and slandered, and went away to retirement. Suddenly the Goths, the old enemies of Rome, fell

upon the city. They surrounded it; they were about to sack it, and Camillus was the only man who could deliver it. Some would have said within themselves "Let the caitiff nation be cut off. The city has turned me out; let it rue the day that it ever drove me away." But no, Camillus gathers together his body of followers, falls upon the Goths, routs them and enters in triumph into Rome though he was an exile. Oh Christian, this should ever be your spirit, only in a higher degree. When the Church rejects you, casts you out, annoys, despises you, still be ready to defend her, and when you have an ill name even in the lips of God's people, still stand up for the common cause of Zion, the city of our solemnities. Or look you at Cincinnatus. He is chosen Dictator, but as soon as ever his dictatorship is over he retires to his little farm of three acres, and goes to his plough, and when he is wanted to be absolute monarch of Rome he is found at his plough upon his three acres of land and his little cottage. He served his country, not for himself, but for his country's sake; and can it be that you will not be poor yet honest for Christ's sake! Will you descend to the tricks of trade to win money. Ah, then, the Roman eclipses the Christian. Will you not be satisfied to serve God though you lose by it; to stand up and be thought an arrant fool, because you will not learn the wisdom of this world; to be esteemed a mad fanatic, because you cannot swim with the current. Can you not do it? Can you not do it? Then again I say to you, "Tell it not in Gath and publish it not in Askelon, then has a heathen eclipsed a Christian." May the sons of God be greater than the sons of Romulus. One other instance let me give you. You have heard of Regulus the Roman general; he was taken prisoner by Carthaginians, who anxiously wished for peace. They told him to go home to Rome, and see if he could not make peace. But his reply was, "No, I trust they will always be at war with you, for Carthage must be destroyed if Rome is to prosper." They compelled him, however, to go, exacting from him this promise, that if the Romans did not make peace he would come back, and if he came back they would put him to death in the most horrid manner that ever cruelty could invent. Regulus returns to Rome; he stands up in the senate and conjures them never to make peace in Carthage, but of his wife and children, and tells them that he is going back to Carthage, and of course they tell him that he need not keep faith with an enemy. I imagine that he said, "I promised to go back, and though it is to pangs indescribable, I will return." His wife clings to his shoulder, his children

seek to persuade him; they attend him to the waters' edge; he sails for Carthage; his death was too horrible to be described. Never martyr suffered more for Christ than that man suffered for his word's sake. And shall a Christian man break his promise? shall a son of God be less true than a Roman or a heathen? Shall it be, I say, that integrity shall be found in heathen lands and not be found here? No. May you be holy, harmless, sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. I used this argument; I thought it might be a new one; I am sure it is a forcible one. You cannot imagine, surely, that God is to allow heathens to eclipse his children. Oh! never let it be so. So live, so act, ye sons of God, that the world may say of you, "Yes, these men bring forth the fruits of God; they are like their Father; they honour his name; they are indeed filled with his grace, for their every word is as true as his oath; their every act is sincere and upright; their heart is kind, their spirit is gentle; they are firm but yet they are generous; they are strict in their integrity, but they are loving in their souls; they are men who, like God, are full of love; but like him are severely just. They are sternly holy; they are, like him, ready to forgive, but they can by no means tolerate iniquity, nor hear that sin should live in their presence." God bless you, ye sons of God, and may those of you who are strangers to him, be convinced and converted by this sermon, and seek that grace by which alone you can have your prayer fulfilled: -

"With them numbered may we be,  
Now and through eternity."

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## **The Sorrowful Man's Question**

Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in? - Job 3:23

I am very thankful that so many of you are glad and happy. There is none

too much joy in the world, and the more that any of us can create, the better. It should be a part of our happiness, and a man part of it, to try to make other people glad. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," is a commission which many of us ought to feel is entrusted to us. If your own cup of joy is full, let it run over to others who have a more trying experience. If you yourself are privileged to have the flashing eye, and the elastic step, and the bounding heart, be mindful to speak words of good cheer to such as are in bonds. Feel as if you were bound with them; and try to revive their drooping spirits. That is what I am going to aim at tonight, so you will excuse me if I bid "good-bye" for a while to you joyous ones, and just seek after those who have no such delight as you now possess; but who are, on the contrary, suffering from extreme depression of spirit. Sometimes, we must single out the wounded ones of the flock; that is what I am about to do; yet I feel sure that, while some few will be distinctly sought after, there will be something that may be of use to the many who are in a less sorrowful condition. The ninety-and-nine shall get their full portion although the shepherd goes specially after the lost one.

The question of our text was put by Job when he first opened his mouth in the extreme bitterness of his anguish: "Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?" His case was so sad and so trying that life itself became irksome to him. I suppose that by "light" here he means the power to see the light, the life which lives in the light. "Why," he asked in his agony, "is that continued to a man when God hath filled him with sorrow upon sorrow!" The verses preceding our text are to the same effect: "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave." The patriarch was weary of living; and perhaps we shall not wonder so much at his pitiful lamentation if we recollect the extreme distress into which he had been brought. He had lost all his property; by stroke upon stroke, all his wealth had been taken away from him. He might have borne that if it had been his only loss; but close upon the heels of it had come sore bereavement. His happy children, for whom he daily cared, and whom he had tenderly loved, were all destroyed in a moment, while they were feasting in the house of one of their brothers. The calamity seemed all the greater because it came in the

very midst of their joys. Then as if that was not trial enough, Job was himself smitten from head to foot with sore boils. If you have ever seen a person in that condition, I am sure that you must pity him. There is a dear friend of ours, now with God, whom I visited when he was in much the same state as that. Perhaps he had not to endure quite all that Job suffered, but something exceedingly like it had befallen him. The irritation, the pain, and the depression of spirit that come with that particular form of disease, all tend to make us treat very gently the petulant expressions of Job. We may not excuse them, but only he amongst us that is without; fault may take up the first stone to cast at him. I will warrant that, if we had suffered as he did, and been brought to poverty, and left childless, and then been tortured as he was from head to foot, and even his wife rendering him no comfort, but, on the contrary, adding to his grief and woe, we might have said even worse things than Job did. For remember, dear friends, that he said nothing against God in the time of his deepest sorrow. He cursed most vehemently the day of his birth, and wished that he had never existed, or that he might speedily pass away to sleep with the generations that are dead; and he used unwise and foolish expressions, but any of us might have used far worse words if we had been in his case, so we will not condemn him, but we will see what lessons we can learn from his experience.

I think that Job's experience teaches us the very small value of temporal things. To have spiritual blessings, and to enjoy them, is one thing; but to have earthly things, and to enjoy them, is quite another thing. You may have an abundance of them, and yet they may be utterly tasteless to you, or they may even be bitter as gall to you, and you may curse the day that gave them to you. I am sure that it is so, because Job speaks thus concerning life, which is the chief of all earthly things. It is true, although Satan said it, "All that a man hath will he give for his life;" yet we may be brought into such a condition that we may wish that we had never been born. Life itself may become, so wearisome to us that we may even wish to escape from it, that we may be at rest, as we hope. Job had once enjoyed every comfort that heart could desire, and he still had this blessing of life left to him; but even that had become curdled and soured, the last thing to which a man usually clings had become distasteful and disgusting to him, so that he set no store by it, but longed to get rid of it.



O beloved, seek eternal treasures, for there is no moth that can eat them, no rust can mar them, no fermentation or corruption can injure them; but, as for the things of time and sense, if you do possess them, use them as though you had them not, and never make them your gods, for they are but as a shadow that passeth away in a moment. They come, and they are gone; and if you make idols of them, the Lord may permit you still to retain them, but take away from you all power to enjoy them. You may have abundance, and yet not be able to relish even the bread you eat, or the drink that refreshes you. You may have a loss of health, or a loss of all power to be happy, though everything that men think to be the cause of happiness may be laid abundantly at your feet.

With this as a preface, I now come to my text, and ask you to notice, first, the case which raises the question, secondly, the question itself; and, thirdly, answers which may be given to the question: "Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?"

I. First, notice **THE CASE WHICH RAISES THE QUESTION:** "Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?"

That is to say, "Why does God permit men to live when their souls are under deep depression and gloom? Why does he not let them die at once? When their days are spent in weariness, and their nights yield them neither rest nor refreshment,—when they look upward, and see nothing to give them hope, or onward, and behold nothing but that which is even more dreadful than the present,—why is it that God continues life to those who are in such sad circumstances?" Well, dear friends, if life were not continued to any but those who are bright of eye, and fleet of foot, and joyous of heart, how few would live! And if, the first time that darkness fell upon a man's pathway, he were to be permitted to die, well, then, the whole population of the globe would soon be swept away. If our murmuring the petulance demanded that we should die rather than suffer, then we should soon pass away, and be gone. But that is the case which is supposed in Job's question, if a man find, himself entirely in the dark, if God's presence be completely hidden from him, and he can find no joy in anything whatever, and his spirit is tossed to and fro with worries and perplexities, the question is, "Why does he continue to live?"

Yet, further, the man here described is in such trouble that he can see no reason for to trouble. His "way is hid." Job could not perceive, in his own case, any cause for the distress into which he had been plunged. as far as he knew, he had walked uprightly. He had not sinned so as to be now suffering the result of his sin. He had not committed a crime, else he would have understood the punishment when it came upon him. He looked back upon all that he had done, and he could not, at his first glance, see in himself any cause for his affliction. Nor, indeed, dear brethren, was there any cause why all these things should have happened to Job by way of punishment, for the inspired record concerning him is that he was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil."

Even the devil himself, who kept a sharp look-out with his malicious eye, could not find any fault whatsoever with which he could charge Job. He deserved the character which God had given to him, though Satan did insinuate that he had acted from interested motives, he asked, "Doth Job fear God for nought." That question has always seemed to me to be a very crafty one, yet very foolish, for if it could have been proved that Job had feared or served God for nought, then the devil would have said at once that God was a bad master, and that there was no reward for those who served him. But now that he finds God putting a hedge of roses round about Job, and sheltering him on every side, he declares that Job was only pious because he found it profitable. He could find no other fault with him; and even that accusation was not true.

Job, on his part, remembered how he had fed the widow, and succoured the fatherless,—how he had acted justly towards his fellow-creatures in the midst of an unjust generation, and how, amidst a mass of idolaters, he had worshipped God, and God alone. He had never kissed his hand in adoration to the moon, as she walked along her shining way in all her queenly brightness, nor had he ever bowed himself down to the host of heaven, as nearly all around him had done. He stood alone, or almost alone, in that age, as a true and faithful servant of Jehovah; yet his sorrows and trials were multiplied. And so, his way was hidden, he was hedged in by God, and he could not make it out. You know, dear friends,

that it is often a great aggravation of our troubles when we do not know why they come. A man, when he is ill, usually wants to know what is the nature of his disease, and how he came to be attacked by it. When we see a person suffering, we generally ask "Where did you catch that cold?" or, "What was it that brought on that congestion?" We always like to know the cause of the complaint, and Job wanted to ascertain the reason for his trouble, but he could not find it out, and this rendered it all the more mysteriously grievous to him, and therefore he enquired, "Why do I continue to live, when I have come into such darkness as this?"

It was equally trying to Job that he did not now what to do. There seemed to be nothing that he could do. He was stripped of all his earthly possessions. Those ashes where he sat formed his uncomfortable couch, and the sole property that remained to him was a potsherd, with which, in his desperation, he began to scrape himself because of his sore boils. What could he do in such a case as that? There was no physician there to cure him of his sad complaint.

True, there were his three friends; but all that they could do, or, at least, the best thing they did, was to sit still, and say nothing. When they opened their mouths, it was only to pour vinegar into his wounds, and to increase his agony tenfold. What could poor Job do under such circumstances. His very helplessness tended to increase his wretchedness.

Am I addressing anyone who is in that kind of perplexity I think I hear someone moaning, "I don't know which way to turn. I have done everything I can think of, and I cannot tell what is to come next. I sit in darkness, and can see no light. Why I am brought to this pass, I cannot tell; or what is the reason for it, I cannot make out anyhow. If I could light upon some great and grievous fault which had brought me where I am, I could understand it; but as it is, I am in thick Egyptian night about it all, and I know not what to do. Why does a man continue to live when his way is thus hidden, or hedged up." If that is the way you talk, you are in very much the same sort of plight that the patriarch was in when he uttered the mournful question which forms our text.

What was still worse to Job was that he could not see any way out of his trouble. He said that God had hedged him in, not with a hedge of roses, but with a barrier of briars. Whatever he tried to do, he found himself obstructed in doing it. And there are men, now in this world, whose sorrows are the more grievous because everything they do to alleviate their distress seems only to increase it. Their efforts are all fruitless; they are like men who have become entangled in a bog; the more they struggle to get out, the deeper they descend; They strive to their very utmost, but it is all in vain; they rise up early, they sit up late, and they eat the bread of carefulness mingled with their tears; but there is a blight on all that they do. Nothing prospers with them; they are at their wits end. Then they begin to cry, "Oh, that we had never been born, rather than that we should have been born to such trouble as this! 'Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?'"

I have thus stated the case which gave rise to Job's question, and I should not wonder if I have, at the same time, stated the case of some who are here. Do not think it has been a waste of time for any of you to hear this sorrowful description of a very sad condition of heart and mind. If I should only have been describing one such individual, let us all feel sympathy for him or for her, and let us unite in breathing the silent petition, "Lord, bring thy servant out of prison."

II. Now, secondly, we are to consider THE QUESTION ITSELF: "Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?" in other words, Why is the light of life given to him who is in the darkness of misery?

Well, first, let me say that it is a very unsafe question for anyone to ask. Brethren, We are sure to get into mischief as soon as we begin catechising God, and asking "why?" and "wherefore?" Such questioning comes not well from our lips. He is the Potter, and we are the clay in his hands. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonor?" God's eternal purposes are a great deep, and when we try to fathom them, we utterly fail. Divine Sovereignty is an ocean without a bottom and without a shore,

and all we can do is to set our sail, and steer by the chart which he has given us, and all the while believe that, as we sang just now,—

"E'en the hour that darkest seemeth,  
Will his changeless goodness prove;  
From the mist his brightness streameth,  
God is wisdom, God is love."

Voyaging in that fashion, we shall be safe indeed. But to try to cross such a sea, without rudder, or chart, or compass,—this is a venture—some piece of sailing which we had better not undertake. I tremble whenever I have to think of the wondrous ways of God; I mean, when I have to think of them after the manner of the reasoner, and not after the style of the believer. Well did Milton describe the fallen spirits sitting, in little groups, discussing predestination and the counsels of the Eternal. You know how Paul answers the man who calls in question the dealings of God either in providence or in grace: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that replest against God." Job received his answer when the Lord spake to him out of the whirlwind, and said, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" What God said to him was not so much a vindication of the ways of providence, but a revelation of his matchless power as the Creator and the Ruler of the universe; and, though men may not like to hear it, yet there is, in the thunder of God's power, an answer, which, though it may not always answer the sceptic, but ultimately overpower and silence him. As for God's child, he sits down in the shadow of that black cloud which is the canopy of Deity, and he is well content to be still in the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. Imitate him, my brother, and do not keep asking God the why and the wherefore of what he does. It is an unsafe thing to ask such questions.

Next, it reflects upon God. In this question of Job, there is really a reflection upon the wisdom of the Almighty. He has given the light of life to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God hath hedged in, yet Job asks, "Why did he do it?" I think that, far too often, we indulge our questionings of divine providence. Is God to stand and answer to you and me for what he does? Is he bound to tell us the reason why he does it? Job's friend Elihu said, "God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive

against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters." If there be his equal anywhere, let him meet him in the field, and they shall speak together; but to us worms of the dust answers shall not be given if we haughtily put questions to him of "what?" and "why?" and "wherefore?" To accept the Lord's will with absolute submission, is after the manner of the Son of God himself, for he prayed, in the hour of his greatest agony, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." But to cavil and to question, is after the manner of the prince of darkness, who is ever seeking to dispute the sovereignty of God. Therefore, beloved, let no question of ours reflect upon the Lord's love, or the dispensations of his providence.

Further, We may rest quite certain that there must be an answer to this question, a good answer, and an answer in harmony with the character of God. If there are men and women to be found still sitting in the darkness of grief and sorrow, and we ask why they are allowed to continue to live, there is a reply possible to that enquiry, and a reply consistent with boundless grace and infinite compassion; but, mark you, that reply may never be given, or, if it is given, we may be incapable of understanding it. There is much that God does that could not be understood, even by those great men, of modern times, who would fain sit on the throne of the Eternal and judge him,—

"Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,  
Rejudge his judgments, be the god of God."

I say that there are some answers, which God might give if he pleased, but which even they could not comprehend with all their wit and wisdom, and you and I must often come to a point where we have to stop and say, "We cannot understand this;" and we shall be still wiser if we add, "Nor do we wish to do so." Brothers and sisters, I, for one, have had enough of searching into reasons; I am perfectly satisfied to accept facts. I am ready to bow my reason before the Lord, and to accept whatever he says. If I do not, how little shall I ever know! What is there that I do really understand? I confess that I see profound mysteries about the commonest phenomena around me; I cannot fully comprehend anything when I get right to the bottom of it. There is, on every hand, a deep which

I cannot fathom; how, then, shall I understand the ways of God, and measure him with my finite mind, comparing so many inches with the Infinite, weighing so many ounces against the Omnipotent, and reckoning so many seconds in contrast with the Eternal? No, brethren, for such calculations, you have nothing to measure with; you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep, yea, bottomless. So, the less of such questions as Job's any of us ask, the better, for, even if we had the answer to them, we might not be able to understand it.

Let me remind you also that, however important this question may seem to be, it is not the most profitable question. I have heard of a farmer, whose boy said to him, "Father, the cows are in the corn; however did they get there? Boy," he replied, "never mind how they got there; our work is to get them out as soon as we can." That is our main business also, to get the cows out of the corn; how they got there is a matter that can be thought of by-and-by when we have nothing else to do. The origin of evil is a point that puzzles a great many people; but I hope you will not worry your brain over that question; if you do, you will be very foolish. But if you are wise men, you will not trouble yourself so much about the origin of evil, as about how to conquer it, in yourself, and in others. Get the cows out of the corn, and then find out how they got in, if you can, by so doing, prevent their getting in again.

There will be space enough, and time enough, and better light, to discuss these questions when we get up yonder before the throne of the Eternal. If their solution is of any real consequence to us, we shall get them solved then; but, meanwhile, we are color-blind; or, if we are not, it is so dark and so misty here, and we have so many other more pressing matters to attend to, that we had better leave these whys and wherefores, and rely on the infallible wisdom and the infinite love of God. If he has done anything, it is quite certain that it is right and just; yea, if it has come from his dear hand, it is also gracious and kind. There is more sublimity in being like a little child in the presence of the Eternal than there is in trying to ape the Deity, for that is but a mockery,—a thing to be despised;—nay more, it is the greatest insult we can offer to God, and it is a pity and a shame that any of us should so live and act. Put aside everything of the kind, I implore you, and in very truth submit yourselves unto God.

III. But now, in the last place, speaking to the sorrowful person, I want to mention SOME ANSWERS WHICH MAY BE GIVEN TO HIS QUESTION. "Why do I continue to live," asks he, "in such sorrow as this? Why does not God take from me the light of life when he does not permit me to enjoy the light of comfort?"

Supposing that you are a child of God, I will give you one answer which ought to satisfy you, though, perhaps, it will not if your spirit is rebellious. God wills it. If you are one of his true children, that is all the answer that you will require; and you will say, with those early christians, "The will of the Lord be done;" and with your Lord himself, "Not my will, but thine, be done." It was enough for Christ that his suffering was in accordance with the Father's will, so he bowed before him in unquestioning submission; and shall not you, the disciple, be content to fare as your Master did? Will not you be perfectly satisfied with that which satisfied your Lord? it is the will of the Lord; then what need is there of any further question if you are his child?

But supposing that you are an unconverted person, and you say, "I cannot bear to live in such sorrow as this, why is my life prolonged" the answer is, "Because of God's mercy to you." Where would you go to be better off than you are here? You who have no hope in Christ, and yet who say, "I wish I were dead," you know not what you are saying. You wish you were dead? But what would be your portion after death? What! Do you really wish to hear that dread sentence which must be passed upon you if you die unregenerate: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"? Do you really desire to feel the full weight of divine justice! Ah! I hope that you are not so foolish. You have spoken in petulance, and do not mean what you have said; It may be hard for you to live, but it would be harder far for you to die, and then to live for ever in a death that never dies. God grant that, you may never know that awful doom!

Moreover, the answer to your question is that the Lord spares you because he would fain save you. You are kept alive that you may hear again that voice of mercy which says, "Repent ye, and be converted."



"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." God comes to you in this time of suffering, that he may stop you in your sin, and make you think. Even to the most careless and giddy among you, during the poignancy of your grief, he says, "Now, my prodigal child, thou hast wasted thy substance in riotous living, thy belly is hungry, and thou hast nothing with which to fill it; arise, and go unto thy Father, for he will receive thee."

Come then, sorrowful one, it may be that thy sorrows will end when thy sins end; certainly, when thou comest to Christ to be forgiven, thou shalt find divine consolation, even if all thy griefs do not at once disappear. Anyhow, it would be better to be whipped all the way to heaven than to be carried down to hell "on flowery beds of ease." Pray this prayer, "O Lord, let me enter into life with one eye and one hand, halt or maimed, rather than, having two eyes and two hands, to be cast into hell!" This is one answer to your question: the Lord lets you live, even though it is in pain and grief, because he has purposes of love and mercy towards you. Therefore, be not anxious to die; but be thankful that you are still permitted to tarry upon gospel ground. Nay, do not be content to tarry there, but fly at once to the God of grace; look this very instant to Jesus, for—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One;  
There is life at this moment for thee;  
Then look, sinner—look unto him, and be saved—  
Unto him who was nail'd to the tree."

One believing glance of the eye to him who is the sinner's Substitute, and all transgression is forgiven; therefore, yield yourself unto him, trust to his finished work, and eternal life is yours. And when you have that unspeakable blessing, why need you sorrow more?

As for the child of God, to whom I now again speak, if you ask, in a timid, childlike way, "Why do I continue to live in such sorrow as I have to endure?" I would, as your brother, try to answer you. First, it may be that all this trouble has come upon you to let you know what is in you. None of us know what there is in us until we are put to the test. We are

wonderfully sweet-tempered until somebody touches one of our sore places; and then, ah, me! there is not much sweetness of temper left after that. We are remarkably patient until we get a sharp neuralgic pain, perhaps; and then, where is all our boasted patience gone. We are very generous until we ourselves are somewhat pinched, and then we become as tight-fisted as others whom we have condemned. We do not know what is really in us while all goes smoothly and well; but sickness, and sorrow, and bereavement, and poverty, and hunger, will soon let us see what we are. They make a mental or moral photograph of us, and when we look at the picture we say, "Oh, no! that cannot be our likeness;" but we look again and again, and then we say, "Alas! it is even so; but we did not know we were like that. Now we see our faults and our follies. O Lord, thou hast searched us, and tried us, and shown us the wicked ways that are in us; now purge us from them, and make us clean and pure in thy sight!" That is one reason, and a very good reason, for sharp affliction,—to let us see ourselves as we really are.

The next is that, often, our trials bring us very near to our God. Your children run down the meadow to play, and they get a good way off from home in the sunny day, as they ramble along gathering their buttercups and daisies; but by-and-by, the sun sets, and night comes on, and now they cry to be at home. Just so; and you, in all your pretty ways of pleasure in your happy home, though you are a child of God, sometimes forget him. Sorrowfully must you remember that sad fact. But now the night comes on, and there is danger all around you; so you begin to cry for your Father, and you would fain be back to fellowship with him; and that is a blessed trouble which brings us near to our God. Christ's sheep ought to be thankful for the ugly black dog that keeps them from going astray, or fetches them back when they have wandered from the Shepherd. Perhaps Christ will call that black dog off when he has answered the Master's purpose, and brought you near his side.

Dear child of God, anything that promotes your sanctification, or increases your spirituality, is a good thing for you. I have had my share of physical pain, and perhaps more of it than most who are here; and bless God for it. If it comes again, I ask him for grace to bless him for it then; and now that it has gone for a while, I freely bless him for it, for I cannot

tell you all the good that it has wrought in me. Oh! how often a proud spirit has been cut back by affliction and trial, like a vine that is made to bleed, that the clusters that followed the pruning might be all the better and richer! The mown grass is very sweet and fine; and so, often, are believers who have been deeply tried. This tribulation, as Paul says, "worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Wherefore, bow humbly before the Lord, my tried and afflicted friend, and see at least some of the reasons why he thus puts you in the dark chamber of tribulation.

Perhaps, dear brother, you are being very greatly tried, more than most people, to fit you to be an example to others. The Lord means to make a veteran of you, so you must be the first in the breach, or you must lead the forlorn hope. He puts you on the hardest service because he wants others of his children to be able to learn from you. I do not know that we should ever have heard anything of Job if it had not been for his troubles; he was a most respectable Eastern farmer, with a considerable estate, very much like a great many country gentlemen we have in England, who may be heard of at the Quarter Sessions, or the corn and cattle market, but nothing more will be known of them unless you go to the parish church, and see some memorial of them stuck up there. Job would have been much the same sort of man as that,—an Oriental magnate, who would have lived, and died, and been forgotten; but now his fame will last as long as the world endures, and "ye have heard of the patience of Job. You have all heard of it, and Job is one of the undying names. So it may be with you, beloved. You are, perhaps, to sail through seas of trouble to reach your crown. God means to use you in his service, and make you a blessing to others, and a teacher of others, by passing you again and again through the fire. One of the ancient warriors said, "I cannot use in battle a sword that has not been oftentimes annealed; but give me a Damascus blade that has been so prepared, and I will cut through a coat of mail, or split a man from head to foot at a single stroke. It gets its temper and keenness of edge from having slept with the flames again and again." So must it be with believers. Full often, they are unfit for God to use till they have been sorely tried.

Perhaps, dear friend, the Lord is putting you through all this trouble— (only I hardly like to say it aloud, I must whisper it in your ears somehow) because he loves you more than anybody else. Dear Samuel Rutherford, when he wrote to a lady who had lost, I think, seven children, congratulated her, and said, "I am sure that the Well-beloved has a strong affection for your ladyship, for he will have all your heart. He has taken away all these children that there may not be a nook or a corner for anybody else but for him." So the Lord loves you much, and he is testing you to set whether you can bear his will,—whether you love him so much that you will take up your cross, and deny yourself, just as, sometimes, architects will ask for their work to be put to the severest possible tests. "Yes," they say, "see what it will really bear." No doubt Stephenson felt great joy when the heaviest train went safely across his tubular bridge; and other engineers have said, "Yes, put on as much pressure as you like; it will stand it." Fathers often take delight in the athletic feats of their sons, and princes revel in the brave deeds of their warriors; and so does the Lord delight to see what his people can do, and he often puts upon them more and more, to prove whether they love him so much that they can bear it all for his sake. Did not the Lord do this to let Satan see that Job did love his God, and would still say, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? . . . The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." We cannot tell what a blessing must come from such a state of heart as that.

It is very possible, dear friend, also, that God is putting you through all this trouble that he may enable you to bear great prosperity. Job was to have twice as much as he had ever had before, and that was a very great deal, for he said that he washed his steps with butter, and the rock poured him out rivers of oil; but how much richer he was when everything was doubled! Job was hardly fit to manage such a large estate as that until he had been made to see the vanity of it all, and to get nearer to his God. So, dear friends, you are going to be pressed, and squeezed, and tried, in order that you may be fitted to come right out into the front rank, and to be magnified and made much of by the Lord your God. I have noticed this kind of thing happen more than once. I have seen a man suddenly taken from the very dregs of the people, and put up to preach, and he has been

popular all at once. Nobody has abused him, nobody has said a word against him; but, before long, he has passed completely out of sight. He could not bear the weight that was put upon him, and gave way. You have seen others, who have been called of God to preach the Word, and they have been abused year after year. They could not say anything that was not perverted; they were called mountebanks, impostors, and I know not what. And then, when happier days came, and almost all men spoke well of them, they could bear it, for they had learnt to despise alike the flatteries and the abuse of men. Now, something like that must happen to all God's servants who are to be greatly honored. If they are to bear prosperity, they must go through the fire first. Perhaps that is what the Lord is doing with you, my dear friend; if so, be content with your lot.

And, once again, do you not think that the Lord means thus to make you more like his dear Son than other people are? Some other Christians have not as much trouble to endure as you have. No; why is it? You know how an artist can, if he likes, dash off a picture. There! A little red, and a little blue, and so on, and it is done; and away it goes! Ay, but when he wants to paint something that will be observed and admired, then he takes more pains. See how he works at every part of it; note what care and what trouble he takes with it. It is the same with the lapidary or the sculptor when he has choice work in hand; and you are, I hope, the kind of material that will pay for cutting and carving; and the Lord is using his chisel upon you more than he does upon most folk. He wants to make you just like his dear Son; so now he is chipping out a thorn-crown, and you must wear it round your brain. He is fashioning the image of his Son out of the block of your renewed nature, and you must patiently bear the blows from his hammer and chisel till that work is done.

Finally, if I cannot tell you why all this trouble falls to your lot, I know it is right, for the Lord has done it, and blessed be his name. Aaron held his peace when his two sons died. He got as far as that in submission to the will of the Lord; but it will be better still if, instead of simply holding your peace, you can bless and praise and magnify the Lord even in your sharpest trouble. Oh, may you be divinely helped to do so! Let every troubled soul march out of this place feeling, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Rise, dear friend, out of all despondency and despair,

shake yourself from the dust, and put on your beautiful garments of praise and joy, remembering that—

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

You can see the tracks of the martyrs along the road you are journeying; better still, you can see the footprints of the Son of God, your Lord and Savior. Therefore, you may rest assured that you are on the right road, so press bravely forward on it, and, in due time, you will come to that place of which Job said, "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest;" and you shall be for ever without fault before the throne of God. May he grant this happy portion to you all, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.

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## The Sound In The Mulberry Trees

When thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shall bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines. - 2 Samuel 5:24

David had just fought the Philistines in this very valley, and gained a signal victory, so that he said, "the Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me as the breach of waters." The Philistines had come up in great hosts, and had brought their gods with them, that like Israel, when the ark of the Lord was brought into their midst, they might feel quite sure of victory. However, by the help of God David easily put them to rout, burned their images in the fire, and obtained a glorious victory over them. Note, however, that when they came a second time against David, David did not go up to fight them, without enquiring of the Lord. Once he had been victorious; he might have said, as many of us have said, in fact, in other cases—"I shall be victorious again; I may rest quite sure that if I have triumphed once I shall triumph yet again. Wherefore should I go and seek at the Lord's hands?" Not so, now David. He had gained one victory by the strength of the Lord; he would not venture upon another, until he had ensured the same. He went and asked the sacred oracle, "Shall I go up against them?" and when he was informed that he was not immediately to march against them, but to encamp so as to surprise them at the mulberry-trees, he did not demur a single moment to the mandate of God; and when he was bidden to wait until he should hear the sound in the tops of the mulberry-trees before he went to fight, he was not in an ill haste to rush to battle at once, but he tarried until the mulberry-trees began to sing at the top by reason of the wind that rushed along the leaves. He would wait until God's sign was given; he said, "I will not lift my spear nor my hand till God hath bidden me do it, lest I should go to war at my own charges, and lose all I have obtained."

My brethren, let us learn from David to take no steps without God. The last time you moved, or went into another business, or changed your

situation in life, you asked God's help, and then did it, and you were blessed in the doing of it. You have been up to this time a successful man, you have always sought God, but do not think that the stream of providence necessarily runs in a continuous current; remember, you may to-morrow without seeking God's advice venture upon a step which you will regret but once, and that will be until you die. You have been wise hitherto, it may be because you have trusted in the Lord with all your heart, and have not leaned to your own understanding; you have said like David, "Let us enquire of the Lord," and like Jehoshaphat, who said to Ahab, "I will not go up until I have enquired of the Lord;" and you have not to ask priests of Baal, but you have said, "Is there not here one, prophet of the Lord, that I may enquire at his hands?" Now, keep on in the same way: do not, I beseech you, go before the cloud. If Providence tarries, tarry till Providence comes, never go before it. He goes on a fool's errand who goes before God but he walks in a blessed path who sees the footsteps of Providence, and reads the map of Scripture, and so discovers, "This is the way wherein I am to walk." This may be imputed to some one here; I thought I would begin with it, for it may be I have some young man here who is about unadvisedly to take a step which may be his ruin, temporarily; I beseech him, if he loves the Lord—I speak to none but those who are already Christians,—I beseech him not to venture until he has sought counsel of God, and unless he has a firm conviction that he is doing it not merely for his own advantage but to help him in serving his God the better. Unless he can be sure that he has God's approval of his steps let me—by the mistake that many have made, by the mischief that he will do himself unless he listens to me,—let me beseech him to stop, and not take so much as one half a step, or lift his foot, until he has sought of God, and has had the answer, "Go up against them."

Thus I have introduced the text: but now I would refer to it in another way altogether. David was not to go to battle, until he heard a sound of a rustling in the tops of the mulberry trees. There was a calm, perhaps; and God's order to David was, "You are not to begin to fight until the wind begins rustling through the tops of the mulberry trees;" or as the Rabbis have it, and it is a very pretty conceit if it be true, the footsteps of angels walking along the tops of the mulberry trees make them rustle; that was the sign for them to fight, when God's cherubim were going with them,



when they should come, who can walk through the clouds and fly through the air, led by the great Captain himself, walking along the mulberry trees, and so make a rustle by their celestial footsteps. How true that may be, I cannot tell; my remark IS only this—that there are certain signs which ought to be indications to us of certain duties. I shall use the verse in this way. First, *there are certain special duties, which are not duties to everybody, but only to some people*. If we wish to know whether we are to perform these duties, we must seek signs concerning them, and not go and rush into a duty to which we are not called, unless we get a sign, even as David got the rustling among the mulberry leaves. And then I should use it, in the second place, thus, *there are certain duties which are common to all of us*; but when we see some sign of God's Holy Spirit being in motion, or some other signs, *these are seasons when we ought to be more than ever active*, and more than ever earnest in the service of our Master.

I. First, then, in regard to SPECIAL DUTIES. I shall confine myself, I think to one. The office of the ministry is a special duty. I do not believe, as some do, that it is the business of everyone of us to preach; I believe it is the business of a great many people who do preach to hold their tongues. I think that if they had waited until God had sent them they would have been at home now; and there be some men who are not fit to edify a doorpost, who yet think that if they could but once enter the pulpit they would attract a multitude. They conceive preaching to be just the easiest thing in all the world, and while they have not power to speak three words correctly, and have not any instruction from on high, and never were intended for the pulpit, for the mere sake of the honor or the emolument, they rush into the ministry. There are hundreds of men in the ministry starving for want of bread and entirely unsuccessful, and I believe in regard to some of them that the best thing they could do would be to open a grocer's shop. They would be doing more to serve God and to serve the church if they would take a business, and preach now and then as they had time to study, or else give it up altogether, and let somebody come and preach to the people who had something to tell them. For alas, alas, a preacher who has nothing to say will not only do no good, but will do a great deal of harm. The people who hear him get disgusted at the very name of a place of worship; and they only look at it as a kind of

stocks, where they are to sit for an hour with their feet fast, quiet and still listening to a man who is saying nothing, because he has nothing to say. I would not advise all of you to be preachers. I do not believe God ever intended that you should. If God had intended all his people to be preachers, I wonder how even He in his wisdom could have found them all congregations; because were all preachers where were the hearers! No, I believe the office of the ministry, though not like that of the priesthood, as to any particular sanctity, or any particular power that we possess, is yet like the priesthood in this—that no man ought to take it to himself, save he that is called "hereunto, as was Aaron. No man has any right to address a congregation on things spiritual, unless he believes that God was given him a special calling to the work, and unless he has also in due time received certain seals which attest his ministry as being the ministry of God. The rightly ordained minister is ordained not by the laying on of bishop's or presbyter's hands, but by the Spirit of God himself, whereby the power of God is communicated in the preaching of the word.

There may be some here who will say "How am I to know whether I am called to preach?" My brethren, you will find it out by-and-by, I dare say; and if you are sincerely desirous to know when you are in the path of duty in endeavoring to preach, I must bid you do as David did. He noted the rustling in the leaves of the mulberry trees. And I must have you notice certain signs. Do you want to know whether you can preach? Ask yourself this question, "Can I pray? When I have been called upon in the prayer-meeting, have I been enabled to put my words together and has God helped me in the matter?" So far so good. "Well then I will go and try, I will preach in the street, for instance." Suppose nobody listens to me, suppose I go and take a room, or go to a chapel, and nobody comes to hear, well, there is no rustling among the mulberry trees; I had better stop. Suppose I go to my wife and children, and take a text, and just preach a little wee bit to them and to the neighbors suppose, after I have preached to them, I should feel that they could preach great deal better to me, there is no rustling among the mulberry trees, and I had better give it up. And suppose if, after having preached for sometime I hear of none who have been brought to Christ, there is no rustling among the mulberry trees, I think the best thing I could do is, to let somebody else try for suppose I have not been called to the ministry, it would have been a

fearful thing for me to have occupied the watchman's place, without having received the watchman's commission. He that should take upon himself to be a policeman, and go and do the work of arresting others, without having received a commission, must be in danger of being taken up himself, for being a deceiver. And it may be, if I had not been called to the ministry, and had no seal of it, I had better leave it alone, lest I go without God's commission, and that would never answer my purpose, to begin without his having sent me; for if he have not sent me, it may be I shall break down in my errand, and do no good. I do not ask whether you are much instructed or learned, or all that; I do not need to ask you; for I do not care about it myself. But I ask you these questions. Have you tried to address a Sabbath-school? have you gained the attention of the children. Having tried to address a few people, when they have been gathered together, have you found they would listen to you after you had preached? Had you any evidence and any sign that would lead you to believe that souls were blessed under you? Did any of the saints of God who were spiritually-minded, tell you that their souls were fed by your sermon? Did you hear of any sinner convinced of sin? Have you any reason to believe that you have had a soul converted under you? If not, if you will take one's advice for what it is good for—and I believe it is advice which God's Holy Spirit would have me give you—you had better give it up. You will make a very respectable Sunday-school teacher, you will do very well in a great many other ways; but unless these things have been known by you, unless you have these evidences, you may say you have been called and all that; I don't believe it. If you had been called to preach, there would have been some evidence and some sign of it. I remember, two years ago, some man wrote to me a note, telling me that it had been said to his heart and God the Holy Spirit had revealed it to him, that I was to let him preach in this chapel. Well, I just wrote to him, and told him that was a one-sided revelation, and that as soon as ever God revealed it to me that I was to let him preach here, then he should; but until then I did not see that the revelation was quite a square one. Why should it be revealed to him and not revealed to me? I have heard no more of him, and I have not had it revealed to me either; so that I do not suppose he will make his appearance here. I say this because, though to a great many of you it would be nothing at all, there are a large number of young men here who preach. I thank God for them—for anyone who is

able to preach. But I will thank God to stop those who cannot preach, because if they go about to preach and have not the ability, and God has not sent them, they will just make fools of themselves, though that you should not be greatly surprised at, because they may not be far off already; but they will make the very Gospel itself come into contempt. If they profess to preach who have not the call from God's Spirit, when they begin to talk they will just bring more scandal upon the cross by a rash defense of it than would have come if they had left it alone. Now, take care about that. I would discourage none; I would say to every young man who has a grain of ability, and believes he has been called of God, and everyone who has really been blessed, "So far as I can help you I will help you, I will do so to the very uttermost, if you need my help, and I pray God Almighty to bless you, and make you more and more abundantly useful; for the Church needs many pastors and evangelists." But if there is no soul converted under you, if you are not qualified to preach at all, you shall have my equally earnest prayers for you that God may speed you—and I shall pray for you in this way, that God will speed you by making you hold your tongue. I waited till I heard the sound among the mulberry trees, else had I been uncalled and unsent. David waited; he would not go to the battle till he had heard the signal from on high, which was the signal for the battle, and the signal of the commencement of warfare.

II. But now, my brethren I come to something more practical to many of you; you do not profess to be called to preach; **THERE ARE CERTAIN DUTIES BELONGING TO ALL CHRISTIANS WHICH ARE TO BE SPECIALLY PRACTISED AT SPECIAL SEASONS.** First, concerning *the Christian church at large*. The whole of the Christian church should be very prayerful, always seeking the unction of the Holy One to rest upon their hearts, that the kingdom of Christ may come and that his will be done on earth even as it is in heaven; but there are times when God seems to favor Zion, when there are great movements made in the church, when revivals are commenced, when men are raised up whom God blesses; that ought to be to you like "a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." We ought then to be doubly prayerful, doubly earnest, wrestling more at the throne, than we have been wont to do. I think this is just the time that demands your extraordinary and special prayers. I look upon that great movement in the Church of England, the preaching on

Sabbath-evenings in Exeter Hall, as a sign of rustling, a kind of "a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." My brethren, I could pity the man that would be for one moment envious, though a thousand such places should be full to the doors; I could cry out to God for mercy on the man, who could be so great a sinner against humanity and against the souls of men, as to wish that it should not prosper. With all my heart I pray that God may bless it, and I exhort you just now, as there appears to be a move in the right direction, now that some of the ministers are more thoroughly roused up than they used to be, now that the ordinance of preaching is more honored, now that there is a spirit of hearing poured out amongst the people, I beseech you now, let your prayers be doubly earnest. Do as David was commanded to do—rise up and bestir yourself, not in a spirit of envy, not in a spirit of strife; do not bestir yourself, lest the Church of England shall beat Dissenters. No, brethren, let us each bestir ourselves that we may beat the devil. Let us each be earnest, and let us each when we see a movement in any section of the church, hold up the hands of faithful men, and pray to God that if they are not faithful men they may be made right, but that as far as they are right they may have a blessing. I think the church of Christ has lived to a glorious period. I really think the day to which we have lived now, is a day that ought to gladden the eyes of many of God's people. So far from being now, as I was a little time ago, in a gloomy frame about the worshippers of the church, I seem to think I have lived now to a happy era. Even the holy Whitfield himself never stirred up such a revival of religion as God has been pleased to give now, not by his preaching did he stir up a host of bishops and clergymen to come forth and preach to the poor. God has been pleased of late to wake up the churches far and near. I hear the noise amongst the mulberry trees. Everywhere I hear of the doctrine of grace being made more prominent, and the preaching of the gospel becoming more earnest, more energetic, and more full of the Spirit. We have seen in our midst some called out of our church, whom God has blessed in the preaching of the Word. There is in many places, and I allude especially to the Church of England just now, "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." Now, my brethren, is the time for us to bestir ourselves. Oh let us cry to God more earnestly; let our prayer-meetings be filled with men who come full of vehement petitions, let our private altars be more constantly kept burning, causing the smoke of prayer to ascend, and let

our closets continually be occupied by earnest intercession. Bestir thyself: there is a "sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees."

That is concerning the church at large; the same truth holds good of *any particular congregation*. One Sabbath-day the minister preached with great unction; God clothed him with power, he seemed like John the Baptist in the wilderness, crying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He spake with all the earnestness of a man who was about to die; he so spake that the people trembled, a visible thrill passed through the audience. Every eye was fixed, and the tears seemed to bedew every cheek. Men and women rose up from the sermon, saying, "Surely, God was in this place, and we have felt his presence." What ought a Christian man to say, as he retires from the house of God? He should say, "I have heard this day the sound of the leaves of the mulberry trees." I saw the people earnest; I marked the minister speaking mightily, God having touched his lips with a live coal from off the altar. I saw the tear in every eye; I saw the deep, wrapt attention, of many who were careless. There were some young people there that looked as if they had been impressed, their countenances seemed to show that there was a work doing. Now, what should I do? The first thing I will do is, I will bestir myself. But how shall I do it? Why, I will go home this day, and I will wrestle in prayer more earnestly than I have been wont to do that God will bless the minister, and multiply the church. Well, what next? Where do I sit? Was there a young woman in my pew that seemed impressed? When I go this evening I will look out for her; I have heard the "sound of the leaves of the mulberry trees," and I will bestir myself; and if I see her there, I will speak a word to her, or, what is more, if I hear another sermon like it, and I see any who seem to be impressed, I will try to find them out; for I know that two words from a private person are often better than fifty from a minister. So that if I have seen a young man impressed, I will touch him on his elbow and say, "You seemed as if you enjoyed this sermon." "Yes, I liked it very well." "And do you like spiritual things?" Who can tell? I may be made the means of his conversion. At all events, I shall have this sweet consolation to go to bed with, that I heard the "sound of the leaves of the mulberry trees," and as soon as I heard it I bestirred myself that I might serve my God, and be the means of winning souls from hell. But, alas! my brethren, much of the seed we sow seems to be lost for want of watering.

Many an impressive sermon seems to lose much of its force, because it is not followed up as it should be. God's purposes, I know, are answered, his Word does not return unto him void; still, I think we might sometimes ask ourselves, have we not been too dilatory, too neglectful in not availing ourselves of favorable times and seasons, when the power of the Spirit has been in our midst, and when we should have looked upon it as the signal for more strenuously exerting ourselves in the service of our Master.

The same I might say of any time of general sickness, or any time of plague or cholera, or sudden death. There are times when the cholera is raging through our streets the people are all trembling, they are afraid to die; mark, that is the "sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." It is the business of you and I to bestir ourselves, when people are by any means led to serious thought, when God is walking through the land, and smiting down first one and then another, and the minds of the people are all on tiptoe concerning what the end shall be; when there has been some alarming fire, when a sudden death has taken place, in the street, or in the court, or in a house, it is the Christian's business to seize upon the time, and to improve it for his Master. "Now," said the Puritans, during the great plague of London, when the hireling parish priests had fled from their churches—"now is our time to preach." And all through that terrible time, when the carts, filled with the dead, went through the streets overgrown with grass, these strong-minded Puritans occupied the pulpits, and boldly preached the word of God. Brethren, that is what we should do whenever we see a time more favorable than another for telling sinners of the wrath to come. Let us seize it, just as the merchant looks out for every turn of the market, for every rise and every fall; just as the farmer looks out for a good season for sowing or planting or mowing. Let us look out for the best times for seeking to do good. Let us plough deep while sluggards sleep, and let us labor as much as possible in the best season, to make hay while the sun is shining, and serve our God when we hear the "sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees."

And now permit me to go back to a thought I have given you. Keep the same idea in view in regard to *every individual* you meet with. If you have a drunken neighbor; it is very seldom you can ever say a word to

him. His wife is ill; she is sick and dying, poor fellow, he is sober this time. He seems to be a bit impressed; he is anxious about his wife, and anxious about himself. Now is your time; now for the good word; put it in well, now is your opportunity. There is a great swearer, but he seems by some terrible providence or other to become a little abashed, and he is not so profane as he used to be. You should do as the ancient slingers did. If they saw a warrior lift his helmet, in they would put the stone, before he could get the helmet down again. So if you see a man a little impressed, and he is open to conviction, do what you can, as God gives you opportunity; and if any of your acquaintance have been in the house of God, if you have induced them to go there, and you think there is some little good doing but you do not know, take care of that little, it may be God hath used us as a fostermother to bring up his child, so that this little one may be brought up in the faith, and this newly converted soul may be strengthened and edified. But I'll tell you, many of you Christians do a deal of mischief, by what you say when going home. A man once said that when he was a lad he heard a certain sermon from a minister, and felt deeply impressed under it. Tears stole down his cheeks, and he thought within him—self, "I will go home to pray." On the road home he fell into the company of two members of the church. One of them began saying, "Well, how did you enjoy the sermon? The other said, "I do not think he was quite sound on such a point." "Well," said the other, "I thought he was rather off his guard," or something of that sort; and one pulled one part of the minister's sermon to pieces, and another the other, until, said the young man, before I had gone many yards with them, I had forgotten all about it; and all the good I thought I had received seemed swept away by these two men, who seemed afraid lest I should get any hope, for they were just pulling that sermon to pieces that would have brought me on my knees. How often have we done the same! People will say, "What did you think of that sermon?" I gently tell them nothing at all, and if there is any fault in it—and very likely there is, it is better not to speak of it, for some may get good from it. I do believe that many a sermon that seems nothing but perfect nonsense from beginning to end may be the means of salvation. You and I may have more knowledge of the Scriptures, we may be more instructed and enlightened: we may say, "Dear me, I do not know how people can hear that." You may think people are not able to hear it, but they are saved; that is all you have to look after. A Primitive



minister has sometimes quite puzzled you: you have said, "I dare say the good man understands himself, but I do not understand him." And yet he has got all those people with their attention fixed; and you have seen souls brought to God under the sermon, and therefore you must not say anything about it. You are obliged to say, "Well, it was not the sermon for me." Never mind that, it was the sermon for some one else. It is the best way for you not to hear that man again, but let him go on; he will get some people to do good to, I dare say.

I just throw this in, in an interjulatory way. If you have got hold of people's ears, or a bit of their ear; if you have got them to say, "I think I will come again," do not put in any word that may keep them away; but bestir yourselves, to be the means of saving souls instrumentally, when you hear these signals from on high.

And I think my brethren, I must expressly make an appeal to you in regard to *your own children*. There are certain times in the history of my own beloved children, when they seem more impressible than at other seasons; I beseech you never lose the opportunity. Salvation is of God, from first to last; but yet it is your business to use all the means, just as if you could save them. Now there are times when your son, who is generally very gay and wild, comes home from chapel and there is a sort of solemnity about him you do not often see. When you see that, get a word with him. Sometimes your little daughter comes home; she has heard something she understands, something that seems to have struck her thoughts. Do not laugh at her, do not despise that little beginning. Who can tell? It may be the "sound in the tops of the mulberry trees." Your son, a boy of fourteen or fifteen, is often coming home apparently deeply interested, and sometimes you have thought, "Well, I do not know, the boy seems as if he listened rather more than others do. I think there must be a good work in him." Do not, by any harshness of yours, put a rough hand on that tender plant; do not say to him, for instance, if he commits a little fault, "I thought there was some good thing in you, but there is no piety in you at all, or else you would not have done it." Do not say that, that is a damper at once. Remember, if he be a child of God he has his faults as well as any other boy. Therefore do not be too harsh or severe with him, but if you find the slightest good say, There is the "sound

in the tops of the mulberry trees." There may be ever such a faint rustling, never mind, that is my opportunity; now will I be more earnest about my child's salvation, and now will I seek to teach him, if I can, more fully the way of God; I will try to get him alone and talk to him. The tender plant, if it be of God, it is sure to grow; but let me take care to be the instrument of fostering it, and let me take my boy aside, and say to him, "Well, my son, have you learnt something of the evil of sin?" And if he says yes, and I find he has a little hope and faith, though it may be rather a superficial work let me not despise it, but let me remember, I was once grace in the blade, and though grace in the ear now, I would never have been grace in the ear if I had not been grace in the blade. I must not despise the blades, because they are not ears; I must not kill the lambs, because they are not sheep; for where would my sheep come from, if I killed all the lambs? I must not despise the weakest of the saints, for where should I get the advanced saints from, if I put weak ones out of the covenant, and tell them they are not the children of God? No, I will watch for the least indication, the least sign of any good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, and I will pray God that these signs may not be delusive, not like the smoke that is driven away, nor like the early cloud and the morning dew, but the abiding signs of grace begun, which shall be afterwards grace complete.

And lastly, not to detain you longer Christian, in regard to *yourself* there is a great truth here. There are times, you know, "when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." You have a peculiar power in prayer; the Spirit of God gives you joy and gladness; the Scripture is open to you; the promises are applied; you walk in the light of God's countenance, and his candle shines about your head; you have peculiar freedom and liberty in devotion; perhaps you have got less to attend to in the world and more closeness of communion with Christ than you used to have. Now is the time; now, when you hear the "sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." Now is the time to bestir yourselves; now is the time to get rid of any evil habit that still remains now is the season in which God the Spirit is with you. But spread your sail; remember what you sometimes sing -

"I can only spread the sail;

Thou Lord must breathe the auspicious gale."

Be sure you have the sail up. Do not miss the gale, for want of preparation for it. Seek help of God, that you may be more earnest in duty, when made more strong in faith; that you may be more constant in prayer, when you have more liberty at the throne; that you may be more holy in your conversation, whilst you live more closely with Christ.

And oh, with regard to some here, who to-night, or this morning, or at any other time, have been led to think, "Oh, that I might be saved!" If you have any thought about it, any serious impression, I pray that God the Holy Spirit may enable you to look upon the impression that is made upon you as the "sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees;" that you may be led to bestir yourselves, and seek God more earnestly; if God the Spirit has convinced you in any degree, if he has impressed you, if he has made you tremble, if he has sent you home to pray, now, I beseech you, be in earnest about your own soul; and if God has awakened you so far, look upon that as a token of his grace, and say, "now or never." It may be that this big wave will help you over the great bar that is before the harbour's mouth. This may be the tide, which taken at the flood, leads on to heaven. Oh, that God might help you to take it at the flood, that you might be carried safely over your convictions and your troubles, and landed safely in the blessed haven of faith—that haven which is protected by the atonement of Christ, and by the bar of everlasting love. God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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## **Sovereign Grace And Man's Responsibility**

But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel

he saith, all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. - Romans 10:20-21

Doubtless these words primarily refer to the casting away of the Jews, and to the choosing of the Gentiles. The Gentiles were a people who sought not after God, but lived in idolatry; nevertheless, Jehovah was pleased in these latter times to send the gospel of his grace to them: while the Jews who had long enjoyed the privileges of the Word of God, on account of their disobedience and rebellion were cast away. I believe, however, that while this is the primary object of the words of our text, yet, as Calvin says, the truth taught in the text is a type of a universal fact. As God did choose the people who knew him not, so hath he chosen, in the abundance of his grace, to manifest his salvation to men who are out of the way; while, on the other hand, the men who are lost, after having heard the Word, are lost because of their wilful sin; for God doth all the day long "stretch forth his hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

The system of truth is not one straight line, but two. No man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once. I am taught in one book to believe that what I sow I shall reap: I am taught in another place, that "it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." I see in one place, God presiding over all in providence; and yet I see, and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions to his own will, in a great measure. Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act, that there was no presidency of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to Atheism; and if, on the other hand, I declare that God so overrules all things, as that man is not free enough to be responsible, I am driven at once into Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is just the fault of our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one place that everything is fore-ordained, that is true; and if I find in another place that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other. These two

truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.

Now, this morning I am about to consider the two doctrines. In the 20th verse, we have taught us the doctrines of sovereign grace - "But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." In the next verse, we have the doctrine of man's guilt in rejecting God. "To Israel he saith, all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

I. First, then, DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AS EXEMPLIFIED IN SALVATION. If any man be saved, he is saved by Divine grace, and by Divine grace alone; and the reason of his salvation is not to be found in him, but in God. We are not saved as the result of anything that we do or that we will; but we will and do as the result of God's good pleasure, and the work of his grace in our hearts. No sinner can prevent God; that is, he cannot go before him, cannot anticipate him; God is always first in the matter of salvation. He is before our convictions, before our desires, before our fears, before our hopes. All that is good or ever will be good in us, is preceded by the grace of God, and is the effect of a Divine cause within.

Now in speaking of God's gracious acts of salvation, this morning, I notice first, that they are entirely unmerited. You will see that the people here mentioned certainly did not merit God's grace. They found him, but they never sought for him; he was made manifest to them, but they never asked for him. There never was a man saved yet who merited it. Ask all the saints of God, and they will tell you that their former life was spent in the lusts of the flesh; that in the days of their ignorance, they revolted against God and turned back from his ways, that when they were invited to come to him they despised the invitation, and, when warned, cast the warning behind their back. They will tell you that their being drawn by

God, was not the result of any merit before conversion; for some of them, so far from having any merit, were the very vilest of the vile: they plunged into the very kennel of sin; they were not ashamed of all the things of which it would be a shame for us to speak; they were ringleaders in crime, very princes in the ranks of the enemy; and yet sovereign grace came to them, and they were brought to know the Lord. They will tell you that it was not the result of anything good in their disposition, for although they trust that there is now something excellent implanted in them, yet in the days of their flesh they could see no one quality which was not perverted to the service of Satan. Ask them whether they think they were chosen of God because of their courage; they will tell you, no; if they had courage it was defaced, for they were courageous to do evil. Question them whether they were chosen of God because of their talent; they will tell you, no; they had that talent, but they prostituted it to the service of Satan. Question them whether they were chosen because of the openness and generosity of their disposition; they will tell you that that very openness of temper, and that very generosity of disposition, led them to plunge deeper into the depths of sin, than they otherwise would have done, for they were "hail fellow, well met," with every evil man, and ready to drink and join every jovial party which should come in their way. There was in them no reason whatever why God should have mercy upon them, and the wonder to them is that he did not cut them down in the midst of their sins, blot out their names from the book of life, and sweep them into the gulf where the fire burneth. that shall devour the wicked. But some have said that God chooses his people because he foresees that after he chooses them, they will do this, that, and the other, which shall be meritorious and excellent. Refer again to the people of God, and they will tell you that since their conversion they have had much to weep over. Although they can rejoice that God has begun the good work in them, they often tremble lest it should not be God's work at all. They will tell you that if they are abundant in faith yet there are times when they are superabundant in unbelief; that if sometimes they are full of works of holiness, yet there are times when they weep many tears to think that those very acts of holiness were stained with sin. The Christian will tell you that he weeps over his very tears; he feels that there is filth even in the best of desires; that he has to pray to God to forgive his prayers, for there is sin in the midst of his supplications, and that he has to sprinkle

even his best offerings with the atoning blood, for he never else can bring an offering without spot or blemish. You shall appeal to the brightest saint, to the man whose presence in the midst of society is like the presence of an angel, and he will tell you that he is still ashamed of himself. "Ah!" he will say, "you may praise me, but I cannot praise myself, you speak well of me, you applaud me, but if you knew my heart you would see abundant reason to think of me as a poor sinner saved by grace, who hath nothing whereof to glory, and must bow his head and confess his iniquities in the sight of God." Grace, then is entirely unmerited.

Again, the grace of God is sovereign. By that word we mean that God has an absolute right to give that grace where he chooses, and to withhold it when he pleases. He is not bound to give it to any man, much less to all men; and if he chooses to give it to one man and not to another, his answer is, "Is thine eye evil because mine eye is good? Can I not do as I will with mine own? I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Now, I want you to notice the sovereignty of Divine grace as illustrated in the text: "I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not after thee." You would imagine that if God gave his grace to any he would wait until he found them earnestly seeking him. You would imagine that God in the highest heavens would say, "I have mercies, but I will leave men alone, and when they feel their need of these mercies and seek me diligently with their whole heart, day and night, with tears, and vows, and supplications, then will I bless them, but not before." But, beloved, God saith no such thing. It is true he doth bless them that cry unto him, but he blesses them before they cry, for their cries are not their own cries, but cries which he has put into their lips; their desires are not of their own growth, but desires which he has cast like good seed into the soil of their hearts. God saves the men that do not seek him. Oh, wonder of wonders! It is mercy indeed when God saves a seeker; but how much greater mercy when he seeks the lost himself! Mark the parable of Jesus Christ concerning the lost sheep; it does not run thus: "A certain man had a hundred sheep, and one of them did go astray. And he tarried at home, and lo, the sheep came back, and he received it joyfully and said to his friends, rejoice, for the sheep that I have lost is come back." No; he went after the sheep: it never would have

come after him; it would have wandered farther and farther away. He went after it; over hills of difficulty, down valleys of despondency he pursued its wandering feet, and at last he laid hold of it; he did not drive it before him, he did not lead it, but he carried it himself all the way, and when he brought it home he did not say, the sheep is come back," but, "I have found the sheep which was lost." Men do not seek God first; God seeks them first; and if any of you are seeking him to-day it is because he has first sought you. If you are desiring him he desired you first, and your good desires and earnest seeking will not be the cause of your salvation, but the effects of previous grace given to you. "Well," says another, "I should have thought that although the Saviour might not require an earnest seeking and sighing and groaning, and a continuous searching, after him, yet certainly he would have desired and demanded that every man, before he had grace, should ask for it." That, indeed, beloved, seems natural, and God will give grace to them that ask for it; but mark, the text says that he was manifested "to them that asked not for him." That is to say, before we ask, God gives us grace. The only reason why any man ever begins to pray is because God has put previous grace in his heart which leads him to pray. I remember, when I was converted to God, I was an Arminian thoroughly. I thought I had begun the good work myself, and I used sometimes to sit down and think, "Well, I sought the Lord four years before I found him," and I think I began to compliment myself upon the fact that I had perseveringly entreated of him in the midst of much discouragement. But one day the thought struck me, "How was it you came to seek God?" and in an instant the answer came from my soul, "Why, because he led me to do it; he must first have shown me my need of him, or else I should never have sought him; he must have shown me his preciousness, or I never should have thought him worth seeking;" and at once I saw the doctrines of grace as clear as possible. God must begin. Nature can never rise above itself. You put water into a reservoir, and it will rise as high as that, but no higher if let alone. Now, it is not in human nature to seek the Lord. Human nature is depraved, and therefore, there must be the extraordinary pressure of the Holy Spirit put upon the heart to lead us first to ask for mercy. But mark, we do not know an thing about that, while the Spirit is operating; we find that out afterwards. We ask as much as if we were asking all of ourselves. Our business is to seek the Lord as if there were no Holy Spirit at all. But although we do not know it,



there must always be a previous motion of the Spirit in our heart, before there will be a motion of our heart towards him.

"No sinner can be beforehand with thee,  
Thy grace is most sovereign, most rich, and most free."

Let me give you an illustration. You see that man on his horse surrounded by a body of troopers. How proud he is, and how he reins up his horse with conscious dignity. Sir, what have you got there? What are those despatches you treasure up with so much care? "Oh, sir, I have that in my hand that will vex the church of God in Damascus. I have dragged the fellows into the synagogue, both men and women; I have scourged them, and compelled them to blaspheme; and I have this commission from the high priest to drag them to Jerusalem, that I may put them to death." Saul! Saul! have you no love for Christ? "Love to him! No. When they stoned Stephen, I took care of the witnesses' clothes, and I rejoiced to do it. I wish I had had the crucifying of their Master, for I hate them with perfect hatred, and I breathe out threatenings and slaughter against them." What do you say of this man? If he be saved, will you not grant that it must be some Divine sovereignty that converts him? Look at poor Pilate, how much there was that was hopeful in him. He was willing to save the Master, but he feared and trembled. If we had had our choice, we should have said, "Lord, save Pilate, he does not want to kill Christ, he labours to let him escape; but slay the bloodthirsty Saul, he is, the very chief of sinners." "No," says God, "I will do as I will with mine own." The heavens open, and the brightness of glory descends - brighter than the noon-day sun. Stunned with the light he falls to the ground, and a voice is heard addressing him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." He rises up; God appears to him: "Lo, I have made thee a chosen vessel to bear my name among the Gentiles." Is not that sovereignty - sovereign grace, without any previous seeking? God was found of him that sought not for him; he manifested himself to one that asked him not. Some will say, that was it miracle; but it is one that is repeated every day in the week. I knew a man once, who had not been to the house of God for a long time; and one Sunday morning, having been to market to buy a pair of ducks for his Sunday dinner, he happened to see a house of God opened as he was passing by. "Well," he thought, "I

will hear what these fellows are up to." He went inside; the hymn that was being sung struck his attention; he listened to the sermon, forgot his ducks, discovered his own character, went home, and threw himself upon his knees before God, and after a short time it pleased God to give him joy and peace in believing. That man had nothing in him to begin with, nothing that could have led you to imagine he ever would be saved, but simply because God would have it so, he struck the effectual blow of grace, and the man was brought to himself. But we are, each of us who are saved, the very people who are the best illustrations of the matter. To this day, my wonder is, that ever the Lord should have chosen thee. I cannot make it out; and my only answer to the question is, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

I have now, I think, stated the doctrine pretty plainly. Let me only say a few words about it. Some people are very much afraid of this truth. They say, "It is true, I dare say, but still you ought not to preach it before a mixed assembly; it is very well for the comfort of God's people, but it is to be very carefully handled, and not to be publicly preached upon." Very well, sir, I leave you to settle that matter with my Master. He gave me this great book to preach from, and I cannot preach from anything else. If he has put anything in it you think is not fit, go and complain to him, and not to me. I am simply his servant, and if his errand that I am to tell is objectionable, I cannot help it. If I send my servant to the door with a message, and he delivers it faithfully, he does not deserve to be scolded. Let me have the blame, not the servant. So I say; blame my Master, and not me, for I do but proclaim his message. "No," says one, "it is not to be preached." But it is to be preached. Every word of God is given by inspiration, and it is profitable for some good end. Does not the Bible say so? Let me tell you, the reason why many of our churches are declining is just because this doctrine has not been preached. Wherever this doctrine has been upheld. it has always been "Down with Popery." The first reformers held this doctrine and preached it. Well said it Church of England divine to some who railed at him, "Look at your own Luther. Do you not consider him to be the teacher of the Church of England? What Calvin and the other reformers taught is to be found in his book upon the freedom of the will." Besides, we can point you to a string of ministers from the beginning even until now. Talk of apostolic succession! The man

who preaches the doctrines of grace has an apostolic succession indeed. Can we not trace our pedigree through a whole line of men like Newton, and Whitfield, and Owen, and Bunyan, straight away on till we come to Calvin, Luther, and Zwingle; and then we can go back from them to Savonarola, to Jerome of Prague, to Huss, and then back to Augustine, the mighty preacher of Christianity; and from St. Augustine to Paul is but one step. We need not be ashamed of our pedigree; although Calvinists are now considered to be heterodox, we are and ever must be orthodox. It is the old doctrine. Go and buy any puritanical book, and see if you can find Arminianism in it. Search all the book stalls over, and see if you can find one large folio book of olden times that anything in it but the doctrine of the free grace of God. Let this once be brought to bear upon the minds of men, and away go the doctrines of penance and confession, away goes paying for the pardon of your sin. If grace be free and sovereign in the hand of God, down goes the doctrine of priestcraft, away go buying and selling indulgences and such like things; they are swept to the four winds of heaven, and the efficacy of good works is dashed in pieces like Dagon before the ark of the Lord. "Well," says one, "I like the doctrine; still there are very few that preach it, and those that do are very high." Very likely; but I care little what anybody calls me. It signifies very little what men call you. Suppose they call you a "hyper," that does not make you anything wicked, does it? Suppose they call you an Antinomian, that will not make you one. I must confess, however, that there are some men who preach this doctrine who are doing ten thousand times more harm than good, because they don't preach the next doctrine I am going to proclaim, which is just as true. They have this to be the sail. but they have not the other to be the ballast. They can preach one side but not the other. They can go along with the high doctrine, but they will not preach the whole of the Word. Such men caricature the Word of God. And just let me say here, that it is the custom of a certain body of Ultra-Calvinists, to call those of us who teach that it is the duty of man to repent and believe, "Mongrel Calvinists." If you hear any of them say so, give them my most respectful compliments, and ask them whether they ever read Calvin's works in their lives. Not that I care what Calvin said or did not say; but ask them whether they, ever read his works; and if they say "No," as they must say, for there are forty-eight large volumes, you can tell them, that the man whom they call "a Mongrel Calvinist," though he has not read

them all, has read a very good share of them, and knows their spirit; and he knows that he preaches substantially what Calvin preached - that every doctrine he preaches may be found in Calvin's Commentaries on some part of Scripture or other. We are TRUE Calvinists, however. Calvin is nobody to us. Jesus Christ and him crucified, and the old fashioned Bible, are our standards. Beloved, let us take God's Word as it stands. If we find high doctrine there, let it be high; if we find low doctrine, let it be low; let us set up no other standard than the Bible affords.

II. Now then for the second point. "There now," says my ultra friend, "he is going to contradict himself." No, my friend, I am not, I am only going to contradict you. The second point is MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY. "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Now, these people whom God had cast away had been wooed, had been sought, had been entreated to be saved; but they would not, and inasmuch as they were not saved, it was the effect of their disobedience and their gainsaying. That lies clearly enough in the text. When God sent the prophets to Israel, and stretched forth his hands, what was it for? What did he wish, them to come to him for? Why, to be saved. "No," says one, "it was for temporal mercies." Not so, my friend; the verse before is concerning spiritual mercies, and so is this one, for they refer to the same thing. Now, was God sincere in his offer? God forgive the man that dares to say he was not. God is undoubtedly sincere in every act he did. He sent his prophets, he entreated the people of Israel to lay hold on spiritual things, but they would not, and though he stretched out his hands all the day long, yet they were "a disobedient and gainsaying people," and would not have his love; and on their head rests their blood.

Now let me notice the wooing of God and of what sort it is. First, it was the most affectionate wooing in the world. Lost sinners who sit under the sound of the gospel are not lost for the want of the most affectionate invitation. God says he stretched out his hands. You know what that means. You have seen the child who is disobedient and will not come to his father. The father puts out his hands, and says, "Come, my child, come; I am ready to forgive you." The tear is in his eye, and his bowels move with compassion, and he says, "Come, come." God says this is what

he did - "he stretched out his hands." That is what he has done to some of you. You that are not saved to-day are without excuse, for God stretched out his hands to you, and he said, "Come, come." Long have you sat beneath the sound of the ministry, and it has been a faithful one, I trust, and a weeping one. Your minister has not forgotten to pray for your souls in secret or to weep over you when no eye saw him, and he has endeavoured to persuade you as an ambassador from God. God is my witness, I have sometimes stood in this pulpit, and I could not have pleaded harder for my own life than I have pleaded with you. In Christ's name, I have cried, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I have wept over you as the Saviour did, and used his words on his behalf, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." And you know that your conscience has often been touched; you have often been moved; you could not resist it. God was so kind to you; he invited you so affectionately by the Word; he dealt so gently with you by his providence; his hands were stretched out, and you could hear his voice speaking in your ears, "Come unto me, come: come now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." You have heard him cry, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." You have heard him say with all the affection of a father's heart, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Oh! God does plead with men that they would be saved, and this day he says to every one of you, "Repent, and be converted for the remission of your sins. Turn ye unto me. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways." And with love divine he woos you as a father woos his child, putting out his hands and crying, "Come unto me, come unto me." "No," says one strong-doctrine man, "God never invites all men to himself; he invites none but certain characters." Stop, sir, that is all you know about it. Did you ever read that parable where it is said, My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage." And they that were bidden would not come. And did you never read that they all began to make excuse, and that they were punished because they did not accept the invitations. Now, if the invitation is not to be made to anybody, but to

the man who will accept it, how can that parable be true? The fact is, the oxen and fatlings are killed; the wedding feast is ready, and the trumpet sounds, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come and eat, come and drink." Here are the provisions spread, here is an all-sufficiency; the invitation is free; it is a great invitation. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." And that invitation is couched in tender words, "Come to me, my child, come to me." "All day long I have stretched forth my hands."

And note again, this invitation was very frequent. The words, "all the day long," may be translated "daily" - "Daily have I stretched forth my hands." Sinner, God has not called you once to come, and then let you alone, but every day has he been at you; every day has conscience spoken to you; every day has providence warned you, and every Sabbath has the Word of God wooed you. Oh! how much some of you will have to account for at God's great bar! I cannot now read your characters, but I know there are some of you who will have a terrible account at last. All the day long has God been wooing you. From the first dawn of your life, he wooed you through your mother, and she used to put your little hands together, and teach you to say,

"Gentle Jesus meek and mild,  
Look upon a little child,  
Pity my simplicity;  
Suffer me to come to thee."

And in your boyhood God was still stretching out his hands after you. How your Sunday-school teacher endeavoured to bring you to the Saviour! How often your youthful heart was affected; but you put all that away, and you are still untouched by it. How often did your mother speak to you, and your father warn you; and you have forgotten the prayer in that bed-room when you were sick, when your mother kissed your burning forehead, knelt down and prayed to God to spare your life, and then added that prayer, "Lord, save my boy's soul!" And you recollect the Bible she gave you, when you first went out apprentice, and the prayer she wrote on that yellow front leaf. When she gave it, you did not perhaps know, but you may now; how earnestly she longed after you, that you

might be formed anew in Christ Jesus; how she followed you with her prayers, and how she entreated with her God for you. And you have not yet surely forgotten how many Sabbaths you have spent, and how many times you have been warned. Why you have had waggon-loads of sermons wasted on you. A hundred and four sermons you have heard every year, and some of you more, and yet you are still just what you were.

But sinners, sermon hearing is an awful thing unless it is blessed to our souls. If God has kept on stretching out his hands every day and all the day, it will be a hard thing for you when you shall be justly condemned not only for your breaches of the law, but for your wilful rejection of the gospel. It is probable that God will keep on stretching out his hands to you until your hairs grow grey, still continually inviting you: and perhaps when you are nearing death he will still say, "Come unto me, come unto me." But if you still persist in hardening your heart, if still you reject Christ, I beseech you let nothing make you imagine that you shall go unpunished. Oh! I do tremble sometimes when I think of that class of ministers who tell sinners that they are not guilty if they do not seek the Saviour. How they shall be found innocent at God's great day I do not know. It seems to be a fearful thing that they should be lulling poor souls into sleep by telling them it is not their duty to seek Christ and repent, but that they may do as they like about that, and that when they perish they will be none the more guilty for having heard the Word. My Master did not say that. Remember how he said, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." Jesus did not talk thus when he spoke to Chorazin and Bethsaida; for he said, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." It was not the way Paul preached. He did not tell sinners that there was no guilt in despising the cross. Hear the apostle's words once more: "For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every

transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." Sinner, at the great day of God thou must give an account for every warning thou hast ever had, for every time thou hast read thy Bible, ay, and for every time thou hast neglected to read it; for every Sunday when the house of God was open and thou didst neglect to avail thyself of the opportunity of hearing the Word, and for every time thou didst hear it and didst not improve it. Ye who are careless hearers, are tying faggots for your own burning for ever. Ye that hear and straightway forget, or hear with levity, are digging for yourselves a pit into which ye must be cast. Remember, no one will be responsible for your damnation but yourself, at the last great day. God will not be responsible for it. "As I live saith the Lord" - and that is a great oath - "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." God has done much for you. He sent you his Gospel. You are not born in a heathen land; he has given you the Book of Books; he has given you an enlightened conscience; and if you perish under the sound of the ministry, you perish more fearfully and terribly, than if you had perished anywhere else.

This doctrine is as much God's Word as the other. You ask me to reconcile the two. I answer, they do not want any reconciliation; I never tried to reconcile them to myself, because I could never see a discrepancy. If you begin to put fifty or sixty quibbles to me, I cannot give any answer. Both are true; no two truths can be inconsistent with each other; and what you have to do is to believe them both. With the first one, the saint has most to do. Let him praise the free and sovereign grace of God, and bless his name. With the second, the sinner has the most to do. O sinner, humble thyself under the mighty hand of God, when thou thinkest of how often he hath shown his love to thee, by bidding thee come to himself, and yet how often thou hast spurned his Word and refused his mercy, and turned a deaf ear to every invitation, and hast gone thy way to rebel against a God of love, and violate the commands of him that loved thee.

And now, how shall I conclude? My first exhortation shall be to Christian people. My dear friends, I beseech you do not in any way give yourselves



lip to any system of faith apart from the Word of God. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants; I am the successor of the great and venerated Dr. Gill, whose theology is almost universally received among the stronger Calvinistic churches; but although I venerate his memory, and believe his teachings, yet he is not my Rabbi. What you find in God's Word is for you to believe and to receive. Never be frightened at a doctrine; and above all, never be frightened at a name. Some one said to me the other day, that he thought the truth lay somewhere between the two extremes. He meant right, but I think he was wrong, I do not think the truth lies between the two extremes, but in them both. I believe the higher a man goes the better, when he is preaching the matter of salvation. The reason why a man is saved is grace, grace, grace; and you may go as high as you like there. But when you come to the question as to why men are damned, then the Arminian is far more right than the Antinomian. I care not for any denomination or party, I am as high as Huntingdon upon the matter of salvation, but question me about damnation, and you will get a very different answer. By the grace of God I ask no man's applause, I preach the Bible as I find it. Where we get wrong is where the Calvinist begins to meddle with the question of damnation, and interferes with the justice of God; or when the Arminian denies the doctrine of grace.

My second exhortation is, - Sinners, I beseech every one of you who are unconverted and ungodly, this morning to put away every form and fashion of excuse that the devil would have you make concerning your being unconverted. Remember, that all the teaching in the world can never excuse you for being enemies to God by wicked works. When we beseech you to be reconciled to him, it is because we know you will never be in your proper place until you are reconciled. God has made you; can it be right that you should disobey him? God feeds you every day: can it be right that you should still live in disobedience to him? Remember, when the heavens shall be on a blaze, when Christ shall come to judge the earth in righteousness and his people with equity, there will not be one excuse that you can make which will be valid at the last great day. If you should attempt to say, "Lord, I have never heard the word;" his answer would be, "Thou didst hear it; thou heardest it plainly." "But Lord, I had an evil will." "Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee; thou hadst that evil

will, and I condemn thee for it. This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "But Lord," some will say, "I was not predestinated." "What hadst thou to do with that? Thou didst; do according to thine own will when thou didst rebel. Thou wouldest not come unto me, and now I destroy thee for ever. Thou hast broken my law - on thine own head be the guilt." If a sinner could say at the great day, "Lord, I could not be saved anyhow his torment in hell would be mitigated by that thought: but this shall be the very edge of the sword, and the very burning of the fire" - Ye knew your duty and ye did it not: ye trampled on everything that was holy; ye neglected the Saviour, and how shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?"

Now, with regard to myself; you may some of you go away and say, that I was Antinomian in the first part of the sermon and Arminian at the end. I care not. I beg of you to search the Bible for yourselves. To the law and to the testimony; if I speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in me. I am willing to come to that test. Have nothing to do with me where I have nothing to do with Christ. Where I separate from the truth, cast my words away. But if what I say be God's teaching, I charge you, by him that sent me, give these things your thoughts, and turn unto the Lord with all your hearts.

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## **Sovereignty And Salvation**

Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. - Isaiah 45:22

Six years ago to-day, as near as possible at this very hour of the day, I was "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity," but had yet, by

divine grace, been led to feel the bitterness of that bondage, and to cry out by reason of the soreness of its slavery. Seeking rest, and finding none, I stepped within the house of God, and sat there, afraid to look upward, lest I should be utterly cut off, and lest his fierce wrath should consume me. The minister rose in his pulpit, and, as I have done this morning, read this text, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." I looked that moment; the grace of faith was vouchsafed to me in the self-same instant; and now I think I can say with truth,

"Ere since by faith I saw the stream  
His flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die."

I shall never forget that day, while memory holds its place; nor can I help repeating this text whenever I remember that hour when first I knew the Lord. How strangely gracious! How wonderfully and marvelously kind, that he who heard these words so little time ago for his own soul's profit, should now address you this morning as his hearers from the same text, in the full and confident hope that some poor sinner within these walls may hear the glad tidings of salvation for himself also, and may to-day, on this 6th of January, be "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God!"

If it were within the range of human capacity to conceive a time when God dwelt alone, without his creatures, we should then have one of the grandest and most stupendous ideas of God. There was a season when as yet the sun had never run his race, nor commenced flinging his golden rays across space, to gladden the earth. There was an era when no stars sparkled in the firmament. for there was no sea of azure in which they might float. There was a time when all that we now behold of God's great universe was yet unborn, slumbering within the mind of God, as yet uncreate and no-existent; yet there was God, and he was "over all blessed for ever;" though no seraphs hymned his praises, though no strong-winged cherubs flashed like lightning to do his high behests, though he was without a retinue, yet he sat as a king on his throne, the mighty God,

for ever to be worshipped—the Dread Supreme, in solemn silence dwelling by himself in vast immensity, making the placid clouds his canopy, and the light from his own countenance forming the brightness of his glory. God was, and God is. From the beginning God was God; ere worlds had beginning, he was "from everlasting to everlasting." Now, when it pleased him to create his creatures, does it not strike you how infinitely those creatures must have been below himself? If you are potters, and you fashion upon the wheel a vessel, shall that piece of clay arrogate to itself equality with you? Nay, at what a distance will it be from you, because you have been in part its creator. So where the Almighty formed his creatures, was it not consummate impudence, that they should venture for a moment to compare themselves with him? Yet that arch traitor, that leader of rebels, Satan, sought to climb to the high throne of God, soon to find his aim too high, and hell itself not low enough wherein to escape divine vengeance. He knows that God is "God alone." Since the world was created, man has imitated Satan; the creature of a day, the ephemera of an hour, has sought to match itself with the Eternal. Hence it has even been one of the objects of the great Jehovah, to teach mankind that he is God, and beside him there is none else. This is the lesson he has been teaching the world since it went astray from him. He has been busying himself in breaking down the high places, in exalting the valleys, in casting down imaginations and lofty looks, that all the world might

"Know that he Lord is God alone,  
He can create, and he destroy."

This morning we shall attempt to show you, in the first place, *how God has been teaching this great lesson to the world*— that he is God, and beside him there is none else; and then, secondly, *the special way in which he designs to teach it in the matter of salvation*— "Look unto me, and be ye saved: for I am God, and there is none else."

I. First, then, HOW HAS GOD BEEN TEACHING THIS LESSON TO MANKIND?

We reply, he has taught it, first of all, to *false gods, and to the idolaters*

*who have bowed before them.* Man, in his wickedness and sin, has set up a block of wood and stone to be his maker, and has bowed before it. He hath fashioned for himself out of a goodly tree an image made unto the likeness of mortal man, or of the fishes of the sea, or of creeping things of the earth, and he has prostrated his body, and his soul too, before that creature of his own hands, calling it a god, while it had neither eyes to see, nor hands to handle, nor ears to hear. But how hath God poured contempt on the ancient gods of the heathen? Where are they now? Are they so much as known? Where are those false deities before whom the multitudes of Ninevah prostrated themselves? Ask the moles and the bats, whose companions they are; or ask the mounds beneath which they are buried; or go where the idle gazer walketh through the museum—see them there as curiosities, and smile to think that men should ever bow before such gods as these. and where are the gods of Persia? Where are they? The fires are quenched, and the fire-worshipper hath almost ceased out of the earth. Where are the gods of Greece—those gods adorned with poetry, and hymned in the most sublime odes? Where are they? They are gone. Who talks of them now, but as things that were of yore? Jupiter—doth any one bow before him? And who is he that adores Saturn? They are passed away, and they are forgotten. And where are the gods of Rome? Doth Janus now command the temple? or do the vestal virgins now feed their perpetual fires? Are there any now that bow before these gods? No, they have lost their thrones. And where are the gods of the South Sea Islands—those bloody demons before whom wretched creatures prostrated their bodies? They have well-nigh become extinct. Ask the inhabitants of China and Polynesia where are the gods before which they bowed? Ask, and echo says ask, and ask again. They are cast down from their thrones; they are hurled from their pedestals; their chariots are broken, their sceptres are burnt in the fire, their glories are departed; God hath gotten unto himself the victory over false gods, and taught their worshippers that he is God, and that beside him there is none else. Are their gods still worshipped, or idols before which the nations bow themselves? Wait but a little while, and ye shall see them fall. Cruel Juggernaut, whose car still crushes in its motion the foolish ones who throw themselves before it shall yet be the object of derision; and the most noted idols, such as Buddha, and Brahma, and Vishnu, shall yet stoop themselves to the earth, and men shall tread them down as mire in

the streets; for God will teach all men that he is God, and that there is none else.

Mark ye, yet again, how God has taught this truth *to empires*. Empires have risen up, and have been gods of the era; their kings and princes have taken to themselves high titles, and have been worshipped by the multitude. But ask the empires whether there is any beside God? Do you not think you hear the boasting soliloquy of Babylon—"I sit as a queen, and am no widow; I shall see no sorrow; I am god, and there is none beside me?" And think ye not now, if ye walk over ruined Babylon, that ye will meet aught save the solemn spirit of the Bible, standing like a prophet gray with age, and telling you that there is one God, and that beside him there is none else? Go ye to Babylon, covered with its sand, the sand of its own ruins; stand ye on the mounds of Nineveh, and let the voice come up—"There is one God, and empires sink before him; there is only one Potentate, and the princes and kings of the earth, with their dynasties and thrones, are shaken by the trampling of his foot." Go, seat yourselves in the temples of Greece; mark ye there what proud words Alexander once did speak; but now, where is he, and where his empire too? Sit on the ruined arches of the bridge of Carthage, or walk ye through the desolated theatres of Rome, and ye will hear a voice in the wild wind amid those ruins—"I am God, and there is none else." "O city, though didst call thyself eternal; I have made thee melt away like dew. Though saidst 'I sit on seven hills, and I shall last forever; ' I have made thee crumble, and thou art now a miserable and contemptible place, compared with what thou wast. Thou wast once stone, thou madest thyself; I have made thee stone again, and brought thee low." O! how has God taught monarchies and empires that have set themselves up like new kingdoms of heaven. that he is God, and that there is none else!

Again: how has he taught his great truth *to monarchs*! There are some who have been most proud that have had to learn it in a way more hard than others. Take, for instance, Nebuchadnezzar. His crown is on his head, his purple robe is over his shoulders; he walks through proud Babylon, and says, "Is not this great Babylon which I have builded?" Do you see that creature in the field there? It is a man. "A man?" say you; its hair has grown like eagles' feathers, and its nails like birds' claws; it

walketh on all-fours, and eateth grass, like an ox; it is driven out from men. That is the monarch who said—"Is not this great Babylon that I have builded?" And he is now restored to Babylon's palace, that he may "bless the Most High who is able to abase those that walk in pride." Remember another monarch. Look at Herod. He sits in the midst of his people, and he speaks. Hear ye the impious shout? "It is the voice of God," they cry, "and not the voice of man." The proud monarch gives not God the glory; he affects the God, and seems to shake the spheres, imagining himself divine. There is a worm that creepeth into his body, and yet another, and another; and ere that sun has set, he is eaten up of worms. Ah! monarch! though thoughtest of being a god, and worms have eaten thee! thou hast thought of being more than man; and what art thou? Less than man, for worms consume thee, and thou art the prey of corruption. Thus God humbleth the proud; thus he abaseth the mighty. We might give you instances from modern history; but the death of a king is all-sufficient to teach this one lesson, if men would but learn it. When kings die, and in funeral pomp are carried to the grave, we are taught the lesson—"I am God, and beside me there is none else." When we hear of revolutions, and the shaking of empires—when we see old dynasties tremble, and gray-haired monarchs driven from their thrones, then it is that Jehovah seems to put his foot upon land and sea, and with his hand uplifted cries—"Hear! ye inhabitants of the earth! Ye are but as grasshoppers; 'I am God, and beside me there is none else.'"

Again: our God has had much to do to teach this lesson *to the wise men of this world*; for as rank, pomp, and power, have set themselves up in the place of God, so has wisdom; and one of the greatest enemies of Deity has always been the wisdom of man. The wisdom of man will not see God. Professing themselves to be wise, wise men have become fools. But have ye not noticed, in reading history, how God has abased the pride of wisdom? In ages long gone by, he sent mighty minds into the world, who devised systems of philosophy. "These systems," they said, "will last forever." Their pupils thought them infallible, and therefore wrote their sayings on enduring parchment, saying, "This book will last forever; succeeding generations of men will read it, and to the last man that book shall be handed down, as the epitome of wisdom." "Ah! but," said God, "that book of yours shall be seen to be folly, ere another hundred years have rolled away." And so the mighty thoughts of Socrates, and the

wisdom of Solon, are utterly forgotten now; and could we hear them speak, the veriest child in our schools would laugh to think that he understandeth more of philosophy than they. But when man has found the vanity of one system, his eyes have sparkled at another; if Aristotle will not suffice, here is Bacon; now I shall know everything; and he sets to work and says that this new philosophy is to last forever. He lays his stones with fair colors, and he thinks that every truth he piles up is a precious imperishable truth. But, alas! another century comes, and it is found to be "wood, hay, and stubble." A new sect of philosophers rise up, who refute their predecessors. So too, we have wise men in this day—wise secularists, and so on, who fancy they have obtained the truth; but within another fifty years—and mark that word—this hair shall not be silvered over with gray, until the last of that race shall have perished, and that man shall be thought a fool that was ever connected with such a race. Systems of infidelity pass away like a dew-drop before the sun, for God says, "I am God, and beside me there is none else." This Bible is the stone that shall break in powder philosophy; this is the mighty battering ram that shall dash all systems of philosophy in pieces; this is the stone that a woman may yet hurl upon the head of every Abimelech, and he shall be utterly destroyed. O church of God! fear not; thou shalt do wonders; wise men shall be confounded, and thou shalt know, and they too, that he is God, and that beside him there is none else.

"Surely," says one, "*the Church of God* does not need to be taught this." Yes, we answer, she does; for of all beings, those whom God has made the objects of his grace are perhaps the most apt to forget this cardinal truth, that he is God, and that beside him there is none else. How did the church in Canaan forget it, when they bowed before other gods, and therefore he brought against them mighty kings and princes, and afflicted them sore. How did Israel forget it; and he carried them away captive into Babylon. And what Israel did, in Canaan and in Babylon, that we do now. We too, too often, forget that he is God, and beside him there is none else. Doth not the Christian know what I mean, when I tell him this great fact? For hath he not done it himself? In certain times prosperity has come upon him; soft gales have blown his bark along, just where his wild will wished to steer; and he has said within himself: "Now I have peace, now I have happiness, now the object I wished for is within my grasp, now I will say,



'Sit down, my soul, and take thy rest; eat, drink, and be merry; these things will well content me; make thou these thy god, be thou blessed and happy.'" But have we not seen our God dash the goblet to the earth, spill the sweet wine, and instead thereof fill it with gall? and as he has given it to us, he has said—"Drink it, drink it: ye have thought to find a god on earth, but drain the cup and know its bitterness." When we have drunk it, nauseous the draft was, and we have cried, "Ah! God, I will drink no more of these things; thou art God, and beside thee there is none else." And ah! how often, too, have we devised schemes for the future, without asking God's permission! Men have said, like those foolish ones James mentioned, "We will do such-and-such things on the morrow; we will buy and sell and get gain." whereas they knew not what was to be on the morrow,, for long ere the morrow came they were unable to buy and sell; death had claimed them, and a small span of earth held all their frame. God teaches his people every day, by sickness, by affliction, by depression of spirits, by the forsakings of God, by the loss of the Spirit for a season, by the lackings of the joys of his countenance, that he is God, and that beside him there is none else. And we must not forget that there are some special servants of God raised up to do good works, who in a peculiar manner have to learn this lesson. Let a man, for instance, be called to the great work of preaching the gospel. He is successful; God helped him; thousands wait at his feet, and multitudes hang upon his lips; as truly as that man is a man, he will have a tendency to be exalted above measure, and too much will he begin to look to himself, and too little to his God. Let men speak who know, and what they know let them speak; and they will say, "It is true, it is most true." If God gives us a special mission, we generally begin to take some honor and glory to ourselves. But in review of the eminent saints of God, have you never observed how God has made them feel that he was God, and beside him there was none else? Poor Paul might have thought himself a god, and been puffed up above measure, by reason of the greatness of his revelation, had not there been a thorn in the flesh. But Paul could feel that he was not a god, for he had a thorn in the flesh, and gods *could not* have thorns in the flesh. Sometimes God teaches the minister, by denying him help on special occasions. We come up into our pulpits and say, "oh! I wish I could have a good day today!" We begin to labor; we have been just as earnest in prayer, and just as indefatigable; but it is like a blind horse turning round a mill, or like

Samson with Delilah: we shake our vain limbs with vast surprise, "make feeble fight," and win no victories. We are made to see that the Lord is God, and that beside him there is none else. Very frequently God teaches this to the minister, leading him to see his own sinful nature. He will have such an insight into his own wicked and abominable heart, that he will feel as he comes up the pulpit stairs that he does not deserve so much as to sit in his pew, much less to preach to his fellows. Although we feel always joy in the declaration of God's Word, yet we have known what it is to totter on the pulpit steps, under a sense that the chief of sinners should scarcely be allowed to preach to others. Ah! beloved, I do not think *he* will be very successful as a minister who is not taken into the depths and blackness of his own soul, and made to exclaim, "Unto me, who am less *than the least of all saints*, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." There is another antidote which God applies in the case of ministers. If he does not deal with them personally, he raises up a host of enemies, that it may be seen that he is God, and God alone. An esteemed friend sent me, yesterday, a valuable old Ms. of one of George Whitefield's hymns which was sung on Kennington Common. It is a splendid hymn, thoroughly Whitefieldian all through. It showed that his reliance was wholly on the Lord, and that God was within him. What! will a man subject himself to the calumnies of the multitude, will he toil and work day after day unnecessarily, will he stand up Sabbath after Sabbath and preach the gospel and have his name maligned and slandered, if he has not the grace of God in him? For myself, I can say, that were it not that the love of Christ constrained me, this hour might be the last that I should preach, so far as the ease of the thing is concerned. "Necessity is laid upon us; yea, woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel." But that opposition through which God carries his servants, leads them to see at once that he is God, and that there is none else. If every one applauded, if all were gratified, we should think ourselves God; but, when they hiss and hoot, we turn to our God, and cry,

"If on my face, for thy dear name,  
Shame and reproach should be,  
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,  
If thou'lt remember me."

II. This brings us to the second portion of our discourse. Salvation is God's greatest work; and, therefore, in his greatest work, he specially teaches us this lesson, That he is God, and that beside him there is none else. Our text tells us *how he teaches it*. He says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." He shows us that he is God, and that beside him there is none else, in three ways. First, by the person to whom he directs us: "look unto *me*, and be ye saved." Secondly, by the means he tells us to use to obtain mercy: "Look," simply, "Look." And thirdly, by the persons whom he calls to "look:" "Look unto me, and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth.*"

1. First, *to whom does God tell us to look for salvation?* O, does it not lower the pride of man, when we hear the Lord say, "Look unto *me*, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth?" It is not. "Look to your priest, and be ye saved:" if you did, there would be another god, and beside him there would be some one else. It is not "Look to yourself;" if so, then there would be a being who might arrogate some of the praise of salvation. But it is "Look unto me." How frequently you who are coming to Christ look to yourselves. "O!" you say, "I do not repent enough." That is looking to yourself. "I do not believe enough." That is looking to yourself. "I am too unworthy." That is looking to yourself. "I cannot discover," says another, "that I have any righteousness." It is quite right to say that you have not any righteousness; but it is quite wrong to look for any. It is, "Look unto me." God will have you turn your eye off yourself and look unto him. The hardest thing in the world is to turn a man's eye off himself; as long as he lives, he always has a predilection to turn his eyes inside, and look at himself; whereas God says, "Look unto me." From the cross of Calvary, where the bleeding hands of Jesus drop mercy; from the Garden of Gethsemane, where the bleeding pores of the Saviour sweat pardons, the cry comes, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." From Calvary's summit, where Jesus cries, "It is finished," I hear a shout, "Look, and be saved." But there comes a vile cry from our soul, "Nay, look to yourself! look to yourself!" Ah, my hearer, look to yourself, and you will be damned. That certainly will come of it. As long as you look to yourself there is no hope for you. It is not a consideration of what you are, but a consideration of what God is, and what Christ is, that can save you. It is looking from yourself to Jesus. P! there be men that quite misunderstand

the gospel; they think that righteousness qualifies them to come to Christ; whereas sin is the only qualification for a man to come to Jesus. Good old Crisp says, "Righteousness keeps me from Christ: the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Sin makes me come to Jesus, when sin is felt; and, in coming to Christ, the more sin I have the more cause I have to hope for mercy." David said, and it was a strange thing, too, "Have mercy upon me, for mine iniquity is great." But, David, why did not you say that it was little? Because, David knew that the bigger his sins were, the better reason for asking mercy. The more vile a man is, the more eagerly I invite him to believe in Jesus. A sense of sin is all we have to look for as ministers. We preach to sinners; and let us know that a man will take the title of sinner to himself, and we then say to him, "Look unto Christ, and ye shall be saved." "Look," this is all he demands of thee, and even this he gives thee. If thou lookest to thyself thou art damned; thou art a vile miscreant, filled with loathsomeness, corrupt and corrupting others. But look thou here—seest thou that man hanging on the cross? Dost thou behold his agonized head dropping meekly down upon his breast? Dost thou see that thorny crown, causing drops of blood to trickle down his cheeks? Dost thou see his hands pierced and rent, and his blest feet, supporting the weight of his own frame, rent well-nigh in twain with the cruel nails? Sinner! dost thou hear him shriek, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabbathani?" Dost thou hear him cry, "It is finished?" Dost thou mark his head hang down in death? Seest thou that side pierced with the spear, and the body taken from the cross? O, come thou hither! Those hands were nailed for thee; those feet gushed gore for thee; that side was opened wide for thee; and if thou wantest to know how thou canst find mercy, there it is. "Look!" "Look unto *me!*" Look no longer to Moses. Look no longer to Sinai. Come thou here and look to Calvary, to Calvary's victim, and to Joseph's grave. And look thou yonder, to the man who near the throne sits with his Father, crowned with light and immortality. "Look, sinner," he says, this morning, to you, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." It is in this way God teaches that there is none beside him; because he makes us look entirely to him, and utterly away from ourselves.

2. But the second thought is, *the means of salvation*. It is, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." You have often observed, I am sure, that many people

are fond of an intricate worship, and involved religion, one they can hardly understand. They cannot endure worship so simple as ours. Then they must have a man dressed in white, and a man dressed in black; then they must have what they call an altar and a chancel. After a little while that will not suffice, and they must have flower-pots and candles. The clergyman then becomes a priest, and he must have a variegated dress, with a cross on it. So it goes on; what is simply a plate becomes a paten, and what was once a cup becomes a chalice; and the more complicated the ceremonies are, the better they like them. They like their minister to stand like a superior being. The world likes a religion they cannot comprehend. But have you never noticed how gloriously simple the Bible is? It will not have any of your nonsense; it speaks plain, and nothing but plain things. "*Look!*" There is not an unconverted man who likes this, "Look unto Christ, and be ye saved." No, he comes to Christ like Naaman to Elijah; and when it is said, "Go, wash in Jordan," he replies, "I verily thought he would come and put his hand on the place, and call on the name of his God. But the idea of telling me to wash in Jordan, what a ridiculous thing! Anybody could do that!" If the prophet had bidden him to do some great thing, would he not have done it? Ah! certainly he would. And if, this morning, I could preach that any one who walked from here to Bath without his shoes and stockings, or did some impossible thing, should be saved, you would start off tomorrow morning before breakfast. If it would take me seven years to describe the way of salvation, I am sure you would all long to hear it. If only one learned doctor could tell the way to heaven, how would he be run after! And if it were in hard words, with a few scraps of Latin and Greek, it would be all the better. But it is a simple gospel that we have to preach. It is only "*Look!*" "*Ah!*" you say, "Is that the gospel? I shall not pay any attention to that." But why has God ordered you to do such a simple thing? Just to take down your pride, and to show you that he is God, and that beside him there is none else. O, mark how simple the way of salvation is. It is "*Look! look! look!*" Four letters, and two of them alike! "*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.*" Some divines want a week to tell what you are to do to be saved; but God the Holy Ghost only wants four letters to do it. "*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.*" How simple is that way of salvation! and O, how instantaneous! It takes us some time to move our hand, but a look does not require a moment. So a sinner

believes in a moment; and the moment that sinner believes and trusts in his crucified God for pardon, at once he receives salvation in full through his blood. There may be one that came in here this morning unjustified in his conscience, that will go out justified rather than others. There may be some here, filthy sinners one moment, pardoned the next. It is done in an instant. "Look! look! look!" And how universal it is! Because, wherever I am, however far off, it just says, "Look!" It does not say I am to see; it only says, "Look!" If we look on a thing in the dark, we cannot see it; but we have done what we were told. So, if a sinner only looks to Jesus he will save him; for Jesus in the dark is as good as Jesus in the light; and Jesus, when you cannot see him, is as good as Jesus when you can. It is only, "Look!" "Ah! says one, "I have been trying to see Jesus this year, but I have not seen him." It does not say, see him, but "Look unto him." And it says that they who looked were enlightened. If there is an obstacle before you, and you only look in the right direction, it is sufficient. "Look unto me." It is not seeing Christ so much as looking after him. The will after Christ, the wish after Christ, the desire after Christ, the trusting in Christ, the hanging on Christ, that is what is wanted. "Look! look! look!" Ah! if the man bitten by the serpent had turned his sightless eyeballs towards the brazen serpent, though he had not seen it, he would still have had his life restored. It is looking, not seeing, that saves the sinner.

We say again, how this *humbles* a man! There is a gentleman who says, "Well, if it had been a thousand pounds that would have saved me, I would have thought nothing of it." But gold and silver is cankered; it is good for nothing. "Then, am I to be saved just the same as my servant Betty?" Yes, just the same; there is no other way of salvation for you. That is to show man that Jehovah is God, and that beside him there is none else. The wise man says, "If it had been to work the most wonderful problem, or to solve the greatest mystery, I would have done it. May I not have some mysterious gospel? May I not believe in some mysterious religion?" No; it is "Look!" "What! am I to be saved just like that Ragged School Boy, who can't read his letters?" Yes, you must, or you will not be saved at all. Another says, "I have been very moral and upright; I have observed all the laws of the land; and, if there is anything else to do, I will do it. I will eat only fish on Fridays, and keep all the fasts of the church, if that will save me." No, sir, that will not save you; your good works are

good for nothing. "What! must I be saved in the same way as a harlot or a drunkard?" Yes, sir; there is only one way of salvation for all. "He hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." He hath passed a sentence of condemnation on all, that the free grace of God might come upon many to salvation. "Look! look! look!" This is the simple method of salvation. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

But, lastly, mark how God has cut down the pride of man, and has exalted himself *by the persons whom he has called to look*. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." When the Jew heard Isaiah say that, "Ah!" he exclaimed, "you ought to have said, 'Look unto me, O Jerusalem, and be saved.' That would have been right. But those Gentile dogs, are they to look and be saved?" "Yes," says God; "I will show you Jews, that, though I have given you many privileges, I will exalt others above you; I can do as I will with my own."

Now, who are the ends of the earth? Why, there are poor heathen nations now that are very few degrees removed from brutes, uncivilized and untaught; but if I might go and tread the desert, and find the Bushman in his kraal, or go to the South Seas and find a cannibal, I would say to the cannibal or the Bushman, "Look unto Jesus, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." They are some of "the ends of the earth," and the gospel is sent to as much to them as to the polite Grecians, the refined Romans, or the educated Britons. But I think "the ends of the earth" imply those who have gone the farthest away from Christ. I say, drunkard, that means you. You have been staggering back. till you have got right to the ends of the earth; you have almost had *delirium tremens*; you cannot be much worse. There is not a man breathing worse than you. *Is there?* Ah! but God, in order to humble your pride, says to you, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." There is another who has lived a life of infamy and sin, until she has ruined herself, and even Satan seems to sweep her out at the back door; but God says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Methinks I see one trembling here, and saying, "Ah, I have not been one of these, sir, but I have been something worse; for I have attended the house of God, and I have stifled convictions, and put off all thoughts of Jesus, and now I think he will never have mercy on me." You are one of

them. "Ends of the earth!" So long as I find any who feel like that, I can tell them that they are "the ends of the earth." "But," says another, "I am so peculiar; if I did not feel as I do, it would be all very well; but I feel that my case is a peculiar one." That is all right; they are a peculiar people. You will do. But another one says, "There is nobody in the world like me; I do not think you will find a being under the sun that has had so many calls, and put them all away, and so many sins on his head. Besides, I have guilt that I should not like to confess to any living creature." One of "the ends of the earth" again; therefore, all I have to do is to cry out, in the Master's name, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." But thou sayest, sin will not let thee look. I tell thee, sin will be removed the moment thou dost look. "*But I dare not; he will condemn me; I fear to look.*" He will condemn thee more if thou dost not look. Fear, then, and look; but do not let thy fearing keep thee from looking. "*But he will cast me out.*" Try him. "*But I cannot see him.*" I tell you, it is not seeing, but looking. "*But my eyes are so fixed on the earth, so earthly, so worldly.*" Ah! but, poor soul, he giveth power to look and live. He saith, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

Take this, dear friends, for a new year's text, both ye who love the Lord, and ye who are only looking for the first time. Christian! in all thy troubles through this year, look unto God and be saved. In all thy trials and afflictions, look unto Christ, and find deliverance. In all thine agony, poor soul, in all thy repentance for thy guilt, look unto Christ, and find pardon. This year, remember to put thine eyes heavenward, and thine heart heavenward, too. Remember, this day, that thou bind round thyself a golden chain, and put one link of it in the staple of heaven. Look unto Christ; fear not. There is no stumbling when a man walks with his eyes up to Jesus. He that looked at the stars fell into the ditch; but he that looks at Christ walks safely. Keep your eyes up all the year long. "Look unto *him*, and be ye saved;" and remember that "*he* is God, and beside *him* there is none else." And thou, poor trembler, what sayest thou? Wilt thou begin the year by looking unto him? You know how sinful you are this morning; you know how filthy you are; and yet it is possible that, before you open your pew door, and get into the aisle, you will be as justified as the apostles before the throne of God. It is possible that, ere you foot treads



the threshold of your door, you will have lost the burden that has been on your back, and you will go on your way, singing, "I am forgiven, I am forgiven; I am a miracle of grace; this day is my spiritual birthday." O, that it might be such to many of you, that at last I might say, "Here am I, and the children thou hast given me." Hear this, convinced sinner! "This poor man cried, and the Lord delivered him out of his distresses." O, taste and see that the Lord is good! Now believe on him; now cast thy guilty soul upon his righteousness; now plunge thy black soul into the bath of his blood; now put thy naked soul at the door of the wardrobe of his righteousness; now seat thy famished soul at the feast of plenty. Now, "Look!" How simple does it seem! And yet it is the hardest thing in the world to bring men to. They never will do it, till constraining grace makes them. Yet there it is, "Look!" Go thou away with that thought. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

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## **Sowing In The Wind, Reaping Under Clouds**

He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. - Ecclesiastes 11:4

Sow when the time comes, whatever wind blows. Reap when the times comes, whatever clouds are in the sky. There are, however, qualifying proverbs, which must influence our actions. We are not to discard prudence in the choice of the time for our work. "To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven." It is well to sow when the weather is propitious. It is wise to "make hay while the sun shines." Cut your corn when there is the probability of getting it dry.

But Solomon here is pushing the other side of the matter. He had seen prudence turn to idleness; he had noticed some people wait for a more convenient season, which never came. He had observed sluggards making

excuses, which did not hold water. So he, with a blunt word, generalizes, in order to make the truth more forcible. Not troubling about the exceptions to the rule, he states it broadly thus: "Take no notice of winds or clouds. Go one with your work whatever happens. 'He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.'"

I. The first thought that is suggested by these words is this: **NATURAL DIFFICULTIES MAY BE UNDULY CONSIDERED.** A man may observe the wind, and regard the clouds a great deal too much, and so neither sow nor reap.

Note here, first, that in any work this would hinder a man. In any labour to which we set our hand, if we take too much notice of the difficulties, we shall be hindered in it. It is very wise to know the difficulty of your calling, the sorrow which comes with it, the trial which arises out of it, the temptation connected therewith; but if you think too much of these things, there is no calling that will be carried on with any success. Poor farmers, they have a crop of hay and cannot get it in; they may fret themselves to death if they like, and never earn a penny for a seven years' fretting! We say of their calling that it is surrounded with constant trouble. They may lose everything just at the moment when they are about to gather it in. The seed may perish under the clods when it is first sown. It is subject to blight and mildew, and bird, and worm, and I know not what beside; and then, at the last, when the farmer is about to reap the harvest, it may disappear before the sickle can cut it. Take the case of the sailor. If he regards winds and clouds, will he ever be put to sea? Can you give him a promise that the wind will be favourable in any of his voyages, or that he will reach his desired haven without a tempest? He that observeth the winds and clouds, will not sail; and he that regardeth the clouds will never cross the mighty deep. If you turn from the farmer and the sailor, and come to the trader, what tradesman will do anything if he is always worrying about the competition, and about the difficulties of his trade, which is so cut up that there is no making a living by it? I have heard this, I think, about every trade, and yet our friends keep on living, and some of them get rich, when they are supposed to be losing money every year! He that regardeth the rise and fall of prices, and is timid, and will do no trading because of the changes on the market, will not reap. If

you come to the working-man, it is the same as with those I have mentioned; for there is no calling or occupation that is not surrounded with difficulties. In fact, I have formed this judgment from what friends have told me, that every trade is the worst trade out; for I have found somebody in that particular line who has proved this to a demonstration. I cannot say that I am an implicit believer in all I hear about this matter. Still, if I were, this would be the conclusion that I should come to, that he that observed the circumstances of any trade or calling, would never engage in it at all; he would never sow; and he would never reap. I suppose he would go to bed, and sleep all the four-and-twenty hours of the day; and after a while, I am afraid he would find it become impossible even to do that, and he would learn that to turn, with the sluggard, like a door on its hinges, is not unalloyed pleasure after all.

Well now, dear friends, if there be these difficulties in connection with earthly callings and trades, do you expect there will be nothing of the kind with regard to heavenly things? Do you imagine that, in sowing the good seed of the kingdom, and gathering the sheaves into the garner, you will have no difficulties and disappointments? Do you dream that, when you are bound for heaven, you are to have smooth sailing and propitious winds all the voyage? Do you think that, in your heavenly trading, you will have less trials than the merchant who has only to do with earthly business? If you do, you make a great mistake. You will not be likely to enter upon the heavenly calling, if you do nothing else but unduly consider the difficulties surrounding it.

But, next, in the work of liberality this would stay us. This is Solomon's theme here. "Cast thy bread upon the waters:" "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight;" and so on. He means, by my text, that if anybody occupies his mind unduly with the difficulties connected with liberality, he will do nothing in that line. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.." "How am I to know," says one, "that the person to whom I give my money is really deserving? How do I know what he will do with it? How do I know but what I may be encouraging idleness or begging? By giving to the man, I may be doing him real injury." Perhaps you are not asked to give to an individual, but to some great work. Then, if you regard the clouds, you will begin to say,

"How do I know that this work will be successful, the sending of missionaries to a cultivated people like the Hindoos? Is it likely that they will be converted?" You will not sow, and you will not reap, if you talk like that; yet there are many who do speak in that fashion. There was never an enterprise started yet but somebody objected to it; and I do not believe that the best work that Christ himself ever did was beyond criticism; there were some people who were sure to find some fault with it. "But," says another, "I have heard that the management at headquarters is not all it ought to be; I think that there is too much money spent on the secretary, and that there is a great deal lost in this direction and in that." Well, dear friend, it goes without saying that if you managed things, they would be managed perfectly; but, you see, you cannot do everything, and therefore you must trust somebody. I can only say, with regard to societies, agencies, works, and missions of all kinds, "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." If that is what you are doing, finding out imperfections and difficulties, it will end in this, you will do nothing at all.

Going a little further, as this is true of common occupations and of liberality, so it is especially true in the work of serving God. Now, if I were to consider in my mind nothing but the natural depravity of man, I should never preach again. To preach the gospel to sinners, is as foolish a thing as to bid dead men rise out of their graves. For that reason I do it, because it has pleased God, "by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." When I look upon the alienation from God, the hardness of the human heart, I see that old Adam is too strong for me; and if I regarded that one cloud of the fall, and original sin, and the natural depravity of man, I, for one, should neither sow nor reap. I am afraid that there has been a good deal of this, however. Many preachers have contemplated the ruin of man, and they have had so clear a view of it that they dare not say, "Thus saith the Lord, Ye dry bones, live." They are unable to cry, "Dear Master, speak through us, and say, 'Lazarus, come forth!' " Some seem to say, "Go and see if Lazarus has any kind of feeling of his condition in the grave. If so, I will call him out, because I believe he can come;" thus putting all the burden on Lazarus, and depending upon Lazarus for it. But we say, "Though he has been dead four days, and is already becoming corrupt, that has nothing to do with us. If our Master

bids us call him out from his grave, we can call him out, and he will come; not because he can come by his own power, but because God can make him come, for the time now is when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of God, and they that shall hear shall live.

But, dear friends, there are persons to whom we should never go to seek their salvation if we regarded the winds and the clouds, for they are peculiarly bad people. You know, from observation, that there are some persons who are much worse than others, some who are not amenable to kindness, or any other human treatment. They do not seem to be terrified by law, or affected by love. We know people who go into a horrible temper every now and then, and all the hope we had of them is blown away, like sere leaves in the autumn wind. You know such, and you "fight shy" with them. There are such boys, and there are such girls, full of mischief, and levity, or full of malice and bitterness; and you say to yourself, "I cannot do anything with them. It is of no use." Just so. You are observing the winds, and regarding the clouds. You will not be one of those to whom Isaiah says, "Blessed be ye that sow beside all waters."

Some one may say, "I would not mind the moral condition of the people, but it is their surroundings that are the trouble. What is the use of trying to save a man while he lives, as he does, in such a horrible street, in one room? What is the use of seeking to raise such and such a woman while she is surrounded, as she is, with such examples? The very atmosphere seems tainted." Just so, dear friend; while you observe the winds, and regard the clouds, you will now sow, and you will not reap. You will not attempt the work, and of course you will not complete what you do not commence.

So, you know, you can go on making all kinds of excuses for doing nothing with certain people, because you feel or think that they are not those whom God is likely to bless. I know this to be a common case, even with very serious and earnest workers for Christ. Let it not be so with you, dear friends; but be you one of those who obey the poet's words,—

"Beside all waters sow;  
The highway furrows stock;

Drop it where thorns and thistles grow;  
Scatter it on the rock."

Let me carry this principle, however, a little further. You may unduly consider circumstances in reference to the business of your own eternal life. You may, in that matter, observe the winds, and never sow; you may regard the clouds, and never reap. "I feel," says one, "as if I never can be saved. There never was such a sinner as I am. My sins are peculiarly black." Yes, and if you keep on regarding them, and do not remember the Saviour, and his infinite power to save, you will not sow in prayer and faith. "Ah, sir; but you do not know the horrible thoughts I have, the dark forebodings that cross my mind!" I know that, dear friend; I do not know them. I know what I feel myself, and I expect that your feelings are very like my own; but, be what they may, if, instead of looking to Christ, you are always studying your own condition, your own withered hopes, your own broken resolutions, then you will still keep where you are, and you will neither sow nor reap.

Beloved Christians, you who have been believers for years, if you begin to live by your frames and feelings, you will get into the same condition. "I do not feel like praying," says one. Then is the time when you ought to pray most, for you are evidently most in need; but if you keep observing whether or not you are in the proper frame of mind for prayer, you will not pray. "I cannot grasp the promises," says another; "I should like to joy in God, and firmly believe in his Word; but I do not see anything in myself that can minister to my comfort." Suppose you do not. Are you, after all, going to build upon yourself? Are you trying to find your ground of consolation in your own heart? If so, you are on the wrong tack. Our hope is not in self, but in Christ; let us go and sow it. Our hope is in the finished work of Christ; let us go and reap it; for, if we keep on regarding the winds and the clouds, we shall neither sow nor reap. I think it is a great lesson to learn in spiritual things, to believe in Christ, and his finished salvation, quite as much as when you are down as when you are up; for Christ is not more Christ on the top of the mountain than he is in the bottom of the valley, and he is no less Christ in the storm by midnight than he is in the sunshine by day. Do not begin to measure your safety by your comfort; but measure it by the eternal Word of God, which you have

believed, and which you know to be true, and on which you rest; for still here, within the little world of our bosom, "he that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." We want to get out of that idea altogether.

I have said enough to prove the truth of my first observation, namely, that natural difficulties may be unduly considered.

II. My second observation is this: SUCH CONSIDERATION INVOLVES US IN SEVERAL SINS.

If we keep on observing circumstances, instead of trusting God, we shall be guilty of disobedience. God bids me sow: I do not sow, because the wind would blow some of my seed away. God bids me reap: I do not reap, because there is a black cloud there, and before I can house the harvest, some of it may be spoiled. I may say what I like; but I am guilty of disobedience. I have not done what I was bidden to do. I have made an excuse of the weather; but I have been disobedient. Dear friends, it is yours to do what God bids you do, whether the heavens fall down or not; and, if you knew they would fall, and you could prop them up by disobedience, you have no right to do it. What may happen from our doing right, we have nothing to do with; we are to do right, and take the consequences cheerfully. Do you want obedience to be always rewarded by a spoonful of sugar? Are you such a baby that you will do nothing unless there shall be some little toy for you directly after? A man in Christ Jesus will do right, though it shall involve him in losses and crosses, slanders and rebukes; yea, even martyrdom itself. May God help you so to do! He that observeth the wind, and does not sow when he is bidden to cast his seed upon the waters, is guilty of disobedience.

Next, we are guilty also of unbelief, if we cannot sow because of the wind. Who manages the wind? You distrust him who is Lord of the north, and south, and east, and west. If you cannot reap because of a cloud, you doubt him who makes the clouds, to whom the clouds are the dust of his feet. Where is your faith? Where is your faith? "Ah!" says one, "I can serve God when I am helped, when I am moved, when I can see a hope of success." That is poor service, service devoid of faith. May I not say of it,

"Without faith it is impossible to please God"? Just in proportion to the quantity of faith, that there is in what we do, in that proportion will it be acceptable with God. Observing of winds and clouds is unbelief. We may call it prudence; but unbelief is its true name.

The next sin is really rebellion. So you will not sow unless God chooses to make the wind blow your way; and you will not reap unless God pleases to drive the clouds away? I call that revolt, rebellion. An honest subject loves the king in all weathers. The true servant serves his master, let his master do what he wills. Oh, dear friends, we are too often aiming at God's throne! We want to get up there, and manage things,—

"Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,  
Rejudge his judgments, be the god of God."

Oh, if he would but alter my circumstances! What is this but tempting God, as they did in the wilderness, wishing him to do other than he does? It is wishing him to do wrong; for what he does is always right; but we must not so rebel, and vex his Holy Spirit, by complaining of what he does. Do you not see that this is trying to throw the blame of our shortcomings upon the Lord? "If we do not sow, do not blame us; God did not send the right wind. If we did not reap, pray not to censure us; how could we be expected to reap, while there were clouds in the skies?" What is this but a wicked endeavour to blame God for our own neglect and wrong-doing, and to make Divine Providence the pack-horse upon which we pile our sins? God save us from such rebellion as that!

Another sin of which we are guilty, when we are always looking at our circumstances, is this, foolish fear. Though we may think that there is no sin in it, there is great sin in foolish fear. God has commanded his people not to fear; then we should obey him. There is a cloud; why do you fear it? It will be gone directly; not a drop of rain may fall out of it. You are afraid of the wind; why fear it? It may never come. Even if it were some deadly wind that was approaching, it might shift about, and not come near you. We are often fearing what never happens. We feel a thousand deaths in fearing one. Many a person has been afraid of what never would occur. It is a great pity to whip yourselves with imaginary rods. Wait till the



trouble comes; else I shall have to tell you the story I have often repeated of the mother whose child would cry. She told it not to cry, but it would cry. "Well," she said, "if you will cry, I will give you something to cry for." If you get fearing about nothing, the probability is that you will get something really to fear, for God does not love his people to be fools.

There are some who fall into the sin of penuriousness. Observe, that Solomon was here speaking of liberality. He that observeth the clouds and the winds thinks "That is not a good object to help," and that he will do harm if he gives here, or if he gives there. It amounts to this, poor miser, you want to save your money! Oh, the ways we have of making buttons with which to secure the safety of our pockets! Some persons have a button manufactory always ready. They have always a reason for not giving to anything that is proposed to them, or to any poor person who asks their help. I pray that every child of God here may avoid that sin. "Freely ye have received, freely give." And since you are stewards of a generous Master, let it never be said that the most liberal of Lords has the stingiest of stewards.

Another sin is often called idleness. The man who does not sow because of the wind, is usually too lazy to sow; and the man who does not reap because of the clouds is the man who wants a little more sleep, and a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the hands to sleep. If we do not want to serve God, it is wonderful how many reasons we can find. According to Solomon, the sluggard said there was a lion in the streets. "There is a lion in the way," said he, "a lion is in the streets." What a lie it was, for lions are as much afraid of streets as men are of deserts! Lions do not come into streets. It was idleness that said the lion was there. You were asked to preach the other night, and you could preach, but you said, no, you could not preach. However, you attended a political meeting, did you not, and talked twice as long as you would have done if you had preached? Another friend, asked to teach in Sunday-school, said, "I have no gifts of teaching." Somebody afterwards remarked of you that you had no gifts of teaching, and you felt very vexed, and asked what right had anyone to say that of you? I have heard persons run themselves down, when they have been invited to any Christian work, as being altogether disqualified; and when somebody has afterwards said, "That is true, you

cannot do anything, I know," they have looked as if they would knock the speaker down. Oh, yes, yes, yes, we are always making these excuses about winds and clouds, and there is nothing in either of them. It is all meant to save our corn-seed, and to save us the trouble of sowing it.

Do you not see, I have made out a long list of sins wrapped up in this observing of winds and clouds? If you have been guilty of any of them, repent of your wrong-doing, and do not repeat it.

III. I will not keep you longer over this part of the subject. I will now make a third remark very briefly: LET US PROVE THAT WE HAVE NOT FALLEN INTO THIS EVIL. How can we prove it?

Let us prove it, firstly by sowing in the most unlikely places. What says Solomon? "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." Go, my brothers and sisters, and find out the most unlikely people, and begin to work for God with them. Now, try, if you can, to pick out the worst street in your neighbourhood, and visit from house to house, and if there is a man or woman more given up than another, make that person the object of your prayers and of your holy endeavours. Cast your bread upon the waters; then it will be seen that you are trusting God, not trusting the soil, nor trusting the seed.

Next, prove it by doing good to a great many. "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight." Talk of Christ to everybody you meet with. If God has not blessed you to one, try another; and if he has blessed you with one, try two others; and if he has blessed you to two others, try four others; and always keep on enlarging your seed-plot as your harvest comes in. If you are doing much, it will be shown that you are not regarding the winds and the clouds.

Further, prove that you are not regarding winds and clouds by wisely learning from the clouds another lesson than the one they seem made to teach. Learn this lesson: "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth;" and say to yourself, "If God has made me full of grace, I will go and pour it out to others. I know the joy of being saved, if I have had fellowship with him, I will make a point of being more

industrious than ever, because God has been unusually gracious to me. My fulness shall be helpful to others. I will empty myself for the good of others, even as the clouds pour down the rain upon the earth."

Then, beloved, prove it still by not wanting to know how God will work. There is a great mystery of birth, how the human soul comes to inhabit the body of the child, and how the child is fashioned. Thou knowest nothing about it, and thou canst not know. Therefore do not look about thee to see what thou canst not understand, and pry into what is concealed from thee. Go out and work; go out and preach; go out and instruct others. Go out to seek to win souls. Thus shalt thou prove, in very truth, that thou art not dependent upon surroundings and circumstances.

Again, dear friend, prove this by consistent diligence. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand." "Be instant in season, out of season." I had a friend, who had learned the way to put a peculiar meaning upon that passage of Scripture, "Let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth." He thought that the best way was to have money in both pockets; put one hand into each pocket, and then put both hands on the collection plate. I never objected to this interpretation of the passage. Now, the way to serve Christ is to do all you possibly can, and then as much more. "No," says you, "that cannot be." I do not know that it cannot be. I found that the best thing I ever did was a thing I could not do. What I could do well, that was my own; but what I could not do, but still did, in the name and strength of the Eternal Jehovah, was the best thing I had done. Beloved, sow in the morning, sow in the evening, sow at night, sow all day long, for you can never tell what God will bless; but by this constant sowing, you will prove to demonstration that you are not observing the winds, nor regarding the clouds.

IV. I now come to my concluding observation: LET US KEEP THIS EVIL OUT OF OUR HEARTS AS WELL AS OUT OF OUR WORK.

And, first, let us give no heed to the winds and clouds of doctrine that are everywhere about us now. Blow, blow, ye stormy winds; but you shall not move me. Clouds of hypotheses and inventions, come up with you, as many as you please, till you darken all the sky; but I will not fear you.

Such clouds have come before, and have disappeared, and these will disappear, too. If you sit down, and think of man's inventions of error, and their novel doctrines, and how the churches have been bewitched by them, you will get into such a state of mind that you will neither sow nor reap. Just forget them. Give yourself to your holy service as if there were no winds and no clouds; and God will give you such comfort in your soul that you will rejoice before him, and be confident in his truth.

And then, next, let us not lose hope because of doubts and temptations. When the clouds and the winds get into your heart, when you do not feel as you used to feel, when you have not that joy and elasticity of spirit you once had, when your ardour seems a little damped, and even your faith begins to hesitate a little, go you to God all the same. Trust him still.

"And when thine eye of faith grows dim,  
Still hold to Jesus, sink or swim;  
Still at his footstool bow the knee,  
And Israel's God thy strength shall be."

Do not go up and down like the mercury in the weather-glass; but know what you know, and believe what you believe. Hold to it, and God keep you in one mind, so that none can turn you; for, if not, if you begin to notice these things, you will neither sow nor reap.

Lastly, let us follow the Lord's mind, and come what will. In a word, set your face, like a flint, to serve God, by the maintenance of his truth, by your holy life, by the savour of your Christian character; and, that being done, defy earth and hell. If there were a crowd of devils between you and Christ, kick a lane through them by holy faith. They will fly before you. If you have but the courage to make an advance, they cannot stop you. You shall make a clear gangway through legions of them. Only be strong, and of good courage, and do not regard even the clouds from hell, or the blasts from the infernal pit; but go straight on in the path of right, and God being with you, you shall sow and you shall reap, unto his eternal glory.

Will some poor sinner here to-night, whether he sinks or swims, trust

Christ? Come, if you feel less inclined to-night to hope, than you ever did before. Have hope even now; hope against hope; belief against belief. Cast yourself on Christ, even though he may seem to stand with a drawn sword in his hand, to run you through; trust even an angry Christ. Though your sins have grieved him, come and trust him. Do not stop for winds to blow over, or clouds to burst. Just as thou art, without one trace of anything that is good about thee, come and trust Christ as thy Saviour, and thou art saved. God give you grace to do so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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## **Sown Among Thorns**

And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them  
- Matthew 13:7

He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful - Matthew 13:22

When that which comes of his sowing is unfruitful, the sower's work is wasted: he has spent his strength for nothing. Without fruit the sower's work would even seem to be insane, for he takes good wheat, throws it away, and loses it in the ground. Preaching is the most idle of occupations if the Word is not adapted to enter the heart, and produce good results. O my hearers, if you are not converted, I waste time and energy in standing here! People might well think it madness that one whole day in the week should be given up to hearing speeches-madness, indeed, it would be if nothing came of it to conscience and heart. If you do not bring forth fruit to holiness, and the end is not everlasting life, I would be better employed in breaking stones on the road-side than in preaching to you.

Fruit-bearing made the difference appear in the various soils upon which the sower scattered seed. You would not so certainly have known the quality if you had not seen the failure or success of the seed. We do not know your hearts until we see your bearing toward the Gospel. If it produces in you holiness and love to God and humanity, then we know that there is good soil in you; but if you are merely promising people, but not performing people, then we know that the ground of your heart is hard, or stony, or thorny. The Word of the Lord tries the hearts of the children of men, and in this it is as the fire which distinguishes between metal and dross. O my dear hearers, you undergo a test today! Peradventure you will be judging the preacher, but a greater than the preacher will be judging you, for the Word itself shall judge you. You sit here as a jury upon yourselves; your own condition will be brought clearly out by the way in which you receive or refuse the Gospel of God. If you bring forth fruit to the praise of God's grace, well; but if not, however you may seem to hear with attention and may retain what you hear in your memories, if no saving effect is produced upon your souls we shall know that the soil of your heart has not been prepared of the Lord and remains in its native barrenness.

What fruit have you born hitherto from all your hearing? May I venture to put the question to each one of you very pointedly? Some of you have been hearers from your childhood—are you any the better? What long lists of sermons you must have heard by now! Count over your Sundays; how many they have been! Think of the good men now in heaven to whom you once listened! Remember the tears that were drawn from you by their discourses! If you are not saved yet, will you ever be saved? If you are not holy yet, will you ever be holy? Why has the Lord spent so much on one who makes no return? To what purpose is this waste? Surely you will have much to answer for in that great day when the servants of God shall give in their accounts, and shall have no joy when they come to mention you. How will you excuse yourselves before God for having occasioned them so much disappointment?

At this time I will only deal with one class of you. I will not speak to those of you who hear the Word, and retain none of it because of the hardness

of your hearts; such are the wayside hearers. Neither will I address myself to those who receive the truth with sudden enthusiasm, and as readily quit it when trial befalls them; such are the rocky-ground hearers. But I will deal with those of you who hear the Word attentively, and, in a sense, receive it into your hearts and understandings, so that the seed grows in you, though its fruit never comes to perfection. You are religious persons, and to all appearance you are under the influence of godliness. You exhibit plenty of leaf, but there is no corn in the ear, no substance in your Christianity. I cannot speak with any degree of physical vigor to you by reason of the infirmity under which I struggle; but what I do say to you is steeped in earnest desire that the Lord may bless it to you. An eloquent congregation will make any preacher eloquent: help me then this morning. If you will give me your ear, you will make up for my deficiency of tongue: especially if you give to God your hearts, He will bless His truth, however feebly I may utter it.

First, I desire to talk to you a little about the seed which you have received; secondly about the thorns; thirdly about the result.

I. First a little about THE SEED. Remember, first, that it was the same seed in every case. Yonder it has brought forth thirty-fold; it was the same seed which was lost upon you. In a still better case, the seed has brought forth a hundred-fold; it was precisely the same corn with which your field has been sown. The sower went to his master's granary for all his seed; how is it that in your case it is all lost? If there were two Gospels, we might expect two results without fault in the soil which failed. But with many of you to whom I speak there has been only one Gospel throughout the whole of your lives. You have been attending in this house of prayer, where we have never changed our seed, but have gone on sowing the one eternal truth of God. Many have brought forth fruit a hundred-fold from the seed which has been scattered broadcast from this platform. They heard no more than you have heard, but how much better they treated it than you have done! I want you to consider this. How covered with briars and thorns must your mind be that the Gospel which converted your sister or friend never touched you! Though you may be nominally a believer in the Word of God, it has never so affected you as to make you gracious and holy. You are still a hearer only. How is this? The fault is not

in the seed, for it is the same which has been so useful to others.

You have heard the Gospel with pleasure. "Heard it!" You say, "I heard it when a little child." Your mother brought you to the house of God in her arms. You have heard it and still hear it, though it is rather like an old song to you: but is this to be all? I am very grateful that you do hear the Gospel, for I hope that one of these days God may cause it to grow in you and yield fruit. But still a grave responsibility is upon you. Think how favored you have been! How will you answer for this privilege if it is neglected and rendered useless by that neglect? Dear hearers, if we lived in the heart of Africa and we died without believing in a Christ of whom we had not heard, we could not be blamed for that. But here we are in the heart of London where the Gospel is preached in all our streets, and our blood will be on our own heads if we perish. Do you mean to go down to hell? Are you so desperate that you will go there wearing the garb of Christians? If you do persist ruining your souls, my eyes shall follow you with tears; and when I cannot warn you any longer, I will weep in secret places because of your perversity.

Those described in my text were not only hearers, but in a measure they accepted the good Word. The seed fell not only on this ground, but into it, so that it began to grow. Of you it is true that you do not refuse the Gospel, or raise disputes concerning it. I am glad that you have no difficulties about the inspiration of Scripture, or the Deity of our Lord, or the fact of His atonement. You do not befog yourselves with "modern thought," but you avow your belief in the old, old Gospel. So far so good; but what shall I make of the strange fact that your acceptance of the truth has no effect upon you? It is a very lamentable case, is it not, that a person should believe the Gospel to be true, and yet should live as if it were a lie? If it is the truth, why do you not yield obedience to it? The person knows that there is an atonement for sin, but he has never confessed his sin and accepted the great sacrifice. Those great truths, which circle about the Cross like a coronet of stars, he has seen their beauty and enjoyed their brilliance, but he has never allowed their light to enter his heart and find a reflection in his moral character. This is evil, only evil. If you believe the truth, what do you more than the Devil? No, you are behind him, for he believes, and trembles, and you have not gone



so far as the trembling. It should be so, that every great truth which is believed should influence the mind, sway the thoughts, and mold the life. This is the natural fruitage of great spiritual truth. The doctrine of grace, when it takes possession of the mind and governs the heart, produces the purest results; but if it is held in unrighteousness, it is a curse rather than a blessing to have a head knowledge. Is it not a dreadful thing to believe God's revelation without receiving God's Spirit? This is to accept a well, but never to drink of the water; to accept corn in the barn, and yet die of hunger. God have mercy upon the possessors of a dead faith!

The seed sown among thorns lived and continued to grow. And in many people's minds the Gospel of divine truth is growing after a fashion: they understand it better, can defend it more valorously, and speak of it more fluently. Moreover, it does influence them in some form and degree, for gross vices are forsaken. They are decent imitations of believers: you can see the shape of an ear: the stalk has struggled up through the thorns until you can see its head, and you are led to expect corn. But go to that apparent wheat-ear, and feel it: there are the sheaths but there is nothing in them; you have all the makings of an ear of wheat, but it will yield no grain. I would speak to those before me who, perhaps, have been baptized and are members of the church; I want to ask of them a question or two. Do you not think that there is a great deal of empty profession nowadays? Do you not think that many have a name to live and are dead? "Yes," say you, "I know a neighbor whom I judge to be in that condition." May not another neighbor judge the same of you? Would it not be well to raise the question about yourself? Have you really believed in the Lord Jesus? Are you truly converted from sin and self? Turn that sharp eye of yours homeward for a while. Examine your own actions, and judge your condition by them. Put yourself into the crucible. O my God, what if I should be a preacher to others, and should be myself a castaway! Will not every deacon and elder, and every individual church member, speak to himself after the same fashion. You will go to your Sunday school class this afternoon; will you be teaching the children what you do not know? You mean to go to a meeting this evening and talk to others about conversion; will you be exhorting them to that which you have never yourself experienced? Will it be so? You do not need fine preaching, but you do need probing in the conscience. A thorough examination will do

the healthy no harm, and it may bless the sick. "Lord, let me know the worst of my case," is one of my frequent prayers, and I suggest it to you.

So much then about the seed: it was good seed, it was sown, it was received by the soil, it grew and promised well, but yet in the end it was unfruitful. No doubt multitudes, who receive Christianity, become regular attendants at our place of worship, and are honest in their moral character; but Christ is not all in all to them. He holds a very secondary place in their affections. Their wheat is overshadowed with a thicket of thorns, and is so choked that it comes to nothing. Their religion is buried beneath their worldliness. Sad will their end be. God in mercy save us from such a doom!

II. But now, secondly, I would speak a little about THE THORNS. They are by Matthew described as "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches." Luke adds, "and pleasures of this life," and Mark still further mentions, "the lusts of other things." I suppose that the sower did not see any thorns when he threw the handful of corn; they had all been cut down level with the surface. He probably hoped that it was all good ground, and therefore he sowed it little suspecting that the thorns were in possession.

Note well that thorns are natural to the soil. Since the fall these are the firstborn children of the ground. Any evil which hinders religion is not at all an extraordinary thing—it is what we ought to expect among fallen human beings. Grace is an exotic; thorns are indigenous. Sin is very much at home in the human heart and, like an ill weed, it grows apace. If you wish to go to heaven, I might take a little time to show you the way, and I would need to stir you up to diligence; but if you must go to hell—well, "easy is the way to destruction"—it is only a little matter of neglect. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Evil things are easy things: for they are natural to our fallen nature. Right things are rare flowers that need cultivation. If any of you are being injured by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, I am not astonished; it is natural that it should be so. Therefore, be on your guard against these mischiefs. I pray you say to yourself, "Come, there is something in this man's talk. He is very slow and dull, but still there is something in what he says. I may, after all, be tolerating those thorns in my heart which will

kill the good seed, for I am of like passions and infirmities with other people." I beseech you look to yourselves, that you be not deceived at the last.

The thorns were already established in the soil. They were not only the natural inhabitants of the soil, but they were rooted and fixed in it. Our sins within us claim the freehold of our faculties, and they will not give it up if they can help it. They will not give way to the Holy Spirit, or to the new life, or to the influences of divine grace, without a desperate struggle. The roots of sin run through and through our nature, grasp it with wonderful force, and keep up their grasp with marvelous tenacity. O my dear hearer, whoever you may be, you are a fallen creature! If you were the Pope himself, or the President of the United States, or the Queen of England, it would be true of you that you were born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and your unregenerate heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. The established church of the town of Mansoul has the Devil for its archbishop. Sin has enclasped our nature as a boa constrictor encircles its victim, and when it has maintained its hold for twenty, forty, or sixty years, I hope you are not so foolish as to think that holy things will easily get the mastery. Our evil nature is radically conservative, and it will endeavor to crush out every attempt at a revolution by which the grace of God should reign through righteousness. Wherefore, watch and pray, lest temptation choke that which is good in you. Watch earnestly, for grace is a tender plant in a foreign soil, in an uncongenial clime, while sin is in its own element, and is strongly rooted in the soil.

Do you know why so many professing Christians are like the thorny ground? It is because processes have been omitted which would have gone far to alter the condition of things. It was the husbandman's business to uproot the thorns, or burn them on the spot. Years ago when people were converted, there used to be such a thing as conviction of sin. The great subsoil plow of soul-anguish was used to tear deep into the soul. Fire also burned in the mind with exceeding heat: as people saw sin and felt its dreadful results, the love of it was burned out of them. But now we are dinned with braggings about rapid salvations. As for myself, I believe in instantaneous conversions, and I am glad to see them; but I am

still more glad when I see a thorough work of grace, a deep sense of sin, and an effectual wounding by the law. We shall never get rid of thorns with plows that scratch the surface. Those fields grow the best corn which are best plowed. Converts are likely to endure when the thorns cannot spring up because they have been plowed up. Dear hearer, are you undergoing today a very severe conviction of sin? Thank God for it. Are you in awful trouble and anguish? Do not think that a calamity has happened to you. May God Himself continue to plow you, and then sow you, and make sure work in you for years to come! So you see these thorns were natives, and old-established natives, and it would have been well had they been cut up.

The thorns were bound to grow. There is an awful vitality in evil. First the thorns sent up a few tiny shoots. These shoots branched out, and more and more came to keep them company, until the wheat stood as a lonely thing in a thicket of briars, and was more and more overtopped and shadowed by them. The thorns aspired to the mastery, and they soon obtained it; that done, they set to work to destroy the wheat. They blocked it up, crowded it out, and some of the thorn shoots twisted around it, and held the wheat by the neck until it was choked.

The thorns sucked away all the nutriment from the wheat, and it was starved, for there is only a certain quantity of nourishment in the soil, and if the thorns have it, the wheat must go without it. There is only a certain amount of thought and energy in a person; and if the world gets it, Christ cannot have it. If our thoughts run upon care and pleasure, they cannot be eager about true religion: is not that clear? That is the way in which those thorns served the wheat; they starved it by devouring its food, and they choked it by keeping off the air and sun; the poor thing became shriveled and weak, and quite unable to produce the grain which the sower expected of it. So it is with many professing Christians. They are at first worldly, but not so very worldly. They are fairly religious, though by no means too zealous. They seek the pleasures of the world, but by no means quite so much as others we could name. But very soon the thorns grow, and it becomes doubtful which will win, sin or grace, the world or Christ. Two masters there cannot be, and in this case it is especially impossible since neither of the contending powers will brook a rival. Sin

has sprung from a royal though evil stock, and if it be in the heart, it will struggle for the throne. So it came to pass that the tares, being tolerated, choked the good seed.

Let me describe these thorns a little. Putting together Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we find that there were four sorts of thorns. The first is called "the care of this world." This assuredly comes to the poor; they are apt to grow anxious and mistrustful about temporal things. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" This trinity of doleful questions much afflicts many. But anxiety comes to rich people also. Care dwells with wealth as well as with poverty. "How shall I get more? How shall I lay it up? How shall I still increase it?"—and so on. It is "the care of the age" which we are most warned against. Each age has its own special fret. It is not a care for God—that is not the care of any age; but the care of the age is some vanity or another, and as a standing thing it is the ambition to keep up with your fellows, to be respectable, and to keep up appearances. This is the care which eats as does a canker in the case of many. Grim care turns many a black hair white, and furrows many a brow. If you let care grow in your soul, it will choke up your religion: you cannot care for God and for mammon too. "We must have care," says one. There is a care which is proper, and there is an anxiety which is improper. That is proper care which you can cast upon God—"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." That is an improper care which you dare not take to God but have to bear yourself. Take heed of anxiety; it will eat the heart out of your religion.

There were others who felt "the deceitfulness of riches." Our Lord does not say "riches," but "the deceitfulness of riches." The two things grow together: riches are evermore deceitful. They deceive people in the getting of them, for people judge matters very unfairly when a prospect of gain is before them. The jingle of the charming guinea, or of "the almighty dollar," makes a world of difference to the ear when it is hearing a case. People cannot afford to lose by integrity and so they take the doubtful way, and either sail near the wind or speculate until it amounts to gambling. They would not endure the idea of such conduct were it not that the hope of gain deceives them. Our line of conduct ought never to be ruled by gain or loss. Do right if the heavens fall. Do no wrong, even

though a kingdom should be its reward. People turn to Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," a wonderful book, and there they find certain laws which I believe to be as fixed and unalterable as the laws of gravitation; led on by the deceitfulness of riches, people make these laws into an excuse for grinding the faces of the poor. They might as well take people to the top of a rock, fling them down, and dash them to pieces, and then cry out, "This is the natural result of the law of gravitation." Of course, the law of gravitation operates remorselessly, and so will the law of supply and demand. We must not use either of these laws as a cover for cruelty to the poor and needy, yet many do so through "the deceitfulness of riches."

Riches are very deceitful when they are gained, for they breed in men and women many vices which they do not themselves suspect. One man is purse-proud, but he thinks he is humble. He is a self-made man and worships him that made him. Is it not natural that a person should worship his maker? In his heart he thinks: "I am somebody. I came up to London with half-a-crown in my pocket, and now I could buy a whole street!" People ought to respect someone of that kind, ought they not, even though he may have made his money by very queer practices? It little matters how you make money nowadays; only get it, and you will have plenty of admirers and the deceitfulness of riches will enable you to admire yourself. With pride comes a desire for wealthy society and vain company, and thus again religion receives severe injury. There is apt to grow up in the mind an idolatry of this world and its treasures. "I don't love money," says one. "You know it is not money that is the root of all evil, but the love of it." Just so; but are you sure that you do not love it? Your thoughts run a good deal after it. You hug it rather closely and you find it hard to part with it. I will not accuse you, but I would have you awake to the fact that riches worm themselves into a person's heart before he is well aware of it.

You may perceive the deceitfulness of riches if you note the excuses which people make for getting so much and withholding it from the cause of God. "They intend to do a great deal of good with it." Did you hear the Devil laugh? I am not speaking of many dear people in this place who are doing a great deal of good with their means, but I am speaking of those

who are simply living to accumulate wealth, and who say that they will one day do a great deal of good with it. They say so. Will it ever be more than saying? I fear that in this thing many rich people deceive themselves. They go on accumulating the means but never using them; making bricks, but never building. All they will get with it will be a corner in "The Illustrated London News" to say that they died worth so much. O sirs, how can you be content thus to have your good things choked? Wherever this deceitfulness of riches is allowed the upper hand, it chokes the good seed. A person cannot be eager to get, and eager to keep, and eager to increase, and eager to become a millionaire, and at the same time be a true servant of the Lord Jesus. As the body grows rich, the soul grows poor.

Luke tells us of another kind of weed, namely, "the pleasures of this life." I am sure that these thorns play a dreadful part nowadays. I have nothing to say against recreation in its proper place. Certain forms of recreation are needful and useful; but it is a wretched thing when amusement becomes a vocation. Amusement should be used to do us good "like a medicine"; it must never be used as the food of the individual. From early morning until late at night some spend their time in a round of frivolities, or else their very work is simply carried on to furnish them funds for their pleasures. This is vicious. Many have had all holy thoughts and gracious resolutions stamped out by perpetual trifling. Pleasure, so called, is the murderer of thought. This is the age of excessive amusement. Everybody craves for it, like a babe for its rattle. In the more sober years of our fathers, men and women had something better to live for than silly sports. The thorns are choking the age.

Mark adds, "and the lusts of other things." I will not enumerate all those other things, but all things except the things of Christ and of the Father are "other things." If anybody spends his life on any object, however good, short of the glory of God, the good seed is choked by the inferior object. One person is eminently scientific, and he will do well if his science is used for holy purposes, but it can be used to choke the seed. Another person is a great proficient in the arts, and he does well if the arts are used as a mule for Christ to ride upon, but if art is to ride upon Christ, then it is ill enough. I met with a clergyman many years ago who

was going a long distance to find a new beetle. He was a great entomologist, and I did not blame him for it, for to a thoughtful person entomology may yield many profitable lessons. But if he neglected his preaching to catch insects, then I do not wonder that a parishioner would wish that the beetles would nibble his old sermons, for they were very stale. I call it choking the seed when any inferior pursuit becomes the master of our minds, and the cause of God and truth takes a secondary place. The seed is choked in our souls whenever Christ is not our all in all. You see my drift: be it what it may—gain, glory, study, pleasure—all these may be briars that will choke the seed.

Mr. Jay was never more pleased than when at Bristol he had a note sent up to him which ran as follows: "A young man, who is prospering in business, begs the prayers of God's people that prosperity may not be a snare to him." Take care that you look thus upon your prosperity. My dear friend Dr. Taylor, of New York, speaks of some Christians nowadays as having a "butterfly Christianity." When time, and strength, and thought, and talent are all spent upon mere amusement, what else are men and women but mere butterflies? "Society" is just a mass of idle people keeping each other in countenance. O dear hearers, surely we did not come into this world to play away our days! I do not think we came into this world either to slave ourselves to death, or to rust away in laziness. We have come here as a man enters into the porch that he may afterward enter the house. This life is the doorway to the palace of heaven. Pass through it in such style that you may enter before the King with holy joy. If you give your minds and thoughts to these passing things, be they what they may, you will ruin your souls, for the good seed cannot grow.

III. So I close in the last place by noticing THE RESULT. The seed was unfruitful.

These briars and thorns could not pull the seed up, or throw it away. It remained where it was, but they choked it. So it may be that your business, your cares, your pleasures have not torn up your religion by the roots—it is there still, such as it is. But these things suffocate your better feelings. Someone that is choked is not good for much. If a thief gets into



his house, and he desires to defend his property, what can he do while he is choked? He must wait until he gets his breath again. What an amount of choked religion we have around us! It may be alive. I do not know whether it is or not; but it looks very black in the face. God save you from having your religion choked!

I have already told you it was drained of all its sustenance. Look at many Christians; I call them Christians for they call themselves so. A boy in the streets, selling mince pies, kept crying, "Hot mince pies!" A person bought one of them, and found it quite cold. "Boy," said he, why did you call these pies hot?" "That's the name they go by, sir," said the boy. So there are plenty of people that are called Christians, but they are not Christians—that's the name they go by; but all the substance is drained out of them by other matters. You see the shape of a Christian, the make of a Christian, and some of the talk of a Christian, but the fruit of a Christian is not there. That is the result of the choking by the thorns of care, riches, pleasure, and worldliness in general.

What life there was in the wheat was very sickly. Let me remind certain persons that their spiritual lives are growing weak at this time. Morning prayer this morning, how long did it take? Do not grow red in the face. I will say no more about it. You are not coming out tonight, are you? Half a Sunday is enough worship for you. Would you not like to live in some country place where you did not need to go out to a place of worship even once? Bible reading, how much do you do of that? Family prayer, is that a delight to you? Why, numbers of so-called Christians have given up family religion altogether. How about week-day services? You are not often at a prayer-meeting. No, the distance is too great! Thursday night service? "Well, well, you see I might come, but there happens to be a lawn tennis party that night." Will you come in the winter'? "Yes, I would, but then a friend drops in, and we have an evening at bagatelle." How many there are in this condition! I am not going to judge them, but I remember that an eminent minister used to say, "When weekday services are forsaken, farewell to the life of godliness." Such people never seem to bathe in their religion, but they give themselves a wetting with the end of the towel; thus they try to look decent, but they are not inwardly cleansed.

As to confessing Christ before men and women, many fall altogether. If you were pushed into a corner, and were asked if you are a Christian, you would say, "Well, I do go to a place of worship," but you are by no means anxious to own the soft impeachment. Our Salvation Army friends are not ashamed of their religion; why should you be? Our Quaker friends used to wear broad brims, but they are very properly giving up their peculiar garb. I hope it is not to be to you an indication that you may conceal your religion and be as much as possible like the world. Do you hope to be soldiers and yet never wear your regimentals? This is one of the marks of feeble religion.

When it comes to defending the Gospel, where do you see it in this age? I hoped that many would be found among Baptists who would care for the truth; but now I come to the conclusion that it is with many, as with the showman when asked which was Wellington, and which was Bonaparte: "Whichever you please, my little dears. Pay your money, and take your choice!" Free will or free grace, human merit or Christ's atonement, it does not matter now. New theology or old theology, human speculation or divine revelation—who minds? What do they care whether God's truth stands or the Devil's lies? I am weary of these drivellers! The thorns have choked the seed in the pulpits and in the churches as well as in private individuals. Oh, that God would return! Oh, that His Spirit would raise up among us people who believe indeed, and prove the power of their belief!

The fruit of much modern piety is nil. I sat down one day with three or four old Christian men. We had no sooner met than we began to speak of the providential dealings of God with His people. We related instances of answers to prayer, and we spoke of the sovereign grace of God, and His faithfulness to His saints. When we had gone a little forward in the conversation, one remarked how he had enjoyed the talk. "Alas!" said he, "nobody talks about God now. His providence and His readiness to hear prayer are seldom mentioned now. The talk is all about the markets, and the weather, and Home Rule, and Mr. Gladstone, and Disestablishment, but little enough about the Lord Jesus Christ." That witness was true. In old times the Lord's people spoke often one to another, and the Lord stood at the window and listened:—"The Lord hearkened, and heard it."

He liked their talk so well that He said He would print it—"A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." Where do you get experimental Christian talk now? The thorns choke holy communion upon the best things.

Fervent prayer! Mighty prayer! Where do you meet with it? Thank God, we have some brothers and sisters here whose prayers could unlock the windows of heaven, or shut them up; but it is not so with many. Go to the prayer-meetings of most of the churches. What poor things! Of course I find in country places that many drop the prayer-meeting during hay-time and harvest. In London they do not drop the prayer-meetings in summer because they are too small to need dropping. They take up the fragment of a prayer-meeting and mend with it the worn-out lecture, so that it becomes neither lecture nor prayer meeting. How can we expect a blessing when we are too lazy to ask for it? Is it not evidence of a dying religion when, to cover their carelessness about meeting for prayer, we even hear ministers doubting the value of prayer-meetings and calling them "religious expedients"?

Where do you meet with intense enjoyment of the things of God? The spiritual life is low when there is little delight in holy service. Oh, for the old Methodistic fire! Oh, to feel our hearts dance at the sound of Jesus' name! Oh, to flame up like beacon fires, and blaze toward heaven with holy ecstasy! It is a sorrowful day when religion goes abroad without wearing her ornaments of joy. When an army has left its flag behind, it has evidently given up all idea of victory.

If there is a declension in spiritual life, we cannot expect to see deeds of holy consecration. Oh, for men and women who bring their alabaster boxes to Jesus! I am glad when I hear this kind of lamentation. "My dear sir, I have not done for the Lord what I ought to have done. I have been a believer now for many years, but I have not given to His cause what I ought to have given; tell me what I can do." There are hopeful signs in such inquiries and therefore they are well, but it would be better to begin early and avoid such regrets.

I would put it to you, my dear hearer, have you been fruitful? Have you

been fruitful with your wealth? Have you been fruitful with your talent? Have you been fruitful with your time? What are you doing for Jesus now? Salvation is not by doings, you are saved by grace, but if you are so saved, prove it by your devoted life. Consecrate yourself anew this day wholly to your Master's service. You are not your own, but bought with a price, and if you would not be like these thorn-choked seeds, live while you live, with all-consuming zeal.

"Well," says one, but there are the thorns." I know there are. They were here when our blessed Lord came among us, and they made Him a cruel crown. Are you going to grow more of them? May I urge you to give up cultivating thorns? They are useless; they come to no good. Whatever the pursuit is, short of the glory of God, it is a thorn and there is no use in it. It will in the end be painful to you as it was to your Lord. A thorn will tear your flesh, aye, tear your heart. Especially when you come to die will these thorns be in your pillow. Even if you die in the Lord, it will grieve your heart to think you did not live more to Jesus. If you live for these things, you will rue the day, for they are like thorns, painful in the getting, painful in the keeping, and painful in the extraction. You who have had a thorn in your hand know what I mean. Worldly cares come with pain, they stay with pain, and they go with pain.

Still, there is a use for thorns. What is that use? First, if you have thorns about you today, make a child's use of them. What does a child do? If he gets a thorn in his finger, he looks at it, and cries. How it smarts! Then he runs off to his mother. That is one of the sweet uses of his adversity, it admits him to his mother at once. She might say, "What are you coming in for? Run about the garden." But he cries, "Please, mother, I've got a thorn in my finger." This is quite enough argument to secure him the best attention of the queen of the house. See how tenderly she takes out the little dagger! Let your cares drive you to God. I shall not mind if you have many of them if each one leads you to prayer. If every fret makes you lean more on the Beloved, it will be a benefit. Thus make good use of the thorns.

Another service to which thorns may be put is to make a hedge of them, to keep the goats of worldly pleasure from eating the young shoots of your

graces. Let the sorrows of life keep off temptations which else might do you serious mischief.

May we meet in heaven! Oh, may we all meet in heaven! What a congregation I have addressed this morning! I feel overawed as I look at you. From the ends of the earth have many of you come. The Lord bless you! Strangers are here in vast numbers, for the most of our regular hearers are at the seaside. I may never see you again on earth. May we all meet in heaven, where thorns will never grow! May we be gathered by the angels in that day when the Lord shall say, "Gather the wheat into my barn"! Amen. So let it be.

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## **Speak For Yourself. A Challenge!**

He is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. - John 9:21

Those of you, dear friends, who were present this morning will remember that our subject was "Jesus Christ himself." ( Sermon 1888 "Jesus Christ himself.") We dwelt upon his blessed person. Our faith is fixed on him; our affections are drawn to him; our hopes all bend toward him. Though everything he said or did is precious, yet Jesus himself stands first in our estimation. To know him, to believe him, to love him, is the very essence of our Christianity. To - night we change our theme. There is a "himself" in our text this evening - a "himself" `tis true of a much humbler order. How stand we each one for himself? Our individuality and the personal responsibilities which fall upon ourselves in reference to Christ must not be lost sight of. If, for instance, a spiritual miracle has been wrought upon us, if we are obliged to confess - nay, if we are delighted to confess - that he has opened our eyes, then we are bound, especially those of us who are of ripe understanding, who may be said to be of full age, we are bound to bear our own personal testimony to him. The allegation and the appeal may alike apply to each one of us, "He is of age; ask him: he shall speak

for himself." Jesus Christ himself bore our sins, as we heard this morning. He gave himself for us, he served us, not by proxy, but by personal consecration; not by alms doled out pitifully, but by his life surrendered as a sacrifice to God cheerfully. Has he thus commended his love to us, what less can we do in return than bear our own brave, bold, personal testimony for him?

What a parallel there is between this man's case and our own. He had suffered from a grievous, personal evil. He was born blind. So we were born in sin. Sin has cast its blindness over our faculties from our very birth. We shall never forget the midnight of our nature. We could not see even the beauties of Christ himself, though resplendent as the sun at noonday, so blind were we. This man was personally delivered from his ailment, and so have we been delivered, I trust. I know many here who can say that, whereas they were blind, now they see. You have received, as the blind man did, a personal blessing, being endowed with sight. The blemish that blighted your life has been healed. It is not that somebody sees for you, and tells you what he sees, but you see for yourself. It is not merely imputed to you that you see, because you have been told what somebody else saw.

Now you have no proxy in the matter, no sponsor in the business. You yourself are conscious that a work of grace has been wrought upon you, whereas you were blind now you see, and you know it. The blind man was cured through personal obedience to Christ's command. He heard a special call addressed to him - "Go, wash in the pool." He went, and came seeing. And many here present have heard the voice which says, "Believe and live," and it has come to you, not as a general exhortation, but as a special direction. You have believed and you do live. You have washed, and you have come seeing. Well now, all this is personal, therefore your Lord and Master has a right to expect a personal testimony from you of his power to save. You are of age. When any ask you, I trust you will speak for yourself. Speak up, and speak out for your Master without hesitancy or fear.

I. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN SAVED MEN ARE POSITIVELY COMPELLED TO SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES. They must of necessity

bear their personal witness.

What else can they do when friends desert them? Father and mother were quite willing to own this young man - that he was their son - quite willing to bear their witness that he was born blind, but they would not go any farther. They could have gone farther if they liked, but they were afraid of that sentence of excommunication which the Jews had already agreed upon: that if any man did confess that Jesus was the Christ he should be put out of the synagogue. So, feeling very little compunction in declining to take any responsibility themselves, for they had great and probably well - founded confidence in their son's power to take care of himself, they did, as it were, abandon him. They threw upon him the stress and onus of giving a plain answer, which would have incurred such obloquy. They backed out of it. They had no wish whatever to become the subjects of persecution because their blind son had been blessed with sight. The young man who had been blind must therefore do battle himself for the good Lord who had bestowed so great a benefit on him. "Ask him," said his parents, "he will speak for himself."

There are times with many young people when their parents, if they do not frown upon their religion, at least turn the cold shoulder to them, and show no sympathy with their faith or their feelings. Some of us are rejoiced when our sons are converted. We are not ashamed to stand by them and to defend them and to protect them whatever may come of it. But there are fathers and mothers who themselves have no liking for the things of God, and so their children, if they are converted, have a hard time of it. I have known even some who profess to be disciples of Christ hold back very suspiciously, and leave others to champion the Master's cause when it has come to a hard push. In a conversation you expected to hear that old gentleman speak up bravely for the truth of the gospel, but he did not. You knew he was a member of a Christian church, yet he very cautiously held his tongue for a long time, and then quietly said something about not casting pearls before swine. Probably he had not got any pearls, or possibly he was a swine himself. How else could you account for such awful cowardice? But one has known in youthful ardor what it is to be compelled to come out so defiantly as to risk the charge of presumption, because everybody else seemed to be deserting the doctrine

it was his duty to defend. It is lamentable how many seem afraid of being compromised themselves. "Ask him; ask him; he will speak for himself," is their puny pretext; while they prudently retire behind the bushes out of rifle range, never coming forward unless, perchance, you should win the victory, when they would most likely come up to share the spoils. Whenever a man is placed in such a condition that he finds himself deserted in the battle for Christ by those who ought to be at his back, then let him disdain retreat, and say right gallantly "I am of age: I will speak for myself. In the name of God I will bear my witness."

Christian men, however reserved and backward their natural disposition may be, are compelled to speak out when they are very much pressed.

These Pharisees took this man and questioned him rather closely. They put questions to him by way of examination and cross - examination. "What did he do to thee? How opened he thine eyes?" and so on. He does not appear to have been disturbed or disconcerted by the questions. He acquitted himself grandly. Self - contained, quiet, shrewd, immovable, his mind was made up, and with a thorough mastery of the situation, he was ready for them. He did not hesitate. Well now, I trust if ever you and I are brought to book, and questions are put to us, even though it be with intent to entangle us, we shall never be "ashamed to own our Lord or to defend his cause." Surely we might expect to be smitten dumb if we were ever abashed to speak of Christ when we are adjured to do it. If it comes to a challenge, "On whose side am I?" shall I ever hesitate to say, "I am with Immanuel, the crucified Savior"? If ever they get us into a corner and say, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth," oh may God give us grace to be prompt and not think twice - "Of course I was, and of course I am still. He is my Friend, my Savior, my all in all; and I never blush to own his name." Christians must come out and bear each man for himself a clear and distinct testimony.

When others revile and slander our Lord Jesus Christ it becomes imperative on us to commend and extol him. They said to this man, "Give God the praise. We know that this man is a sinner." Then he spoke right gratefully with a heart bubbling up with thankfulness. "He hath opened my eyes." "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." But



when they went the length of saying, "As for this fellow, we know not from whence he is," he spoke up more heroically still. He turned upon his assailants and twitted them with their marvellous ignorance, "that ye know not from whence he is," and he fought for his Master so trenchantly that they were fain to throw away the weapons of debate and take up stones of abuse with which to stone him. Oh, if they speak ill of Christ, shall we be quiet? Does the oath make our blood chill, and shall we never have a word of rebuke for the blasphemer? Shall we hear the cause of Christ denounced in society, and for fear of feeble man refrain our tongue or smooth the matter over? No, let us throw the gauntlet down for Christ and say at once, "I cannot and I will not refrain myself. Now the very stones might speak.

When my dear friend - my best of friends - is thus abused, I must and will proclaim the honors of his name." I think Christian people in this country do not take half the liberty they might. If we speak a word of religion or open our Bibles in a railway carriage or anything of that kind, they say, "cants!" They may play cards, I suppose, in a public conveyance with impunity: they may make night hideous with their howlings, they may utter all sorts of profanities and sing lascivious songs at their sweet will, but we are cants forsooth if we take our turn. In the name of everything that is free we will have our turn. And every now and then I like you to sing to their annoyance one of the songs of Zion, for they sing the songs of Babylon loud enough to annoy us. Let us tell them that while we live in a land of liberty, and rejoice that Christ has made us free, we shall no more be ashamed of his testimonies than they are ashamed of their iniquities. When they begin to sin in private and blush to utter a lewd word, then may be the time - nay, and not even then - for us to keep our religion to ourselves.

Thus you see there are times when men - quiet, reserved men - must speak.

They will be traitors if they do not. I do not think this blind man was at all talkative. The brevity of his replies seems to indicate that he was rather a sententious speaker; but they drove him to it. He was like the stag at bay.

He must fight, however gently disposed. And I think there is scarcely a Christian man that has been able to go all the way to heaven, and yet quietly hide himself, and run from bush to bush, skulking into glory.

Christianity and cowardice! What a contradiction in terms. I think there must have been times when you have felt inclined, to say to yourself, "Well now, cost what it may: I may be tabooed in society; I may be ridiculed by the rough, and I may lose respect among the polite; but for Jesus Christ and for his truth I must bear witness." Then has it come true of you, "He is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself."

II. We pass on to another remark. IT IS ALWAYS WELL TO BE PREPARED TO SPEAK FOR YOURSELF. This man was evidently ready to do so. When his parents said, "Ask him: he shall speak for himself," - I think there was a little twinkle of the father's eye as he spoke, - meaning to say, "You will catch a Tartar. He can speak for himself. We have known him a good many years while he has been blind and he has always had a pretty sharp reply for anybody that thought him a fool; if you imagine now that you will get much out of him, by way of food for your mirth or fun, you are mightily mistaken. He will be more likely to spoil you than you to spoil him." And as they handed him over to the inquisitors, though they were unkind, I suppose they did not feel that he was a tender chicken that needed much of their care; so they seemed to say, "He is of age, he has come to years of maturity; ask him. Only ask him. He will speak for himself we warrant you." And so indeed he did. Now I want to have a band of Christian people here much of that sort - who when asked anything about their holy faith can so answer that they are not likely to be often the butts of ridicule and scorn, because they shall prove more than a match for their adversaries.

But how, you will be ready to ask, are we to be prepared to speak for ourselves?

On the outset it is well to cultivate a general habit of openheartedness and boldness. We have no need to intrude and push ourselves into people's way and so become a nuisance and a bore to them. Far from it; but let us walk through the world as those who have nothing to conceal, conscious

of the integrity of our own motives and the rightness of our heart before God; not needing to wear armor and sleep in it like the knights of old, knowing rather that truth unarmed is the best apparel. Let us show that we have nothing to cloak or cover, nothing to disguise or keep dark - that the gospel has wrought in us such an honesty and frankness of spirit that no blab can make us blush, no foe can cause us fear. Let us tell what we believe as true, because we can vouch for its verity. Let us choke those who cavil at these things, not so much by our combats as by our character.

Let us prove to them that we have a solid reason for our simple protest; that we have actually received the grace in which we earnestly believe. Our words will have weight when they see that the fruit of our piety accords with the flower of our profession. There is great power in this manner of answering the adversary.

Take heed however, when you do speak, to be sure of your ground. This man was. "Whether he be a sinner or no," says he, "I know not;" so he offered no opinion on a subject of which he could not be quite positive.

But where he had hard fact on his side there was nothing vague in his statement - "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." This is an argument which the most astute caviller would find it difficult to answer. As the blind man looked them full in the face it was enough to bewilder them. And there are some of you in whom such a change of character has been wrought that you could verily say, "I know I am not the man I used to be. My manner of life from my youth is well known to many, if they would testify. But now God, by the gospel of his Son, has opened my eyes, renewed my heart, cleansed my leprosy, and set my feet in the way of peace." Even those who scoff at the gospel are, in the cases of many of us, unable to deny the remarkable and beneficial change it has wrought. There is a rectitude here about which we need be very rigid. Put your foot down and say, "No, you cannot misjudge this. You may philosophize, if you like, but the old - fashioned simple gospel of the children it was that changed me, and made me love that which before I hated, and hate that which before I loved. That is a thing you cannot gainsay. One thing I know."

And it is well, like this man, to have the facts ready to adduce. "A man named Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and sent me to the pool to wash, and I washed, and I came seeing." Let them have the plan of salvation, as you first perceived it, very succinctly and plainly put before them. It is often the very best answer you can give to those who question in order to carp and discuss with a view to disparage. Let them have it with the trill you had it at the time. As the Lord has dealt with your soul so tell them what he has done for you. He must be a hard - hearted man who can sneer at the simple statement of your own conversion. The change it has wrought in you will be a fact which he cannot meet. Though he should think you deluded and call you an enthusiast, there is nothing so difficult for him to grapple with as your candour and confidence. "He opened my eyes." There is the point. "He opened my eyes; and if he opened my eyes, then he was of God. God must have been in such a matter as that, for I was born blind." Give a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear, to all those who oppose you.

Christian men should at all times, also, be as this man was - quite ready to bear abuse. "Thou wast altogether born in sin." I do not suppose the blind man cared one atom what they had to assert or to insinuate on that score.

Their scorn could not deprive him of his sight. He merely shook his head and said, "I can see; I can see. I was blind, but now I see. Pharisees may abuse me, but I can see. They may tell me I am this, that, and the other, but I can see. My eyes are open." So, child of God, you may often say to yourself, "I may be ridiculed: I may be twitted as Presbyterian, or Methodist; Baptist or Schismatic, or whatever they like; it does not matter.

I am saved; I am a changed man. The grace of God has renewed me; let them call me what they like now." Some people are very sensitive of satire, they shrink from and seem chafed at a jest, and what men call "chaff" grates upon them. What a baby a man is who cannot brave a fool's laugh!

Stand upright, young man, and when you go back to that drapery establishment show a bold front. You that go to work at some of the big factories, and have been quizzed and bantered because of your religion, screw up your courage and say, "Here I am, five feet ten high, or six feet, or whatever else it may be, and shall I be ashamed to be laughed at for Christ?" Pooh! Well, you are not worth the boots you stand upright in if you are put down by their play. I have no doubt many a soldier in the barrack room finds it hard to keep up his spirits when comrades taunt him with scoff and scorn in their rough way; but after all, dear friends, should not common manliness nerve us with fortitude? When we have got hold of a thing that we believe to be right, we should be greenhorns to let it go for fear of a giddy prank or a paltry grimace. Let them laugh. They will be tired of teasing us when they find out that our temper triumphs over their senseless tricks. Let them find merriment if they can, poor simpletons. I sometimes feel more inclined to smile than to sadden over the jokes that are coined at my expense. Their playful sallies may relieve some of the pitiful sorrows that light unawares on their lonely hours. Melancholy holds carnival in this mad world. Ghosts and goblins haunt the merriest brain.

What if for once now and then they get a living object for their sport, and I myself become the butt of their buffoonery - there is no fear that it will harm me; the only danger is that it will hurt them. Be you of that mind, dear friends, and do not care for any of their railiery.

This born - blind man whose eyes were opened was prepared to meet the Pharisees and speak up for himself, because he felt intense gratitude to him who had bestowed on him the priceless boon of sight. You see, all through the narrative, that though he did not know much about Jesus, he felt conscious that he was his true friend, and he stuck to him through thick and thin. Now, you and I may not know much about our Lord - not one tenth of what we hope to know - but he has opened our eyes; he has forgiven our sins; he has saved our souls; and by his grace we will stick to him, come what may. If your gratitude to him be always at its full heat, I am not afraid but whenever you are taunted, whenever at any time you are put to the test, you will be faithful to your friend and able to say with a sound conscience,-

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,  
Or to defend his cause  
Maintain the honor of his word,  
The glory of his cross."

III. EVERY SAVED MAN SHOULD WILLINGLY SPEAK FOR HIMSELF ABOUT CHRIST. I have said that you will be driven to it. I have also bidden you to be prepared for it when you are driven to it; but now I have to urge that you ought willingly to do it.

Are we not all debtors to Christ if, indeed, he has saved us? How can we acknowledge that debt if we are ashamed of him? His testimony is - "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." Does the baptism save us?

Nay, verily, but he that believes is bound to be baptized that he may thus confess his Lord; for baptism is the answer of a good conscience towards God. It is the disciple's grateful response to his Master's gracious call. You know how it is put - "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved." I may not lawfully forbear to confess if I inwardly believe. Why should I? If I owe so much to him shall I, can I, think of not confessing him? I am sure if there were a commandment issued that we were not to own our Lord, that we were to tell no man, that we must hide the secret from kinsfolk, friends, and neighbors, - to me it would be most distressing. But now doth he bid us own him and bear our testimony to him. We hail the command, we account it most seemly and fitting, and we cheerfully obey it. Is it not so?

How ought we each willingly to speak up for Christ, because we each one of us know most about what he has done for us. No one here knows all that he has done for me. I think I hear you say, "'Tis true, but then you do not know what he did for us." No, no; we are over head and ears debtors to him. Oh, what mercy he has shown to some of us. If the world could know our state before conversion it might almost make our hair stand upon end to read the story of our lives. How the grace of God has changed us!

O what a change! What a change! Should ravens become doves, and lions become lambs, your sciolists might expound or mystify the phenomenon in a word or two of Greek terminology. But this conversion comes across us every day; and scientific men are silent, while scoffers meet it only to make mouths at it. The change is infinitely greater than when dry bones are raised and clothed with flesh. When stones begin to melt and run into streams, it is nothing in point of marvel to the regeneration we have experienced. We must tell it; we must talk about it. We know more about it than others, and we are bound to be the honest narrators of the wondrous narrative.

The more individual testimonies are borne to Christ the more weight there is in the accumulated force of the great aggregate. If I in the mass bear witness for Christ, in the name of you all, saying, "The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad," I hope there is some honor to Christ and some influence to take effect. But if ten, twenty, thirty, fifty were to rise one after the other and say, "The Lord hath done great things for me," and each one were to tell his own tale, how much more conviction would be wrought. I have heard of a lawyer in the United States who attended an experience meeting amongst his neighbors. He was a sceptic, if not a thorough unbeliever, when he entered the place, but he sat with his pencil and took notes of the statements of his neighbors. When he afterwards reviewed the evidence he said to himself, "Now, if I had these twelve or thirteen persons in the witness - box on my side, I should feel quite sure of carrying my case. I live among them. They are not the most learned people I ever met with, but they are very honest, trustworthy people - plain spoken; and though each one has told his tale they all come to the same point, and all bear witness to one fact, that there is such a thing as the grace of God, and that it does change the heart. "Well," said he, "I am bound to believe it after all this testimony." And he did believe, and he became a Christian. Of this I am certain, that if Christian people were more often to bear their testimony to the power of Jesus Christ in their hearts, the cumulated witness would tell on many a thoughtless mind, and multitudes would come to believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit delights to own and bless such true stories as you can tell.

Do I hear one and another of you say, "They can do without my story"?

Nay, my friend, I would answer, we cannot dispense with your evidence, because the diversities of their experience are as numerous as the individuals converted, although there is unity in the operation of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord opened the eyes of many blind men, he unstopped the ears of many deaf people, he loosed the tongues of many that were dumb, and we cannot count how many lepers he cleansed; but each patient could tell you his own symptoms and the minute particulars of his own healing. Your story, too, has its special interest while it contributes to the general narrative. At least, you would be sorry if it were not so. "The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there." I know you would like your name to be mentioned then; and I think it would be worth your while now to mention the mercies you have received in just the manner you received them. To speak for myself, I believe that God in converting me manifested a way of his own that exactly suited my need.

My case was so like yours as to produce sympathy, and so unlike as to provoke special gratitude, and thus it was doubtless with each one of you.

Your career, your character, your circumstances differed in each instance.

As a great master seldom paints the same picture twice, so the Masterartist, God, seldom, I think never, works precisely the same in any two hearts. There is a difference, and in that difference there is an illustration of the manifold wisdom of God; therefore, we want your story.

Besides, your testimony may touch the heart of somebody like yourself.

Little Mary over yonder says, "Well, I am nobody; only a nurse - maid. The Lord Jesus Christ has cleansed me and made me his, 'tis true, but you can do without my tale." No, Mary, we cannot. Perhaps your testimony will exactly suit another little lass like yourself. A little maid waited on Naaman's wife. Who but she could have told her mistress that there was healing for Naaman or that he could go to a prophet in Israel and be made whole? Tell your story gently and quietly and at proper



times, but let it be known. "Oh," says the old man, "but I am so feeble now. You could dispense with my saying anything." No, father William, we cannot. You are just the man whose few words have full weight. You meet every now and then with choice opportunities of leading souls to the Savior. "I am too old to think about these things," says one; but you might tell how the Lord has dealt with you in your old age, and may be it will strike home. Why, you working men, if you were all to speak up for Christ, as I know many of you do, what an effect would be produced: what an influence you would have on others like you. Of course when they hear us preach they say, "Oh well, you know, he is a parson. He says it professionally. It is his business to say it." But when you tell of what the Lord has done for you, it becomes the talk: it is repeated over and over again. I know what Tom says when he gets home. He says to his wife Mary, "What do you think of that Jack that I have been working with? Why, he has been talking to me about his soul, and he says his sin is forgiven him, and he seems such a happy man. You know that he used to drink and swear the same as I do, but oh, he is a wonderfully different man now; and I should say, from what I see, there must be something in it. Well, he asked me home the other night, and his place is so different from ours." "There, you hold your tongue," Mary will answer up pretty sharply: "if you brought your wages home to me regularly every week, I could lay them out for you better." "Ah," says he, "and that is what I have been thinking. It is just because he is a religious man that he does bring his wages home, and I think there is something real about his conversion, do you know. He does not drink as I do. He does not mix up with all manner of larks and follies. I should not have thought so much of it had the parson spoke to me. But now I really do think there is something good and genuine in the grace he talks about. You and I had better go next Sunday evening to the Tabernacle, or somewhere else, and hear about it for ourselves." Ah, there are many, many souls brought to Christ in that way. We cannot do without your testimony then, Jack, because your conversation is suitable to your own class. And you, your ladyship, you say, "I love the Lord, but I do not think I possibly could say anything in my circle and walk of life." Could not you? Ah, but I am sure you will easily surmount this little difficulty if you attain a little more growth in grace. We had one among us whose rank entitled her to move in an upper sphere of "society," but her choice enabled her to prefer the humble

companionship of the church. Her silvery locks some of you well remember. She has left us now. She has gone home to glory. Amongst the aristocracy her lot was cast. Yet with gentle, quiet, bland simplicity she introduced the gospel wherever she went. Many and many have come to these pews to listen to your minister who had never been here but for her calm, beautiful, unobtrusive, holy life, and the nerve with which, anywhere at any time, she could say, "Yes, I am a Christian; what is more, I am a Nonconformist; and what you will think worse, I am a Baptist; and what you will think worst of all, I am a member of the Tabernacle." She never blushed to own our blest Redeemer's name, nor yet to acknowledge and befriend the lowliest of his disciples. Her faith ye do well to follow. In whatever circle we move let us strive to become centres of influence.

Thus have I tried to show you, dear friends, that each one has a witness to bear - a privilege to be prized no less than a duty to be discharged - because a gift you have received qualifies you for a service you are asked to render.

Suppose that the soldier when he marched to battle were to say, "I need not load my gun; I need not fire in the day of battle, seeing that on the right and on the left there are good marksmen picking off the enemy." Yes, but when you are in full musketryfire your bullet has got its billet and the billet for your bullet is not the billet for any other bullet, therefore let it go, let it go. We must all fire, brethren; not some, but all must fire, and our charge must be this, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind now I see. Therefore do I bear witness to my Lord. Let who will gainsay it, he has opened my eyes."

IV. Lastly, AS EVERY CHRISTIAN, BEING OF AGE, HAS TO SPEAK FOR HIMSELF, WE MEAN TO DO IT; WE MEAN TO DO IT. For my own part, I mean to do so. That which I believe to be true I have spoken to you from my youth up. I have offended a good many at times. I shall offend a good many more, I hope, because that is not a matter I have ever taken into consideration. Is this true? Is it a necessary truth? Is it essential that it be spoken plainly and published widely? Away it goes like a hand - grenade flung into the midst of the crowd. May every minister of Christ - and I trust the rightness of the thing will be more and more

recognized - take courage to speak for his Master; speak out, never with bated breath, but in the name of him that sent him, in the name of God, with a courage that befits his commission. A trembling lip and a coward countenance in a minister show him to be unworthy of the office which he pretends to sustain. We must set our faces like a flint and bear testimony to the truth - to the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as far as God shall teach it to us.

And will not you, my fellow - members, and you Christian people here of all sorts, will not you also take up this resolution - "We are of age. and we mean to speak for ourselves"? You cannot all preach. I hope you will not all try. What a world of tumult and disorder we should have if every man and woman felt a call to preach. We should have a church all mouth, and then there would be a vacuum somewhere. There would be no hearers left if everybody turned preacher. No, it is not to seek precedence in public assemblies, but to exert influence in private society that you are called; by a good conversation, with a speech seasoned with salt, at home among friends, kinsfolk, or companions, to the dozen or to one, make known what love has done, what grace has done, what Christ has done. Make it known; make it known. Among your servants, among your children, among your tradespeople - wherever you go make it known; make it known. Wear your regimentals wherever you go. I do not like to see a Christian soldier ashamed to show the scarlet. Oh, no, put it on. It is an honor to serve his Majesty. If there is anything in Christianity that you are ashamed of, get out of it. Do not pretend to believe if you are afraid of betraying your profession: but if you do receive the gospel, and believe it, as the revelation of God, never blush to own it, but be brave to avow it at all times and in all places.

"Well," says one, "I am so retiring." I know you are, brother. Come, then, drop a little of your modesty and distinguish yourself a little more for your manliness. Have I not sometimes told you of the soldier who was retiring in the day of battle; but they shot him for a coward. It will not do to be retiring when duty shall urge, or where danger shall summon you to the front. I have heard of a man with the face of a lion and the heart of a deer.

Beware of a too retiring disposition. Disreputable things are sometimes

disguised in words polite; so diffidence may be dastardly, and caution may be cowardly. Be thou valiant for thy Lord and Master; play not the traitor's part by thy silence as thou wouldst scorn to do it by thy speech -

"Ashamed of Jesus! that dear Friend  
On whom my hopes of heaven depend!  
No; when I blush, be this my shame,  
That I no more revere his name."

Break the ice then now, and speak to somebody about this blessed message before you go to rest. Will you resolve to do so? Take care that you defer not till your heart grows cool, and the words you purpose freeze on your lips. Nay, but do it, and the thing will grow upon you. Presently you will greet the opportunity as much as you now shrink from the necessity. It will bless your life. I think it is Horatius Bonar who says -

"He liveth long who liveth well!  
All else is being flung away;  
He liveth longest who can tell.  
Of true things truly done each day."

"Be what thou seemest; live thy creed;  
Hold up to earth the torch divine;  
Be what thou prayest to be made;  
Let the great Master's steps be thine."

"Fill up each hour with what will last  
Buy up the moments as they go;  
The life above, when this is past,  
Is the ripe fruit of life below.

"Waste not thy being; back to him  
Who freely gave it, freely give;  
Else is that being but a dream,  
'Tis but to be and not to live."

Dear friends, some of you who are believers in Christ have never yet

confessed him. I hope that you will resolve from this night to avow yourselves his disciples and become his faithful followers. You are of age.

"Yes," says one, "I am of rather full age; for I am over fifty." Others of you are older than that, and though you are believers in Christ you have never confessed him. It will not do, brother; it will not do. It will not do to die with; it does not do to think of now. When he cometh, happy shall they be that were not ashamed of him; but when he cometh in his glory with all his holy angels, trembling shall take hold on those that thought and said they loved him, but never dared to bear reproach for his name's sake or to suffer shame for the gospel. I hope these reflections will make you very uneasy, and constrain you to say, "Please God, I will join a Christian church before this week is over." If you are a believer in Christ I charge you not to trifle with the voice of conscience, but to pay your vows to the Most High.

Alas! Alas! There are some that cannot speak for Christ in any way whatever, because they do not know him. He never opened your eyes.

Never try to talk of matters you do not understand, nor pretend to bear witness to mercies you have not experienced. Remember the Christ we preach is not only the Christ of history who was crucified dead and buried, but he is a living Christ at this moment, among us still by his Spirit - changing, our natures, turning and guiding the current of our thoughts and our lives, purifying our wishes and motives, teaching us to love each other, admonishing us to be pure, entreating us to be gentle, giving us a heart to aspire after those things that are above instead of grovelling among those things that are below. Now, if you have never met this Christ you cannot bear witness as to his power. But he is to be found. Trust in him. He is divine - the Son of God. His blood is the blood of the great sacrifice, whereof Moses spoke and of which all the prophets bare witness. He is the last great sacrifice of God. Come and trust him. And when you trust him, that trust shall be like the woman's touching of the hem of his garment. No sooner had she touched him than she was made whole, for virtue went out of him. That virtue goeth out of his sacred person still whenever the simple touch of faith brings the sinner into contact with the Savior. The Lord lead you to believe in Jesus, and when

you have believed through grace, come forward and confess his name. So shall you be numbered with his saints now and in glory everlasting.

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## **Special Thanksgiving To The Father**

My dear brethren, I have journeyed happily to the borders of Switzerland, and already feel that the removing of the yoke from the shoulder is one of the readiest means of restoring the metal powers. Much of Popish superstition and idolatry has passed under my observation, and if nothing else could make me a Protestant, what I have seen would do so. One thing I have learned anew, which I would have all my brethren learn, the power of a personal Christ. We Protestants are too apt to make doctrine everything, and the person of Christ is not held in sufficient remembrance; with the Roman Catholic doctrine is nothing, but the person is ever kept in view. The evil is, that the image of Christ before the eye of the Papist is carnal and not spiritual; but could we always keep o'er Lord before our eyes, his spiritual sense, we should be better men than any set of doctrines can ever make us. The Lord give to us to abide in him and so to bring forth much fruit. Baden-Baden, June 15th, 1860 C. H. Spurgeon.

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. - Colossians 1:12-13

This passage is a mine of riches. I can anticipate the difficulty in preaching and the regret in concluding we shall experience this evening because we are not able to dig out all the gold which lies in this precious vein. We lack the power to grasp and the time to expatiate upon that volume of truths which is here condensed into a few short sentences.

We are exhorted to "give thanks unto the Father." This counsel is at once

needful and salutary. I think, my brethren, we scarcely need to be told to give thanks unto the Son. The remembrance of that bleeding body hanging upon the cross is ever present to our faith. The nails and the spear, his griefs, the anguish of his soul, and his sweat of agony, make such tender touching appeals to our gratitude—these will prevent us always from ceasing our songs, and sometimes fire our hearts with rekindling rapture in praise of the man Christ Jesus. Yes we will bless thee, dearest Lord; our souls are all on fire. As we survey the, wondrous cross, we cannot but shout—

"O for this love let rocks and hills  
Their lasting silence break,  
And all harmonious human tongues  
The Savior's praises speak."

It is in a degree very much the same with the Holy Spirit. I think we are compelled to feel every day our dependence upon his constant influence. He abides with us as a present and personal Comforter and Counsellor. We, therefore, do praise the Spirit of Grace, who hath made our heart his temple, and who works in us all that is gracious, virtuous, and well-pleasing in the sight of God. If there be any one Person in the Trinity whom we are more apt to forget than another in our praises, it is God the Father. In fact there are some who even get a wrong idea of Him, a slanderous idea of that God whose name is LOVE. They imagine that love dwelt in Christ, rather than in the Father, and that our salvation is rather due to the Son and the Holy Spirit, than to our Father God. Let us not be of the number of the ignorant, but let us receive this truth. We are as much indebted to the Father as to any other Person of the Sacred Three. He as much and as truly loves us as any of the adorable Three Persons. He is as truly worthy of our highest praise as either the Son or the Holy Spirit.

A remarkable fact, which we should always bear in mind, is this:—in the Holy Scriptures most of the operations which are set down as being the works of the Spirit, are in other Scriptures ascribed to God the Father. Do we say it is God the Spirit that quickens the sinner who is dead in sin? it is true; but you will find in another passage it is said "The Father

quickeneth whom he will." Do we say that the Spirit is the sanctifier, and that the sanctification of the soul is wrought by the Holy Ghost? You will find a passage in the opening of the Epistle of St. Jude, in which it is said, "Sanctified by God the Father." Now, how are we to account for this? I think it may be explained thus. God the Spirit cometh from God the Father, and therefore whatever acts are performed by the Spirit are truly done by the Father, because he sendeth forth the Spirit. And again, the Spirit is often the instrument—though I say not this in any way to derogate from his glory—he is often the instrument with which the Father works. It is the Father who says to the dry bones, live; it is the Spirit who, going forth with the divine word, makes them live. The quickening is due as much to the word as to the influence that went with the word; and as the word came with all the bounty of free grace and goodwill from the Father, the quickening is due to him. It is true that the seal on our hearts is the Holy Spirit, he is the seal, but it is the Eternal Father's hand that stamps the seal; the Father communicates the Spirit to seal our adoption. The works of the Spirit are, many of them, I repeat it again, attributed to the Father, because he worketh in, through, and by the Spirit.

The works of the Son of God, I ought to observe are every one of them in intimate connection with the Father. If the Son comes into the world, it is because the Father sends him; if the Son calls his people, it is because his Father gave this people into his hands. If the Son redeems the chosen race, is not the Son himself the Father's gift, and doth not God send his Son into the world that we may live through him? So that the Father, the great Ancient of Days, is ever to be extolled; and we must never omit the full homage of our hearts to him when we sing that sacred doxology,

"Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

In order to excite your gratitude to God the Father to-night, I propose to dilate a little upon this passage, as God the Holy Spirit shall enable me. If you will look at the text, you will see two blessings in it. The first has regard to the future; it is a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. The second blessing, which must go with the first, for indeed it is the cause of the first, the effective cause, has relation to the past. Here we read of our deliverance from the power of darkness. Let us meditate a



little upon each of these blessings, and then, in the third place, I will endeavor to show the relation which exists between the two.

I. The first blessing introduced to our notice is this—"God the Father has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." It is a PRESENT BLESSING. Not a mercy laid up for us in the covenant, which we have not yet received, but it is a blessing which every true believer already has in his hand. Those mercies in the covenant of which we have the earnest now while we wait for the full possession, are just as rich, and just as certain as those which have been already with abundant lovingkindness bestowed on us, but still they are not so precious in our enjoyment. The mercy we have in store, and in hand is after all, the main source of our present comfort. And oh what a blessing this! "Made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." The true believer is fit for heaven; he is meet to be a partaker of the inheritance—and that now, at this very moment. What does this mean? Does it mean that the believer is perfect; that he is free from sin? No, my brethren, where shall you ever find such perfection in this world? If no man can be a believer but the perfect man, then what has the perfect man to believe? Could he not walk by sight? When he is perfect, he may cease to be a believer. No, brethren, it is not such perfection that is meant although perfection is implied, and assuredly will be given as the result. Far less does this mean that we have a right to eternal life from any doings of our own. We have a fitness for eternal life, a meetness for it, but we have no desert of it. We deserve nothing of God even now, in ourselves. but his eternal wrath and his infinite displeasure. What, then, does It mean? Why, it means just this: we are so far meet that we are accepted in the Beloved, adopted into the family, and fitted by divine approbation to dwell with the saints in light There is a woman chosen to be a bride; she is fitted to be married, fitted to enter into the honorable state and condition of matrimony; but at present she has not on the bridal garment, she is not like the bride adorned for her husband. You do not see her yet robed in her elegant attire, with her ornaments upon her, but you know she is fitted to be a bride, she is received and welcomed as such in the family of her destination. So Christ has chosen his Church to be married to him; she has not yet put on her bridal garment, beautiful array in which she shall stand before the father's throne, but notwithstanding, there is such a

fitness in her to be the bride of Christ, when she shall have bathed herself for a little while, and lain for a little while in the bed of spices—there is such a fitness in her character, such a grace given adaptation in her to become the royal bride of her glorious Lord, and to become a partaker of the enjoyments of bliss—that it may be said of the church as a whole, and of every member of it, that they are "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

The Greek word, moreover, bears some such meaning as this though I cannot give the exact idiom, it is always difficult when a word is not used often. This word is only used twice that I am aware of, in the New Testament. The word may be employed for "suitable," or, I think, "sufficient" "He hath made us meet"—sufficient—"to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." But I cannot give my idea without borrowing another figure. When a child is born, it is at once endowed with all the faculties of humanity. If those powers are wanting at first, they will not come afterwards. It has eyes, it has hands, it has feet, and all its physical organs. These of course are as it were in embryo. The senses though perfect at first, must be gradually developed, and the understanding gradually matured. It can see but little, it cannot discern distances. it can hear, but it cannot hear distinctly enough at first to know from what direction the sound comes; but you never find a new leg, a new arm, a new eye, or a new ear growing on that child. Each of these powers will expand and enlarge, but still there is the whole man there at first, and the child is sufficient for a man. Let but God in his infinite providence cause it to feed, and give it strength and increase, it has sufficient for manhood. It does not want either arm or leg, nose or ear. you cannot make it grow a new member; nor does it require a new member either; all are there. In like manner, the moment a man is regenerated, there is every faculty in his new creation that there shall be, even when he gets to heaven. It only needs to be developed and brought out: he will not have a new power, he will not have a new grace, he will have those which he had before, developed and brought out. Just as we are told by the careful observer, that in the acorn there is in embryo every root and every bough and every leaf of the future tree, which only requires to be developed and brought out in their fullness. So, in the true believer, there is a sufficiency or meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. All that he requires

is, not that a new thing should be implanted, but that that which God has put there in the moment of regeneration, shall be cherished and nurtured, and made to grow and increase, till it comes unto perfection and he enters into "the inheritance of the saints in light." This is, as near as I can give it to you, the exact meaning and literal interpretation of the text, as I understand it.

But you may say to me, "In what sense is this meetness or fitness for eternal life the work of God the Father? Are we already made meet for heaven? How is this the rather's work?" Look at the text a moment, and I will answer you in three ways.

What is heaven? We read it is an inheritance. Who are fit for an inheritance? Sons. Who makes us sons? "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be galled the sons of God." A son is fitted for an inheritance. The moment the son is born he is fitted to be an heir. All that is wanted is that he shall grow up and be capable of possession. But he is fit for an inheritance at first. If he were not a son he could not inherit as an heir. Now as soon as ever we become sons we are meet to inherit. There is in us an adaptation, a power and possibility for us to have an inheritance. This is the prerogative of the Father, to adopt us into his family, and to "beget us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." And do you not see, that as adoption is really the meetness for inheritance, it is the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light?"

Again, heaven is an inheritance; but whose inheritance is it? It is an inheritance of the saints. It is not an inheritance of sinners, but of saints—that is, of the holy ones—of those who have been made saints by being sanctified. Turn then, to the Epistle of Jude, and you will see at once who it is that sanctified. You will observe the moment you fix your eye upon the passage that it is God the Father. In the first verse you read, "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father." It is an inheritance for saints: and who are saints? The moment a man believes in Christ, he may know himself to have been truly set apart in the covenant decree; and he finds consecration, if I may so speak, verified in his own experience, for he has

now become "a new creature in Christ Jesus," separated from the rest of the world, and then it is manifest and made known that God has taken him to be his son for ever. The meetness which I must have, in order to enjoy the inheritance of the saints in light, is my becoming a son. God hath made me and all believers sons, therefore we are meet for the inheritance; so then that meetness has come from the Father. How meetly therefore doth the Father claim our gratitude, our adoration and our love!

You will however observe, it is not merely said that heaven is the inheritance of the saints, but that it is "the inheritance of the saints in light." So the saints dwell in light—the light of knowledge, the light of purity, the light of joy, the light of love, pure ineffable love, the light of everything that is glorious and ennobling. There they dwell, and if I am to appear meet for that inheritance, what evidence must I have? I must have light shining into my own soul. But where can I get it? Do I not read that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and Cometh down"—yea verily, but from whom? From the Spirit? No—"from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The preparation to enter into the inheritance in light is light. and light comes from the Father of lights; therefore, my meetness, if I have light in myself, is the work of the Father, and I must give him praise. Do you see then, that as there are three words used here—"the inheritance of the saints in light," so we have a threefold meetness? We are adopted and made sons. God hath sanctified us and set us apart. And then, again, he hath put light into our hearts. All this, I say, is the work of the Father, and in this sense, we are "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

A few general observations here. Brethren, I am persuaded that if an angel from heaven were to come to-night and single out any one believer from the crowd here assembled, there is not one believer that is unfit to be taken to heaven. You may not be ready to be taken to heaven now; that is to say, if I foresaw that you were going to live, I would tell you you were unfit to die, in a certain sense. But were you to die now in your pew, if you believe in Christ, you are fit for heaven. You have a meetness even now which would take you there at once, without being committed to purgatory for a season. You are even now fit to be "partakers of the

inheritance of the saints in light." You have but to gasp out your last breath and you shall be in heaven, and there shall not be one spirit in heaven more fit for heaven than you, nor one soul more adapted for the place than you are. You shall be just as fitted for its element as those who are nearest to the eternal throne.

Ah! this makes the heirs of glory think much of God the Father. When we reflect, my brethren, upon our state by nature, and how fit we are to be fire-brands in the flames of hell—yet to think that we are this night, at this very moment if Jehovah willed it, fit to sweep the golden harps with joyful fingers, that this head is fit this very night to wear the everlasting crown, that these loins are fit to be girded with that fair white robe throughout eternity, I say, this makes us think gratefully of God the Father; this makes us clap our hands with joy, and say, "thanks be unto God the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Do ye not remember the penitent thief? It was but a few minutes before that he had been cursing Christ. I doubt not that he had joined with the other, for it is said, "They that were crucified with him reviled him." Not one, but both; they did it. And then a gleam of supernatural glory lit up the face of Christ, and the thief saw and believed. And Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, this day," though the sun is setting, "this day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." No long preparation required, no sweltering in purifying fires. And so shall it be with us. We may have been in Christ Jesus to our own knowledge but three weeks, or we may have been in him for ten years, or threescore years and ten—the date of our conversion makes no difference in our meetness for heaven, in a certain sense. True indeed the older we grow the more grace we have tasted, the riper we are becoming, and the fitter to be housed in heaven; but that is in another sense of the word,—the Spirit's meetness which he gives. But with regard to that meetness which the Father gives, I repeat, the blade of corn, the blade of gracious wheat that has just appeared above the surface of conviction, is as fit to be carried up to heaven as the full-grown corn in the ear. The sanctification wherewith we are sanctified by God the Father is not progressive, it is complete at once, we are now adapted for heaven, now fitted for it, and we shall enter into the joy of our Lord.

Into this subject I might have entered more fully; but I have not time. I am sure I have left some knots untied, and you must untie them if you can yourselves; and let me recommend you to untie them on your knees—the mysteries of the kingdom of God are studied much the best when you are in prayer.

II. The second mercy is A MERCY THAT LOOKS BACK. We sometimes prefer the mercies that look forward, because they unfold such a bright prospect.

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood."

But here is a mercy that looks backward; turns its back, as it were, on the heaven of our anticipation, and looks back on the gloomy past, and the dangers from which we have escaped. Let us read the account of it—"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." This verse is an explanation of the preceding, as we shall have to show in a few minutes. But just now let us survey this mercy by itself. Ah! my brethren, what a description have we here of what matter of men we used to be. We were under "the power of darkness." Since I have been musing on this text, I have turned these words over and over in my mind—"the power of darkness!" It seems to me one of the most awful expressions that man ever attempted to expound. I think I could deliver a discourse from it, if God the Spirit helped me, which might make every bone in your body shake. "The power of darkness!" We all know that there is a moral darkness which exercises its awful spell over the mind of the sinner. Where God is unacknowledged the mind is void of judgment. Where God is unworshipped the heart of man becomes a ruin. The chambers of that dilapidated heart are haunted by ghostly fears and degraded superstitions. The dark places of that reprobate mind are tenanted by vile lusts and noxious passions, like vermin and reptiles, from which in open daylight we turn with disgust. And even natural darkness is tremendous. In the solitary confinement which is practiced in some of our penitentiaries the very worst results would be produced if the treatment were prolonged. If one of you were to be taken to-night and led into some dark cavern, and left there, I can imagine that for a moment, not knowing your fate, you might feel a child-

like kind of interest about it;—there might be, perhaps, a laugh as you found yourselves in the dark; there might for the moment, from the novelty of the position, be some kind of curiosity excited. There might, perhaps, be a flush of silly joy. In a little time you might endeavor to compose yourself to sleep; possibly you might sleep; but if you should awake, and still find yourself down deep in the bowels of earth, where never a ray of sun or candle light could reach you; do you know the next feeling that would come over you? It would be a kind of idiotic thoughtlessness. You would find it impossible to control your desperate imagination. Your heart would say, "O God I am alone, alone, alone, in this dark place." How would you cast your eyeballs all around, and never catching a gleam of light, your mind would begin to fail. Your next stage would be one of increasing terror. You would fancy that you saw something, and then you would cry, "Ah! I would I could see something, were it foe or fiend!" You would feel the dark sides of your dungeon. You would begin to "scribble on the walls," like David before king Achish. Agitation would cease hold upon you, and if you were kept there much longer, delirium and death would be the consequence. We have heard of many who have been taken from the penitentiary to the lunatic asylum; and the lunacy is produced partly by the solitary confinement, and partly by the darkness in which they are placed. In a report lately written by the Chaplain of Newgate, there are some striking reflections upon the influence of darkness in a way of discipline. Its first effect is to shut the culprit up to his own reflections, and make him realize his true position in the iron grasp of the outraged law. Methinks the man that has defied his keepers, and come in there cursing and swearing, when he has found himself alone in darkness, where he cannot even hear the rattling of carriages along the streets, and can see no light whatever, is presently cowed; he gives in, he grows tame. "The power of darkness" literally is something awful. If I had time, I would enlarge upon this subject. We cannot properly describe what "the power of darkness" is, even in this world. The sinner is plunged into the darkness of his sins, and he sees nothing, he knows nothing. Let him remain there a little longer, and that joy of curiosity, that hectic joy which he now has in the path of sin, will die away, and there will come over him a spirit of slumber. Sin will make him drowsy, so that he will not hear the voice of the ministry, crying to him to escape for his life. Let him continue in it, and it will by-and-bye

make him spiritually an idiot. He will become so in sin, that common reason will be lost on him. All the arguments that a sensible man will receive, will be only wasted on him. Let him go on, and he will proceed from bad to worse, till he acquires the raving mania of a desperado in sin; and let death step in, and the darkness will have produced its full effect; he will come into the delirious madness of hell. Ah! it needs but the power of sin to make a man more truly hideous than human thought can realize, or language paint. Oh "the power of darkness!"

Now, my brethren, all of us were under this power once. It is but a few months—a few weeks with some of you—since you were under the power of darkness and of sin. Some of you had only got as far as the curiosity of it; others had got as far as the sleepiness of it; a good many of you had got as far as the apathy of it; and I do not know but some of you had got almost to the terror of it. You had so cursed and swore; so yelled ye out your blasphemies, that you seemed to be ripening for hell; but, praised and blessed be the name of the Father, he has "translated you from the power of darkness, into the kingdom of his dear Son."

Having thus explained this term, "the power of darkness," to show you what you were, let us take the next word, "and hath translated us." What a angular word this—"translated"—is. I dare say you think it means the process by which a word is interpreted, when the sense is retained, while the expression is rendered in another language. That is one meaning of the word "translation," but it is not the meaning here. The word is used by Josephus in this sense—the taking away of a people who have been dwelling in a certain country, and planting them in another place. This is called a translation. We sometimes hear of a bishop being translated or removed from one see to another. Now, if you want to have the idea explained, give me your attention while I bring out an amazing instance of a great translation. The children of Israel were in Egypt under taskmasters that oppressed them very sorely, and brought them into iron bondage. What did God do for these people? There were two millions of them. He did not temper the tyranny of the tyrant; he did not influence his mind, to give them a little more liberty; but he translated his people; he took the whole two millions bodily, with a high hand and outstretched arm, and led them through the wilderness, and translated them into the



kingdom of Canaan; and there they were settled. What an achievement was that, when, with their flocks and their herds, and their little ones, the whole host of Israel went out of Egypt, crossed the Jordan, and came into Canaan! My dear brethren, the whole of it was not equal to the achievement of God's powerful grace, when he! brings one poor sinner out of the region of sin into the kingdom of holiness and peace. It was easier for God to bring Israel out of Egypt, to split the Red Sea, to make a highway through the pathless wilderness, to drop manna from heaven, to send the whirlwind to drive out the kings; it was easier for Omnipotence to do all this, than to translate a man from the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son. This is the grandest achievement of Omnipotence. The sustenance of the whole universe, I do believe, is even less than this—the changing of a bad heart, the subduing of an iron will. But thanks be unto the Father, he has done all that for you and for me. He has brought us out of darkness, he has translated us, taken up the old tree that has struck its roots never so deep—taken it up, blessed be God, roots and all, and planted it in a goodly soil. He had to cut the top off, it is true—the high branches of our pride; but the tree has grown better in the near soil than it ever did before. Who ever heard of moving so huge a plant as a man who has grown fifty years old in sin? Oh! what wonders hath our Father done for us I He has taken the wild leopard of the wood, tamed it into a lamb, and purged away its spots. He has regenerated the poor Ethiopian—oh, how black are were by nature—our blackness was more than skin deep; it went to the center of our hearts; but, blessed be his name, he hath washed us white, and is still carrying on the divine operation, and he will yet completely deliver us from every taint of sin, and will finally bring us into the kingdom of his dear son. Here, then, in the second mercy, we discern from what we were delivered, and how we were delivered—God the Father hath "translated" us.

But where are we now? Into what place is the believer brought, when he is brought out of the power of darkness? He is brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Into what other kingdom would the Christian desire to be brought? Brethren. a republic may sound very well in theory, but in spiritual matters, the last thing we want is a republic. We want a kingdom. I love to have Christ an absolute monarch in the heart. I do not want to have a doubt about it. I want to give up all my liberty to him. for I

feel that I never shall be free till my self-control is all gone; that I shall never have my will truly free till it is bound in the golden fetters of his sweet love. We are brought into a kingdom—he is Lord and Sovereign, and he has made us "kings and priests unto our God," and we shall reign with him. The proof that we are in this kingdom must consist in our obedience to our King. Here, perhaps, we may raise many causes and questions, but surely we can say after all, though we have offended our King many times, yet our heart is loyal to him. "Oh, thou precious Jesus! we would obey thee, and yield submission to every one of thy laws, our sins are not wilful and beloved sins, but though we fall we can truly say, that we would be holy as thou art holy, our heart is true towards thy statutes; Lord, help us to run in the way of thy commandments."

So, you see, this mercy which God the Father hath given to us, this second of these present mercies, is, that he hath "translated us out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son." This is the Father's work. Shall we not love God the Father from this day forth? Will we not give him thanks, and sing our hymns to him, and exalt and triumph in his great name?

III. Upon the third point, I shall be as brief as possible; it is to SHOW THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO VERSES.

When I get a passage of Scripture to meditate upon, I like, if I can, to see its drift, then I like to examine its various parts, and see if I can understand each separate clause; and then I want to go back again, and see what one clause has to do with another. I looked and looked again at this text, and wondered what connection there could be between the two verses. "Giving thanks unto God the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Well, that is right enough; we can see how this is the work of God the Father, to make us meet to go to heaven. But has the next verse, the 13th, anything to do with our meetness?—"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Well, I looked it over and I said I will read it in this way. I see the 12th verse tells me that the inheritance of heaven is the inheritance of light. Is heaven light? Then I can see my meetness for it as described in the 13th verse.—He hath

delivered me from the power of darkness. Is not that the same thing? If I am delivered from the power of darkness, is not that being made meet to dwell in light? If I am now brought out of darkness into light, and am walking in the light, is not that the very meetness which is spoken of in the verse before? Then I read again. It says they are saints. Well, the saints are a people that obey the Son. Here is my meetness then in the 13th verse, where it says "He hath translated me from the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son." So that I not only have the light, but the sonship too, for I am in "the kingdom of his dear Son." But how about the inheritance? Is there anything about that in the 13th verse? It is an inheritance; shall I find anything about a meetness for it there? Yes, I find that I am in the kingdom of his dear Son. How came Christ to have a kingdom? Why, by inheritance. Then it seems I am in his inheritance; and if I am in his inheritance here, then I am meet to be in it above, for I am in it already. I am even now part of it and partner of it, since I am in the kingdom which he inherits from his Father, and therefore there is the meetness.

I do not know whether I have put this plainly enough before you. If you will be kind enough to look at your Bible, I will just recapitulate. You see, heaven is a place of light; when we are brought out of darkness, that, of course, is the meetness for light. It is a place for sons; when we are brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son, we are of course made sons, so that there is the meetness for it. It is an inheritance; and when we are brought into the inherited kingdom of God's dear Son, we enjoy the inheritance now, and consequently are fitted to enjoy it for ever.

Having thus shown the connection between these verses, I propose now to close with a few general observations. I like so to expound the Scripture, that we can draw some practical inferences from it. Of course the first inference is this: let us from this night forward never omit God the Father in our praises. I think I have said this already six times over in the sermon. Why I am repeating it so often, is that we may never forget it. Martin Luther said he preached upon justification by faith every day in the week and then the people would not understand. There are some truths, I believe, that need to be said over and over again, either because our silly hearse will not receive, or our treacherous memories will not

hold them. Sing, I beseech you, habitually, the praises of the Father in heaven, as you do the praises of the Son hanging upon the cross. Love as truly God, the ever-living God, as you love Jesus the God-man, the Savior who once died for you. That is the great inference.

Yet another inference arises. Brothers and sisters, are you conscious tonight that you are not now what you once were? Are you sure that the power of darkness does not now rest upon you, that you love divine knowledge, that you are panting after heavenly joys? Are you sure that you have been "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son?" Then never be troubled about thoughts of death, because, come death whenever it may, you are meet to be a "partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." Let no thought distress you about death's coming to you at an unseasonable hour. Should it come to-morrow should it come now, if your faith is fixed on nothing less than Jesu's blood and righteousness, you shall see the face of God with acceptance. I have that consciousness in my soul, by the witness of the Holy Spirit, of my adoption into the family of God, that I feel that though I should never preach again, but should lay down my body and my charge together, ere I should reach my home, and rest in my bed, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and more, that I should be a "partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." It is not always that one feels that but I would have you never rest satisfied till you do, till you know your meetness, till you are conscious of it; until, moreover, you are panting to be gone, because you feel that you have powers which never can be satisfied short-of heaven—powers which heaven only can employ.

One more reflection lingers behind. There are some of you here that cannot be thought by the utmost charity of judgment, to be "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Ah! if a wicked man should go to heaven without being converted, heaven would be no heaven to him. Heaven is not adapted for sinners; it is not a place for them. If you were to take a Hottentot who has long dwelt at the equator up to where the Esquimaux are dwelling, and tell him that you would show him the aurora, and all the glories of the North Pole, the poor wretch could not appreciate them; he would say, "It is not the element for me; it is not the place where I could rest happy! And if you were to take, on the other

hand, some dwarfish dweller in the north, down to the region where trees grow to a stupendous height, and where the spices give their balmy odours to the gale, and bid him live there under the torrid zone, he could enjoy nothing; he would say, "This is not the place for me, because it is not adapted to my nature." Or if you were to take the vulture, that has never fed on anything but carrion, and put it into the noblest dwelling you could make for it, and feed it with the daintiest meals, it would not be happy because it is not food that is adapted for it. And you, sinner, you are nothing but a carrion vulture; nothing makes you happy but sin, you do not want too much psalm singing, do you? Sunday is a dull day to you; you like to get it over, you do not care about your Bible; you would as soon there should be no Bible at all, You find that going to a meeting-house or a church is very dull work indeed. Oh then you will not be troubled with that in eternity; do not agitate yourself. If you love not God, and die as you are, you shall go to your own company, you shall go to your jolly mates, you shall go to your good fellows; those who have been your mates on earth shall be your mates for ever; but you shall go to the Prince of those good fellows, unless you repent and be converted. Where God is you cannot come. It is not an element suited to you. As well place a bird at the bottom of the sea, or a fish in the air, as place an ungodly sinner in heaven. What is to be done then? You must have a new nature. I pray God to give it to you. Remember if now you feel your need of a Savior, that is the beginning of the new nature. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ;" cast yourselves simply on him, trust in nothing but his blood, and then the new nature shall be expanded, and you shall be made meet by the Holy Spirit's operations to be a "partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." There is many a man who has come into this house of prayer, many a man is now present, who has come in here a rollicking fellow, fearing neither God nor devil. Many a man has come from the ale house up to this place. If he had died then, where would his soul have been? But the Lord that very night met him, There are trophies of that grace present here to-night. You can say, "Thanks be to the Father, who hath brought us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." And if God has done that for some, why cannot he do it for others? Why need you despair, O poor sinner? If thou art here to-night, the worst sinner out of hell, remember, the gate of mercy stands wide open, and Jesus bids thee come, Conscious of thy guilt, flee, flee to

him. Look to his cross, and thou shalt find pardon in his veins, and life in his death.

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## The Spies

And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. - Numbers 13:32

And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes. And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. - Numbers 14:6-7

The unbelief of the children of Israel, prompted them to send spies into Canaan. God had told them that it was a good land, and he had promised to drive out their enemies, they ought therefore to have marched forward with all confidence to possess the promised heritage. Instead of this, they send twelve princes to spy out the land, and "alas, for human nature," ten of these were faithless, and only two true to the Lord. Read over the narrative, and mark the ill effect of the lying message, and the holy boldness of the true spies.

Now I must take up my parable. The land of Canaan is a picture of religion; I do not think it was ever intended to be a picture of heaven, for there are no Canaanites in heaven, certainly in heaven there are no sons of Anak, no giants to be driven out, no walled cities, and no kings with chariots of iron. Canaan is, however, a very excellent picture of religion. The children of Israel must stand this morning as the representatives of the great mass of mankind. The great mass of mankind never try for themselves what religion is; they neither search our sacred books, nor taste and try our religion. But this is what they do; they consider those who make a profession of religion as spies who have entered the land, and they look upon our character and our conduct as the message which we bring back to them. The ungodly man does not read his Bible in order to discover whether the religion of Christ is holy and beautiful, no, he reads the living Bible—Christ's church—and if the church is inconsistent

he condemns the Bible, though the Bible is never to be accountable for the sins of those who profess to believe it. Ungodly men of course do not come and by repentance and faith make a trial of the love of Christ; they do not enter into covenant with the Lord Jesus, or else they would soon discover that it is a good land that floweth with milk and honey; but instead thereof they stand still, and they say, "Let be, let us see what these Christians make of it. Do *they* find it to be a happy thing? Does it succor *them* in their hour of trouble? Does it comfort *them* in the midst of their trials?" And if they find that our report is a gloomy or an unholy one, they turn aside, and they say, "It is not a good land; we will not enter into it, for its difficulties are great, but its enjoyments are few."

Beloved brethren and friends, to put the parable as simply as I can, I am about to make out every Christian man and woman here to be a spy who has entered into the good land of religion, and who by his conduct and conversation brings either an evil or a good report of this good land, and either moves the world to murmur at and to despise religion, or else inspires it with a holy dread of goodness, and something of a longing after a portion therein.

But I shall begin with a word of caution. In the first place I shall notice that *the men of the world are not to be excused for their folly in trusting to mere report from other persons*. Then secondly, I shall endeavor to describe *the evil reporters*, the evil spies, which are in the camp; then we will mention some *good spies*, who bring a good report of the land; and, in conclusion, bring a *few weighty reasons to bear upon Christian men, why they should act like Caleb and Joshua, and bring up a good report of the land*.

I. In the first place, then, THE UNGODLY WORLD ARE NOT TO BE EXCUSED for that, which must nevertheless be admitted to be a very natural matter, namely, that INSTEAD OF INVESTIGATING RELIGION FOR THEMSELVES, THEY USUALLY TRUST TO THE REPRESENTATION OF OTHERS.

The worldly man looks at a Christian to see whether his religion be *joyful*. "By this," says he, "shall I know whether there is that in religion which



will make a man glad. If I see the professor of it with a joyous countenance, then I will believe it to be a good thing." But hark, sir! hast thou any right to put it to that test? Is not God to be counted true, even before we have proved him? And hath he not declared himself, "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile?" Doth not the Scripture itself declare that godliness is profitable, not only for this life, but for that which is to come—that it hath the blessing of two worlds, the blessing of this world below the sky and of that upper world above the stars? Would you not know from Scripture if you were to take the Bible and read it, that everywhere the Christian is commanded to rejoice, because it is comely for him? "Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart." "Rejoice evermore." "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, rejoice." Remember you have no right to put the joyfulness of religion to any test short of your own experience, for you are bound to believe God on his naked word. It is not for you to stand still till you can see it to be true. It is your duty to believe your Maker when he declares that the ways of religion are pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

Again, you say you will test the *holiness* of Christ's religion by the holiness of Christ's people. You have no right, I reply, to put the question to any such test as that. The proper test that you ought to use is to try it yourselves—to "taste and see that the Lord is good." By tasting and seeing you will prove his goodness, and by the same process you must prove the holiness of his gospel. Your business is to seek Christ crucified for yourselves, not to take the representation of another man concerning the power of grace to subdue corruption and to sanctify the heart. Your business is yourselves to enter into its valleys and pluck its grapes; yourselves to climb its hills and see its inhabitants. Inasmuch as God has given you a Bible, he intended you to read it, and not to be content with reading *men*. There is his Holy Spirit; you are not to be content with feelings that rise through the conversation of others, your only power to know true religion is, by having that Spirit operating upon your own heart, that you may yourself know what is the power of religion. You have no right to judge religion from anything extra or external from itself. And if you despise it before you have tried it yourself, you must stand confessed in this world as a fool, and in the next world as a criminal. And

yet this is so with most men. If you hear a man rail at the Bible, you can usually conclude that he never reads it. And you may be quite certain if you hear a man speak against religion, that he never knew what religion was. True religion, when once it takes possession of the heart, never allows a man to quarrel with it. That man will call Christ his best friend who knows Christ at all. We have found many who have despised the enjoyments of this world, but we never found one who turned from religion with disgust or with satiety, after having once enjoyed it. No, remember my hearers, if you take your religion from other people, and are led by the example of professors to discard religion, you are nevertheless guilty of your own blood. For God has not left you to the uncertain chart of men's characters; he has given you his own Word; a more sure word and testimony, whereunto you do well if ye take heed.

It will be in vain for you to say at the day of judgment, "Such and such a man was inconsistent, therefore I despised religion." Your excuse will then be discovered to be idle, for you shall have to Confess, that in other respects, you did not take another man's opinion. In business, in the cares of this life, you were independent enough; in your political opinions you did not pin your faith to any man's coat; and, therefore, it shall be said of you at last, you had enough independence of mind to steer your own course even against the example of others, in business, in politics, and such like things; you certainly had enough of mental vigor, if you had chosen to have done so, to have stood out against the inconsistency of professors, anal to have searched for yourselves. If all Christ's church were inconsistent, so long as there is a Bible upon earth, you could have no excuse in the day of judgment; for Christ was not inconsistent, and you are not asked to follow Christ's followers—you are asked to follow Christ himself. Until then you can find a flaw in *his* character, a mistake in *his* conduct, you have no right to fling the inconsistency of his followers in the teeth of Christ, nor to turn from him because his disciples forsake him and flee. To their own Master they stand or fall; they must bear their own burden, and you must bear yours too. "Every man shall bear his own burden," saith Scripture, "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account for the things which we have done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil" You will not be accountable for another man's sins, but for your own; and if

another man by his sin has brought reproach upon Christ, still it shall be no excuse for you if you do not follow him wholly, in the midst of an evil generation.

II. With that, by way of caveat and guard, I shall now bring forth THE BAD SPIES. I wish that the men mentioned in the text, had been the only spies who have brought an evil report: it would have been a great mercy if the plague that killed them, had killed all the rest of the same sort; but alas! the breed, I am afraid, will never be extinct, and as long as the world endureth, there will be some professors who bring up an evil report of the land.

But now let me bring forth the evil spies. Remember, these spies are to be judged, not by what they say, but by *what they do*; for to a worldling, words are nothing—*acts* are everything. The reports that we bring of our religion are not the reports of the pulpit, not the reports that we utter with our lips, but the report of our daily life, speaking in our own houses, and the every day business of life.

Well, first, I produce a man who brings up an evil report of the land, and you will see at once that he does so, for *he is of a dull and heavy spirit*. If he preaches, he takes this text—"Through much tribulation we must inherit the kingdom." Somehow or other, he never mentions God's people, without calling them God's *tried* children. As for joy in the Lord, he looks upon it with suspicion. "Lord, what a wretched land is this!" is the very height of poetry to him. He could sing that always. He is always in the valley, where the mists are hovering: he never climbs the mountain's brow, to stand above the tempests of this life. He was gloomy before he made a profession of religion—since then he has become more gloomy still. See him at home. Ask the children what they think of their father's religion. they think they could wish their father was anything except religious. "Father will not let us laugh," they say; "he pulls the blinds down on the Sunday; he tries to make us as dark and miserable as he can on the Sabbath day;" he thinks it his duty as a strict Sabbatarian, to make the Sabbath the greatest day of bondage out of the whole seven. Ask his wife what she thinks of religion: she says, "I do not know much about it myself, but I wish my husband were be little more cheerful."

"Nay, but is it his religion that makes him miserable?" "I do not know what it is," she says, "but I know when he is most miserable, he is generally most religious." Hear him pray: when he is on his knees he gives a long list of his trials and troubles; but he never says at the end, "More are they that are for us than all they that are against us." He usually dwells upon the valley of Baca, and about crying so much that he makes it a well. He never goes on to say, "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeared before God." No, it is just the black part of the story. If you want to see this brother in perfection, you must see him when he is talking to a young convert. The young man is full of joy and gladness, for he has found the Saviour, and, like a young fledgling that has just taken wing, he delights to fly about in the sunshine, and chirp merrily in the joy of his faith. "Ah!" says the old Christian, "the black ox has not trodden on your toes yet; you will have more troubles than you dream of." Old Mr. Timorous was a friend of mine: did you ever hear what he said to Christian, when he met him on his journey? I will tell you the same. "The lions; the lions! the lions!" he cries; however says "The lions are chained." "The giants! the giants! the giants!" he exclaims. He never saith, "He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young." He takes always the dreary side of the question, bringing up an ill report of the land. And, do you know, some of these people are so proud of their ill report, that they form themselves into a little knot, and they cannot hear any preacher except his face he of an extreme length, and except he has studied the dictionary to find all the most lugubrious terms, and except he appear unto men to fast, just like the Pharisees of old. Now, I do not hesitate to say that these men are evil spies. Far be it from us to mask the great fact that religion does entail tribulation, and that a Christian, like everybody else, must expect in this world to have trouble, for man is born to it as the sparks fly upward; but it is as false as God is true, that religion makes men miserable. So sure as God is good, his religion is good. and as God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works, religion is an atmosphere in which those tender mercies play, and the sea in which his lovingkindness swims. Oh, come, ye dreary professors, take away those storm-clouds, and wreath a few rainbows on your brow. Come, now, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast; take those harps from the willows; down with them, and now try if your unaccustomed fingers

cannot make them alive with melody. And if you will not do it, and cannot do it, permit me to bear my testimony. I can say, concerning Christ's religion, if I had to die like a dog, and had no hope whatever of immortality, if I wanted to lead a happy life, let me serve my God with all my heart; let me be a follower of Jesus and walk in his footsteps, for never was there a truer word spoken than that of Solomon, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." It is a land that floweth with milk and honey; there are clusters even on earth too heavy for one man to carry; there are fruits that have been found so rich that even angel lips have never been sweetened with more luscious wine; there are joys to be had here so fair that even cates ambrosial and the nectared wine of Paradise can scarce excel the sweets of satisfaction that are to be found in the earthly banquets of the Lord.

Perhaps, however, this poor man that I have just sent off is to be pitied. Not so the next one, for he is a rascal indeed. See him! he comes forward as Mr. Meekface, making a great profession of religion. How he mouths the hymns! When he stands up to pray, with what a spiritual kind of voice he prays. Nothing carnal about his voice! He is among the Christian people a great leader. He can preach sermons by the yard. He can dissect doctrines by the hour. There is not a metaphysical point in all our theology that he does not understand,

"He can a hair divide,  
Betwixt the west and north-west side."

His understanding is, in his own opinion, infinite; and he makes very boastful pretensions to piety. Everybody says when they see him in his good frames in chapel or elsewhere, "What a dear good man he is!" You follow him to business. He will not swear, but he will lie. He won't out-and-out rob, but he will cheat. He will not curse a man to his face, but he will do worse—he will speak ill of him behind his back. You watch him! He, if he could find a drunkard in the street, would upbraid him, and talk to him so proudly against the sin of intoxication, but he himself very seldom knows his own way upstairs to bed; only that is in a quiet way, therefore nobody sees it, and he is thought to be a very reputable member of society. Don't you know any such people? I hope you do not; but I have

met with them. There is a great stock of them still living; men that make grand professions, and their lives are as much opposed to their professions, as hell is opposed to heaven. Now what does the world say of religion when they see these people? They say at once, "Well, if this be religion, we had better have none of it." Says the business man, "I could not do what So-and-so does, it is true, I could not sing out of his hymn book, but I could not keep his cash book." We have known many men say; "I could not make so long a prayer as So-and-so, and could not make out my invoices in the dishonest way he does." We have met with worldly men who are far more honest as tradesman and professional men than persons who make a profession of religion. And we have known on the other hand, men who have made the greatest profession, indulging in all kinds of evil. Horrible shall be that man's fate, who thus ruins other men's souls by bringing up a bad report of the land. But, oh! I beseech you, my hearers, if any of you have seen such professors, let the righteous stand out to-day, like Joshua and Caleb of old; let the Church stand before you and rend its garments, while it entreats you not to believe the lying and slanderous reports of such men. For, indeed, religion is holy; as Christ is holy, even so do his people desire to be holy. And the grace of God which bringeth salvation is pure and peaceful; it produces in men things that are holy and of good report, things that magnify God, and that make human nature appear glorious. But scarcely do I need to tell you that, in your own circle while you have met with hypocrites, you have met with men whom you could not doubt. Yes, you have sometimes seen even in your evil company, a man who was like an angel; you have felt as Satan did when Abdiel, the faithful among the faithless, stood forth, and would not turn a rebel to his God.

"Abashed the devil stood, and felt how awful goodness was"

I beseech you therefore, do not believe the ill report of the hypocrite, and the unholy man.

But there is a third class of professors who bring up a bad report of the land. And this I am afraid will affect us all in some measure we must all plead guilty to it. The Christian man, although he endeavors uniformly to walk according to the law of Christ, finds still another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and consequently there are times

when his witness is not consistent. Sometimes this witness is, "The Gospel is holy" for he is holy himself. But, alas with the very best of men, there are times when our witness contradicts our faith. When you see an angry Christian—and such a thing may be seen—and when you meet with a Christian who is proud, and such a thing has been known, when you catch a Christian overtaken in a fault, as you may sometimes do, then his testimony is not consistent. He contradicts then what he has at other times declared by his acts.

And here, I say again, I fear that all of us must plead guilty. We have sometimes by our actions put in words which seem to conflict with the general testimony of our lives. Oh! brothers and sisters, do not believe all that you see in us, and if sometimes you see a Christian man betrayed into a hasty or a wrong expression, do not set it down to our religion, set it down to our poor fallen humanity. If sometimes you should catch us overtaken by a fault, and we trust it shall be rarely enough you so see us, abuse *us*, but do not abuse our Master: say what you will concerning *us*, but do not, we beseech you, impute it to our religion, for saints are sinners still, and the most holy men have still to say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." But we do beseech you, when the madness of sin deludes us, do not believe the maunderings of our madness, but have regard to the general testimony of our lives, and that, we trust, you will find to be consistent with the gospel of Christ. *I* could bear to be abused, but I should not like to have the Master abused. I would rather have it believed that I was not a Christian at all, than allow any one to say that any faults I have were caused by my religion. No, Christ is holy; the gospel is pure and spotless. If at any time we seem to contradict that witness, do not believe us, I beseech you, but look into the matter for yourselves, for indeed it is a good land, a land which floweth with milk and honey.

III. Thus I have brought forth the evil spies who bring up a bad report. and now, thank God we have some GOOD SPIES too. But we will let them speak. Come Joshua and Caleb, we want your testimony; though you are dead and gone, you have left children behind you; and they, still grieved as you were at the evil report, rend their clothes, but they boldly stand to it that the land they have passed through is an exceeding good land.

One of the best spies I have ever met with is an *aged Christian*. I remember to have heard him stand up and tell what he thought of religion. He was a blind old man, who for twenty years had not seen the light of the sun. His grey locks hung from his brow, and floated over his shoulders. He stood up at the table of the Lord, and thus addressed us:- "Brethren and sisters, I shall soon be taken from you; in a few more months I shall gather up my feet upon my bed, and sleep with my fathers. I have not the tongue of the learned nor the mind of the eloquent but I desire before I go, to bear one public testimony to my God. Fifty and six years have I served him, and I have never found him once unfaithful. I can say 'Surely goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of my life, and not one good thing hath failed of all the Lord God has promised.' "

And there stood that old man, tottering into his tomb, deprived of the light of heaven naturally, and yet having the light of heaven in a better sense shining into his soul; and though he could not look upon us, yet did he turn himself, and seemed to say, "Young people, trust God in early life, for I have not to regret that I sought him too soon. I have only to mourn that so many of my years ran to waste." There is nothing that more tends to strengthen the faith of the young believer than to hear the veteran Christian, covered with scars from the battle testifying that the service of his Master is a happy service, and that if he could have served any other master he would not have done so, for his service was pleasant and his wages everlasting joy.

Take the testimony of the *sufferer*. "Behold that fragile form of delicate transparent beauty, whose light-blue eye and hectic cheek are lit by the bale-fires of decline, all droopingly she lieth, as a dew-laden lily, her flaxen tresses, rashly luxuriant, dank with unhealthy moisture." I have seen her when her eyes were sunk, when she could scarce be lifted out of the bed, when the frame was wearied of life; and I have seen her quite complacent, as she took her Bible from beneath her pillow and read, "Yea, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies." I have sat down and spoken to her, and have said to her, "Well, you have been in this sad place these many months. Do you find religion cheers you now?"



"Oh, Sir," she has said, "what could I do without it? I cannot leave this bed; but it has been to me a couch of joy, where Christ has spread a banquet. He has made my bed in all my sickness. he has put his left hand under my head, and his right hand has embraced me; he has given me joy in my sorrows, and has prepared me to face death with a calm and unflinching countenance." Such a case bears witness to the Master. Like that of the gray-headed saint, it is an excellent report of this good land.

But we need not look to sick beds and to grey heads for the only witness. We know a Christian merchant; he is immersed in the cares of this life, and yet he always finds time to prepare for a world that is to come. He has as much business as any man in the city, and yet family prayer is never neglected. And perhaps you find him serving the office of civic magistrate—as was the case in one instance—and yet even on the day of banquet, he rises from his chair, in order that family worship may still be kept up in his house. He is known in business as one who is willing to help little tradesmen. He likes good securities, as other people do; but he will sometimes run a risk to help a rising man. When you go to him, you find him a sharp man of business, he is not to be taken in; but at the same time you will find him a man that will not take you in. You may trust him. Whatever the transaction may be, you have no need to look over the invoice if he has had anything to do with it. There will be no mistake there; or if there be a mistake, it will be palpably a mistake, and immediately confessed with the greatest possible sorrow, for he is upright in his dealings. There has come sometimes in his case an unhappy crisis, and when houses were tumbling, and bankrupts were as common as leaves upon the trees he was not disturbed and distracted like other men, for his confidence was in his God, and his trust in the God of Jacob. He had some anxiety, but he had more faith. and when his prosperity returned to him, he dedicated part of his substance unto the Lord, not in a noisy way, so that it might appear in a report that So-and-so gave a hundred a year to a society, but he gave five hundred and nobody knew of it. Men said of him in the Exchange and in the Market, "If there is a Christian, it is that man." When they saw him, they said, "There is something in religion. We have watched him; we have never found him trip or turn aside. We have always found him the same upright character, fearing his God, and fearing no man." Such a man brings up a good report

of the land. I may talk here Sunday after Sunday, and every day in the week elsewhere, but I cannot preach in so forcible a way as you can, who by your actions are preaching to the world. Ah! and I cannot preach so well as those who are servants, who by their holy action in the midst of trial and difficulty have an opportunity to show what grace can do in the heart. Those are good spies who bring up a good report of the land.

And, my sisters, let me say a word to you. It is possible for you, too, to bring up a good report; not by neglecting your households in order to attend to visiting societies. Let visiting societies be attended to. God be thanked for them, for they are among the best institutions of our times. But I have known some people who would have been a great deal better employed in scrubbing their dressers, and seeing their servants wash up the tea things, than going out visiting the sick from house to house; for their house has run to riot, and their families have been quite out of order, because the wife, like a foolish woman, was plucking everything down at home, while trying to do good abroad. We have known many true sisters of mercy, who are really blessed among women, and God shall bless them abundantly. We have known others who very seldom go out visiting the sick, but they are at home ordering their household. We have known an ungodly husband converted by a godly wife. I remember to have heard an instance of a man who had a wife of so excellent a disposition, that though he was a worldly, gay man, he used to boast in his gay company that he had got the best wife on earth. Said he, "You cannot put her into a passion. I go home late at night, in all sorts of trim, but she always receives me meekly, and I feel ashamed of myself every time I see her, for her holiness rebukes me. You may put her to any test you like, you will find her the best of women." "Well," said they, "let us all go to supper with you to-night." They did. In they rushed. She did not hint there was nothing in the house, though there was very little; but she and her maid set to with all their might, although it was past twelve o'clock, and very soon had supper, and she waited on them with all the grace of a duchess, seeming as glad to see them as if they were her friends, and had come at the most opportune time. And they began to tell how it was they had come, and asked her how it was she could bear it so patiently. She said, "God has given me a husband. I was not converted before I was married, but ever since I was converted, my first endeavor

has been to bring my husband to know Jesus. and I am sure," said she, "he will never be brought to do so except by kindness." Her husband, through these words, after the company had gone, confessed how wrong he had acted to her; his heart was touched; next Sabbath he went to the house of God with her, and they became a happy couple, rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts. She was a good spy, and brought a good report of the land. I doubt not there are many women whose names will never be heard of on earth who will receive the Master's commendation at last, "She hath done what she could;" and when you have done what you can for Christ, by holy, patient, quiet meekness, you are good spies; you have brought a good report of the land.

And you servants, you can do the same. A religious servant girl ought to be the best servant anywhere. A religious shoemaker ought to make shoes better than anybody else. If there be a religious man who is set to clean knives, he ought to take care that he does not take the edge off. You know the negroes' piety in America is such, that a religious negro is worth many dollars more than another and always sells well; so that the masters like them to get religious because they are the men that do not rebel, but submit meekly and patiently, and the men who, finding themselves slaves, much as they may hate their position, yet regard one to be their master who is higher than all, and "not with eye service as men pleasers, but with singleness of heart," they endeavor to serve God.

IV. And now I want to press with all my might upon every professing Christian here, **THE GREAT NECESSITY OF BRINGING OUT A UNIFORMLY GOOD TESTIMONY CONCERNING RELIGION.** Brethren, I feel persuaded if Christ were here to-day, there are some of us who love him so well that we would turn our own cheek to the smiter, rather than he should be smitten. One of Napoleon's officers loved him so well that when a cannon ball was likely to smite the emperor, he threw himself in the way, in order that he might die as a sacrifice for his master. Oh Christian, you would do the same, I think. If Christ were here you would run between him and insult, yea, between him and death. Well, then, I am sure you would not wantonly expose Christ; but remember, every unguarded word you use, every inconsistent act puts a slur on Christ. The world, you know, does not find fault with you—they lay it all to your

Master. If you make a slip to-morrow they will not say, "That is John Smith's human nature;" they will say, "That is John Smith's religion." They know better, but they will be sure to say it; they will be sure they put all the mischief at the door of Christ. Now, if you could bear the blame yourself you might bear it manfully; but do not allow Christ to bear the blame—do not suffer his escutcheon to be tarnished—do not permit his banner to be trampled in the dust.

Then there is another consideration. You must remember, if you do wrong the world will be quite sure to notice you. The world carries two bags: in the bag at the back they put all the Christian's virtues—in the bag in front they put all our mistakes and sins. They never think of looking at the virtues of holy men; all the courage of martyrs and all the fidelity of confessors, and all the holiness of saints, is nothing to them; but our iniquities are ever before them. Please to recollect, that wherever you are as a Christian, the eyes of the world are upon you; the Argus eyes of an evil generation follow you everywhere. If a church is blind the world is not. It is a common proverb, "As sound asleep as a church," and a very true one, for most churches are sound asleep; but it would be a great falsehood if anyone were to say, "As sound asleep as the world," for the world is never asleep. Sleeping is left to the church. And remember, too, that the world always wears magnifying glasses to look at Christians' faults. If a man trips who makes no profession, oh! it is nothing—you never hear of it; let a minister do it, let a Christian professor do it, and then comes out the magnifying glass. It is nothing in anybody else, but it is a great sin in us. There are two codes of morality in the world, and it is very right there should be. If we make profession to be God's children, and to have God's grace in our hearts, it is no more wrong in the world to expect more of us than of others than it is for a gardener to expect his plants to grow more quickly on a hot-bed and under a glass-shade than he would out of doors in the cold frost. If we have more privileges, and more culture, and make more profession, we ought to live up to them, and the world is quite right in expecting us to do so.

There is another consideration I must offer you before I have done. Recollect if you do not bring a good testimony for your religion, an evil testimony will defeat a great deal of good. All the saints in a church but

one may be faithful to Christ, and the world will not honor the church for it; but let one professor in that church turn aside to sin, and you will hear of it for many a day. It is even so in nature. Take the days in the year. The sun rises and shines upon us, and we do not note it; all things continue as they were: the stars smile sweetly by night, and the day and night roll on in quiet: but there comes one day, a day of thunder and lightning, a day of earthquake and storm, and it is put on the rolls of our history that such-and-such a remarkable day occurred at such-and-such a time. Why not note the good day? But so it is. The world will only note the evil. You may cross through a country, and you will notice a hundred fair rivers, like silver streams threaded with emeralds running through the pastures, who hears the sound of their waters, as they flow gently to the sea? But there is one precipitous rock, and a waterfall dashes there; you may hear that half a mile off. We never hear anything about the river St. Lawrence, in all its lengths and breadths, it is only the falls of Niagara that we hear of. And so the Christian may flow on in a steady course of life, unseen, unheard; but you are sure to hear of him, if he makes a fall. Be watchful, therefore; your Master cometh. Be watchful: the enemy is at hand even now. O may the Holy Spirit sanctify you wholly, that you may abound in every good work, to the glory of God!

As for you who fear not God, remember, if Christians do sin, that shall not be an excuse for you. Suppose a man you are dealing with says to you, "I cheated you, but I did not make any profession of being honest." You would tell him he was a confirmed rogue. Or if a man were taken before a magistrate, and were to say, "You need not put me in a prison, I never made a profession of being anything but a thief. I never said I would not break into people's chambers and get at their plate baskets!" The magistrate would say, "You speak honestly, but you are by your own confession a great rogue, and I will transport you for life, and you shall never have a ticket of leave." It will be of no use for you at the last day, to say that you never made a profession of wanting to go to heaven or to escape hell, of leaving sin and trusting in Christ. If you never made a profession of serving God, you may rest assured he will have short work with you. You have made no profession. O there is no judgment required. Depart! Thou didst make no profession of loving me, and now thou shalt have no possession of my glory. Depart, accursed, into everlasting fire.

May the Lord deliver us from that, for Jesus' sake.

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## **Spiritual Liberty**

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. - 2 Corinthians 3:17

Liberty is the birthright of every man. He may be born a pauper; he may be a foundling; his parentage may be altogether unknown; but liberty is his inalienable birthright. Black may be his skin; he may live uneducated and untaught; he may be poor as poverty itself; he may never have a foot of land to call his own; he may scarce have a particle of clothing, save a few rags to cover him; but, poor as he is, nature has fashioned him for freedom - he has a right to be free, and if he has not liberty, it is his birthright, and he ought not to be content until he wins it.

Liberty is the heirloom of all the sons and daughters of Adam. But where do you find liberty unaccompanied by religion? True it is that all men have a right to liberty, but it is equally true that you do not meet it in any country save where you find the Spirit of the Lord. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Thank God, this is a free country. This is a land where I can breathe the air and say it is untainted by the groan of a single slave; my lungs receive it, and I know there has never been mingled with its vapours the tear of a single slave woman shed over her child which has been sold from her. This land is the home of liberty. But why is it so? I take it, it is not so much because of our institutions as because the Spirit of the Lord is here - the spirit of true and hearty religion. There was a time, remember, when England was no more free than any other country, when men could not speak their sentiments freely, when kings were despots, when Parliaments were but a name. Who won our liberties for us? who have loosed our chains? Under the hand of God, I say, the men of religion - men like the great and glorious Cromwell, who would have liberty of conscience, or die - men who, if they could not reach kings'

hearts, because they were unsearchable in cunning, would strike kings low, rather than they would be slaves. We owe our liberty to men of religion, to men of the stern Puritanical school - men who scorned to play the craven and yield their principles at the command of man. And if we ever are to maintain our liberty (as God grant we may) it shall be kept in England by religious liberty - by religion. This Bible is the Magna Charta of old Britain. its truths, its doctrines have snapped our fetters, and they never can be riveted on again, whilst men, with God's Spirit in their hearts, go forth to speak its truths. In no other land, save where the Bible is unclasped - in no other realm, save where the gospel is preached, can you find liberty. Roam through other countries, and you speak with bated breath; you are afraid; you feel you are under an iron hand; the sword is above you; you are not free. Why? Because you are under the tyranny engendered by a false religion: you have not free Protestantism there; and it is not till Protestantism comes that there can be freedom. It is where the Spirit of the Lord is that there is liberty, and nowhere else. Men talk about being free: they describe model governments, Platonic republics, or Owenite paradises; but they are dreamy theorists; for there can be no freedom in the world, save, "where the spirit of the Lord is."

I have commenced with this idea, because I think worldly men ought to be told that if religion does not save them, yet it has done much for them - that the influence of religion has won them their liberties.

But the liberty of the text is no such freedom as this: it is an infinitely greater and better one. Great as civil or religious liberty may be, the liberty of my text transcendentally exceeds. There is a liberty, dear friends, which Christian men alone enjoy; for even in Great Britain there are men who taste not the sweet air of liberty. There are some who are afraid to speak as men, who have to cringe and fawn, and bow, and stoop, to any one; who have no will of their own, no principles, no voice, no courage, and who cannot stand erect in conscious independence. But he is the free man, whom the truth makes free. He who has grace in his heart is free; he cares for no one; he has the right upon his side; he has God within him - the indwelling Spirit of the Holy Ghost; he is a prince of the blood royal of heaven; he is a noble, having the true patent of nobility; he is one of God's elect, distinguished, chosen children, and he is not the man to bend, or

meanly cringe. No! - sooner would he walk the burning furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego - sooner would he be cast into the lion's den with Daniel, than yield a point of principle. He is a free man. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty" in its fullest, highest, and widest sense. God give you friends, to have that "Spirit of the Lord;" for without it, in a free country, ye may still be bondsmen; and where there are no serfs in body, ye may be slaves in soul. The text speaks of Spiritual liberty; and now I address the children of God. Spiritual liberty, brethren, you and I enjoy if we have "the Spirit of the Lord" within us. What does this imply? It implies that there was a time when we had not that Spiritual liberty - when we were slaves. But a little while ago all of us who now are free in Christ Jesus, were slaves of the devil: we were led captives at his will. We talked of free-will, but free will is a slave. We boasted that we could do what we pleased; but oh! what a slavish and dreamy liberty we had. It was a fancied freedom. We were slaves to our lusts and passions - slaves to sin; but now we are freed from sin; we are delivered from our tyrant; a stronger than he has cast out the strong man armed, and we are free.

Let us now examine a little more closely, in what our liberty consists.

I. And first, my friends, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" from the Bondage of Sin. Ah! I know I shall speak feelingly to some of you when I talk about the bondage of sin. You know what that misery means. Of all bondage and slavery in this world, there is none more horrible than the bondage of sin. Tell me of Israel in Egypt preparing their tale of bricks unsupplied with straw; tell me of the negro beneath the lash of his cruel task-master, and I confess it is a bondage fearful to be borne; but there is one far worse - the bondage of a convinced sinner when he is brought to feel the burden of his guilt; the bondage of a man when once his sins are baying him, like hounds about a weary stag; the bondage of a man when the burden of sin is on his shoulder - a burden too heavy for his soul to bear - a burden which will sink him for ever in the depths of everlasting torment, unless he doth escape from it. Methinks I see such a person. He hath ne'er a smile upon his face; dark clouds hath gathered on his brow; solemn and serious he stands; his very words are sighs; his songs are groans; his smiles are tears; and when he seems most happy, hot drops of



grief roll in burning showers, scalding furrows on his cheek. Ask him what he is, and he tells you he is "a wretch undone." Ask him how he is, and he confesses that he is "misery incarnate." Ask him what he shall be, and he says, "he shall be lost in flames for ever, and there is no hope." Behold him alone in his retirement: when he lays his head on his pillow, up he starts again: at night he dreams of torment, and by day he almost feels that of which he dreamed. Such is the poor convinced sinner under bondage. Such have I been in my days, and such have you been, friends. I speak to those who understand it. You have passed through that gloomy Slough of Despond; you have gone through that dark vale of penitence: you have been made to drink the bitter cup of repentance: and I know you will say, "Amen" when I declare that of all bondage this is the most painful - the bondage of the law, the bondage of corruption. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me" from it? But the Christian is free; he can smile now, though he wept before; he can rejoice now, whereas he lamented. "There is," he says, "no sin upon my conscience now; there is no crime upon my breast; I need not walk through the earth fearful of every shadow, and afraid of every man I meet, for sin is washed away; my spirit is no more guilty; it is pure, it is holy; there no longer resteth the frown of God upon me; but my Father smiles: I see his eyes - they are glancing love: I hear his voice - it is full of sweetness. I am forgiven, I am forgiven, I am forgiven I All hail, thou breaker of fetters! glorious Jesus! Ah! that moment when first the bondage passed away I Methinks I recollect it now. I saw Jesus on his cross before me; I thought on him, and as I mused upon his death and sufferings, methought I saw him cast a look on me; and when he gazed on me, I looked at him, and said,

"Jesus, lover of my soul,  
Let me to thy bosom fly."

He said "come," and I flew to him and clasped him; and when he let me go again, I wondered where my burden was. It was gone! There, in the sepulchre, it lay, and I felt light as air; like a winged sylph, I could fly over mountains of trouble and despair; and oh! what liberty and joy I had! I could leap with ecstasy for I had much forgiven, and now I was freed from sin." Beloved, this is the first liberty of the children of God. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" from the bondage of sin.

2. Liberty from the Penalty of Sin. - What is it? Eternal death - torment for ever - that is the sad penalty of sin. It is no sweet thing to fear that if I died now I might be in hell. It is no pleasant thought for me to stand here and believe that if I dropped down I must sink into the arms of Satan and have him for my tormentor. Why, sirs, it is a thought that would plague me; it is a thought that would be the bitterest curse of my existence. I would fain be dead and rotting in the tomb rather than walk the earth with the thought that I might suffer such a penalty as this. There are some of you here who know right well that if you die hell is your portion. You don't attempt to deny it; you believe the Bible, and there you read your doom, "He that believeth not shall be damned." You cannot put yourselves among believers. You are still without Christ. Have any of you been brought into such a condition that you believe yourself so full of sin that God could not be just if he did not punish you? Have you not felt that you have so rebelled against God by secret crimes, ay, I say, by secret crimes, and by open transgression, that if he did not punish you he must cease to be God and lay aside his sceptre? And then you have trembled, and groaned, and cried out under the fear of the penalty of sin. You thought when you dreamed, that you saw that burning lake whose waves are fire, and whose billows are ever blazing brimstone; and each day you walked the earth it was with fear and dread lest the next step should let you into the pit which is without a bottom. But Christian, Christian, you are free from the penalty of sin. Do you know it? Can you recognize the fact? You are free at this moment from the penalty of sin. Not only are you forgiven, but you never can be punished on account of your sins however great and enormous they may have been.

"The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in his crucified God;  
His pardon at once he receives,  
Salvation in full through his blood,"

and he never can be punished on account of sin. Talk of the punishment of a believer! there is not such a thing. The afflictions of this mortal life are not punishments for sin to Christians; they are fatherly chastisements, and not the punishments of a judge. For me there is no

hell; let it smoke and burn, if I am a believer I shall never have my portion there. For me there are no eternal racks, no torments, for if I am justified, I cannot be condemned. Jesus hath suffered the punishment in my stead, and God would be unjust if he were to punish me again; for Christ has suffered once, and satisfied justice for ever. When conscience tells me I am a sinner, I tell conscience I stand in Christ's place, and Christ stands in mine. True, I am a sinner; but Christ died for sinners. True, I deserve punishment; but if my ransom died, will God ask for the debt twice? Impossible! He has cancelled it. There never was, and never shall be one believer in hell. We are free from punishment, and we never need quake on account of it. However horrible it may be - If it is eternal, as we know it is - it is nothing to us, for we never can suffer it. Heaven shall open its pearly portals to admit us; but hell's iron gates are barred for ever against every believer. Glorious liberty of the children of God!

3. But there is one fact more startling than both of these things, and I dare say some of you will demur to it; nevertheless it is God's truth, and if you don't like it, you must leave it! There is liberty from the guilt of sin. This is the wonder of wonders. The Christian is positively not guilty any longer the moment he believes. Now, if Her Majesty in her goodness spares a murderer by giving him a free pardon, that man cannot be punished: but still he will be a guilty man; she may give him a thousand pardons, and the law cannot touch him, but still he will be guilty; the crime will always be on his head, and he will be branded as a murderer as long as he lives. But the Christian is not only delivered from the bondage and from the punishment, but he is positively absolved from the guilt. Now this is something at which you will stand amazed. You say, "What? is a Christian no more a sinner in God's sight?" I answer, he is a sinner as considered in himself; but in the person of Christ he is no more a sinner than the angel Gabriel; for snowy as are angelic wings, and spotless as are cherubic robes, an angel cannot be more pure than the poor blood-washed sinner when he is made whiter than snow. Do you understand how it is that the very guilt of the sinner is taken away? Here I stand today a guilty and condemned traitor; Christ comes for my salvation, he bids me heave my cell, "I will stand where you are; I will be your substitute; I will be the sinner; all your guilt is to be imputed to me; I will die for it, I will suffer for it; I will have your sins." Then stripping himself

of his robes, he says, "There, put them on; you shall be considered as if you were Christ; you shall be the righteous one. I will take your place, you take mine." Then he casts around me a glorious robe of perfect righteousness; and when I behold it, I exclaim, "Strangely, my soul, art thou arrayed, with my elder brother's garments on." Jesus Christ's crown is on my head, his spotless robes are round my loins, and his golden sandals are the shoes of my feet. And now is there any sin? The sin is on Christ; the righteousness is on me. Ask for the sinner, Justice! Let the voice of Justice cry, "Bring forth the sinner!" The sinner is brought. Who doth the executioner lead forth? It is the incarnate Son of God. True, he did not commit the sin; he was without fault; but it is imputed to him: he stands in the sinner's place. Now Justice cries, "Bring forth the righteous, the perfectly righteous." Whom do I see? Lo, the Church is brought; each believer is brought. Justice says, "Are these perfectly righteous?" "Yes they are. What Christ did is theirs; what they did is laid on Christ; his righteousness is theirs; their sins are his." I appeal to you, ye ungodly. This seems strange and startling, does it not? You have set it down to hyper-calvinism, and you laugh at it. Set it down for what you please, sirs. God has set it up as his truth; he has made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. And now, if I am a true believer, I stand here freed from every sin. There is not a crime against me in the book of God; it is blotted out for ever; it is cancelled; and not only can I never be punished, but I have nothing to be punished for. Christ has atoned for my sins, and I have received his righteousness. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

4. Furthermore, the Christian man, whilst delivered from the guilt and punishment of sin, is likewise delivered from the dominion of it. Every living man before he is converted, is a slave to lust. Profane men glory in free living and free thinking. They call this free living - a full glass, a Bacchanalian revel, shouting, wantonness, chambering. - Free living, sir! Let the slave hold up his fetters and jingle them in my ears, and say, "This is music, and I am free." The man is a poor maniac. Let the man chained in his cell, the madman of Bethlehem, tell me he is a king, and grin a horrible smile; I say, "Ah, poor wretch, I know wherefore he counteth that he is a king; he is demented, and is mad." So it is with the worldling who says he is free. Free sir! you are a slave. You think you are

happy; but at night, when you lay yourself upon your bed, how many times have you tossed from side to side sleepless and ill at ease; and when you awaked have you not said, "Ah! that yesterday - that yesterday !" And though you plunged into another day of sin, that "yesterday," like a hell-dog, barked at you, and followed at your heels. You know it, sir, - sin is a bondage and a slavery. And have you ever tried to get rid of that slavery? "Yes," you say, "I have." But I will tell you what has been the end of it. When you have tried, you have bound your fetters firmer than ever; you have riveted your chains. A sinner without grace attempting to reform him self is like Sisyphus rolling the stone up hill, which always comes down with greater force. A man without grace attempting to save himself, is engaged in as hopeless a task as the daughters of Danaus, when they attempted to fill a vast vessel with bottomless buckets. He has a bow without a string, a sword without a blade, a gun without powder. He needs strength. I grant you, he may produce a hollow reformation; he may earth up the volcano, and sow flowers around its crater; but when it once begins to stir again, it shall move the earth away, and the hot lava shall roll over all the fair flowers which he had planted, and devastate both his works and his righteousness. A sinner without grace is a slave: he cannot deliver himself from his sins. But not so the Christian! Is he a slave to his sin? Is a true-born heir of God a slave? Oh, no. He does not sin, because he is born of God; he does not live in uncleanness, because he is an heir of immortality. Ye beggars of the earth may stoop to deeds of wrong, but princes of heaven's blood must follow acts of right. Ye poor worldlings, mean and pitiful wretches in God's sight - -ye may live in dishonesty and unrighteousness, but the heir of heaven cannot; he loves his Lord; he is free from the power of sin; his work is righteousness, and his end his everlasting life. We are free from the dominion of sin.

5. Once more: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" in all holy acts of love - liberty from a slavish fear of law. Many people are honest because they are afraid of the policeman. Many are sober because they are afraid of the eye of the public. Many persons are seemingly religious because of their neighbours. There is much virtue which is like the juice of the grape - it has to be squeezed before you get it; it is not like the generous drop of the honeycomb, distilling willingly and freely. I am bold to say, that if a man be destitute of the grace of God, his works are only

works of slavery; he feels forced to do them. I know before I came into the liberty of the children of God, if I went to God's house, I went because I thought I must do it; if I prayed, it was because I feared some misfortune would happen in the day if I did not; if I ever thanked God for a mercy, it was because I thought I should not get another if I were not thankful; if I performed a righteous deed, it was with the hope that very likely God would reward me at last, and I should be winning some crown in heaven. A poor slave, a mere Gibeonite, hewing wood and drawing water. If I could have left off doing it, I should have loved to do so. If I could have had my will, there would have been no chapel-going for me, no religion for me - I would have lived in the world and followed the ways of Satan, if I could have done as I pleased. As for righteousness, it was slavery; sin would have been my liberty. But now, Christian, what is your liberty? What makes you come to the house of God to day?

"Love made your willing feet  
In swift obedience move."

What makes you bend your knee in prayer? It is because you like to talk with your Father who seeth in secret. What is it that opens your purses, and makes you give liberally? It is because you love the poor children of God, and you feel, so much being given to you, that it is a privilege to give something back to Christ. What is it that constrains you to live honestly, righteously, and soberly? Is it the rear of the jail? No; you might pull the jail down; you might annihilate the convict settlements; you might hurl all chains into the sea; and we should be just as holy as we are now. Some people say, "Then, sir, you mean to say that Christians may live as they like." I wish they could, sir. If I could live as I liked, I would, always live holily. If a Christian could live as he liked, he would always live as he ought. It is a slavery to him to sin; righteousness is his delight. Oh! if I could but live as I list, I would list to live as I ought. If I could but live as I would I would live as God commands me. The greatest happiness of a Christian is to be holy. It is no slavery to him. Put him where you will, he will not sin, Expose him to any temptation, if it were not for that evil heart still remaining, you would never find him sinning. Holiness is his pleasure; sin is his slavery. Ah! ye poor bondsmen who come to church and chapel because ye must; ah! ye poor slavish moralists that are honest

because of the gyves, and sober because of the prison; ah! ye poor slaves! We are not so; we are not under the law, but under grace. Call us Antinomians if you will; we will even glory in the scandalous title; we are freed from the law, but we are freed from it that we may obey it more than ever we did. The true-born child of God serves his Master more than ever he did. As old Erskine says: -

"Slight now his loving presence if they can;  
No, no; his conquering kindness leads the van.  
When everlasting love exerts the sway,  
They judge themselves most kindly bound to obey;  
Bound by redeeming love in stricter sense,  
Than ever Adam was in innocence."

6. But to conclude. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" from the Fear of Death. O death! how many a sweet cup hast thou made bitter. O death! how many a revel hast thou broken up. O death! how many a gluttonous banquet hast thou spoiled. O death! how many a sinful pleasure hast thou turned into pain. Take ye, my friends, the telescope this morning, and look through the vista of a few years, and what see you? Grim death in the distance grasping his scythe. He is coming, coming, coming; and what is behind him? Ay, that depends upon your own character. If ye are the sons of God, there is the palm-branch; if ye are not, ye know what followeth death - Hell follows him. O death! thy spectre hath haunted many a house where sin otherwise would have rioted. O death! thy chilly hand hath touched many a heart that was big with lust, and made it start affrighted from its crime. Oh! how many men are slaves to the fear of death. Half the people in the world are afraid to die. There are some madmen who can march up to the cannon's mouth; there are some fools who rush with bloody hands before their Maker's tribunal; but most men fear to die. Who is the man that does not fear to die? I will tell you. The man that is a believer. Fear to die! Thank God, I do not. The cholera may come again next summer - I pray God it may not; but if it does, it matters not to me: I will toil and visit the sick by night and by day, until I drop; and if it takes me, sudden death is sudden glory. And so with the weakest saint in this hall; the prospect of dissolution does not make you tremble. Sometimes you fear, but oftener you rejoice. You

sit down calmly and think of dying. What is death ? It is a low porch through which you stoop to enter heaven. What is life ? It is a narrow screen that separates us from glory, and death kindly removes it! I recollect a saying of a good old woman, who said, "Afraid to die, sir! I have dipped my foot in Jordan every morning before break fast for the last fifty years, and do you think I am afraid to die now ?" Die! beloved: why we die hundred of times; we "die daily ;" we die every morning; we die each night when we sleep; by faith we die; and so dying will be old work when we come to it. We shall say, "Ah, death! you and I have been old acquaintances; I have had thee in my bedroom every night; I have talked with thee each day; I have had the skull upon my dressing table; and I have oftentimes thought of thee. Death! thou art come at last, but thou art a welcome guest; thou art an angel of light, and the best friend I have had." Why, then, dread death; since there is no fear of God's leaving you when you come to die! Here I must tell you that anecdote of the good Welch lady, who, when she lay a-dying, was visited by her minister. He said to her, "Sister, are you sinking?" She answered him not a word, but looked at him with an incredulous eye. He repeated the question, "Sister, are you sinking ?" She looked at him again, as if she could not believe that he would ask such a question. At last, rising a little in the bed, she said, "Sinking! Sinking! Did you ever know a sinner sink through a rock? If I had been standing on the sand, I might sink; but, thank God I am on the Rock of Ages, and there is no sinking there." How glorious to die! Oh, angels, come! Oh, cohorts of the Lord of hosts, stretch, stretch your broad wings and lift us up from earth; O, winged seraphs, bear us far above the reach of these inferior things; but till ye come, I'll sing,

"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing -  
But gladly put off these garments of clay,  
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing;  
Since Jesus to glory, though death lead the way."

And now, dear friends, I have shown you as briefly as I can the negative side of this liberty. I have tried to tell you, as well as I could put it in a few words, what we are freed from. But there are two sides to such questions as this. There are some glorious things that we are free to. Not only are we freed from sin in every sense from the law, and from the fear of death;



but we are free to do something. I shall not occupy many moments, but shall just run over a few things we are free to; for, my brother Christians, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" and that liberty gives us certain rights and privileges.

In the first place, we are free to heaven's charter. There is heaven's charter - the Magna Charta - the Bible; and, my brother, you are free to it. There is a choice passage here: "When thou passest through the river I will be with thee, and the floods shall not overflow thee ;" thou art free to that. Here is another: "Mountains may depart, and hills may be removed; but my lovingkindness shall not depart:" you are free to that. Here is another: "Having love his own, he loved them unto the end." you are free to that. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Here is a chapter touching election: you are free to that if you are elect. Here is another, speaking of the non-condemnation of the righteous, and their justification; you are free to that. You are free to all that is in the Bible. Here is a never-failing treasure filled with boundless stores of grace. It is the bank of heaven: you may draw from it as much as you please without let or hindrance. Bring nothing with you, except faith. Bring as much faith as you can get, and you are welcome to all that is in the Bible. There is not a promise, not a word in it, that is not yours. In the depths of tribulation let it comfort you. Mid waves of distress let it cheer you. When sorrows surround thee, let it be thy helper. This is thy father's love-token: let it never be shut up and covered with dust. Thou art free to it - use, then, thy freedom.

Next, recollect that thou art free to the throne of grace. It is the privilege of Englishmen, that they can always send a petition to Parliament; and it is the privilege of a believer, that he can always send a petition to the throne of God. I am free to God's throne. If I want to talk to God tomorrow morning, I can. If to-night I wish to have conversation with my Master, I can go to him. I have a right to go to his throne. It matters not how much I may have sinned. I go and ask for pardon. It signifies nothing how poor I am - I go and plead his promise that he will provide all things needful. I have a right to go to his throne at all times - in midnight's darkest hour, or in noontide's heat. Where'er I am; if fate command me to the utmost verge of the wide earth, I have still constant admission to his

throne. Use that right, beloved - use that right. There is not one of you that lives up to his privilege. Many a gentleman will live beyond his income, spending more than he has coming in; but there is not a Christian that does that - I mean that lives up to his spiritual income. Oh, no! you have an infinite income - an income of promises - an income of grace; and no Christian ever lived up to his income. Some people say, "If I had more money I should have a larger house, and horses, and carriage, and so on." Very well and good; but I wish the Christian would do the same. I wish they would set up a larger house, and do greater thing. for God; look more happy, and take those tears away from their eyes.

"Religion never was designed  
To make our pleasures less."

With such stores in the bank, and so much in hand, that God gives you, you have no right to be poor. Up! rejoice! rejoice! The Christian ought to live up to his income, and not below it.

Then, if you have the "Spirit of the Lord," dear friends, you have a right to enter into the city. There are many of the freemen of the City of London here, I dare say, and that is a great privilege, very likely. I am not a freeman of London, but I am a freeman of a better city.

"Saviour, if of Zion's city,  
I, by grace, a member am,  
Let the world revile or pity,  
I will glory in thy name."

You have a right to the freedom of Zion's city, and you do not exercise it. I want to have a word with some of you. You are very good Christian people. but you have never joined the church yet. You know it is quite right, that he that believeth should be baptized; but I suppose you are afraid of being drowned, for you never come. Then the Lord's table is spread once every month, and it is free to all God's children, but you never approach it. Why is that? It is your banquet. I do not think if I were an alderman I should omit the city banquet; and being a Christian, I cannot omit the Christian banquet, it is the banquet of the saints.

"Ne'er did angels taste above  
Redeeming grace and dying love."

Some of you never come to the Lord's table; you neglect his ordinances. He says, "This do in remembrance of me." You have obtained the freedom of the city, but you won't take it up. You have a right to enter in through the gates into the city, but you stand outside. Come in brother; I will give you my hand. Don't remain outside the church any longer, for you have a right to come in.

Then, to conclude, you have the freedom of Jerusalem, the mother of us all. That is the best gift. We are free to heaven. When a Christian dies, he knows the open sesame that can open the gates of heaven, he knows the pass-word that can make the gates wide open fly; he has the white stone whereby he shall be known as a ransomed one, and that shall pass him at the barrier; he has the passport that shall let him into the dominions of Jehovah; he has liberty to enter into heaven. Methinks I see you, ye unconverted, in the land of shades, wandering up and down to find your portion. Ye come to the porch of heaven. It is great and lofty. The gate hath written o'er it, "The righteous only are admitted here." As ye stand, ye look for the porter. A tall archangel appeareth from above the gate, and ye say, "Angel, let me in." "Where is thy robe?" Thou searchest, and thou hast none; thou hast only some few rags of thine own spinning, but no wedding garment. "Let me in," sayest thou, "for the fiends are after me to drag me to yonder pit. Oh, let me in." But with a quiet glance the angel lifteth up his finger and saith, "Read up there;" and thou readest, "None but the righteous enter here." Then thou tremblest; thy knees knock together; thy hands shake. Were thy bones of brass they might melt; and were thy ribs of iron they might be dissolved Ah! there thou standest, shivering, quaking, trembling; but not long, for a voice which frights thee from thy feet and lays thee prostrate, cries, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." O dear hearers, shall that be your portion? My friends, as I love you, - I do this morning, and hope I ever shall, - shall this be your lot? Will you not have freedom to enter into the city? Will you not seek that Spirit which giveth liberty? Ah! I know ye will not have it if left to yourselves; some of you perhaps

never will. O God, grant that that number may be but few, but may the number of the saved be great indeed!

"Turn, then my soul unto thy rest,  
The ransom of thy great High Priest,  
Hath set the captive free.  
Trust to his efficacious blood,  
Nor fear thy banishment from God,  
Since Jesus died for thee."

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## **Spiritual Peace**

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. - John 14:27

Our Lord was now about to die, to depart from this world, and to ascend to his Father; he therefore makes his will; and this is the blessed legacy which he leaves to the faithful - "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."

We may rest well assured that this testament of our Lord Jesus Christ is valid. You have here his own signature; it is signed, sealed, and delivered in the presence of the eleven apostles, who are faithful and true witnesses. 'Tis true a testament is not in force while the testator liveth, but Jesus Christ has died once for all; and now none can dispute his legacy. The will is in force, because the testator has died. It may however, sometimes happen that a testator's wishes in a will may be disregarded, and *he*, powerless beneath the sod, is quite unable to rise and demand that his last will should be carried out. But our Lord Jesus Christ who died, and therefore made his will valid rose again, and now he lives to see every stipulation of it carried out; and this blessed codicil, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," is sure to all the blood-bought seed. Peace is theirs, and must be theirs, because he died and put the will in force, and lives to see the will fulfilled.

The donation, the blessed legacy which our Lord has here left, is *his peace*. This might be considered as being peace with all the creatures. God has made a league of peace between his people and the whole universe. "For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee." "All things work together for good to them that love God." Providence that was once estranged, and seemed to work counter to our welfare, has now become at peace with us. The wheels revolve in happy order, and bear us blessings as often as they turn. The words of our Lord may also refer to the peace which exists among the people of God toward one another. There is a peace of God which reigns in our hearts through Jesus Christ, by which we are bound in closest ties of unity and concord to every other child of God whom we may meet with in our pilgrimage here below. Leaving, however, these two sorts of peace, which I believe to be comprehended in the legacy, let us proceed to consider two kinds of peace, which in our experience resolve themselves into one, and which are surely the richest part of this benediction. Our Savior here means peace *with God*, and peace *with our own conscience*. There is first, peace with God for he "hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;" he hath put away the wall which separated us from Jehovah, and now there is "peace on earth" and "goodwill toward men." When sin is put away, God has no cause of warfare against his creature: Christ has put *our* sins away, and therefore there is a virtual substantial peace established between God and our souls. This, however, might exist without our clearly understanding and rejoicing in it. Christ has therefore left us peace in the conscience. Peace with God is the treaty; peace in the conscience is the publication of it. Peace with God is the fountain, and peace with conscience is the crystal stream which issues from it. There is a peace decreed in the court of divine justice in heaven; and then there follows as a necessary consequence. As soon as the news is known, a peace in the minor court of human judgment wherein conscience sits upon the throne to judge us according to our works.

The legacy, then, of Christ is a twofold peace: a peace of friendship, of agreement, of love, of everlasting union between the elect and God. It is next a peace at sweet enjoyment, of quiet rest of the understanding and the conscience. When there are no winds above, there will be no tempests

below. When heaven is serene earth is quiet. Conscience reflects the complacency of God. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom also we have received the atonement."

I propose this morning, if God the Holy Spirit shall graciously assist, to speak of this peace thus: - first, its *secret ground-work*; then its *noble nature*; thirdly, its *blessed effects*; fourthly, its *interruptions and means of maintenance*; and then I shall close by some words of *solemn warning* to those of you who have never enjoyed peace with God, and consequently never have had true peace with yourselves.

I. First, then, THE PEACE WHICH A TRUE CHRISTIAN ENJOYS WITH GOD AND HIS CONSCIENCE HAS A SOLID GROUND-WORK TO REST UPON. It is not built upon a pleasing fiction of his imagination, a delusive dream of his ignorance; but it is built on facts, on positive truths, on essential verities; it is founded upon a rock, and though the rains descend, and the winds blow, and the floods beat upon that house, it shall not fall, because its foundation is secure. When a man hath *faith in the blood of Christ* there is but little wonder that he hath peace, for indeed he is fully warranted in enjoying the most profound calm which mortal heart can know. For thus he reasons with himself: - God hath said, "He that believeth is justified from all things." and, moreover, that "he that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ *shall* be saved." Now, my faith is unfeignedly fixed in the great substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, therefore I am now justified from all things, and stand accepted in Christ as a believer. The necessary consequence of that is, that he possesses peace of mind. If God has punished Christ in my stead, he will not punish me again. "Being once purged I have no more conscience of sin." Under the Jewish ceremonial, mention was made of sin every year; the atoning lamb must be slaughtered a thousand times, but "this man, having made one atonement for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens." How, I ask, can the man tremble who believes himself forgiven? It were strange indeed if his faith did not breathe a holy calm into his bosom.

Again, the child of God receives his peace from another golden pipe, for a

*sense of pardon has been shed abroad in his soul.* He not only believes his forgiveness from the testimony of God, but he has a sense of pardon. Do any of you know what this is? It is something more than a belief in Christ; it is the cream of faith, the full ripe fruit of believing, it is a high and special privilege which God gives after faith. If I have not that sense of pardon I am still bound to believe, and then, believing, I shall by and by advance to the seeing of that which I believed and hoped for. The Holy Spirit sometimes sheds abroad in the believer a consciousness that he is forgiven. By mysterious agency he fills the soul with the light of glory. If all the false witnesses on earth should rise up and tell the man at that time that God is not reconciled to him, and that his sins remain unforgiven, he would be able to laugh them to scorn; for saith he, "the love of God is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit." He *feels* that he is reconciled to God. He has come from faith up to enjoyment, and every power of his soul feels the divine dew as it gently distils from heaven. The understanding feels it, it is enlightened; the will feels it, it is subjected to the will of God; the heart feels it, it is fired with holy love; the hope feels it, for it looks forward to the day when the whole man shall be made like its covenant head Jesus Christ. Every flower in the garden of humanity feels the sweet south wind of the Spirit, as it blows upon it, and causes the sweet spices to send forth their perfume. What wonder, then, that man has peace with God when the Holy Ghost becomes a royal tenant of the heart, with all his glorious train of blessings? Ah! poor tried soul, what peace and joy unspeakable would reign in your soul if you did but believe on Christ? "Yes," say you, "but I want God to manifest to me that I am forgiven." Poor soul, he will not do that at once; he bids you believe Christ *first*, and *then* he will make manifest to you the pardon of your sin. It is by faith we are saved, not by enjoyment; but when I believe Christ, and take him at his word, even when my feelings seem to contradict my faith, then, as a gracious reward, he will honor my faith by giving me to feel that which I once believed when I did not *feel* it.

The believer also enjoys, in favored seasons, such *an intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ*, that he cannot but be at peace. Oh! there are sweet words which Christ whispers in the ears of his people, and there are love-visits which he pays to them, which a man would not believe even though it should be told unto him. Ye must know for yourselves what it is to have

fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. There is such a thing as Christ manifesting himself to us as he does not unto the world. All black and frightful thoughts are banished. "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." This is the one all-absorbing feeling of the spirit. And what wonder is it, that the believer has peace when Christ thus dwells in his heart, and reigns there without a rival, so that he knows no man, save Jesus only. It were a miracle of miracles if we did not have peace; and the strangest thing in Christian experience is that our peace is not more continued, and the only explanation of our misery is, that our communion is broken, that our fellowship is marred, else would our peace be like a river, and our righteousness like the waves of the sea.

That venerable man of God, Joseph Irons, who but a little while ago ascended to our Father in heaven, says, "What wonder that a Christian man has peace when *he carries the title-deeds of heaven in his bosom!*" This is another solid groundwork of confidence. We know that heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, and the Christian can sometimes cry with the apostles, "Thanks be unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Feeling that God has given him the meetness; he discovers that this preparation is a warrant for the hope that he shall enter into the dwelling-place of the glorified. He can lift his eye above, and say, "Yon bright world is mine, my entailed inheritance; life keeps me from it, but death shall bring me to it; my sins cannot destroy the heaven-written indentures, heaven is mine; Satan himself cannot shut me out of it. I must, I shall be where Jesus is, for after him my spirit longs, and to him my soul is knit." Oh, brethren, it is not a marvel when all is blest within, and all is calm above, that justified men possess "a peace with God which passeth all understanding."

You will perhaps be saying, well, but the Christian has troubles like other men - losses in business, deaths in his family, and sickness of body! Yes, but he has another groundwork for his peace - *an assurance of the faithfulness* and covenant fidelity of his God and Father. He believes that God is a faithful God - that whom he hath loved he will not cast away. All the dark providences to him are but blessings in disguise. When his cup is bitter, he believes it is mixed by love, and it must all end well, for God



secures the ultimate result. Therefore come foul, come fair, come all weathers, his soul shelters itself beneath the twin wings of the faithfulness and power of his Covenant God. The sanctified spirit is so resigned to his Father's will that he will not murmur. To him, as Madame Guyon was wont to say, - "It is equal whether love ordain his life or death, appoint him weal or woe." He is content to take just what his Father sends him, knowing that his Father understands him better than he understands himself: He gives up the helm of his ship to the hand of a gracious God; and he, himself; is enabled to fall asleep softly in the cabin, he believes that his Captain hath power over winds and waves; and when he sometimes feels his ship rocking in the storm, he cries with Herbert -

"Though winds and waves assault my keel,  
He doth preserve it; he doth steer,  
Even when the bark seems most to reel.  
Storms are the triumph of his art;  
Sure he may hide his face, but not his heart."

No wonder, then, that he has peace, when he can feel this, and knows that he who hath begun the good work, has both the will and the power to perfect it, unto the day of Christ.

II. Having hurriedly unveiled the secret groundwork of the Christian's peace, we must dwell for a few minutes upon ITS NOBLE CHARACTER.

The peace of other men is ignoble and base. Their peace is born in the purlieu of sin. Self-conceit and ignorance are its parents. The man knows not what he is and therefore thinks himself to be something - when he is nothing. He says - "I am rich and increased in goods," while he is naked, and poor, and miserable. Not such is the birth of the Christian's peace. That is born of the Spirit. It is a peace which God the Father gives, for he is the God of all peace; it is a peace which Jesus Christ bought, for he has made peace with his blood, and he is our peace; and it is a peace which the Holy Spirit works - he is its author and its founder in the soul.

Our peace then, is God's own child, and God-like is its character. His Spirit is its sire, and it is like its Father. It is "*my peace*," saith Christ! not

man's peace; but the unruffled, calm, the profound peace of the Eternal Son of God. Oh, if we had but this one thing within our bosoms, this divine peace, a Christian were a glorious thing indeed; and even now kings and mighty men of this world are as nothing when once compared with the Christian; for he wears a jewel in his bosom which all the world could not buy, a jewel fashioned from old eternity and ordained by sovereign grace to be the high boon, the right royal inheritance of the chosen sons of God.

This peace, then, is divine in its origin; and it is also *divine in its nourishment*. It is a peace which the world cannot give; and it cannot contribute towards its maintenance. The daintiest morsels that ever carnal sense fed upon, would be bitter to the mouth of this sweet peace. Ye may bring your much fine corn, your sweet wine and your flowing oil, your dainties tempt us not, for this peace feeds upon angels food, and it cannot relish any food that groweth earth. If you should give a Christian ten times as much riches as he has, you would not cause him ten times as much peace; but probably, ten times more distress; you might magnify him in honor, or strengthen him with health; yet, neither would his honor or his health contribute to his peace, for that peace flows from a divine source; and there are no tributary streams from the hills of earth to feed that divine current; the stream flows from the throne of God, and by God alone is it sustained.

It is, then, a peace divinely born and divinely nourished. And let me again remark, it is *a peace that lives above circumstances*. The world has tried hard to put an end to the Christian's peace, and it has never been able to accomplish it. I remember, in my early childhood, having heard an old man utter in prayer, a saying which stuck by me - "O Lord, give unto thy servants that peace which the world can neither give nor take away." Ah! the whole might of our enemies cannot take it away. Poverty cannot destroy it, the Christian in his rags can have peace with God. Sickness cannot mar it; lying on his bed, the saint is joyful in the midst of the fires. Persecution cannot ruin it, for persecution cannot separate the believer from Christ, and while he is one with Christ his soul is full of peace. "Put your hand here," said the martyr to his executioner, when he was led to the stake, "put your hand here, and now put your hand on your own

heart, and feel which beats the hardest, and which is the most troubled." Strangely was the executioner struck with awe, when he found the Christian man as calm as though he were going to a wedding feast, while he himself has all agitation at having to perform so desperate a deed. Oh, world! we defy thee to rob us of our peace. We did not get it of thee, and thou canst not rend it from us. It is set as a seal upon our arm; it is strong as death and invincible as the grave. Thy stream, O Jordan, cannot drown it, black and deep though thy depths may be; in the midst of thy tremendous billows our soul is confident, and resteth still on him that loved us, and gave himself for us. Frequently have I had to remark, that Christians placed in the most unfavourable circumstances are, as a rule, better Christians than those who are placed in propitious positions. In the midst of a very large church of persons in all ranks, with the condition of most of whom I am as thoroughly conversant as man can well be, I have observed that the women who come from houses where they have ungodly husbands, and trying children - that the young people who come from workshops where they are opposed and laughed at - that the people who come from the depths of poverty, from the dens and kens of our city, are the brightest jewels that are set in the crown of the church. It seems as if God would defeat nature - not only make the hyssop grow on the wall, but make the cedar grow there too - he finds his brightest pearls in the darkest waters, and bring up his most precious jewels from the filthiest dung hills.

"Wonders of grace to God belong,  
Repeat his mercies in your song."

And this I have found too, that often the more disturbed a Christian man is, the purer is his peace, the heavier the rolling swell his griefs and sorrow, the more still, and calm, and profound is the peace that reigns within his heart. So then, it is peace divinely born, divinely nourished, and one which is quite above the influence of this poor whirling world.

Further, I must remark briefly upon the nature of this peace, that it is *profound and real*. "The peace of God," saith an apostle, "that passeth all understanding." This peace not only fills all the senses to the brim, till every power is satiated with delight, but the understanding which can

take in the whole world, and understand many things which are not within the range of vision, even the understanding cannot take in the length and the breadth of this peace. And not only will the understanding fail to compass it, but *all* understanding is outdone. When our judgment hath exerted itself to the utmost, it cannot comprehend the heights and depths of this profound peace. Have you ever imagined what must be the stillness of the caverns in the depth of the seas, a thousand fathoms beneath the bosom of the floods, where the mariners' bones lie undisturbed, where pearls are born, and corals that never see the light, where the long lost gold and silver of the merchants lie sprinkled on the sandy floor - down in the rock caves, and the silent palaces of darkness where waves dash not, and the intruding foot of the diver hath never trodden? So clear, so calm is the peace of God, the placid rest of the assured believer. Or lift up your eyes to the stars. Have you never dreamed a sweet dream of the quietude of those noiseless orbs? Let us mount beyond the realm of noise and riot, let us tread the noiseless highway of the silent orbs. The thunders are far below us, the confused tumult of the crowd defiles not the sanctity of this wondrous quiet. See how the stars sleep on their golden couches, or only open their bright eyes to keep watch upon that stormless sea of ether, and guard the solemn boundaries of the reign of peace. Such is the peace and calm that reigns in the Christian's bosom. "Sweet calm," one calls it; perfect peace," David styles it; another one calls it "great peace." "Great peace have all they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." Last year - I tell you now a secret of my own heart - I had one text which thrust itself upon my recollection many times a day I dreamed of it when I slept; when I awoke it went with me, and I verified it, and rejoiced in it: "His soul shall dwell at ease." It is my promise now. There is such an *ease* - quite consistent with labor, with agony for the souls of men, with an earnest desire for yet greater attainments in divine life; there is such an ease - it is not to be gained by all the appliances of luxury, by all the aggrandisement of wealth - an ease in which "not a wave of trouble rolls across the peaceful breast," but all is calm, and all is clear, and all is joy and love. May we evermore dwell in that serene atmosphere, and never lose our hold of this peace.

Lest there should be any of you who do not understand what I have said, I

will try and say it over again briefly in an example. Do you see that man? He has been taken up before a cruel tribunal; he is condemned to die. The hour draws nigh: he is taken to prison, and placed there with two soldiers to guard him, and four quarters of soldiers outside the door. The night comes on: he lies down, but in how uncomfortable a position! Chained between two soldiers! He lies down and he falls asleep - not the sleep of the guilty criminal, whose very sense of dread makes his eyelids heavy; but a calm sleep which is given by God, and which ends in an angelic vision, by which he is delivered. Peter sleeps, when the death sentence is above his head, and the sword is ready to penetrate his soul. See you another picture? There are Paul and Silas yonder: they have been preaching, and their feet are thrust in the stocks for it. They will die on the morrow; but in the midnight they sing praises unto God, and the prisoners hear them. One would have thought in such a loathsome dungeon as that, they would have groaned and moaned all night long, or that at best they might have slept; but no, they sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them. There is the peace - the calm, the quietude of the heir of heaven. I might give you another picture - of our ancient Nonconformists, in the days of that most persecuting Queen Elizabeth. She cast into prison among very many others, two of our forefathers, of the name of Greenwood and Barrow. They were caused to lie in that loathsome stinking dungeon - the Clink Prison - shut in one huge room with maniacs, murderers, felons, and the like, compelled to listen to their frightful conversation. One day there came a warrant, that they must die. The two men were led out, and tied to the cart, and were about to be taken away to death; but they were no sooner outside the gate than a messenger rode up. The Queen had sent a reprieve. They were taken back; calmly and quietly they returned to their prison; and the next day they were taken to Newgate, and, just as suddenly, there come a second messenger, to say they must be taken away to Tyburn to die. They were again tied to the cart; they ascended the scaffold, the ropes were put round their necks, and they were allowed to stand in that position and address the assembled multitude, and bear witness to the liberty of Christ's church, and to the right of private judgment among men. They concluded their speech, and a second time that wretched Queen sent them a reprieve, and they were taken back a second time to the dungeon, and there they lay in New gate, but only for few days more, and then a

third time they were taken out, and this time they were hanged in reality; but they went as cheerfully to the scaffold on each occasion as men go to their beds, and seemed as joyous, as though they were going to a crown, rather than to a halter. Such specimens all the churches of Christ can show. Wherever there has been a true Christian, the world has tried its best to put out his peace; but it is a peace that never can be quenched - it *will* live on, what halter about its neck with the hot pincers tearing away its flesh, with the sword in its very bones; it will live, till, mounting from the burning bush of earth, this bird of paradise shall wear its glittering plumage in the midst of the garden of paradise.

III. Having detained you longer on this point than I thought I should do, I hasten to the third point, THE EFFECTS OF THIS DIVINE PEACE.

The blessed effects of this divine peace are, first of all, *joy*. You will notice that the words "joy," and "peace" are continually put together; for joy without peace were an unhallowed and an unhappy joy - the crackling of thorns under a pot, unsound, mere flames of joy, but not the red glowing coals of bliss. Now, divine peace gives joy to the Christian; and *such* joy! Have you ever seen the first gleam of joy when it has come into the eye of the penitent? It has been my happy lot to pray with many a convinced sinner, to witness the deep agony of spirit, and I deeply to sympathise with the poor creature in his trouble for sin. I have prayed and have exhorted to faith, and I have seen that flash of joy, when at last the hopeful word was spoken "I do believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart." Oh! that look of joy! It is as if the gates of heaven had been opened for a moment, and some flash of glory had blazed upon the eye and had been reflected therefrom I remember my own joy, when I first had peace with God. I thought I could dance all the way home I could understand what John Bunyan said, when he declared he wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land all about it. He was too full to hold, he felt he must tell some one. Oh! there was joy in the household that day, when all heard that the eldest son had found a Savior and knew himself to be forgiven - bliss compared with which all earth's joys are less than nothing and vanity. As the counterfeit to the real coin, so are the base joys of earth to the real joy which springs from peace with God. Young man! Young woman! if you could have at bliss such as you never knew before, you

must be reconciled to God through the blood of Christ; for till then, real joy and lasting pleasure you can never know.

The first effect of this peace, then, is joy. Taken follows another - *love*. He that is at peace with God through the blood of Christ is constrained to love him that died for him. "Precious Jesus!" he cries, "help me to serve thee! Take me as I am, and make me for something. Use me in thy cause; send me to the farthest part of the green earth, if thou wilt, to tell to sinners the way of salvation; I will cheerfully go, for my peace fans the flame of love, that all that I am and all I have shall be, *must be*, for ever thine."

Then next, there comes an anxiety after *holiness*. He that is at peace with God does not wish to go into sin; for he is careful lest he should lose that peace. He is like a woman that has escaped from a burning house; he is afraid of every candle afterwards, lest he should come again into the like danger. He walks humbly with his God. Constrained by grace, this sweet fruit of the Spirit, peace, leads him to endeavor to keep all the commandments of God, and to serve his Lord with all his might.

Then again, this peace will *help us to bear affliction*. Paul describes it as a shoe. As he says, "Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of *peace*." It enables us to tread on the sharpest flints of sorrow, yea, on adders, and on serpents also; it gives us power to walk over the briars of this world, and our feet are not wounded; we tread the fires, and we are not burned. This divine shoe of peace makes us walk without weariness, and run without fainting. I can do all things when my soul is at peace with God. There are no sufferings that shall move my soul to pain, no terrors that shall blanch my cheek, there are no wounds that shall compel me to an ignominious fear when my spirit is at peace with God. It makes a man a giant - swells the dwarf to a Goliath size. He becomes mightiest of the mighty; and while the weaklings creep about this little earth, bowed down to the very dust, he strides it like a Colossus. God has made him great and mighty, because he has filled his soul with peace, and with overflowing joy.

More might I tell you of the blessed effects of this peace, but I shall be

content, after I have simply noticed that this peace gives *boldness at the throne*, and access to a Father's mercy-seat. We feel we are reconciled, and therefore we stand no longer at a distance, but we come up to him, even to his knees, we spread our wants before him, plead our cause, and rest satisfied of success, because there is no enmity in our Father's heart to us, and none in ours to him. We are one with God, and he is one with us, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

IV. And now I have a practical duty to perform, and with this I shall close after having said a few words to those who know nothing of this peace. The practical remarks I have to make are upon the subject of INTERRUPTIONS OF PEACE.

All Christians have a right to perfect peace, but they have not all the possession of it. There are times when gloomy doubts prevail, and we fear to say that God is ours. We lose a consciousness of pardon, and we grope in the noonday as in the night. How is this? I think these interruptions may be owing to one of four causes.

Sometimes they are due to *the ferocious temptations of Satan*. There are periods when with unexampled cruelty Satan assaults the children of God. It is not to be expected that they will maintain perfect peace while they are fighting with Apollyon. When poor Christian was wounded in his head, and in his hands, and in his feet, no wonder that he did groan exceedingly, and as Bunyan hath it, "I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceive I he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword; then, indeed, he did smile and look upward; but it was the dreadfulest fight that ever I saw." Mark, there is no such thing as a disturbance of the reality of the peace between God and the soul; for God is always at peace with those who are reconciled to him by Christ; but there is a disturbance of the enjoyment of that peace, and that is often effected by the howlings of that great dog of hell. He comes against us with all his might, with his mouth open ready to swallow us up quick, and were it not for divine mercy he would do so. It is but little marvel that sometimes our peace is affected, when Satan is fierce in his temptations.



At another time a want of peace may arise from *ignorance*. I do not wonder that a man who believes Arminian doctrine, for instance, has little peace. There is nothing in the doctrine to give him any. It is a bone without marrow, it is a religion that seems to me to be cold, sapless, marrowless, fruitless - bitter and not sweet. There is nothing about it but the whip of the law; there are no grand certainties - no glorious facts of covenant love, of discriminating grace, of Almighty faithfulness, and suretyship engagements. I will never quarrel with the man that can live on such stones and scorpions as conditional election, haphazard redemption, questionable perseverance, and unavailing regeneration. There may be some, I suppose, who can live on this dry meat. If they can live on it, be it so; but I believe many of our doubts and fears arise from doctrinal ignorance. You have not, perhaps, a clear view of that covenant made between the Father and his glorious Son, Jesus Christ; you do not know how to spell the word "gospel" without mixing up the word "law" in it. Perhaps you have not learned fully to look out of self to Christ for everything. You do not know how to distinguish between sanctification, which varies, and justification, which is permanent. Many believers have not come to discern between the work of the Spirit and the work of the Son; and what marvel, if ye are ignorant, that ye sometimes lack peace? Learn more of that precious Book, and your peace shall be more continual.

Then again this peace is usually marred by *sin*. God hides his face behind the clouds of dust which his own flock make as they travel along the road of this world. We sin, and then we sorrow for it. God still loves his child, even when he sins; but he will not let the child know it. That child's name is in the family register; but the Father clasps up the book, and will not let him read it till he thoroughly repents again, and comes back once more to Jesus Christ. If you can have peace and yet live in sin, mark this, you are unrenewed. If you can live in iniquity, and yet have peace in your conscience, your conscience is seared and dead. But the Christian man, he sins, begins to smart; it not the very moment he falls, it is not long before his Father's rod is on his back, and he begins to cry,

"Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?"

Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and his Word?"

Once more: our peace may be interrupted also by *unbelief*. Indeed, this is the sharpest knife of the four, and will most readily cut the golden thread of our enjoyments.

And now, if ye would maintain unbroken peace, take advice from God's minister this morning, young though he be in years. Take advice, which he can warrant to be good, for it is Scriptural. If ye would keep your peace continual and unbroken, look always to the sacrifice of Christ, never permit your eye to turn to any thing but Jesus. When thou repentest, my hearer, still keep thine eye on the cross; when thou labourest, labor in the strength of the Crucified One. Everything thou doest, whether it be self-examination, lasting, meditation, or prayer, do all under the shadow of Jesus' cross; or otherwise, live as thou wilt, thy peace will be but a sorry thing; thou shalt be full of disquiet and of sore trouble. Live near the cross, and your peace shall be continual.

Another piece of advice. Walk humbly with your God. Peace is a jewel; God puts it on your finger, be proud of it, and he will take it off again, Peace is a noble garment; boast of your dress, and God will take it away from you. Remember the hole of the pit whence you were digged, and the quarry of nature whence you were hewn; and when you have the bright crown of peace on your head, remember your black feet; nay, even when that crown is there, cover it and your face still with those two wings, the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. In this way shall your peace be maintained.

And again, walk in boldness, avoid every appearance of evil. "Be not conformed to this world." Stand up for truth and rectitude. Suffer not the maxims of men to sway your judgment. Seek the Holy Spirit that you may live like Christ, and live near to Christ, and your peace shall not be interrupted.

As for those of you who have never had peace with God, I can entertain but one sentiment towards you, namely, that of pity. Poor souls! poor

souls! poor souls! that never knew the peace which Jesus Christ gives to his people. And my pity is all the more needed, because you do not pity yourselves. Ah! souls, the day is coming when that God to whom you are now an enemy, shall stare you in the face. You *must* see him; and he is "a consuming fire." You must look into that blazing furnace, and sink, and despair; and die. Die, did I say? Worse than that. You must be cast into the pit of damnation, where dying were a boon that can never be granted. Oh! may God give you peace through his Son! If you are now convinced of sin, the exhortation is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Just as thou art, thou art bidden to put thy trust in him that did die upon the tree; and if thou doest this, thy sins shall all be forgiven now, and thou shalt have peace with God; and, ere long, thou shalt know it in thine own conscience and rejoice. Oh! seek this peace and pursue it. and above all, seek the Peace-maker, Christ Jesus, and you shall be saved. God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **Spiritual Resurrection**

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. -  
Ephesians 2:1

It might naturally be expected that I should have selected the topic of the resurrection on what is usually called the Easter Sabbath. I shall not do so; for although I have read portions which refer to that glorious subject, I have had pressed on my mind a subject which is not the resurrection of Christ, but which is in some measure connected with it—the resurrection of lost and ruined men by the Spirit of God in this life.

The apostle is here speaking, you will observe, of the church at Ephesus, and, indeed, of all those who were chosen in Christ Jesus, accepted in him, and redeemed with his blood; and he says of them, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

What a solemn sight is presented to us by a dead body! When last evening trying to realize the thought, it utterly overcame me. The thought is overwhelming, that soon this body of mine must be a carnival for worms; that in and out of these places, where my eyes are glistening, foul things, the offspring of loathsomeness, shall crawl; that this body must be stretched in still, cold, abject, passive, death, must then become a noxious, nauseous thing, cast out even by those that loved me, who will say, "Bury my dead out of my sight." Perhaps you can scarcely, in the moment I can afford you, appropriate the idea to yourselves. Does it not seem a strange thing, that you, who have walked to this place this morning, shall be carried to your graves; that the eyes with which you now behold me shall soon be glazed in everlasting darkness; that the tongues, which just now moved in song, shall soon be silent lumps of clay; and that your strong and stalwart frame, now standing to this place, will be unable to move a muscle, and become a loathsome thing, the brother of the worm and the sister of corruption? You can scarcely get hold of the idea; death doth such awful work with us, it is such a Vandal with this mortal fabric, it so rendeth to pieces this fair thing that God hath builded up, that we can scarcely bear to contemplate his works of ruin.

Now, endeavour, as well as you can, to get the idea of a dead corpse, and when you have so done, please to understand, that that is the metaphor employed in my text, to set forth the condition of your soul by nature. Just as the body is dead, incapable, unable, unfeeling, and soon about to become corrupt and putrid, so are we if we be unquickened by divine grace; dead in trespasses and sins, having within us death, which is capable of developing itself in worse and worse stages of sin and wickedness, until all of us here, left by God's grace, should become loathsome beings; loathsome through sin and wickedness, even as the corpse through natural decay. Understand, that the doctrine of the Holy Scripture is, that man by nature, since the fall, is dead; he is a corrupt and ruined thing; in a spiritual sense, utterly and entirely dead. And if any of us shall come to spiritual life, it must be by the quickening of God's Spirit, vouchsafed to us sovereignly through the good will of God the Father, not for any merits of our own, but entirely of his own abounding and infinite

grace.

Now, this morning, I trust I shall not be tedious; I shall endeavour to make the subject as interesting as possible, and also endeavour to be brief. The general doctrine of this morning is, that every man that is born into the world is dead spiritually, and that spiritual life must be given by the Holy Spirit, and can be obtained from no other source. That general doctrine, I shall illustrate in rather a singular way. You remember that our Saviour raised three dead persons; I do not find that during his lifetime he caused more than three resurrections. The first was the young maiden, the daughter of Jairus, who, when she lay on her bed dead, rose up to life at the single utterance of Christ, "Talitha cumi!" The second was the case of the widow's son, who was on his bier, about to be carried to his tomb; and Jesus raised him up to life by saying, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." The third, and most memorable case, was that of Lazarus, who was not on his bed, nor on his bier, but in his tomb, ay, and corrupt too; but notwithstanding that, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the voice of his omnipotence, crying, "Lazarus, come forth," brought him out of the tomb.

I shall use these three facts as illustrations of the different states of men, though they be all thoroughly dead; secondly, as illustrations of the different means of grace used for raising them, though, after all, the same great agency is employed; and, in the third place, as illustrations of the after experience of quickened men; for though that to a great degree is the same, yet there are some points of difference.

I. I shall begin by noticing, then, first of all, **THE CONDITION OF MEN BY NATURE**. Men by nature are all dead. There is Jairus's daughter; she lies on her bed; she seems as if she were alive; her mother has scarce ceased to kiss her brow, her hand is still in her father's loving grasp, and he can scarcely think that she is dead; but dead she is, as thoroughly dead as she ever can be. Next comes the case of the young man brought out of his grave; he is more than dead, he has begun to be corrupt, the signs of decay are upon his face, and they are carrying him to his tomb; yet though there are more manifestations of death about him, he is no more dead than the other. He is just as dead; they are both dead, and death

really knows of no degrees. The third case goes further still in the manifestation of death; for it is the case of which Martha, using strong words, said, "Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days." And yet, mark you, the daughter of Jairus was as dead as Lazarus; though the manifestation of death was not so complete in her case. All were dead alike. I have in my congregation some blessed beings, fair to look upon; fair, I mean, in their character, as well as their outward appearance; they have about them everything that is good and lovely; but mark this, if they are unregenerate they are dead still. That girl, dead in the room, upon her bed, had little about her that could show her death. Not yet had the loving finger closed the eyelid; there seemed to be a light still lingering in her eye; like a lily just nipped off; she was as fair as life itself. The worm had not yet begun to gnaw her cheek, the flush had not yet faded from her face; she seemed well-nigh alive. And so it is with some I have here. Ye have all that heart could wish for, except the one thing needful; ye have all things save love to the Saviour. Ye are not yet united to him by a living faith. Ah! then, I grieve to say it, ye are dead! ye are dead! As much dead as the worst of men, although your death is not so apparent. Again, I have in my presence young men who have grown to riper years than that fair damsel who died in her childhood. You have much about you that is lovely, but you have just begun to indulge in evil habits; you have not yet become the desperate sinner; you have not yet become altogether noxious in the eyes of other men; you are but beginning to sin, you are like the young man carried out on his bier; you have not yet become the confirmed drunkard; you have not yet begun to curse and blaspheme God; you are still accepted in good society; you are not yet cast out; but you are dead, thoroughly dead, just as dead as the third and worst case. But I dare say I have some characters that are illustrations of that case too. There is Lazarus in his tomb, rotten and putrid; and so there are some men not more dead than others, but their death has become more apparent, their character has become abominable, their deeds cry out against them, they are put out of decent society, the stone is rolled to the mouth of their tomb, men feel that they cannot hold acquaintance with them, for they have so utterly abandoned every sense of right, that we say, "Put them out of sight, we cannot endure them!" And yet these putrid ones may live; these last are not more dead than the maiden upon her bed, though the death has more fully revealed

itself in their corruption. Jesus Christ must quicken the one as well as the other, and bring them all to know and love his name.

1. Now, then, I am about to enter into the minutiae of the difference of these three cases. I will take the case of the young maiden. I have her here to-day; I have many illustrations of her present before me; at least, I trust so. Now, will you allow me to point out all the differences? Here is the young maiden; look upon her; you can bear the sight; she is dead, but oh! beauty lingereth there; she is fair and lovely, though the life hath departed from her. In the young man's case there is no beauty; the worm hath begun to eat him; his honor hath departed. In the third case, there is absolute rottenness. But here there is beauty still upon her cheek. Is she not amiable? Is she not lovely? Would not all love her? Is she not to be admired, even to be imitated? Is she not fairest of the fair? Ay, that she is; but God the Spirit has not yet looked upon her; she has not yet bent her knee to Jesus, and cried for mercy; she has everything, except true religion. Alas! for her; alas! that so fair a character should be a dead one. Alas! my sister; alas! that thou, the benevolent, the kind one, should yet be, after all, dead in thy trespasses and sins. As Jesus wept over that young man who had kept all the commandments, and yet one thing he lacked, so weep I over thee this morning. Alas! thou fair one, lovely in thy character, and amiable in thy carriage, why shouldst thou lie dead? For dead thou art, unless thou hast faith in Christ. Thine excellence, thy virtue, and thy goodness, shall avail thee nought; thou art dead, and dead thou must be, unless he make thee live.

Note, too, that in the case of this maiden, whom we have introduced to you, the daughter of Jairus, she is yet caressed; she has only been dead a moment or two, and the mother still presses her cheek with kisses. Oh! can she be dead? Do not the tears rain on her, as if they would sow the seeds of life in that dead earth again?—earth that looks fertile enough to bring forth life with but one living tear? Ay, but those salt tears are tears of barrenness. She liveth not; but she is still caressed. Not so the young man; he is put on the bier; no man will touch him any more, or else he will be utterly defiled. And as for Lazarus, he is shut up with a stone. But this young maiden is still caressed; so it is with many of you; you are loved even by the living in Sion; God's own people love you; the minister

has often prayed for you; you are admitted into the assemblies of the saints, you sit with them as God's people, you hear as they hear, and you sing as they sing. Alas! for you; alas! for you, that you should still be dead! Oh! it grieves me to the heart, to think that some of you are all that heart could wish, except that one thing; yet lacking that which is the only thing that can deliver you. You are caressed by us, received by the living in Sion into their company and acquaintance, approved of and accepted; alas! that you should yet be without life! Oh! in your case, if you are saved, you will have to join with even the worst in saying, "I have been quickened by divine grace, or else I had never lived."

And now will you look at this maiden again? Note, she has no grave clothes on her yet; she is dressed in her own raiment; just as she retired to her bed a little sick, so lieth she there; not yet have the napkin and the shroud been wrapped about her; she still weareth the habiliments of sleep; she is not yet given up to death. Not so the young man yonder—he is in his grave clothes; not so Lazarus—he is bound hand and foot. But this young maiden hath no grave clothes upon her. So with the young person we wish to speak of this morning; she has as yet no evil habits, she hath not yet reached that point; the young man yonder has begun to have evil habits; and yon grey-headed sinner is bound hand and foot by them; but as yet she appeareth just like the living, she acteth just like the Christian; her habits are fair, goodly, and comely; there seemeth to be little ill about her. Alas! alas! that thou shouldst be dead, even in thy fairest raiment. Alas! thou who hast set the chaplet of benevolence on thy brow, thou who dost gird thyself with the white robes of outward purity, if thou art not born again, thou art dead still. Thy beauty shall fade away like a moth; and in the day of judgment thou wilt be severed from the righteous, unless God shall make thee live. Oh! I could weep over those young ones who seem at present to have been delivered from forming any habits which could lead them astray, but who are yet unquickened and unsaved. Oh! would to God, young man and young woman, you might in early years be quickened by the Spirit.

And will you notice, yet once more, that this young maiden's death was a death confined to her chamber. Not so with the young man; he was carried to the gate of the city, and much people saw him. Not so Lazarus;



the Jews came to weep at his tomb. But this young woman's death is in her chamber. Ay, so it is with the young woman or the young man I mean to describe now. His sin is as yet a secret thing, kept to himself: as yet there has been no breaking forth of iniquity, but only the conception of it in the heart; just the embryo of lust, not as yet broken out into act. The young man has not yet drained the intoxicating cup, although he has had some whisperings of the sweetness of it; he has not yet run into the ways of wickedness, though he has had temptations thrust upon him; as yet he has kept his sin in his chamber, and most of it has been unseen. Alas! my brother, alas! my sister, that thou who in thine outward carriage art so good, should yet have sins in the chamber of thine heart, and death in the secrecy of thy being, which is as true a death as that of the grossest sinner, though not so thoroughly manifested. Would to God that thou couldst say, "And he hath quickened me, for with all my loveliness, and all my excellence, I was by nature dead in trespasses and sins." Come, let me just press this matter home. I have some in my congregation that I look upon with fear. Oh! my dear friends, my much loved friends, how many there are among you, I repeat, that are all that the heart could wish, except that one thing—that you love not my Master. Oh! ye young men who come up to the house of God, and who are outwardly so good; alas! for you, that you should lack the root of the matter. Oh! ye daughters of Sion, who are ever at the house of prayer, oh! that you should yet be without grace in your heart! Take heed, I beseech you, ye fairest, youngest, most upright, and most honest; when the dead are separated from the living, unless ye be regenerated, ye must go with the dead; though ye be never so fair and goodly, ye must be cast away, unless you live.

2. Thus, I have done with the first case; now we will go to the young man, who stands second. He is not more dead than the other, but he is further gone. Come, now, and stop the bier; you cannot look upon him! Why, the cheek is sunken—there is a hollowness there; not as in the case of the maiden, whose cheek was still round and ruddy. And the eye—oh! what a blackness is there! Look on him; you can see that the gnawings of the worm will soon burst forth; corruption hath begun its work. So it is with some young men I have here. They are not what they were in their childhood, when their habits were proper and correct; but mayhap they

have just been enticed into the house of the strange woman; they have just been tempted to go astray from the path of rectitude; their corruption is just breaking forth; they disdain now to sit at their mother's apron-strings; they think it foul scorn to keep to the rules that bind the moral! They! they are free, they say, and they will be free; they will live a jolly and a happy life; and so they run on in boisterous yet wicked merriment, and betray the marks of death about them. They have gone further than the maiden; she was still fair and comely; but here there is something that is the afterwork of death. The maiden was caressed, but the young man is untouched; he lieth on the bier, and though men bear him on their shoulders, yet there is a shrinking from him; he is dead, and it is known that he is dead. Young man, you have got as far as that; you know that good men shrink from you. It was but yesterday that your mother's tears fell fast and thick as she warned your younger brother to avoid your sin; your very sister, when she kissed you but this morning, prayed to God that you might get good in this house of prayer; but you know that of late she has been ashamed of you; your conversation has become so profane and wicked, that even she could scarce endure it. There are houses in which you were once welcome; where you once bowed your knee with them at the family prayer, and your name was mentioned too; but now you do not choose to go there, for when you go, you are treated with reserve. The good man of the house feels that he could not let his son go with you, for you would contaminate him; he does not sit down now side by side with you, as he used to do, and talk about the best things; he lets you sit in the room as a matter of mere courtesy; he stands far away from you, as it were; he feels that you have not a spirit congenial with his own. You are a little shunned; you are not quite avoided; you are still received amongst the people of God, yet there is a coldness that manifests that they understand that you are not a living one.

And note, too, that this young man, though carried out to his grave, was not like the maiden; she was in the garments of life, but he was wrapped in the cerements of death. So many of you have begun to form habits that are evil; you know that already the screw of the devil is tightening on your finger. Once it was a screw you could slip off or on; you said you were master of your pleasures—now your pleasures are master of you. Your habits are not now commendable, you know they are not; you stand

convicted while I speak to you this morning; you know your ways are evil. Ah! young man, thou hast not yet gone so far as the open profligate and desperately profane, take heed, thou art dead! thou art dead! and unless the Spirit quicken thee, thou shalt be cast into the valley of Gehenna, to be the food of that worm which never dieth, but eateth souls throughout eternity. And ah! young man, I weep, I weep over thee; thou art not yet so far gone, that they have rolled the stone against thee; thou art not yet become obnoxious; thou art not yet the staggering drunkard, nor yet the blasphemous infidel; thou hast much that is ill about thee, but thou hast not gone all the lengths yet. Take heed; thou wilt go further still; there is no stopping in sin. When the worm is there, you cannot put your finger on it, and say, "Stop; eat no more." No, it will go on, to your utter ruin. May God save you now, ere you shall come to that consummation for which hell so sighs, and which heaven can alone avert.

One more remark concerning this young man. The maiden's death was in her chamber; the young man's death was in the city gates. In the first case I described, the sin was secret. But, young man, your sin is not. You have gone so far that your habits are openly wicked; you have dared to sin in the face of God's sun. You are not as some others—seemingly good; but you go out and openly say, "I am no hypocrite; I dare to do wrong. I do not profess to be righteous; I know I am a scapegrace rascal. I have gone astray, and I am not ashamed to sin in the street." Ah! young man, young man! Thy father, perhaps, is saying now, "Would God that I had died for him—would God that I had seen him buried in his grave, ere he should have gone to such a length in wickedness! Would God that when I first saw him, and mine eye was gladdened with my son, I had seen him the next minute smitten with disease and death! Oh, would to God that his infant spirit had been called to heaven, that he might not have lived to bring in this way my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave!" Your sport in the city gates is misery in your father's house; your open merriment before the world brings agony into a mother's heart. Oh, I beseech you, stay. Oh, Lord Jesus! touch the bier this morning! Stop some young man in his evil habits, and say unto him, "Arise!" Then will he join with us in confessing that those who are alive have been quickened by Jesus, through the Spirit, though they were dead in trespasses and sins.

3. Now we come to the third and last case—LAZARUS DEAD AND BURIED. Ah! dear friends, I cannot take you to see Lazarus in his grave. Stand, oh stand away from him. Whither shall we flee to avoid the noxious odour of that reeking corpse? Ah, whither shall we flee? There is no beauty there; we dare not look upon it. There is not even the gloss of life left. Oh, hideous spectacle! I must not attempt to describe it; words would fail me, and you would be too much shocked. Nor dare I tell the character of some men present here. I should be ashamed to tell the things which some of you have done. This cheek might mantle with a blush to tell the deeds of darkness which some of the ungodly of this world habitually practise. Ah, the last stage of death, the last stage of corruption, oh, how hideous; but the last stage of sin, hideous far more! Some writers seem to have an aptitude for puddling in this mud, and digging up this miry clay; I confess that I have none. I cannot describe to you the lusts and vices of a fullgrown sinner. I cannot tell you what are the debaucheries, the degrading lusts, the devilish, the bestial sins into which wicked men will run, when spiritual death has had its perfect work in them, and sin has manifested itself in all its fearful wickedness. I may have some here. They are not Christians. They are not, like the young maiden, still fondled, nor even, like the young man, still kept in the funeral procession: no, they have gone so far that decent people avoid them. Their very wife, when they go into the house, rushes upstairs to be out of the way. They are scorned. Such an one is the harlot, from whom one's head is turned in the very street. Such an one is the openly profligate, to whom we give wide quarters, lest we touch him. He is a man that is far gone. The stone is rolled before him. No one calls him respectable. He dwelleth, perhaps, in some back slum of a dirty lane; he knoweth not where to go. Even as he stands in this place, he feels that if his next-door neighbour knew his guilt he would give him a wide berth, and stand far away from him; for he has come to the last stage; he has no marks of life; he is utterly rotten. And mark; as in the case of the maiden the sin was in the chamber, secret; in the next case it was in the open streets, public; but in this case it is secret again. It is in the tomb. For you will mark that men, when they are only half gone in wickedness, do it openly; but when they are fully gone their lust becomes so degrading that they are obliged to do it in secret. They are put into the grave, in order that all may be hidden. Their lust is one which can only be perpetrated at

midnight; a deed which can only be done when shrouded by the astonished curtains of darkness. Have I any such here? I cannot tell that I have many; but still I have some. Ah! in being constantly visited by penitents I have sometimes blushed for this city of London. There are merchants whose names stand high and fair. Shall I tell it here? I know it on the best authority, and the truest, too. There are some who have houses large and tall, who on the exchange are reputable and honorable, and everyone admits them and receives them into their society; but ah! there are some of the merchants of London who practise lusts that are abominable. I have in my church and congregation—and I dare to say what men dare to do—I have in my congregation women whose ruin and destruction have been wrought by some of the most respected men in respectable society. Few would venture on so bold a statement as that; but if you boldly do the thing, I must speak of it. It is not for God's ambassador to wash his mouth beforehand; let him boldly reprove, as men do boldly sin. Ah! there are some that are a stench in the nostrils of the Almighty; some whose character is hideous beyond all hideousness. They have to be covered up in the tomb of secrecy; for men would scout them from society, and hiss them from existence, if they knew all. And yet—and now comes a blessed interposition—yet this last case may be saved as well as the first, and as easily too. The rotten Lazarus may come out of his tomb, as well as the slumbering maiden from her bed. The last—the most corrupt, the most desperately abominable, may yet be quickened; and he may join in exclaiming, "And I have been quickened, though I was dead in trespasses and sins." I trust you will understand what I wish to convey—that the death is the same in all cases; but the manifestations of it is different; and that the life must come from God, and from God alone.

II. And now I will go on to another point—THE QUICKENING. These three persons were all quickened, and they were all quickened by the same being—that is by Jesus. But they were all quickened in a different manner. Note, first, the young maiden on her bed. When she was brought to life, it is said, "Jesus took her by the hand and said, maiden, arise." It was a still small voice. Her heart received its pulse again, and she lived. It was the gentle touching of the hand—no open demonstration—and the soft voice was heard—"arise." Now, usually when God converts young people in the first stage of sin, before they have formed evil habits, he

does it in a gentle manner; not by the terrors of the law, the tempest, fire and smoke, but he makes them like Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened" that she received the word. On such, "it droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven upon the place beneath." With hardened sinners grace cometh down in showers that rattle on them; but in young converts it often cometh gently. There is just the sweet breathing of the spirit. They perhaps scarcely think it is a true conversion; but true it is, if they are brought to life.

Now note the next case. Christ did not do the same thing with the young man that he did with the daughter of Jairus. No; the first thing he did was, he put his hand, not on him, mark you, but on the bier; "and they that bare it stood still." and after that, without touching the young man, he said in a louder voice, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise!" Note the difference: the young maiden's new life was given to her secretly. The young man's was given more publicly. It was done in the very street of the city. The maiden's life was given gently by a touch; but in the young man's case it must be done, not by the touching of him, but by the touching of the bier. Christ takes away from the young man his means of pleasure. He commands his companions, who by bad example are bearing him on his bier to his grave, to stop, and then there is a partial reformation for awhile, and after that there comes the strong out-spoken voice—"Young man, I say unto thee, arise!"

But now comes the worst case; and will you please at your leisure at home to notice what preparations Christ made for the last case of Lazarus? When he raised the maiden, he walked up into the chamber, smiling, and said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth." When he raised the young man, he said to the mother, "Weep not." Not so when he came to the last case; there was something more terrible about that: it was, a man in his grave corrupting. It was on that occasion you read, "Jesus wept;" and after he had wept it is said that "he groaned in his spirit;" and then he said, "Take away the stone;" and then there came the prayer, "I know that thou hearest me always." And then, will you notice, there came, what is not expressed so fully in either of the other cases. It is written, "Jesus cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth!" It is not written that he cried with the loud voice to either of the others. He spake to them; it was his

word that saved all of them; but in the case of Lazarus, he cried to him in a loud voice. Now, I have, perhaps, some of the last characters here—the worst of the worst. Ah! sinner; may the Lord quicken thee! But it is a work that makes the Saviour weep. I think when he comes to call some of you from your death in sin who have gone to the utmost extremity of guilt, he comes weeping and sighing for you. There is a stone there to be rolled away—your bad and evil habits; and when that stone is taken away, a still small voice will not do for you; it must be the loud crashing voice, like the voice of the Lord, which breaketh the cedars of Lebanon—"Lazarus, come forth!" John Bunyan was one of those rotten ones. What strong means were used in his case! Terrible dreams, fearful convulsions, awful shakings to and fro—all had to be employed to make him live. And yet some of you think, when God is terrifying you by the thunders of Sinai, that really he does not love you. It is not so; you were so dead that it needed a loud voice to arrest your ears.

III. This is an interested subject: I wish I could dilate upon it, but my voice fails me; and therefore, permit me to go to the third point very briefly. THE AFTER-EXPERIENCE OF THESE THREE PEOPLE WAS DIFFERENT—at least, you gather it from the commands of Christ. As soon as the maiden was alive, Christ said, "Give her meat;" as soon as the young man was alive "he delivered him to his mother;" as soon as Lazarus was alive, he said, "Loose him, and let him go." I think there is something in this. When young people are converted who have not yet acquired evil habits; when they are saved before they become obnoxious in the eyes of the world, the command is, "Give them meat." Young people want instruction; they want building up in the faith; they generally lack knowledge; they have not the deep experience of the older man; they do not know so much about sin, nor even so much about salvation as the older man that has been a guilty sinner; they need to be fed. So that our business as ministers when the young lambs are brought in, is to remember the injunction, "Feed my lambs;" take care of them; give them plenty of meat. Young people, search after an instructive minister; seek after instructive books; search the Scriptures, and seek to be instructed: that is your principal business. "Give her meat."

The next case was a different one. He gave the young man up to his

mother. Ah! that is just what he will do with you young man, if he makes you live. As sure as ever you are converted, he will give you up to your mother again. You were with her when you first as a babe sat on her knee; and that is where you will have to go again. Oh, yes; grace knits together again the ties which sin has loosed. Let a young man become abandoned; he casts off the tender influence of a sister and the kind associations of a mother: but if he is converted, one of the first things he will do will be to find the mother out, and the sister out, and he will find a charm in their society that he never knew before. You that have gone into sin, let this be your business, if God has saved you. Seek good company. Just as Christ delivered the young man to his mother, do you seek after your mother, the church. Endeavour as much as possible to be found in the company of the righteous; for, as you were carried before to your grave by bad companions, you need to be led to heaven by good men.

And then comes the case of Lazarus. "Loose him, and let him go." I do not know how it is that the young man never was loosed. I have been looking through every book I have about the manners and customs of the East, and have not been able to get a clue to the difference between the young man and Lazarus. The young man, as soon as Christ spoke to him, "sat up and began to speak;" but Lazarus, in his grave-clothes, lying in the niche of the tomb, could do no more than just shuffle himself out from the hole that was cut in the wall, and then stand leaning against it. He could not speak; he was bound about in a napkin. Why was it not so with the young man? I am inclined to think that the difference lay in the difference of their wealth. The young man was the son of a widow. Very likely he was only wrapped up in a few common things, and not so tightly bound about as Lazarus. Lazarus was of a rich family; very likely they wrapped him up with more care. Whether it was so or not, I do not know. What I want to hint at is this: when a man is far gone into sin, Christ does this for him—he breaks off his evil habits. Very likely the old sinner's experience will not be a feeding experience. It will not be the experience of walking with the saints. It will be as much as he can do to pull off his grave-clothes, to get rid of his old habits; perhaps to his death he will have to be rending off bit after bit of the cerements in which he has been wrapped. There is his drunkenness; oh, what a fight will he have with that! There is his lust; what a combat he will have with that, for many a month! There is his



habit of swearing; how often will an oath come into his mouth, and he will have as hard work as he can to thrust it down again! There is his pleasure-seeking: he has given it up; but how often will his companions be after him, to get him to go with them. His life will be ever afterwards a loosing and letting go; for he will need it till he cometh up to be with God for ever and ever.

And now, dear friends, I must close by asking you this question—have you been quickened? And I must warn you that, good, or bad, or indifferent, if you have never been quickened you are dead in sins, and must be cast away at the last. I must bid you, however, who have gone the furthest into sin, not to despair; Christ can quicken you as well as the best. Oh, that he would quicken you, and lead you to believe! Oh, that he now would cry to some, "Lazarus, come forth!" and make some harlot virtuous, some drunkard sober. Oh! that he would bless the word, especially to the young and amiable and lovely, by making them now the heirs of God and the children of Christ!

And now but one thing I have to say to those who are quickened; and then adieu this morning, and may God bless you! My dear friends, you who are quickened, let me advise you to take care of the devil; he will be sure to be after you. Keep your mind always employed, and so you will escape him. Oh, be aware of his devices; seek to "keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake.

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# **Spiritual Revival, The Want Of The Church**

O Lord, revive thy work. - Habakkuk 3:2

All true religion is the work of God: it is pre-eminently so. If he should select out of his works that which he esteems most of all, he would select true religion. He regards the work of grace as being even more glorious than the works of nature; and he is, therefore, especially careful that it shall always be known, so that if any one dare to deny it, they shall do so in the teeth of repeated testimonies to the contrary, that God is indeed the author of salvation in the world and in the hearts of men, and that religion is the effect of grace, and is the work of God. I believe the Eternal might sooner forgive the sin of ascribing the creation of the heavens and of the earth to an idol, than that of ascribing the works of grace to the efforts of the flesh, or to any thing else but God. It is a sin of the greatest magnitude to suppose that there is aught in the heart which can be acceptable unto God, save that which God himself has first created there. When I deny God's work in creating the sun, I deny one truth; but when I deny that he works grace in the heart, I deny a hundred truths in one; for in the denial of that one great truth, that God is the author of good in the souls of men, I have denied all the doctrines which make up the great articles of faith, and have run in the very teeth of the whole testimony of sacred Scripture. I trust, beloved, that many of us have been taught, that if there be any thing in our souls which can carry us to heaven, it is God's work, and, moreover, that if there be aught that is good and excellent found in his church, it is entirely God's work, from first to last. We firmly believe that it is God who quickens the soul which was dead, positively "dead in trespasses and sins;" that it is God who maintains the life of that soul, and God who consummates and perfects that life in the home of the blessed, in the land of the hereafter. We ascribe nothing to man, but all to God. We dare not for a moment think that the conversion of the soul is effected either by its own effort or by the efforts of others; we conceive

that there are means and agencies employed, but that the work is, both alpha and omega, wholly the Lord's. We think, therefore, that we are right in applying the text to the work of divine grace, both in the heart and in the church at large; and we think we can have no subject more appropriate for our consideration than the text. "O Lord, revive thy work!"

First, beloved, trusting that the Spirit of God will help me, I shall endeavor to apply the text *to our own souls personally*, and then *to the state of the Church at large*, for it well needs that the Lord should revive his work in its midst.

#### I. First, then, to OUR OWN SOULS PERSONALLY.

In this matter, we should begin at home. We too often flog the church, when the whip should be laid on our own shoulders. We drag the church, like a colossal culprit, to the altar; we bind her, and try to execute her at once; we bind her hands fast, and tear off thongfull after thongfull of her quivering flesh—finding fault with her where there is none, and magnifying her little errors; while we too often forget ourselves. Let us, therefore, commence with ourselves, remembering that we are part of the church, and that our own want of revival is in some measure the cause of that want in the church at large. Now, I directly charge the great majority of professing Christians—and I take the charge to myself also—with a need of a revival of piety in these days. I shall lay the charge before you very peremptorily, because I think I have abundant grounds to prove it. I believe that the mass of Christian men in this age need a revival, and my reasons are these:

In the first place, look *at the conduct and conversation* of too many who profess to be the children of God. It ill becomes any man who occupies the sacred place of a pulpit to flatter his hearers, and I shall not attempt to do so. The evil lies with too many of you who unite yourselves with Christian churches, and in practically protesting against your profession. It has become very common now-a-days to join a church; go where you may you find professing Christians who sit down at some Lord's table or another; but are there fewer cheats than there used to be? Are there less

frauds committed? Do we find morality more extensive? Do we find vice entirely at an end? No, we do not. The age is as immoral as any that preceded it; there is still as much sin, although it is more cloaked and hidden. The outside of the sepulcher may be whiter; but within, the bones are just as rotten as before. Society is not one whit improved. Those men who, in our popular magazines, give us a true picture of the state of London life, are to be believed and credited, for they do not stretch the truth—they have no motive for so doing; and the picture which they give of morality of this great city is certainly appalling. It is a huge criminal, full of sin; and I say this, that if all the profession in London were true profession, it would not be nearly such a wicked place as it is; it could not be, by any manner of means.

My brethren, it is well known—and who dares deny it that is not too partial, and who will not speak willful falsehood?—it is well known that it is not in these days a sufficient guaranty even of a man's honesty, that he is a member of a church. It is a hard thing for Christian ministers to say, but we must say it, and if friends say it not, enemies will; and better that the truth should be spoken in our own midst, that men may see that we are ashamed of it, than that they should hear us impudently deny what we must confess to be true! O sirs, the lives of too many members of Christian churches give us grave cause to suspect that there is none of the life of godliness in them all! Why that reaching after money, why that covetousness, why that following of the crafts and devices of a wicked world, why that clutching here and clutching there, that grinding of the faces of the poor, that stamping down of the workman, and such like things, if men are truly what they profess to be? God in heaven knows that what I speak is true, and too many here know it themselves. If they be Christians, at least they want revival; if there be life in them, it is but a spark that is covered up with heaps of ashes; it needs to be fanned, ay, and it needs to be stirred also, that, haply, some of the ashes may be removed and the spark may have place to live.

The Church as a whole needs revival in the persons of its members. The members of Christian churches are not what once they were. It is fashionable to be religious now; persecution is taken away; and ah! I had almost said, the gates of the church were taken away with it. The church

has, with few exceptions, no gates now; persons come in, and go out of it, just as they would march through St. Paul's cathedral, and make it a very place of traffic, instead of regarding it as a select and sacred spot, to be apportioned to the holy of the Lord, and to the excellent of the earth, in whom is God's delight. If this be not true, you know how to treat it; you need not confess to sin you have not committed; but if it be true, and true in your case, O! humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God; ask him to search and try you, that if you be not his child you may be helped to renounce your profession, lest it should be to you but the gaudy pageantry of death, and mere tinsel and gewgaw in which to go to hell. If you be his, ask that he may give you more grace, that you may renounce these faults and follies, and turn into him with full purpose of heart, as the effect of a revived godliness in your soul.

Again, where the *conduct* of professing Christians is consistent, let me ask the question, Does not *the conversation* of many a professor lead us either to doubt the truthfulness of his piety, or else to pray that his piety may be revived? Have you noticed the conversation of too many who think themselves Christians? You might live with them from the first of January to the end of December, and you would never be tired of religion for what you would hear of it. They scarcely mention the name of Jesus Christ at all. On Sabbath afternoon all the ministers are talked over, faults are found with this one and the other, and all kinds of conversation take place, which they call religious, because it is concerning religious places. But do they ever -

"Talk of all he did, and said,  
and suffer'd for us here below;  
The path he mark'd for us to tread,  
And whet he's doing for us now"?

Do you often hear the salutation addressed to you by your brother Christian, "Friend, how doth thy soul prosper?" When we step into each other's houses, do we begin to talk concerning the cause and truth of God? Do you think that God would now stoop from heaven to listen to the conversation of his church, as once he did, when it was said, "The Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written for them

that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name?" I solemnly declare, as the result of thorough, and, I trust, impartial observation, that the conversation of Christians, while it can not be condemned on the score of morality, must almost invariably be condemned on the score of Christianity. We talk too little about our Lord and Master.

That ugly word "sectarianism" has crept into our midst, and we must say nothing about Christ, because we are afraid of being called sectarians. I am a sectarian, and hope to be so until I die, and to glory in it; for I can not see, now-a-days, that a man can be a Christian, thoroughly in earnest, without winning for himself the title. Why, we must not talk of this doctrine, because perhaps such a one disbelieves it; we must not notice such and such a truth in Scripture, because such and such a friend doubts or denies it; and so we drop all the great and grand topics which used to be the staple commodities of godly talk, and begin to speak of any thing else, because we feel that we can agree better on worldly things than we can on spiritual. Is not that the truth? and is it not a sad sin with some of us, that we have need to pray unto God, "O Lord, revive thy work in my soul, that my conversation may be more Christlike, seasoned with salt, and kept by the Holy Spirit?"

And yet a third remark here. There are some whose conduct is all that we could wish, whose conversation is for the most part unctuous with the gospel, and savory of truth; but even they will confess to a third charge, which I must now sorrowfully bring against them and against myself, namely, that there is *too little real communion with Jesus Christ*. If, thanks to divine grace, we are enabled to keep our conduct tolerably consistent, and our lives unblemished, yet how much have we to cry out against ourselves, from a lack of that holy fellowship with Jesus which is the high mark of the true child of God! Brethren, let me ask some of you how long it is since you have had a love-visit from Jesus Christ—how long since you could say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies?" How long is it since "he brought you into his banqueting house, and his banner over you was love?" Perhaps some of you will be able to say, "It was but this morning that I saw him; I beheld his face with joy, and was ravished with his countenance." But I fear the greatest part of you will have to say, "Ah, sir, for months I have been without the

shinings of his countenance." What have you been doing, then, and what has been your way of life? Have you been groaning every day? Have you been weeping every minute? "No!" Then you ought to have been. I can not understand how your piety can be of any very brilliant order, if you can live without the sunlight of Christ, and yet be happy.

Christians will sometimes lose the realization of Jesus; the connection between themselves and Christ will at times be severed, as to their own conscious enjoyment of it; but they will always groan and cry when they lose their Jesus. What! is Christ thy Brother, and does he live in thine house, and yet thou hast not spoken to him for a month? I fear there is little love between thee and thy Brother, for thou hast had no conversation with him for so long. What! is Christ the Husband of his church, and has she had no fellowship with him for all this time? Brethren, let me not condemn you, let me not even judge you, but let your conscience speak. Mine shall, and so shall yours. Have we not too much forgotten Christ? Have we not lived too much without him? Have we not been contented with the world, instead of desiring Christ? Have we been, all of us, like that little ewe lamb that did drink out of the master's cup, and feed from his table? Have we not rather been content to stray upon the mountains, feeding anywhere but at home? I fear many of the troubles of our heart spring from want of communion with Jesus. Not many of us are the kind of men who, living with Jesus, his secrets must know. O! no; we live too much without the light of his countenance; and are too happy when he is gone from us. Let us, each of us, then, for I am sure we have each of us need, in some measure, put up the prayer, "O Lord, revive thy work!" Ah! methinks I hear one professor saying, "Sir, I need no revival in my heart; I am every thing I wish to be." Down on your knees, my brethren! down on your knees for him! He is the man that most needs to be prayed for. He says that he needs no revival in his soul; but he needs a revival of his humility, at any rate. If he supposes that he is all that he ought to be, and if he knows that he is all he wishes to be, he has very mean notions of what a Christian is, or of what a Christian should be, and very unjust ideas of himself. Those are in the best condition who, while they know they want reviving, yet feel their condition and groan under it, and pray to the Lord to revive them.

Now, I think I have in some degree substantiated my charge, I fear with too strong arguments; and now let me notice, that the text has something in it which I trust that each of us has. Here is not only an evil implied in these words—"O Lord, revive thy work;" but there is an evil evidently felt. You see Habakkuk knew how to groan about it. "O Lord," said he, "revive thy work!" Ah! we many of us want revival, but few of us feel that we want it. It is a blessed sign of life within, when we know how to groan over our departures from the living God. It is easy to find by hundreds those that have departed, but you must count those by ones who know how to groan over their departure. The true believer, however, when he discovers that he needs revival, will not be happy; he will begin at once that incessant and continuous strain of cries and groans which will at last prevail with God, and bring the blessing of revival down. He will, days and nights in succession, cry, "O Lord revive thy work!"

Let me mention some groaning times, which will always occur to the Christian who needs revival. I am sure he will always groan, *when he looks upon what the Lord did for him of old*. When he recollects the Mizars and the Hermons, and those places where the Lord appeared of old to him, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," I know he will never look back to them without tears. If he is what he should be as a Christian, or if he thinks he is not in a right condition, he will always weep when he remembers God's loving-kindness of old. O! whenever the soul has lost fellowship with Jesus, it can not bear to think of the "chariots of Aminadab;" it can not endure to think of "the banqueting house," for it hath not been there so long; and when it does think of it, it says,

"Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and his Word?"

"What peaceful hours I then enjoy'd!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But now I find an aching void  
The world can never fill."



When one who is in this state hears a sermon which relates the glorious experience of the believer who is in a healthy state, he will put his hand upon his heart, and say, "Ah! such was my experience once; but those happy days are gone. My sun is set; those stars which once lit up my darkness are all quenched; O! that I might again behold him; O! that I might once more see his face; O! for those sweet visits from on high; O! for the grapes of Eschol once more." And by the rivers of Babylon you will sit down and weep. You will weep, when you remember your goings up to Zion—when the Lord was precious to you, when he laid bare his heart, and was pleased also to fill your heart with the fullness of his love. Such times will be groaning times, when you remember "the years of the right hand of the Most High."

Again, to a Christian who wants revival, *ordinances* will be also groaning times. He will go up to the house of God; but he will say of himself when he comes away, "Ah! how changed! When I once went with the multitude that kept holy day every word was precious. When the song ascended my soul had wings, and up it flew to its nest among the stars; when the prayer was offered, I could devoutly say, 'Amen;' but now the preacher preaches as he did before; my brethren are as profited as once they were; but the sermon is dry to me, and dull. I find no fault with the preacher; I know the fault is in myself. The song is just the same—as sweet the melody, as pure the harmony; but ah! my heart is heavy; my harp strings are broken, and I can not sing;" and the Christian will return from those blessed means of grace, sighing and sobbing, because he knows he wants revival. More especially at the Lord's Supper he will think, when he sits at the table, "O! what seasons I once had here! In breaking the bread and drinking the wine my Master was present." He will bethink himself how his soul was even carried to the seventh heaven, and the house was made "the very house of God and the gate of heaven." "But now," he says, "it is bread, dry bread to me; it is wine, tasteless wine, with none of the sweetness of paradise in it; I drink, but all in vain. No thoughts of Christ. My heart will not rise; my soul can not heave a thought half way to him!" And then the Christian will begin to groan again—"O Lord revive thy work!"

But I shall not detain you upon that subject. Those of you who know that you are in Christ, but feel that you are not in a desirable condition, because you do not love him enough and have not faith in him which you desire to have, I would just ask you this: Do you groan over it? Can you groan now? When you feel your heart is empty, is it "an aching void?" When you feel that your garments are stained, can you wash those garments with tears? When you think your Lord is gone, can you hang out the black flag of sorrow, and cry, "O my Jesus! O my Jesus! art thou gone?" If thou canst, then I bid thee do it. Do it, do it; and may God be pleased to give thee grace to continue to do it, until a happier era shall dawn in the reviving of thy soul!

And remark, in the last place, upon this point, that the soul, when it is really brought to feel its own sad estate, because of its declension and departure from God, *is never content without turning its groanings into prayer*, and without addressing the prayer to the right quarter: "O Lord, revive thy work!" Some of you, perhaps, will say, "Sir, I feel my need of revival; I intend to set to work this very afternoon, as soon as I shall retire from this place, to revive my soul." Do not say it; and, above all things, do not try to do it, for you never will do it. Make no resolutions as to what you will do; your resolutions will as certainly be broken as they are made, and your broken resolutions will but increase the number of your sins. I exhort you, instead of trying to revive yourself, to offer prayers. Say not, "I will revive myself," but cry, "O Lord, revive *thy* works!" And let me solemnly tell thee, thou hast not yet felt what it is to decline, thou dost not yet know how sad is thine estate, otherwise thou wouldest not talk of reviving thyself. If thou didst know thy own position, thou wouldest as soon expect to see the wounded soldier on the battle-field heal himself without medicine, or convey himself to the hospital when his limbs are shot away, as thou wouldest expect to revive thyself without the help of God. I bid thee not do any thing, nor seek to do any thing, until first of all thou hast addressed Jehovah himself by mighty prayer—until thou hast cried out, "O Lord, revive thy work!" Remember, he that first made you must keep you alive; and he that has kept you alive must restore more life to you. He that has preserved you from going down to the pit, when your feet have been sliding, can alone set you again upon a rock, and establish your goings. Begin, then, by humbling yourself—giving up all hope of

reviving yourself as a Christian, but beginning at once with firm prayer and earnest supplication to God: "O Lord, what I can not do, do thou! O Lord, revive thy work!"

Christian brethren, I leave these matters with you. Give them the attention they deserve. If I have erred, and in aught judged you too harshly, God shall forgive me, for I have meant it honestly. But if I have spoken truly, lay it to your hearts, and turn your houses into a "Bochim." Weep men apart, and women apart, husbands apart, and wives apart. Weep, weep, my brethren: "It is a sad thing to depart from the living God." Weep, and may he bring you back to Zion, that you may one day return like Israel, not with weeping, but with songs of everlasting joy!

II. And now I come to the second part of the subject, upon which I must be more brief. In THE CHURCH ITSELF, taken as a body, this prayer ought to be one incessant and solemn litany: "O Lord, revive thy work!"

In the present era there is *a sad decline of the vitality of godliness*. This age has become too much the age of form, instead of the age of life. I date the hour of life from this day one hundred years ago when the first stone was laid of this building in which we now worship God. Then was the day of life divine, and of power, sent down from on high. God had clothed Whitefield with power: he was preaching with a majesty and a might of which one could scarcely think mortal could ever be capable; not because he was any thing in himself, but because his Master girded him with might. After Whitefield there was a succession of great and holy men. But now, sirs, we have fallen upon the dregs of time. *Men* are the rarest things in all this world; we have not many left now. We have no men in government hardly, to conduct our politics, and scarcely any men in religion. We have the *things* that perform their duties, as they are called; we have the good, and, perhaps, the honest things, who in the regular routine go on like pack-horses with their bells, for ever in the old style; but men who dare to be singular, because to be singular is generally to be right in a wicked world, are not very many in this age. Compared with the puritanic times even where are our divines? Could we marshal together our Howes and our Charnocks? Could we gather together such names as I could mention about fifty at a time? I trow not. Nor could we bring

together such a galaxy of grace and talent as that which immediately followed Whitefield. Think of Rowland Hill, Newton, Toplady, Doddridge, and numbers of others whom time would fail me to mention. They are gone, they are gone; their venerated dust sleeps in the earth; and where are their successors? Ask where, and the echo shall reply, "Where?" There are none. Successors of them, where are they? God hath not yet raised them up, or, if he have, you have not yet found out where they are.

There is, nowadays, much preaching, and what is it? O Lord, help thy servant to preach, and teach him by thy Spirit what to say." Then out comes the manuscript, and they read it. A pure insult to Almighty God! We have preaching, but it is of this order. It is not preaching at all. It is speaking very beautifully and very finely, possibly eloquently, in some sense of the word; but where is the right down preaching, such as Whitefield's? Have you ever read one of his sermons? You will not think him eloquent; you can not think him so. His expressions were rough, frequently very coarse and unconnected; there was very much declamation about him; it was a great part, indeed, of his speech. But where lay his eloquence? Not in the words you read, but in the tone in which he delivered them, and in the earnestness with which he felt them, and in the tears which ran down his cheeks, and in the pouring out of his soul. The reason why he was eloquent was just what the word means. He was eloquent, because he spoke right out from his heart—from the innermost depths of the man. You could see when he spoke that he meant what he said. He did not speak as a trade, or as a mere machine, but he preached what he felt to be the truth, and what he could not help preaching. When you heard him preach, you could not help feeling that he was a man who would die if he could not preach, and with all his might call to men and say, "Come! come! come to Jesus Christ, and believe on him!"

Now, that is just the lack of these times. Where, where is earnestness now? It is neither in pulpit nor yet in pew, in such a measure as we desire it; and it is a sad, sad age, when earnestness is scoffed at, and when that very zeal which ought to be the prominent characteristic of the pulpit is regarded as enthusiasm and fanaticism. I ask God to make us all such

fanatics as most men laugh at—to make us all just such enthusiasts as many despise. We reckon it the greatest fanaticism in the world to go to hell, the greatest enthusiasm upon earth to love sin better than righteousness; and we think those neither fanatics nor enthusiasts who seek to obey God rather than man, and follow Christ in all his ways. We repeat, that one sad proof that the church wants revival is the absence of that death-like, solemn earnestness which was once seen in Christian pulpits.

*The absence of sound doctrine* is another proof of our want of revival. Do you know who are called Antinomians now, who are called "hypers," who are laughed at, who are rejected as being unsound in the faith? Why, the men that once were the orthodox are now the heretics. We can turn back to the records of our Puritan fathers, to the articles of the Church of England, to the preaching of Whitefield, and we can say of that preaching, it is the very thing we love; and the doctrines which were then uttered are—and we dare to say it everywhere—the very self-same doctrines that he proclaimed. But because we choose to proclaim them, we are thought singular and strange; and the reason is, because sound doctrine hath to a great degree ceased. It began in this way. First of all the truths were fully believed, but the angles were a little taken off. The minister believed election, but he did not use the word, for fear it should in some degree disturb the equanimity of the deacon in the green pew in the corner. He believed that all men were depraved, but he did not say it positively, because if he did, there was a lady who had subscribed so much to the chapel—she would not come again; so that while he did believe it, and did say it in some sense, he rounded it a little. Afterward it came to this. Ministers said, "We believe these doctrines, but we do not think them profitable to preach to the people. They are quite true: free grace is true; the great doctrines of grace that were preached by Christ, by Paul, by Augustine, by Calvin, and down to this age by their successors, are true; but they had better be kept back—they must be very cautiously dealt with; they are very high and dreadful doctrines, and they must not be preached; we believe them but we dare not speak them out." After that it came to something worse. They said within themselves, "Well, if these doctrines will not do for us to preach, perhaps they are not true at all;" and going one step further, they said they dare not preach them. They did

not actually say it, perhaps, but they began just to hint that they were not true; then they went one step further, giving us something which they said was the truth; and then they would cast us out of the synagogue, as if they were the rightful owners of it, and we were the intruders. So they have passed on from bad to worse; and if you read the standard divinity of this age, and the standard divinity of Whitefield's day, you will find that the two can not by any possibility stand together. We have got a "new theology." New theology? Why, it is any thing but a *Theology*; it is an ology which hath cast out God utterly and entirely, and enthroned man, as it is the doctrine of man, and not the doctrine of the everlasting God. We want a revival of sound doctrine once more in the midst of the land.

And the church at large, may be, wants *a revival of downright earnestness in its members*. Ye are not the men to fight the Lord's battles yet. Ye have not the earnestness, the zeal, which once the children of God had. Your forefathers were oaken men; ye are willow men. Our people, what are they many of them? Strong in doctrine when they are with strong doctrine men; but they waver when they get with others, and they change as often as they change their company; they are sometimes one thing, and sometimes another. They are not the men to go to the stake and die; they are not the men that know how to die daily, and so are ready for death when it comes.

Look at our prayer-meetings, with here and there a bright exception. Go in. There are six women; scarcely ever enough members come to pray four times. Look at them. Prayer-meetings they are called; *spare* meetings they ought to be called, for sparely enough they are attended. And very few there are that go to our fellowship-meetings, or to any other meetings that we have to help one another in the fear of the Lord. Are they attended at all? I would like to see a newspaper printed somewhere, containing a list of all the persons that went to those meetings during the week in any of our chapels. Ah! my friends, if they should comprise all the Christians in London, you might find that a chapel or two would hold them all. There are few enough that go. We have not earnestness, we have not life, as we once had; if we had, we should be called worse names than we are; we should have viler epithets thrown at us, if we were more true to our Master; we should not have all things quite so comfortable, if we

served God better. We are getting the church to be an institution of our land—an honorable institution. Ah! some think it a grand thing when the church becomes an honorable institution! Methinks it shows the church has swerved, when she begins to be very honorable in the eyes of the world. She must still be cast out, she must still be called evil, and still be despised, until that day shall come, when her Lord shall honor her because she has honored him—shall honor her, even in this world, in the day of his appearing.

Beloved, do you think it is true that the church wants reviving? Yes, or no? "No," you say, "not to the extent that you suppose. We think the church is in a good condition. We are not among those who cry, "The former days were better than these." Perhaps; you are not: you may be far wiser than we are, and therefore you are able to see those various signs of goodness which are to us so small that we are not able to discover them. You may suppose that the church is in a good condition; if so, of course you can not sympathize with me in preaching from such a text, and urging you to use such a prayer. But there are others of you who are frequently prone to cry, "The church wants reviving." Let me bid you, instead of grumbling at your minister, instead of finding fault with the different parts of the church, to cry, "O Lord revive thy work!" "O!" says one, "if we had another minister. O! if we had another kind of worship. O! if we had a different sort of preaching." Just as if that were all! It is, "O if the lord would come into the hearts of the men you have got. O! if he would make the forms you do use full of power." You do not want fresh ways of fresh machinery; you want the life in what you have. There is an engine on a railway; a train has to be moved. "Bring another engine," says one, "and another, and another." The engines are brought, but the train does not move at all. Light the fire, and get the steam up, that is what you want; not fresh engines. We do not want fresh ministers, or fresh plans, or fresh ways, though many might be invented, to make the church better; we only want life in what we have got. Given, the very man who has emptied your chapel; given, the self-same person that brought your prayer-meeting low; God can make the chapel crowded to the doors yet, and give thousands of souls to that very man. It is not a new man that is wanted; it is the life of God in him. Do not be crying out for something new; it will no more succeed, of itself, than what you have. Cry, "O Lord,

revive thy work!"

I have noticed in different churches, that the minister has thought first of this contrivance, then of that. He tried one plan, and thought that would succeed; then he tried another; that was not it. Keep to the old plan, but get life in it. We do not want anything new; "the old is better"—let us keep to it. But we want life in the old. "O!" men cry, "we have nothing but the shell; they are going to give us a new shell." No, sirs, we will keep the old one, but we will have the life in the shell too; we will have the old thing; but we must, or else we will throw thee old away, have the life in the old. O! that God would give us life. The church wants fresh revivals. O! for the days of Cambuslang again, when Whitefield preached with power. O! for the days when in this place hundreds were converted sometimes under Whitefield's sermons. It has been know that two thousand credible cases of conversion have happened under one solitary discourse. O! for the age when eyes should be strained, and ears should be ready to receive the word of God, and when men should drink in the word of life, as it is indeed, the very water of life, which God gives to dying souls! O! for the age of deep feeling—the age of deep, thorough-going earnestness! Let us ask God for it; let us plead with him for it. Perhaps he has the man, or the men, somewhere, who will shake the world yet; perhaps even now he is about to pour forth a mighty influence upon men, which shall make the church as wonderful in this age, as it ever was in any age that has passed. God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **A Stanza Of Deliverance**



He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes. - Psalm 105:37

This verse has been making music in my heart for several days, and at times it has even claimed utterance from my tongue. I have caught myself singing a solo, with myself as the only hearer; and this has been the theme, "He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes." I love texts which sing to me, and make me join in their tune. If this verse should get into your hearts, and set you singing in a similar way, you will be entertaining a very pleasant visitor, and it will brighten a dark day for you.

Egypt may very fairly represent those states of sorrow and sadness, depression and oppression, into which God's people come far too frequently. Specially is the house of bondage a true picture of our condition when we are convinced of sin, but are ignorant of the way to escape from its guilt and power. Then sin, which was once our Goshen of pleasure, becomes our iron furnace of fear. Though we yield to sin when under conviction, yet we are no longer its willing subjects: we feel that we are slaves, and we sigh by reason of sore bondage. Glory be to God, he has now brought us out from that state of slavery, and we can sing of freedom given by his own right hand!

Since then we have been permitted, in the order of God's providence, to live among evil persons who have had power over us, and have used it maliciously. They have hated our God, and, therefore, they have hated us, and shown their dislike of us in many harsh and expecting ways. We find no rest with them; but our soul is among lions. They seem as though they would devour us, or else frighten us from following the road to heaven.

Full often has our gracious God delivered his persecuted people from such a sorrowful condition, and brought them into a large room, wherein he has made them happy with Christian fellowship, and enabled them to go about holy work without let or hindrance. At such times, when God's people have come out from under the yoke of their oppressors, the Lord has "brought them forth also with silver and gold, and there has not been one feeble person among their tribes."

It is possible to go down again into Egypt by reason of our own depression of spirit, inward conflict, and despondency. If you like the preacher, you are by no means a stranger to inward sinkings. Though you do not give up your faith, but are still, like father Jacob, keeping your hold while the sinew is shrinking, yet you are "sore broken in the place of dragons." You feel that you are like that bush in the desert, which burned with fire, and, only through a miracle, was not consumed. When under temptations of the flesh, and memories of old sins, Satan himself comes in with his fiery darts, and you have a hard time of it. He will insinuate dark and dreadful thoughts, and you will be haunted by them, day after day, till you feel like the poor Israelites under the lash of the Egyptian taskmaster. Your covenant with God will bring you out of that state of anguish and distress; and when he does so, you will sing, "He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes."

God forbid we should repeat that senseless and wicked trust in man, which once made us do down into Egypt for help! We will not go there for pleasure: what have we to do with drinking the waters of the muddy river? We drink of a better river than the Nile, even of the river of the water of life. But we shall go to the region weakness and pain to die. Unless the Lord should suddenly come in his glory, we shall close our eyes in death as Jacob and Joseph did. Then when we go into the tomb, which will be a kind of Egypt for our body, we shall only tarry there for a season. We shall slumber for a while, each one in his bed of dust, but the trump of the archangel shall awaken us, and our bodies shall rise again. We shall not, however, come from the grave so poor and feeble as we went in. No, we shall be great gainers by our sojourn in the dark abode. Those who see the saints in the day of resurrection, ascending to their thrones from the Egypt of death, may fitly say, "He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes."

I am going to try to handle my very delightful subject in the following way:—First, the deliverances of God's people are always wrought by divine power. Lay the stress on the first word: "HE brought them forth."

Secondly, their deliverances are attended with enrichment. "He brought them forth also with silver and gold." And, thirdly, their deliverances are accompanied by a remarkable degree of strength. "There was not one feeble person among their tribes." May the Holy Spirit make rare music for you upon this harp of three strings!

I. First, then, when we are led out of the Egypt of our sorrow, OUR DELIVERANCE IS BY DIVINE POWER. When Israel comes out of Egypt, it was Jehovah who brought forth her armies. When any man is saved from spiritual bondage, it is the Lord Jesus who looseth the captive. Some little time ago, I delivered an address at the Mildmay Park Conference upon "Following Jesus in the dark", and the Lord was pleased to bless that word to a great many who were then under a cloud. For this cause, I greatly rejoice, but from this happy result I have also had to suffer many things in the following way: it seems as if persons everywhere, having read that address, must needs write to me an account of their trouble, despondency, and darkness of the soul. Having written the doleful narrative, they very naturally ask me endless questions by way of trying to find light for themselves out of my experience and knowledge. I have been delighted to answer those questions as far as I can; but there is a limit to human power. I have lately been like a doctor who has suddenly had a new practice handed over to him, when he was already as busy as he could be, both night and day. He finds his door besieged by patients who cannot be dismissed with just a word of hope and a dose of medicine, but require a long time in which to tell their griefs and to receive their comfort. Spiritually, my night-bell is always going; and when I visit a sick soul, it requires long and weary nursing. I know, therefore, from that, as well as from my own experience, that if ever a man is delivered from spiritual bondage of heart, it is not by any easy work, or by a hasty word. Nay, all the power of sympathy and experience will fail with some souls. God alone can take away the iron when it enters into the soul. It is of small use for those afflicted in mind to write to me, or to others, if their distress is spiritual, for God only can deliver them. If they are in the dark, we can strike a match as well as anyone else; but since they need the shining of the sun, that remains with the Lord, who alone creates the light. Oh, that the Sun of righteousness would rise with healing beneath his wings, on every soul that now sits in the midnight of despair!

Deliverance from a cruel captivity, like that of Israel in Egypt, must be wrought by the hand and outstretched arm of Jehovah alone. When such a liberation is performed, then do we rapturously sing, "HE brought them forth."

But this does not exclude the use of means. The Lord used Moses and Aaron, and Moses used his rod and his tongue. Truly Jehovah brought forth Israel, and neither Moses nor Aaron nor the rod in Moses' hand; but yet the Lord's instruments were employed in the service. If the Lord delivers you, my dear afflicted friends, the work will not be done by the preacher, not by a consoling book, nor by any other means so as to prevent its being the Lord alone. The use of instrumentality does not hide divine power, but even makes it more apparent. The man Moses was not only very meek; but he was also so slow in speech that he needed Aaron's help; yet the Lord used him. Aaron was even inferior to Moses; but the Lord used him. As for the rod, it was probably nothing more than a hazel stick, which had been used by Moses in walking and keeping sheep; but it pleased the Lord to make of that rod a very remarkable use, so that no sceptre of kings was ever so greatly honoured. The Lord took care to employ means which could not pretend to share the honour with himself. Notwithstanding Moses, Aaron, and the rod, "HE brought them forth," and HE alone.

This work of the Lord does not exclude the action of the will. The people of Israel came forth freely from the country which had become the house of bondage. "He brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness." They set out exultingly, glad to escape from the intolerable oppression of Pharaoh, who was to them a tyrant indeed. God does not violate the human will when he saves men: they are not converted against their will, but their will itself is converted. The Lord has a way of entering the heart, not with a crowbar, like a burglar, but with a master-key, which he gently inserts in the lock, and the bolt flies back, the door opens, and he enters. The Lord brought Israel forth; but they had cried unto the Lord by reason of their sore bondage, and they did not receive the blessing without the desiring it, yea, and sighing for it; and when it came, they joyfully accepted it, and willingly trusted themselves with him whom the Lord had made to be their mediator and leader, even Moses. They did not

share the honour of their deliverance with God, but still they gave their hearty assent and consent to his salvation. Willingly as they were to move, it was still true, "HE brought them forth."

Brethren, he must have brought them forth, for they could never have come forth by themselves. If you have read enough of Egyptian history to understand the position and power of the reigning Pharaohs, you will know how impossible it was for a mob of slaves, like the Israelites, to make headway against the imperious monarch, and his absolute power. If they had clamoured and rebelled, the only possible result would have been to slaughter many, and the still further enslavement of the rest. There was no hope for the most distinguished Israelite against the tyranny of the Pharaoh: He could simply cry, "Get you unto your burdens;" and they could do no less. Pharaoh crushed even his own Egyptians, and much more the strangers. You cannot look upon the pyramids and other vast buildings along the Nile, and remember that all these were built with unpaid labour, with the whip continually at the workman's back, without feeling that a pastoral unarmed race, long held in servitude, could never have obtained deliverance from the power of Pharaohs, if the omnipotent Jehovah had not espoused their cause. "HE brought them forth."

Beloved, we can never escape from the bondage of sin by our own power. Our past guilt, and the condemnation consequent thereon, have locked us up in a dungeon, whose bars we can never break. The prince of darkness, also, has such power over our evil natures that we cannot overcome him, or escape from under his dominion of ourselves. If we are ever set free from sin and Satan, it will be eternally and infinitely true that the Lord brought us forth out of the house of bondage. "Salvation is of the Lord."

Moreover, the spirit of the people was too crushed to have dared to come forth, even if they could have achieved liberty by a brave revolt. Four hundred years of slavery had ground the very spirit out of the men of Israel. They toiled, they toiled, they toiled; and when Moses came and talked to them about freedom, at first they listened, and they hoped; but in a few hours they began to murmur, and to complain of Moses, and to cry, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." That abject

condition was ours before conversion; we were not easily aroused to seek redemption. I remember hearing the gospel, and getting a little comfort from it, and almost immediately falling back into my former hopelessness; and I said in my soul, "I may as well enjoy the pleasures of sin while I can, for I am doomed to perish for my iniquities." The slavery of sin takes away manliness and courage from the spirit; and where bright hope smiles upon us, we answer her with the sullen silence of despair. Was it not so with you, my brethren, in those gloomy days? Therefore, it must be true, that, if the prisoners of sin have some forth, the Lord himself brought them forth. They had not the spirit of men who could dare to care about their freedom; they were too enfeebled by their own servile spirit. There may be some before me, at this moment, before whom God has set an open door, and yet they dare not go through it. Christ is put before you; you may have him for your trusting; you may have him at once; but you dare not take him. You are commanded to believe, but you dare not believe what you know to be true. You hear us sing the hymn—

"Only trust him, only trust him,  
Only trust him now;"

but you dare not trust the Lord Jesus, though this is your only hope of obtaining salvation. Your sin has left you paralyzed with despair. O God, bring forth these prisoners, even now! Though they lie in the inner prison, with their feet fast in the stocks, may it be said on earth and sung in heaven, "HE brought them forth."

Yet the Lord did bring them forth. Not in part, but as a whole, he redeemed his people. Every one of them was set free. Not only all the human beings, but all their cattle came forth, according to the word of the Lord. "Not a hoof shall be left behind." Christ Jesus, in redeeming his people, will have all or none. All that the Father gave him shall come to him; nor shall the power of sin, and death, and hell be able to hold in captivity one whom Jesus has effectually redeemed, nor one whom his Father chose. All the covenanted ones shall be his in the day when he makes up his jewels. He has paid too much for them to lose one of them. In the loss of one of them too much would be involved; his word, his

covenant, his power, his faithfulness, his honour, would all suffer, should one of his little ones perish. Therefore, he makes their deliverance effectual, and in every deed he brings them forth.

This deliverance came when the lamb was slain. Pharaoh held Israel captive during all the plagues, but he could not go beyond a certain point. On that same night when they saw the lamb slain, and roasted with fire, while they sat in their houses protected by the blood sprinkled upon the lintel, and the two side posts of their doors, that selfsame night they quitted Egypt. They went forth under that seal of redemption, the blood-red mark of substitutionary sacrifice. My dear hearer, perhaps this very night you will also go forth into glorious liberty. I know you will, if you will by faith look to Jesus as the Lamb slain for you. Will you now accept him as your own, and trust him to be your redemption? Behold, then, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world! Take his precious blood, and let it be sprinkled on your door, yea, and upon your own self, that the angel of vengeance may pass you by. Can you come and feed on Christ at once, as the Lamb of God's passover? Do you say that this would be a bold and venturesome faith? Yet be so bold and venturesome. Blessed to the name of the Lord, none were ever rejected, who dared to trust Jesus! We will sing about you and others if you have faith in the great sacrifice, and this will be our song, "HE brought them forth."

Israel cannot remain under slavery to Egypt when once the redemption price has been accepted, and the blood has been sprinkled. None know freedom from sin but those who trust the atoning blood. God forbid that I should point you to any way of hope but this one path; for without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin!

I have perhaps said enough on this point; but assuredly I have fallen short, unless I have made you know each one that deliverance from sin is solely by the power of God. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Unless a supernatural power is put forth in it, any form of deliverance from sin is worth nothing. If you have been born again from below, you will go below; you must be born again from above if you are to go above. There is no true liberty but that wherewith Christ make you free. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall

be free indeed." Do you know what it is, dear friends, to be brought out of prison by a miracle of grace, by a revelation of the Holy Ghost, by the blood of Jesus shed for many? If so, you will join with all the saints in singing, "As for his people, HE brought them forth."

II. But now we reach a very pleasing part of our theme, We have now to note that OUR DELIVERANCE WAS ATTENDED WITH ENRICHMENT: "He brought them forth with silver and gold." "Oh!" says one, "I remember all that about that translation. That is the silver and gold which they borrowed from the Egyptians with no intent of repaying the loan. I have always thought that was a thievish trick." It was a very unfortunate mistake of our translators when they rendered the original by the word "borrowed", for it is not the correct word. Our Revised Version has it more accurately, "And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver and jewels of Gold, and raiment: and the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked." Even if you were forced to read the word "borrowed", it might mean nothing amiss, for all borrowing and nonpayment is not thieving. "Oh!" say you, "that is a new doctrine." Let me state the case. If I borrow upon the security of my property, and leave the property in the hand of the lender, he will not complain if the security is worth more than the loan. These Israelites had lands and houses and other property which they could not carry with them, and now that their sudden removal involved a forced sale, they could say to those who lived near them, "Here is our land, what will you give us upon it?" The people took the immovable property of the Israelites, and they granted them a loan upon it, they were well aware of what they were doing, and were not defrauded. But we have no need thus to defend Israel. The Great Proprietor of all things bade them to ask, and influenced the minds of their neighbors to give. It was just that these poor people, who had been working without fee or reward, and had thereby screened the native Egyptians from much forced labour. The people of Egypt were, in part, afraid of them and of their God, and were also, in measure, sympathetic with them under their cruel oppression, and so they forced presents upon the Israelites hoping to get their blessing before they departed, to save them from further plague which might visit the land. The natives as good as said, "Take whatever you please of us, for



we have treated you ill. Only leave us alone; for plagues and deaths fall upon us thick and fast so long as Pharaoh detains you here." However, this is not my point. I am dealing with more spiritual things. When God brings his people out of bondage, they come out enriched in the best and most emphatic sense.

This seemed very unlikely. It looks to the afflicted as if they could not be profited by trials such as theirs. If they can only escape by the skin of their teeth, they will feel perfectly satisfied. Depressed spirits cannot lift their thought so high as to think of the gold of increased joy, or the silver of enlarged knowledge, or the jewels of holy graces. "I am," said one, "quite prepared to sit down behind the door in heaven, or at the feet of the least of the saints, so long as I may but get there." In some respects this is a very proper feeling. But this is not God's way of acting: he did not lead forth his people in a poverty-stricken way, but "He brought them forth also with silver and gold." Your Deliverer means to enrich you spiritually when he sets you free from your sorrow and trouble.

It was very far from being the design of their enemies to enrich Israel: Pharaoh had intended to work them down to the last ounce of strength, and keep them in abject poverty; in fact, one chief object of his oppression was to kill down the race, lest they should too greatly multiply. But the Lord turned the curse into a blessing; "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew;" and the harder they worked, the healthier they became, so that "there was not one feeble person among their tribes." This was not according to their enemies' will; but the will of the Lord is paramount. Even so it is not the devil's will to drive a man nearer to Christ, but yet his temptations and assaults are often used of the Lord to make the best and most experienced Christians. Satan is the scullion in God's kitchen, and he has to scour the vessels of mercy. Trials and afflictions, which threaten to kill us, are made to sanctify us; and sanctification is the best form of enrichment. How much we owe to sorrow and sickness, crosses and losses! Our bondage ends in our coming forth with much that is better than silver and gold.

Thus do we come forth from conviction of sin. "Now tell me," says one, "what does man gain by being in a desponding, sorrowful condition,

convinced of sin, and full of fears?" By the work of the Holy Spirit he will gain much. He will obtain a clearer knowledge of the evil of sin. This is a rare thing nowadays, when we have so many believers who were never penitent. It is a great thing for a child, who has a habit of stealing apples, to get himself well filled with the sourest of them, and feel the gripes strong within him. He will never touch such fruit anymore. It is a great thing for a man, in his early days, to know what a sour apple sin is, and to feel heartache and soul-anguish because of the exceeding bitterness of his evil ways. It is a lasting lesson. As the burnt child dreads the fire, and the scalded dog is afraid even of cold water, so the discipline of conscience, through divine grace, breeds a holy caution, and even a hatred of sin. We have few Puritans because we have few penitents. An awful sense of guilt, an overwhelming conviction of sin, may be the foundation stone of a gloriously holy character.

The tried and tempted man will also see clearly that salvation is all of grace. He feels that, if he ever rises from his despondency, he can never dare to take an atom of the honour of deliverance to himself; it must be of free grace only. He can do nothing, and he knows it. When a child of God can spell GRACE, and can pronounce it clearly, as with the true Jerusalem accent, he has gained a great deal of spiritual silver and gold. I have heard a brother stutter over that word, "free grace", till it came out very like "free will." As for myself, that Shibboleth I pronounce without faltering, for my free will is that which I daily try to master and I bring into complete subjection to the will of God, and to free grace I owe everything. Blessed is that man, who, by his experience, has been made to know that free grace is the source of every blessing and privilege, and that salvation is all of grace from first to last. By a knowledge of the great gospel principle of grace, men are brought forth also with silver and gold.

Such persons gain by their soul trouble a fund of healthy experience. They have been in the prison, and have had their feet made fast in the stocks. "Well," says one, "I do not want to feel that sort of treatment." No, but suppose you had felt it, the next time you met with a brother who was locked up in the castle of the Giant Despair, you would know how to sympathize with him and help him. You who never felt a finger-ache cannot show much sympathy with broken bones. I take it to be a great

gain to a man to be able to exhibit sympathy towards sufferers of all kinds, especially towards spiritual sufferers. If you can enter into the condition of a bondsman, because you have yourself been a bondsman in Egypt, and God has brought you out, then you will be qualified to comfort those that mourn.

Thus, you see, in various ways, the Lord's people are enriched by the sorrows from which they are delivered by God. "HE brought them forth also with silver and gold." Persons who come to Christ suddenly, and find peace immediately, have much to be grateful for; and they may be helpful to others of a similar character; but those who suffer long law-work, and have deep searchings of the heart, before they can enter into rest, have equal reasons for thankfulness, since they obtain a fitness for dealing with special cases of distressed conscience. Where this is the result of severe trial, we may well say that the Lord has brought them forth with silver and gold.

Thus do saints come out of persecution. The church is refined by the fires of martyrdom. The heap on the Lord's threshing-floor is more largely made up of real wheat after the winnowing fan has been used upon it. Individual piety is also deeper, stronger, nobler in persecuting times than in other seasons. Eminent saints have usually been produced where the environment was opposed to truth and godliness. To this day the bride of Christ has for her fairest jewels the rubies of martyrdom. Out of each period of fierce persecution the Lord has brought forth his people the better for the fires. "HE brought them forth also with silver and gold."

Thus do believers come out of daily afflictions. They become wealthier in grace, and richer in experience. Have you noticed how real those men are who have known sharp trial? If you want an idle evening of chit-chat, go and talk to the gentleman with a regular income, constant good health, and admiring friends; he will amuse your leisure hour. But if you are sad and sorrowful, and need conversation that will bless you, steer clear of that man's door. Look into the faces of the frivolous, and turn away as a thirsty man from an empty cistern. He that has never had his own cheek wet with tears, cannot wipe my tears away. Where will you go in the day of trouble? Why, to that good old man whose sober experience has not

robbed him of cheerfulness, though it has killed his sinful folly. He has been poor, and he knows the inconvenience of straightened means; he has been ill, and can bear with the infirmities of the sick; he has buried his dearest ones, and has compassion for the bereaved. When he begins to talk, the tone of his voice is that of a sympathetic friend. His lips drop fatness of comfort. What a gain is his spiritual acquaintance! A man of God, whose life has been full of mental exercises and spiritual conflict, as well as outward tribulation, becomes, through divine grace, a man of a large wealth of knowledge, prudence, faith, foresight, and wisdom, and he is to the inexperienced like some great proprietor, by whom multitudes of the poorer classes are fed, and guided, housed and set to work. Those who have been much tried are in the peerage of the church. A man who has been in the furnace, and has come out of it, is a marked man. I think I should know Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego even now if I were to meet them. Though the smell of the fire had not passed upon them, I feel sure that it left a glow upon their countenances, and a glory upon their persons, which we find no where else. They are, henceforth called "the three holy children": they were holy before, but now men own it. Do you not think that they were great gainers by the furnace, and is it not true of all the godly whose lives have been made memorable by special tribulation: "HE brought them forth also with silver and gold"?

When you and I reach the shores of heaven, thus shall we come into glory. When we come forth out of our graves, it will not be with loss, but with enrichment. We shall leave corruption and the worm behind us, and with them all that earthly grossness which made us groan in these mortal bodies. God will bring us forth also with silver and gold. What golden songs will we sing! What silver notes of gratitude will we pour forth! What jewels of communion with one another, and of communion with our Lord, will adorn our raiment! If we, too, have been men of sorrows and acquainted with grief, how much more fully shall we enter into the joy of our Lord, because we entered into his sorrow! We also have suffered for sin, and have done battle for God and for his truth against the enemy. We also have borne reproach. And become aliens to our mother's children; we too have been bruised in the heel, and yet in death have conquered death, even as he did; only by his grace. Hence the joy of fellowship with him through eternity. What news we shall have to tell to

angels, and principalities, and powers! The gems of our grateful history will be our trials and deliverances. Coming up from death to eternal life, this will be the sum of it, "HE brought them forth also with silver and gold."

Dear friends, I am anxious to pass on to the third point, for time is flying fast; but I cannot neglect the application of what I have said. I beg those of you who are sad and despondent to notice the truths I have advanced. I want you to believe that your present affliction is for your enrichment. You will come out of this Egypt, with much profit of grace. "Let me out," cries one, "only let me out." I pray you, be not impatient. Why rush out naked, when a little patience will be repaid with silver and gold? If I were labouring in Egypt, and I heard that it was time for me to start for the land of Canaan, I should be eager to be gone at once; but if I found that I must be hindered for an hour or two, I should certainly utilize the delay by disposing of my lands, and endeavouring to get together treasures which I could carry with me. The delay would not be lost time. Therefore, beloved friend, if you cannot at once obtain comfort, make good use of your affliction. Be always more earnest to profit by your trials than to escape from them. Be more earnest after the heavenly silver and gold than about hurrying away from the scene of conflict and temptation.

III. Thirdly; here is a very wonderful thing. OUR DELIVERANCE IS ACCOMPANIED WITH HEALTH AND STRENGTH: "There was not one feeble person among their tribes." In the thousands of Israel there was not one person who could not march out of the land keeping rank as an efficient soldier. Everyone was fit for the journey through the wilderness. They numbered hard upon two millions, if not more; and it is a very surprising fact that there should not have been one feeble person among their tribes. Mark the word, no only no one sick, nut no one "feeble", none with the rheumatism, or other pains which enfeeble walking, or palsies which prevent bearing burdens. This was nothing less than a sanitary miracle, the like of which was never know in the natural order of things.

This fact is typical of the health and strength of the newly saved. The Lord's people, at conversion, are as a rule wonderfully strong in their love

to Jesus, and their hatred of sin. In most cases our young converts, when they have truly come to Christ, even if they are a little timid, are vigorous, much in prayer, abounding in zeal, and earnest in speaking out the gospel. Many of them, I believe, would die at the stake readily enough, while they are in their first love. In their earliest days nothing is too hot or too heavy for them, for the sake of Jesus Christ, their Lord. If I want a bit of work to be done which requires dash and self-sacrifice, give me a set of Israelites who have just come out of Egypt, for there is not one feeble person among their tribes. After they have gone some distance into the wilderness, they are apt to forget the right hand of the Lord, and to get fretting and worrying. Very soon many of them are sick, through being bitten by fiery serpents, or smitten with the plague. They begin grumbling and complaining, and run into all sorts of mischief in a short time; but when they first came out, they were so excellent that even the Lord said, "I remember thee, the love of thine espousals." I have known some of you, after you have been members of the church for a few months, greatly need a nice cushion to sit upon, and the cozy corner of the pew; whereas once you could stand in the aisle, and not know that you were standing. You have grown wonderfully particular about the singing, and the tunes, and the length of the prayer, and the preacher's attitude, and especially the respect paid to your own dear self. Only very choicest service suits you: it would almost insult you if you were put to common work. You were not like that when you were first converted. Do you recollect how the crowd pressed upon you, and yet you were so absorbed in listening to the preacher's voice that you never minded it? What walks you took then to reach the service! I notice, my friend, that when your grace grew short, the miles grew long. When you first joined the church, I said to you, "I fear you live too far off to attend regularly." But you took me up very quickly, and said, "Oh, that is nothing, sir! If I can only get spiritual food, distance is no object." When you get cold in hearts, you find it inconvenient to come so far, and you go to a fashionable place of worship, where your musical tastes can be gratified. Yes, when grace declines, fancy rules the mind, and love of ease controls the body, and the soul loses appetite, and grows greedy for empty phrases, and weary of the Word of God. May the Lord grant you grace to be among those of whom it is said, "There was not one feeble person among their tribes"!

Full often it is so with the persecuted. I do not wish that any of you should experience persecution, but I am persuaded it would do some of you good to have a touch of it. A man who has fulfilled an apprenticeship to this hard master, is likely to be a man indeed. If he has endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, he will be fit to become an officer in the army, and an instructor of recruits. If I could, by the lifting of my finger, screen every believer from persecution at home and in the workshop, I should hesitate long before I did it, since I am persuaded that the church is never more pure, more holy, more prayerful, or more powerful than when the world is raging against her. The dogs keep off the wolves. The hypocrite declines to enter the church where he will gain nothing by reproach, or worse. When there were the stakes at Smithfield, Protestantism meant heroism. When the Lord's covenanting people were meeting among the hills and mosses of Scotland, there were no "moderates" and "modern-thought" men among them. They knew and loved the truth for which they fought and that truth made them strong.

It could be a glorious day if it were so with all God's people, that there were none feeble. We should, as a church, labour to reach this high standard. We would have the weakest to be as David, and David as the angel of the Lord. We would have our babes become young men, and our young men fathers in Christ. Do we reach this standard at the Tabernacle? Alas! We do not, by a very long way. There are numbers of very feeble persons among our tribes. I will not say a word against them, dear hearts! For I trust they are sincere, though feeble. How greatly I wish that they were more concerned about their own feebleness, for it is a real loss to the cause we have at heart! The feeble hinder the strong. We want all the strength of the host for storming the enemies' ramparts, whereas some of us have to stop behind and nurse the infirm. We should not mind this so much, only these are the same poor creatures that were nursed twenty years ago, and they have not made no advance. May the Lord strengthen us all, till we shall all be made fit for the service of Jesus!

Oh, when we meet in the home country, when we once get to glory, what a delight it will be that there will be no sin or weakness there! When the Lord has once brought us forth from the world and all its troubles, then all sinful weakness shall be unknown. We shall all be raised in power, and

shall be as angels of God. Are you going there, dear friends? "Yes," says one, "I hope that I am going there; but I am a feeble person." Thank God that you are on the right road, even if you limp. It is better to enter into life halt, and maimed, and feeble, than to run and leap in the way of death. If I can give a lift to anyone who is feeble, I am sure I will. At the same time, I would urge you to cry to the Lord to make you strong, and bid you trust in Christ for the power, which he alone can give, of faith to overcome doubts and fears.

If any of you have not believe unto eternal life, now put your trust in the Lord Jesus. They serve a good Master who trust alone in Jesus, and take up their cross and follow him. In him is life for the perishing, joy for the sorrowing, rest for the weary, and liberty for the captives. Are you shut up, like a prisoner in a castle? Do but trust in Jesus, and he will batter the dungeon door, and bring you out. Yea, and he will not give you a penniless liberty, a liberty to perish of want. No, it shall be said of you, and of others like you, "HE brought them forth also with silver and gold." Amen, so be it! So be it, even at this moment, good Lord!

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## **The Star And The Wise Men**

Now Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews'? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. - Matthew 2:1-2

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding



great joy. Matthew 2:9-10

See, dear friends, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ even in his state of humiliation! He is born of lowly parents, laid in a manger, and wrapped in swaddling bands; but, lo! the principalities and powers in the heavenly places are in commotion. First, one angel descends to proclaim the advent of the new-born King and suddenly there is with him a multitude of the heavenly host singing glory unto God. Nor was the commotion confined to the spirits above; for in the heavens which overhang this card, there is a stir. A star is deputed on behalf of all the stars, as if he were the envoy and plenipotentiary of all worlds to represent them before their King. This star is put in commission to wait upon the Lord, to be his herald to men afar off, his usher to conduct them to his presence, and his body-guard to sentinel his cradle. Earth, too, is stirred. Shepherds have come to pay the homage of simple-minded ones: with all love and joy they bow before the mysterious child; and after them from afar come the choice and flower of their generation, the most studious minds of the age. Making a long and difficult journey, they too at last arrive, the representatives of the Gentiles. Lo! the kings of Seba and Sheba offer gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Wise men, the leaders of their peoples, bow down before him, and pay homage to the Son of God. Wherever Christ is he is honorable. "Unto you that believe he is honor." In the day of small things, when the cause of God is denied entertainment, and is hidden away with things which are despised, it is still most glorious. Christ, though a child, is still King of kings; though among the oxen, he is still distinguished by his star.

Beloved friends, if wise men of old came to Jesus and worshipped, should not we come also? My intense desire this morning is that we all may pay homage to him of whom we sing, "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given." Let those of us who have long worshipped, worship anew with yet lowlier reverence and intenser love. And God grant—oh, that he would grant it!—that some who are far off from him spiritually, as the Magi were far off locally, may come to-day and ask, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have come to worship him." May feet that have been accustomed to broad roads, but unaccustomed to the narrow path, this day pursue that way till they see Jesus, and how before him with all their

hearts, finding salvation in him. These wise men came naturally, traversing the desert; let us come spiritually, leaving our sins. These were guided by the sight of a star; let us be guided by faith in the divine Spirit, by the teaching of his word and all those blessed lights which the Lord uses to conduct men to himself. Only let us come to Jesus. It was well to come unto the babe Jesus, led by the feeble beams of a star; you shall find it still more blessed to come to him now that he is exalted in the highest heavens, and by his own light reveals his own perfect glory. Delay not, for this day he cries, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

This morning let us try to do three things. First, let us gather light from this star; secondly, let us gather wisdom from those wise men; and thirdly, let us act as wise men helped by our own particular star.

I. First, then, LET US GATHER LIGHT FROM THIS STAR. May the Spirit of the Lord enable us so to do.

I suppose you have each one his own imagination as to what this star was. It would seem to have been altogether supernatural, and not a star, or a comet of the ordinary kind. It was not a constellation, nor a singular conjunction of planets: there is nothing in the Scriptures to support such a conjecture. In all probability it was not a star in the sense in which we now speak of stars: for we find that it moved before the wise men, then suddenly disappeared, and again shone forth to move before them. It could not have been a star in the upper spheres like others, for such movements would not have been possible. Some have supposed that the wise men went in the direction in which the star shone forth in the heavens, and followed the changes of its position: but it could not in that case have been said that it stood over the place where the young child was. If the star was at its zenith over Bethlehem, it would have been in its zenith over Jerusalem too; for the distance is so small that it would not have been possible to observe any difference in the position of the star in the two places. It must have been a star occupying quite another sphere from that in which the planets revolve. We believe it to have been a luminous appearance in mid-air; probably akin to that which led the children of Israel through the wilderness, which was a cloud by day and a

pillar of fire by night. Whether it was seen in the daylight or not we cannot tell. Chrysostom and the early fathers are wonderfully positive about many things which Scripture leaves in doubt, but as these eminent divines drew upon their imagination for their facts, we are not under bonds to follow them. They aver that this star was so bright as to be visible all day long. If so, we can imagine the wise men travelling day and night; but if it could be seen only by night, the picture before us grows far more singular and weird—like as we see these easterns quietly pursuing their star-lit way, resting perforce when the sun was up, but noiselessly hurrying at night through slumbering lands. These questions are not of much importance to us, and therefore we will not dwell long upon them.

Only here is a first lesson: if it should ever be that men should fail to preach the gospel, God can conduct souls to his Son by a star. Ah! say not only by a star, but by a stone, a bird, a blade of grass, a drop of dew.

"Remember that Omnipotence  
Has servants everywhere."

Therefore, despond not when you hear that one minister has ceased to preach the gospel, or that another is fighting against the viral truth of God. Their apostasy shall be to their own loss rather than to the hurt of Jesus and his church; and, sad though it be to see the lamps of the sanctuary put out, yet God is not dependent upon human lights, he is the Shekinah light of his own holy place. Mortal tongues, if they refuse to preach his word, shall have their places supplied by books in the running brooks and sermons in stones. The beam shall cry out of the wall, and the timber shall answer it. When chief priests and scribes have all gone out of the way, the Lord puts stars into commission, and once more in very deed the heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament is showing his handiwork. Sooner than lack speakers for the incarnate God, mountains and hills shall learn eloquence and break forth into testimony. Jehovah's message shall be made known to the utmost ends of the earth. God shall save his own elect; he shall give to Christ to see of the travail of his soul and to be satisfied. His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Hallelujah!

Now, when the Lord does use a star to be his minister, what is the order of his ministry? We may learn by this enquiry what kind of ministry God would have ours to be if we are stars in his right hand. We also shine as lights in the world: let us see how to do it.

We notice, first, that star-preaching is all about Christ. We do not know what the color of the star was, nor the shape of the star, nor to what magnitude it had attained; these items are not recorded, but what is recorded is of much more importance; the wise men said—"We have seen his star." Then the star which the Lord will use to lead men to Jesus must be Christ's own star. The faithful minister, like this star, belongs to Christ; he is Christ's own man in the most emphatic sense. Before we can expect to be made a blessing, dear friends, we must ourselves be blessed of the Lord. If we would cause others to belong, to Jesus, we must belong wholly to Jesus ourselves. Every beam in that star shone forth for Jesus. It was his star, always, and only, and altogether. It shone not for itself, but only as his star: as such it was known and spoken of—"we have seen his star." As I have already said, there is no note taken of any peculiarity that it had except this one, that it was the star of the King. I wish that you and I, whatever our eccentricities or personalities may be, may never make so much of them as to attract men's attention to them. May people never dwell upon our attainments or our deficiencies, but may they always observe this one thing, that we are men of God, that we are ambassadors of Christ, that we are Christ's servants, and do not attempt to shine for ourselves, or to make ourselves conspicuous; but that we labor to shine for him, that his way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all people. Brother, it is well for us to forget ourselves in our message, to sink ourselves in our Master. We know the names of several of the stars, yet they may each one envy that star which remains anonymous, but can never be forgotten because men who sought the King of Israel knew it as "his star." Though you be but a very little star, twinkling for Jesus; however feeble your light may be, be it plain that you are his star, so that if men wonder what you are, they may never wonder whose you are, for on your very forefront it shall be written, "Whose I am and whom I serve." God will not lead men to Christ by us unless we are Christ's heartily, wholly, unreservedly. In his temple our Lord uses no borrowed vessels; every bowl before the altar must be his own. It is not

consistent with the glory of God for him to use borrowed vessels. He is not so poor as that comes to. This lesson is worthy of all acceptance. Are you in a hurry to preach, young man? Are you sure you are Christ's? Do you think it must be a fine thing to hold a company or people listening to your words? Have you looked at it in another light? Have you weighed the responsibility of having to speak as Christ would have you speak, and of yielding yourself in your entire personality to the utterance of the mind of God? You must be consecrated and concentrated if you hope to be used or the Lord. If you have one ray, or ten thousand rays, all must shine with the one design of guiding men to Jesus. You have nothing now to do with any object, subject, design, or endeavor, but Jesus only: in him, and for him, and to him must you live henceforth, or you will never be chosen of the Lord to conduct either wise men or babes to Jesus. See ye well to it that perfect consecration be yours.

Note next that true star-preaching leads to Christ. The star was Christ's star itself, but it also led others to Christ. It did this very much because it moved in that direction. It is a sad thing when a preacher is like a sign-post pointing the way but never following it, on his own account. Such were those chief priests at Jerusalem: they could tell where Christ was born, but they never went to worship him; they were indifferent altogether to him and to his birth. The star that leads to Christ must always be going to Christ. Men are far better drawn by example than driven by exhortation. Personal piety alone can be owned of God to the production of piety in others. "Go," say you; but they will not go. Say "come," and lead the way: then they will come. Do not the sheep follow the shepherd? He who would lead others to Christ should go before them himself, having his face towards his Master, his eyes towards his Master, his steps toward his Master, his heart towards his Master. We are so to live that we may without boasting exhort those around us to have us for an example. Oh, that all who think themselves to be stars would themselves diligently move towards the Lord Jesus. The star in the east led wise men to Christ because it went that way itself: there is a wisdom in example which truly wise men are quick to perceive. This star had such an influence upon the chosen men that they could not but follow it: it charmed them across the desert. Such a charm may reside in you and in me, and we may exercise a powerful ministry over many hearts, being to

them as loadstones, drawing them to the Lord Jesus. Happy privilege! We would not, merely show the road, but induce our neighbors to enter upon it. We read of one of old, not that they told him of Jesus, but that "they brought him to Jesus." We are not only to tell the story of the cross, but we are to persuade men to fly to the Crucified One for salvation. Did not the king in the parable say to his servants, "Compel them to come in." Assuredly he girds his own messengers with such a compelling power that men cannot hold out any longer, but must follow their lead and bow at the King's feet. The star did not draw, "as it were with a cart rope," nor by any force, material and physical; yet it drew these wise men from the remote east right to the manger of the new-born child. And so, though we have no arm of the law to help us, nor patronage, nor pomp of eloquence, nor parade of learning, yet we have a spiritual power by which we draw to Jesus thousands who are our joy and crown. The man sent of God comes forth from the divine presence permeated with a power which makes men turn to the Savior and live. Oh! that such power might go forth from all God's ministers yea, from all God's servants engaged in street-preaching, in Sunday-schools, in tract-visitation, and in every form of holy service. God uses those whose aim and intent it is to draw men to Christ. He puts his Spirit into them, by which Spirit they are helped to set forth the Lord Jesus as so lovely and desirable that men run to him and accept his glorious salvation. It is a small thing to shine, but it is a great thing to draw. Any cast-away may be brilliant; but only the real saint will be attractive for Jesus. I would not pray to be an orator, but I do pray to be a soul-winner. Do not aim, beloved brethren, at anything short of leading men to Jesus. Do not be satisfied to lead them to orthodox doctrine, or merely to bring them to a belief in those views which you hold to be Scriptural, valuable as that may be. It is to the person of the incarnate God that we must bring them to his feet we must conduct them that they may worship him: our mission is not accomplished, it is a total failure, unless we conduct our hearers to the house where Jesus dwells, and then stand over them, keeping watch over their souls for Jesu's sake.

Once more, the star which God used in this case was a star that stopped at Jesus: it went before the wise men till it brought them to Jesus, and then it stood still over the place where the young child was. I admire the manner of this star. There are remarkable stars in the theological sky at

the present, time: they have led men to Jesus, so they say, and now they lead them into regions beyond, of yet undeveloped thought. The gospel of the Puritans is "old-fashioned"; these men have discovered that it is unsuitable for the enlarged intellects of the times; and so these stars would guide us further still. To this order of wandering stars I do not belong myself, and I trust I never shall. Progress beyond the gospel I have no desire for. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." When the star had come to the place where the young child was, it stood still: and so should the gracious mind become settled, fixed, immovable. The wise men knew where to find that star, and where to find the young child by it: so be it with us. Oh, you that have hitherto been diligent in leading souls to Christ, never indulge for a single moment the notion that you need a broader philosophy or a deeper spirituality than are to be found in Jesus. Abide in him. Cry, "Oh God, my heart is fixed. My heart is fixed." There is nothing beyond Christ which is worth a moment's thought. Do not lose your paradise in Christ for another taste of that tree of knowledge of good-and-evil which ruined our first parents. Stick you to the old points: your one subject Christ, your one object to bring men to Christ, your one glory the glory of Christ. Standing by your Lord, and there alone, from this day to the last day, you will secure a happy, honored, and holy life. They said of Greece after her fall that it had become so ruined that you might search for Greece in Greece and fail to find it: I fear I must say that some professed preachers of the gospel have roamed so far away from it that you cannot find the gospel in their gospel, nor Christ himself in the Christ they preach. So far have some diverged from the grand essential soul-saving truth beyond which no man ought to dare to think of going, that they retain nothing of Christianity but the name. All that is beyond truth is a lie; anything beyond revelation is at best a minor matter, and most probably is an old wives' fable, even though he may be of the masculine gender who invented it. Stand you to your colors you who hope to be used of the Lord. Abide so that men shall find you in twenty years' time shining for Jesus and pointing to the place where the Savior is to be found, even as you are doing now. Let Jesus Christ be your ultimatum. Your work is done when you bring souls to Jesus, and help to keep them there, by being yourself "steadfast, unmovable." Be not carried away from the hope of your calling; but hold fast even the form of sound words, for it may be that in letting go the

form you may lose the substance also.

II. Now that we have somewhat rejoiced in the light of the star, let us see if we can GATHER WISDOM FROM THE WISE MEN. Perhaps you have heard the "much speaking" of tradition as to who they were, whence they came, and how they traveled. In the Greek church, I believe, they know their number, their names, the character of their retinue, and what kind of ornaments were on their dromedaries' necks. Details which are not found in the word of God you may believe or not, at your pleasure, and you will be wise if our pleasure is not to believe too much. We only know that they were Magi, wise men from the East, possibly of the old Parsee religion—watchers if not worshippers of the stars. We will not speculate about them, but learn from them.

They did not content themselves with admiring the star and comparing it with other stars, and taking notes as to the exact date of its appearance, and how many times it twinkled, and when it moved, and all that; but they practically used the teaching of the star. Many are hearers and admirers of God's servants, but they are not wise enough to make fit and proper use of the preaching. They notice the peculiarity of the preacher's language, how much he is like one divine, how much he is unlike another; whether he coughs too often, or speaks too much in his throat; whether he is too loud or too low; whether he has not a provincial tone, whether there may not be about him a commonness of speech approaching to vulgarity; or, on the other hand, whether he may not be too florid in his diction. Such fooleries as these are the constant observations of men for whose souls we labor. They are perishing, and yet toying with such small matters. With many it is all they go to the house of God for, to criticise in this paltry fashion. I have even seen them come to this place with opera glasses, as if they came hither to inspect an actor who lived and labored to arouse their leisure hours. Such is the sport of fools; but these were wise men, and therefore practical men. They did not become star-gazers, and stop at the point of admiring the remarkable star; but they said, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." They set out at once to find the now-born King, of whose coming the star was the signal. Oh, my dear hearers, how I wish that you were all wise in this same manner! I would sooner preach



the dullest sermon that was ever preached than preach the most brilliant that was ever spoken if I could by that poor sermon lead you quite away from myself to seek the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the one thing I care about. Will you never gratify me by enquiring after my Lord and Master? I long to hear you say, "What is the man talking about? He speaks about a Savior; we will have that Savior for ourselves. He talks about pardon through the blood of Christ; he speaks about God coming down among men to save them; we will find out if there is any reality in this pardon, any truth in this salvation. We will seek Jesus, and find for ourselves the blessings which are reported to be laid up in him." If I heard you all saying this I should be ready to die of joy.

Is not this a good day on which to set out to find your Savior? Some of you that have postponed it long, would it not be well to set out at once ere this expiring year has seen its last day? These wise men appear to have set out as soon as they discovered the star: they were not among those who have time to waste in needless delays. "There is the star," said they; "away we go beneath its guidance. We are not satisfied with a star, we go to find the King whose star it is!" And so they set out to find Christ immediately and resolutely.

Being wise men, they persevered in their search after him. We cannot tell how far they journeyed. Travelling was extremely difficult in those times. There were hostile tribes to avoid, the broad rivers of the Tigris and the Euphrates to cross, and trackless deserts to penetrate; but they made nothing of difficulty or danger. They set out for Jerusalem, and to Jerusalem they came, seeking the King of the Jews. If it be true that God has taken upon himself our nature, we ought to resolve to find him, let it cost what it may. If we must circumnavigate the globe to find a Savior, the distance and the expense ought to be nothing so long as we may but reach him. Were the Christ in the bowels of the earth, or in the heights of heaven we ought not to rest till we come at him. Everything that was necessary for their expedition the wise men soon gathered together, regardless of expense; and off they went following the star that they might discover the Prince of the kings of the earth.

At length they came to Jerusalem, and here new trials awaited them. It

must have been a great trouble to them when they asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" and the people shook their heads as if they thought the question an idle one. Neither rich nor poor in the metropolitan city knew anything of Israel's King. The ribald multitude replied, "Herod is king of the Jews. Mind how you speak of another king, or your head may have to answer for it. The tyrant brooks no rival." The wise men must have been more astonished still when they found that Herod was troubled. They were glad to think that he was born who was to usher in the age of gold; but Herod's face grew blacker than ever at the bare mention of a king of the Jews. His eyes flashed, and a thundercloud was upon his brow; a dark deed of murder will come of it, though for the moment he conceals his malice. There is tumult all through the streets of Jerusalem, for no man knows what grim Herod may do now that he has been roused by the question, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Thus there was a ferment in Jerusalem, beginning at the palace; but this did not deter the wise men from their search for the promised Prince. They did not pack up their bales and go back and say, "It is useless to try to discover this questionable personage who is unknown even in the country of which he is King, and who appears to be terribly unwelcome to those who are to be his subjects. We must leave to another day the solution of the question: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"

These earnest-minded seekers were not dispirited by the clergy and the learned men when they came together. To the chief priests and scribes the question was put, and they answered the enquiry as to where Christ would be born, but not a mother's son among them would go with the wise men to find this new-born King. Strange apathy! Alas, how common! Those who should have been leaders were no leaders; they would not even be followers of that which is good, for they had no heart towards Christ. The wise men rose superior to this serious discouragement. If the clergy would not help them they would go to Jesus by themselves. Oh, dear friend, if you are wise you will say, "I will find Christ alone if none will join me: if I dig to the center, I will find him; if I fly to the sun, I will find him; if all men put me off, I will find him; if the ministers of the gospel appear indifferent to me, I will find him: the kingdom of heaven or hell suffered violence, and the violent took it by force, and so will I." The first Christians had to leave all the authorized teachers of the day behind,

and to come out by themselves: it will be no strange thing if you should have to do the same. Happy will it be if you are determined to go through floods and flames to find Christ; for he will be found of you. Thus these men were wise because, having started on the search, they persevered in it till they found the Lord and worshipped him.

Notice that they were wise because, when they again saw the star, "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." While enquiring among the priests at Jerusalem they were perplexed, but when the star shone out again, they were at ease and full of joy: this joy they expressed, so that the evangelist recorded it. In these days very wise people think it necessary to repress all emotion, and appear like men of stone or ice. No matter what happens, they are stoical, and raised far above the enthusiasm of the vulgar. It is wonderful how fashions change, and folly stands for philosophy. But these wise men were children enough to be glad when their perplexity was over, and the clear light shone forth. It is a good sign when a man is not ashamed to be happy because he hears a plain, unmistakable testimony for the Lord Jesus. It is good to see the great man come down from his pedestal, and, like a little child, rejoice to hear the simple story of the cross. Give me the hearer who looks not for fineries, but cries out, "Lead me to Jesus. I want a guide to Jesus, and nothing else will suit me." Why, truly, if men did but know the value of things they would rejoice more to see a preacher of the gospel than a king. If the feet of the heralds of salvation be blessed, how much more their tongues when they tell out the tidings of a Savior. These wise men, with all their mystic learning were not ashamed to rejoice because a little star lent them its beams to conduct them to Jesus. We unite with them in rejoicing over a clear gospel ministry. For us all else is darkness, sorrow, and vexation of spirit; but that which leads us to our own glorious Lord is spirit, and light, and life. Better the sun should not shine than that a clear gospel should not be preached. We reckon that a country flourishes or decays according as gospel light is revealed or withdrawn.

Now follow these wise men a little further. They have come to the house where the young child is. What will they do? Will they stand looking at the star? No: they enter in. The star stands still, but they are not afraid to lose its radiance, and behold the Sun of righteousness. They did not cry,

"We see the star, and that is enough for us; we have followed the star, and it is all we need to do." Not at all. They lift, the latch, and enter the lowly residence of the babe. They see the star no longer, and they have no need to see it, for there is he that is born King of the Jews. Now the true Light has shone upon them from the face of the child; they behold the incarnate God. Oh, friends! how wise you will be if, when you have been led to Christ by any man, you do not rest in his leadership, but must see Christ for yourselves. How much I long that you may enter into the fellowship of the mystery, pass through the door, and come and behold the young child, and bow before him. Our woe is that so many are so unwise. We are only their guides, but they are apt to make us their end. We point the way, but they do not follow the road; they stand gazing upon us. The star is gone; it did its work, and passed away: Jesus remains, and the wise men live in him. Will any of you be so foolish as to think only of the dying preacher, and forget the ever-living Savior? Come, be wise, and hasten to your Lord at once.

These men were wise, last of all—and I commend their example to you—because when they saw the child they worshipped. Theirs was not curiosity gratified, but devotion exercised. We, too, must worship the Savior, or we shall never be saved by him. He has not come to put away our sins, and yet to leave us ungodly and self-willed. Oh you that have never worshipped the Christ of God, may you be led to do so at once! He is God over all, blessed for ever, adore him! Was God ever seen in such a worshipful form before? Behold he bows the heavens; he rides upon the wings of the wind; he scatters flames of fire; he speaks, and his dread artillery shakes the hills: you worship in terror. Who would not adore the great and terrible Jehovah? But is it not much better to behold him here, allied to your nature, wrapped like other children in swaddling clothes, tender, feeble, next akin to your own self? Will you not worship God when he thus comes down to you and becomes your brother, born for your salvation? Here nature itself suggests worship: O may grace produce it! Let us hasten to worship where shepherds and wise men and angels have led the way.

Here let my sermon come to a pause even as the star did. Enter the house and worship! Forget the preacher. Let the starlight shine for other eyes.

Jesus was born that you might be born again. He lived that you might live. He died that you might die to sin. He is risen, and to-day he maketh intercession for transgressors that they may be reconciled to God through him. Come, then; believe, trust, rejoice, adore! If you have neither gold, frankincense, nor myrrh, bring your faith, your love, your repentance, and falling down before the Son of God pay him the reverence of your hearts.

III. And now I turn to my third and last point, which is this: LET US ACT AS WISE MEN UNDER THE LIGHT OF OUR STAR. We too have received light to lead us to the Savior: I might say that for us many stars have shone to that blessed end. I will, however, on this point content myself with asking questions.

Do you not think that there is some light for you in your particular vocation, some call from God in your calling? Listen to me, and then listen to God. These men were watchers of the stars; therefore a star was used to call them. Certain other men soon after were fishermen; and by means of an amazing take of fish the Lord Jesus made them aware of his superior power, and then he called them to become fishers of men. For a star-gazer a star; for a fisherman a fish. The Master-Fisher hath a bait for each one of his elect, and oftentimes he selects a point in their own calling to be the barb of the hook. Were you busy yesterday at your counter? Did you bear no voice saying "Buy the truth and sell it not"? When you closed the shop last night did you not bethink yourself that soon you must close it for the last time? Do you make bread? and do you never ask yourself, "Has my soul eaten the bread of heaven?" Are you a farmer? do you till the soil? Has God never spoken to you by those furrowed fields and these changing seasons, and made you wish that your heart might be tilled and sown.? Listen! God is speaking! Hear, ye deaf; for there are voices everywhere calling you to heaven. You need not go miles about to find a link between you and everlasting mercy: the telegraphic wires are on either side of the road, God and human souls are near each other. How I wish that your common vocation would be viewed by you as concealing within itself the door to your high vocation. Oh that the Holy Spirit would turn your favourite pursuits into opportunities for his gracious work upon you. If not among the stars, yet among the flowers of the garden, or the

cattle of the hills, or the waves of the sea may he find a net in which to enclose you for Christ. I wish that those of you who conclude that your calling could never draw you to Christ would make a point of seeing whether it might not be so. We are to learn from ants, and swallows, and cranes, and conies; surely we need never be short of tutors. It did seem that a star was an unlikely thing to head a procession of eastern sages, and yet it was the best guide that could be found; and so it may seem that your trade is an unlikely thing to bring you to Jesus, and yet the Lord may so use it. There may be a message from the Lord to thee in many a left-handed providence; a voice for wisdom may come to thee from the month of an ass; a call to a holy life may startle thee from a bush, a warning may flash upon thee from a wall, or a vision may impress thee in the silence of night when deep sleep falleth upon men. Only be thou ready to hear and God will find a way of speaking to thee. Answer the question as the wise men would have answered it, and say, "Yes, in our calling there is a call to Christ."

Then, again, what should you and I do better in this life than seek after Christ! The wise men thought all other pursuits of small account compared with this. "Who is going to attend to that observatory and watch the rest of the stars?" They shake their heads, and say they do not know: these things must wait; they have seen his star, and they are going to worship him. But who will attend to their wives and families, and all besides, while they make this long journey? They reply that every lesser thing must be subordinate to the highest thing. Matters must be taken in proportion, and the search after the King of the Jews, who is the desire of all nations, is so out of all proportion great that all the rest must go. Are not you, also, wise enough to judge in this sensible fashion? Do you not think, dear friends, it would be well to use all to-morrow in seeking Jesus? It will be a leisure day, could you spend it better than in Seeking your Redeemer? If you were to take a week, and give it wholly to your own soul, and to seeking Christ, would it not be well spent? How can you live with your soul in jeopardy? Oh that you would say, "I must get this matter right; it is an all-important business, and I must see it secure." This would be no more than common-sense. If you are driving, and a trace is broken, do you not stop the horse, and get the harness right? How, then, can you go on with the chariot of life when all its harness is

out of order, and a fall means eternal ruin? If you will stop driving to arrange a buckle for fear of accident, I would beg of you to stop anything and everything to see to the safety of your soul. See how the engineer looks to the safety-valve: are you content to run more desperate risks? If your house were not insured, and you carried on a hazardous trade, the probability is you would feel extremely anxious until you had arranged that matter: but your soul is uninsured, and it may burn for ever,—will you not give heed to it? I beseech you be just to yourself,—kind to yourself. Oh! see to your eternal well-being. You are not certain that you will get home to dinner to-day. Life is frail as a cobweb. You may be in hell before yon clock strikes one! Remember that. There is not a step between you and everlasting destruction from the presence of God if you are as yet unregenerate; and your only hope is to find the Savior, trust the Savior, obey the Savior. Wherefore, like these wise men, put everything on one side, and set out now upon an earnest, resolute, persevering endeavor to find Jesus. I was about to say—resolve to find Jesus, or to die; but I will change the words, and say—resolve to find him, and live.

When we do come near to Jesus, let us ask ourselves this question, "Do we see more in Jesus than other people do?" for if we do, we are God's elect taught of God, illuminated by his Spirit. We read in the Scriptures that when these wise men saw the young child they fell down and worshipped him. Other people might have come in and seen the child, and said, "Many children are as interesting as this poor woman's babe." Ay, but as these men looked, they saw: all eyes are not so blessed. Eyes that see are gifts from the All-seeing One. Carnal eyes are blind; but these men saw the Infinite in the infant; the Godhead gleaming through the manhood; the glory hiding beneath the swaddling bands. Undoubtedly there was a spiritual splendor about this matchless child! We read that Moses' father and mother saw that he was a "goodly child"; they saw he was "fair unto God," says the original. But when these elect men saw that holy thing which is called the Son of the Highest, they discovered in him a glory all unknown before. Then was his star in the ascendant to them: he became their all in all, and they worshipped with all their hearts. Have you discovered such glory in Christ? "Oh!" says one, "you are always harping upon Christ and his glory. You are a man of one idea!" Precisely so. My one idea is that he is "altogether lovely," and that there is nothing

out of heaven nor in heaven that can be compared with him even in his lowest and weakest estate. Have you ever seen as much as that in Jesus? If so, you are the Lord's; go you, and rejoice in him. If not, pray God to open your eyes until, like the wise men, you see and worship.

Lastly, learn from these wise men that when they worshipped they did not permit it to be a mere empty-handed adoration. Ask yourself, "What shall I render unto the Lord?" Bowing before the young child, they offered "gold, frankincense and myrrh," the best of metals and the best of spices; an offering to the King of gold; an offering to the priest of frankincense; an offering to the child of myrrh. Wise men are liberal men. Consecration is the best education. To-day it is thought to be wise to be always receiving; but the Savior said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." God judges our hearts by that which spontaneously comes from them: hence the sweet cane bought with money is acceptable to him when given freely. He doth not tax his saints or weary them with incense; but he delights to see in them that true love which cannot express itself in mere words, but must use gold and myrrh, works of love and deeds of self-denial, to be the emblems of its gratitude. Brothers, you will never get into the heart of happiness till you become unselfish and generous; you have but chewed the husks of religion which are often bitter, you have never eaten of the sweet kernel until you have felt the love of God constraining you to make sacrifice. There is nothing in the true believer's power which he would not do for his Lord: nothing in our substance which we would not give to him, nothing in ourselves which we would not devote to his service.

God give to you all grace to come to Jesus, even though it be by the starlight of this Sermon, for his love's sake! Amen.

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# The Statute Of David For The Sharing Of The Spoil

This is the last sermon Charles Spurgeon ever preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. He struggled with illness for most of 1891. He finally went to Mentone on the French Riviera to try to rest and recover, but he succumbed in January 1892 and never made it back to his pulpit.

And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them. Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart. Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day. And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the Lord - 1 Samuel 30:21-26

Those who associate themselves with a leader must share his fortunes. Six hundred men had quitted their abodes in Judaea; unable to endure the tyranny of Saul they had linked themselves with David, and made him to be a captain over them. They were, some of them, the best of men, and some of them were the worst: in this, resembling our congregations. Some of them were choice spirits, whom David would have sought, but

others were undesirable persons, from whom he might gladly have been free. However, be they who they may, they must rise or fall with their leader and commander. If he had the city Ziklag given to him, they had a house and a home in it; and if Ziklag was burned with fire, their houses did not escape. When David stood amid the smoking ruins, a penniless and a wifeless man they stood in the same condition. This rule holds good with all of us, who have joined ourselves to Christ and his cause; we must be partakers with him. I hope we are prepared to stand to this rule to-day. If there be ridicule and reproach for the gospel of Christ, let us be willing to be ridiculed and reproached for his sake. Let us gladly share with him in his humiliation, and never dream of shrinking. This involves a great privilege, since they that are with him in his humiliation shall be with him in his glory. If we share his rebuke in the midst of an evil generation we shall also sit upon his throne, and share his glory in the day of his appearing. Brethren, I hope the most of us can say we are in for it, to sink or swim with Jesus. In life or death, where he is, there will we, his servants, be. We joyfully accept both the cross and the crown which go with our Lord Jesus Christ: we are eager to bear our full share of the blame, that we may partake in his joy.

It frequently happens that when a great disaster occurs to a band of men, a mutiny follows thereupon. However little it may be the leader's fault, the defeated cast the blame of the defeat upon him. If the fight is won, "it was a soldiers' battle"; every man at arms claims his share of praise. But if the battle is lost, cashier the commander! It was entirely his fault; if he had been a better general he might have won the day. This is how people talk: fairness is out of the question. So in the great disaster of Ziklag, when the town was burned with fire, and wives and children were carried away captive; then we read that they spoke of stoning David. Why David? Why David more than anybody else, it is hard to see, for he was not there, nor any one of them. They felt so vexed, that it would be a relief to stone somebody, and why not David? Brethren, it sometimes happens, even to the servants of Christ, that when they fall into persecution and loss for Christ's sake, the tempter whispers to them to throw up their profession. "Since you have been a Christian, you have had nothing but trouble. It seems as if the dogs of hell were snapping at your heels more than ever since you took upon you the name of Christ. Therefore, throw it up, and

leave the ways of godliness." Vile suggestion! Mutiny against the Lord Jesus? Dare you do so? Some of us cannot do so, for when he asks us, "Will ye also go away?" we can only answer, "Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." No other leader is worth following. We must follow the Son of David. Mutiny against him is out of the question.

Through floods or flames, if Jesus lead,  
We'll follow where he goes."

When a dog follows a man, we may discover whether the man is his master by seeing what happens when they come to a turn in the road. If the creature keeps close to its master at all turnings, it belongs to him. Every now and then you and I come to turns in the road, and many of us are ready, through grace, to prove our loyalty by following Jesus even when the way is hardest. Though the tears stand in his eyes and in ours; though we weep together till we have no more power to weep, we will cling to him when the many turn aside, and witness that he hath the living Word, and none upon earth beside. God grant us grace to be faithful unto death!

If we thus follow our leader and bear his reproach, the end and issue will be glorious victory. It was a piteous sight to see David leaving two hundred men behind him, and marching with his much diminished forces after an enemy who had gone, he scarce knew where, who might be ten times stronger than his little band, and might slay those who pursued them. It was a melancholy spectacle for those left behind to see their leader a broken man, worn and weary like themselves, hastening after the cruel Amalekite. How very different was the scene when he came back to the brook Besor more than a conqueror! Do you not hear the song of them that make merry? A host of men in the front are driving vast herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, and singing as they march, "This is David's spoil!" Then you see armed men, with David in the midst of them, all laden with spoil, and you hear them singing yet another song; those that bring up the rear are shouting exultingly, "David recovered all! David recovered all!" They, the worn-out ones that stayed at the brook Besor, hear the mingled song, and join first in the one shout, and then in the

other; singing, "This is David's spoil! David recovered all!"

Yes, we have no doubt about the result of our warfare. He that is faithful to Christ shall be glorified with him. That he will divide the spoil with the strong is never a matter of question. "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

The old truth by which we stand shall never be blotted out.

Engraved as in eternal brass  
The mighty promise shines;  
Nor shall the powers of darkness rase  
Those everlasting lines."

We are certain as we live that the exiled truth shall celebrate its joyful return. The faith once for all delivered to the saints may be downtrodden for a season; but rejoice not over us, O our adversaries: though we fall we shall rise again! Wherefore we patiently hope, and quietly wait, and calmly believe. We drink of the brook Besor by the way and lift up our heads.

This morning I want to utter God-given words of comfort to those who are faint and weary in the Lord's army. May the divine Comforter make them so!

I. I shall begin by saying, first, that FAINT ONES OCCUR EVEN IN THE ARMY OF OUR KING. Among the very elect of David's army heroes who were men of war from their youth up—there were hands that hung down, and feeble knees that needed to be confirmed. There are such in Christ's army at most seasons. We have among us soldiers whose faith is real, and whose love is burning; and yet, for all that, just now their strength is weakened in the way, and they are so depressed in spirit, that they are obliged to stop behind with the baggage.

Possibly some of these weary ones had grown faint because they had been a good deal perplexed. David had so wrongfully entangled himself with the Philistine king, that he felt bound to go with Achish to fight against

Israel. I dare say these men said to themselves, "How will this end? Will David really lead us to battle against Saul? When he could have killed him in the cave he would not, but declared that he would not lift up his hand against the Lord's anointed; will he now take us to fight against the anointed of God? This David, who was so great an enemy of Philistia, and slew their champion, will he wax on their behalf?" They were perplexed with their leader's movements. I do not know whether you agree with me, but I find that half-an-hour's perplexity takes more out of a man than a month's labour. When you cannot see your bearings, and know not what to do, it is most trying. When to be true to God it seems that you must break faith with man, and when to fulfil your unhappy covenant with evil would make you false to your Christian professions, things are perplexing. If you do not walk carefully, you can easily get into a snarl. If Christians walk in a straight line it is comparatively easy going, for it is easy to find your way along a straight road; but when good men take to the new out, that by-path across the meadow, then they often get into ditches that are not in the map, and fall into thickets and sloughs that they never reckoned upon. Then is the time for heart-sickness to come on. These warriors may very well have been perplexed; and perhaps they feared that God was against them, and that now their cause would be put to shame; and when they came to Ziklag, and found it burned with fire, the perplexity of their minds added intense bitterness to their sorrow, and they felt bowed into the dust. They did not pretend to be faint, but they were really so; for the mind can soon act upon the body, and the body fails sadly when the spirits are worried with questions and fears. This is one reason why certain of our Lord's loyal-hearted ones are on the sick list, and must keep in the trenches for a while.

Perhaps, also, the pace was killing to these men. They made forced marches for three days from the city of Achish to Ziklag. These men could do a good day's march with anybody; but they could not foot it at the double quick march all day long. There are a great many Christians of that sort—good, staying men who can keep on under ordinary pressure, doing daily duty well, and resisting ordinary temptations bravely; but at a push they fare badly: who among us does not? To us there may come multiplied labours, and we faint because our strength is small.

Worst of all, their grief came in just then. Their wives were gone. Although, as it turned out, they were neither killed nor otherwise harmed; yet they could not tell this, and they feared the worse. For a man to know that his wife is in the hands of robbers, and that he may never see her again, is no small trouble. Their sons and daughters also were gone: no prattlers climbed their father's knee no gentle daughters came forth to bid them "Welcome home." Their homes were still burning, their goods were consumed, and they lifted up their voice and wept: is it at all wonderful that some of them were faint after performing that doleful miserere? Where would you be if you went home this morning, and found your home burned, and your family gone, you knew not where? I know many Christians who get very faint under extraordinary troubles. They should not, but they do. We have reason to thank God that no temptation has happened to us but such as is common to men; and yet it may not seem, so; but we may feel as if we were specially tried, like Job. Messenger after messenger has brought us evil tidings, and our hearts are not fixed on the Lord as they ought to be. To those who are faint through grief I speak just now. You may be this, and yet you may be a true follower of the Lamb; and as God has promised to, bring you out of your troubles, he will surely keep his word. Remember, he has never promised that you shall have no sorrows, but that he will deliver you out of them all. Ask yon saints in heaven! Ask those to step out of the shining ranks who came thither without trial. Will one of the leaders of the shining host give the word of command that he shall stop forward who has washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, but who never knew what affliction meant while here below? No one stirs in all that white-robed host. Does not one come forward? Must we wait here for ever without response? See! instead of anyone stirring from their ranks, I hear a voice that says, "These are they which came out of great tribulation." All of them have known, not only tribulation, but great tribulation. One promise of the New Testament is surely fulfilled before our eyes—"In the world ye shall have tribulation." When trouble came so pressingly on David's men they felt their weakness and needed to halt at the margin of the brook.

Perhaps, also, the force of the torrent was too much for them. As I have told you, in all probability the brook Besor was only a hollow place, which

in ordinary times was almost dry; but in a season of great rain it filled suddenly with a rushing muddy stream, against which only strong men could stand. These men might have kept on upon dry land, but the current was too fierce for them, and they feared that it would carry them off their feet and drown them. Therefore, David gave them leave to stop there and guard the stuff. Many there are of our Lord's servants who stop short of certain onerous service: they are not called to do what their stronger comrades undertake with joy. They can do something, but they fail to do more; they can also bear certain trials, but they are unable to bear more; they faint because they have not yet come to fulness of growth in grace. Their hearts are right in the sight of God, but they are not in condition to surmount some peculiar difficulty. You must not overdrive them, for they are the feeble of the flock. Many are too faint for needful controversy. I have found a great many of that sort about lately: the truth is very important, but they love peace. It is quite necessary that certain of us should stand up for the faith once delivered to the saints; but they are not up to the mark for it. They cannot bear to differ from their fellows; and they hold their tongues rather than contend for the truth. There are true hearts that, nevertheless, cannot defend the gospel. They wish well to the champions; but they seek the rear rank for themselves. And some cannot advance any further with regard to knowledge; they know the fundamentals, and feel as if they could master nothing more. It is a great blessing that they know the gospel, and feel that it will save them; but the glorious mysteries of the everlasting covenant, of the sovereignty of God, of his eternal love and distinguishing grace, they cannot compass—these are a brook Besor which as yet they cannot swim. It would do them a world of good if they could venture in; but, still, they axe not to be tempted into these blessed deeps. To hear of these things rather wearies them than instructs them: they have not strength enough of mind for the deep things of God. I would have every Christian wish to know all that he can know of revealed truth. Somebody whispers that the secret things belong not to us. You may be sure you will never know them if they are secret; but all that is revealed you ought to know, for these things belong to you and to your children. Take care you know what the Holy Ghost teaches. Do not give way to a fainthearted ignorance lest you be great losers thereby. That which is fit food for babes should not be enough for young men and fathers: we should eat strong meat, and leave milk to the

little ones.

Yet these fainting ones were, after all, in David's army. Their names were in their Captain's Register as much as the names of the strong. And they did not desert the colours. They had the same captain as the stoutest-hearted men in the whole regiment; they could call David "Master " and "Lord " as truly as the most lion-like man amongst them. They were in for the same dangers; for if the men in front had been beaten and had retreated, the enemy would have fallen on those who guarded the stuff. If the Amalekites had slain the four hundred, they would have made short work of the two hundred. They had work to do as needful as that of the others. Though they had not to fight, they had to take care of the stuff; and this eased the minds of the fighting men. I will be bound to say it was a great trial to them not to be allowed to march into the fight. For a brave man to see the troops go past him, and hear the last footfall of his comrades, must have been sickening. Who could pleasantly say, "I am left out of it. There is a glorious day coming, and I shall be away. I shall, until I die, think myself accursed I was not there, and hold my manhood cheap that I fought not with them on that glorious day "? It is hard to brave men to be confined to hospital, and have no drive at the foe. The weary one wishes he could be to the front, where his Captain's eye would be upon him. He pants to smite down the enemies, and win back the spoil for his comrades.

Enough of this. I will only repeat my first point: fainting ones do occur even in the army of our King.

II. Secondly, THESE FAINTING ONES REJOICE TO SEE THEIR LEADER RETURN. Do you see, when David went back they went to meet him, and the people that were with him. I feel very much like this myself. That was one reason why I took this text. I felt, after my illness, most happy to come forth and meet my Lord in public. I hoped he would be here; and so he is. I am glad also to meet with you, my comrades. We are still spared for the wax. Though laid aside a while, we are again among our brethren. Thank God! It is a great joy to meet you. I am sorry to miss so many of our church-members who are laid aside by this sickness; but it is a choice blessing to meet so many of our kindred in Christ. We are



never happier than when we are in fellowship with one another and with our Lord.

David saluted the stay-at-homes. Oh, that he might salute each one of us this morning, especially those who have been laid aside! Our King's salutations are wonderful for their heartiness. He uses no empty compliments nor vain words. Every syllable from his lips is a benediction. Every glance of his eye is an \*inspiration. When the King himself comes near, it is always a feast day to us! It is a high day and a holiday, even with the faintest of us, when we hear his voice. So they went to meet David, and he came to meet them, and there was great joy. Yes, I venture to mend that, and say there is great joy among us now. Glory be to his holy name, the Lord is here! We see him, and rejoice with joy unspeakable.

David's courtesy was as free as it was true. Possibly those who remained behind were half afraid that their leader might say, "See here, you idle fellows, what we have been doing for you!" No; he saluted them, but did not scold them. Perhaps they thought, "He will upbraid us that we did not manage to creep into the fray." But no; "he giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." He speaks not a word of upbraiding, for his heart pities them, and therefore he salutes them" My brethren, God has been gracious to us. All hail! " David would have them rejoice together; and give praise unto the most High. He will not clash their cup with a drop of bitter. Oh, for a salutation from our Lord at this good hour! When Christ comes into a company his presence makes a heavenly difference. Have you never seen an assembly listening to an orator, all unmoved and stolid? Suddenly the Holy Ghost has fallen on the speaker, and the King himself has been visibly set forth among them in the midst of the assembly, and all have felt as if they could leap to their feet and cry, "Hallelujah, hallelujah!" Then hearts beat fast, and souls leap high; for where Jesus is found his presence fills the place with delight. Now, then, you weary ones, if you be here, any of you, may you rejoice as you now meet your Leader, and your Leader reveals himself to Von! If no one else has a sonnet, I have mine. He must, he shall be praised. " Thou art the King of glory, O Christ! All heaven and earth adores thee. Thou shalt reign for ever and ever."

III. Thirdly, FAINT ONES HAVE THEIR LEADER FOR THEIR ADVOCATE. Listen to those foul-mouthed men of Belial, these wicked men: how they rail against those whom God has addicted! They came up to David and began blustering—"These weaklings who were not in the fight, they shall not share the spoil. Let them take their wives and children and begone." These fellows spoke with loud, harsh voices, and greatly grieved the feebler ones. Who was to speak up for them? Their leader became their advocate.

First, do you notice, he pleads their unity? The followers of the son of Jesse are one and inseparable. David said, "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us." "We are all one," says David. "God has given the spoil, not to you alone, but to us all. We are all one company of brothers." The unity of saints is the consolation of the feeble. Brethren, our Lord Jesus Christ would refresh his wearied ones by the reflection that we are all one in him. I may be the foot, all dusty and travel-stained; and you may be the hand, holding forth some precious gem; but we are still one body. Yonder friend is the brow of holy thought, and another is the lip of persuasion, and a third is the eye of watchfulness; but still we are one body in Christ. We cannot do, any one of us, without his fellow; each one ministers to the benefit of all. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of thee." We are all one in Christ Jesus. Surely this ought to comfort those of you who, by reason of feebleness, are made to feel as if you were very inferior members of the body: you are still living members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ your Lord, and let this suffice you. One life is ours, one love is ours, one heaven shall be ours in our one Saviour.

David further pleaded free grace, for he said to them, "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us." He did not say, "With that which you have conquered, and fairly earned in battle," but "that which the Lord hath given us." Look upon every blessing as a gift, and you will not think anyone shut out from it, not even yourself. The gift of God is eternal life; why should you not have it? Deny not to anyone of your brethren any comfort of the Covenant of grace. Think not of any man, "He ought not to have so much joy." It is all of free grace; and if free

grace rules the hour, the least may have it as well as the greatest. If it is all of free grace, then, my poor struggling brother, who can hardly feel assured that you are saved, yet if you are a believer, you may claim every blessing Of the Lord's gracious covenant. God freely gives to you as well as to me the provisions of his love; therefore let us be glad, and not judge ourselves after the manner of the law of condemnation.

Then he pleaded their needfulness. He said, "These men abided by the Stuff." No army fights well when its camp is unguarded. It is a great thing for a church to know that its stores are well guarded by a praying band. While some of us are teaching in the school or preaching in the street, we have great comfort; in knowing that a certain number of our friends are praying for us. To me it is a boundless solace that I live in the prayers of thousands. I will not say which does the better service—the man that preaches, or the man that prays; but I know this, that we can do better without the voice that preaches than without the heart that prays. The petitions of our bed-ridden sisters are the wealth of the church. The kind of service which seems most commonplace among men is often the most precious unto God. Therefore, as for those who cannot come into the front places of warfare, deny them not seats of honour, since, after all, they may be doing the greater good. Remember the statute, "They shall part alike."

Notice that David adds to his pleading a statute. I like to think of our great Commander, the Lord Jesus, making statutes. For whom does he legislate? For the first three? For the captains of thousands? No. He makes a statute for those who are forced to stay at home because they are faint. Blessed be the name of our Lord Jesus, he is always looking to the interests of those who have nobody else to care for them! If you can look after your own cause, you may do so; but if you are so happy as to be weak in yourself, you shall be Strong in Christ. Those who have Christ to care for them are better off than if they took care of themselves. He that can leave his concerns with Christ has left them in good hands. Vain is the help of self, but all-sufficient is the aid of Jesus.

To sum up what I mean: I believe the Lord will give to the sick and the suffering an equal reward with the active and energetic, if they are equally

concerned for his glory. The Lord will also make a fair division to the obscure and unknown as well as to the renowned and honoured, if they are equally earnest. Oh, tell me not that she who rears her boy for Christ shall miss her reward from him by whom an apostle is recompensed! Tell me not that the woman who so conducts her household that her servants come to fear God, shall be forgotten in the day when the "Well dones" are distributed to the faithful! Homely and unnoticed service shall have honour as surely as that with which the world is ringing.

Some of God's people are illiterate, and they have but little native talent. But if they serve the Lord as best they can, with all their heart, they shall take their part with those that are the most learned and accomplished. He that is faithful over a little shall have his full reward of grace. It is accepted according to what a man hath. We may possess no more than two mites, but if we cast them into the treasury, our Lord will think much of them.

Some dear servants of God seem always to be defeated. They seem sent to a people whose hearts are made gross and their ears dull of hearing. Still, if they have truthfully proclaimed the Word of the Lord their reward will not be according to their apparent success, but according to their fidelity.

Some saints are constitutionally depressed and sad; they are like certain lovely ferns, which grow best under a constant drip. Well, well, the Lord will gather these beautiful ferns of the shade as well as the roses of the sun; they shall share his notice as much as the blazing sunflowers and the saddest shall rejoice with the gladdest. You Little-Faiths, you Despondencies, you Much-Afraids, you Feeble-Minds, you that sigh more than you sing, you that would but cannot, you that have a great heart for holiness, but feel beaten back in your struggles, the Lord shall give you his love, his grace, his favour, as surely as he gives it to those who can do great things in his name. Certain of you have but a scant experience of the higher joys and deeper insights of the kingdom, and it may be that you are in part faulty because you are so backward; and yet, if true to your Lord, your infirmities shall not be reckoned as iniquities. If lawfully detained from the field of active labour this Statute stands last for ever, for you as well as for others: "As his part is that goeth down to the battle,

so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike."

IV. Now, fourthly, FAINT ONES FIND JESUS TO BE THEIR GOOD LORD IN EVERY WAY. Was he not a good Lord when he first took us into his army of salvation? What a curious crew they were that enlisted under David! "Every one that was in debt. and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain over them." He was a captain of ragamuffins; but our Lord had not a better following. I was a poor wretch when I came to Christ; and I should not wonder if that word is near enough to the truth to describe you. I was a good-for-nothing, over head and ears in debt, and without a penny to pay. I came to Jesus so utterly down at the heel, that no one else would have owned me. He might well have said,—"No, I have not come to this—to march at the head of such vagrant beggars as these." Yet he received us graciously, according to his promise, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Since then, how graciously has he borne with us! We axe not among those self-praising ones who have wrought such wonders of holiness; but we mourn our shortcomings and transgressions; and yet he hath not cast away the people whom he did foreknow. When we look back upon our character as soldiers of Christ, we feel ashamed of ourselves' and amazed at his grace. If anybody had told us that we should have been such poor soldiers as we have been, we should not have believed them. We do not excuse ourselves: we are greatly grieved to have been such failures. Yet our gracious Lord has never turned us out of the ranks. He might have drummed us out of the regiment long ago; but here we are still enrolled, upheld, and smiled upon. What a captain we have! None can compare with him for gentleness. He still owns us, and he declares, They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels."

Brethren, let us exalt the name of our Captain. There is none like him. We have been in distress since then: and he has been in distress with us. Ziklag Smoked for him as well as for us. In all, their affliction he was afflicted. Have you not found it so? When we have come to a great difficulty like the brook Besor he has gently eased his commands, and has not required of us what we were unable to yield. He has not made some of you pastors and teachers, for you could not have borne the burden. He hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. He has suited the

march to the foot, or the foot to the march. How sweetly he has smiled on what we have done! Have you not wondered to see how he has accepted your works and your prayers? You have been startled to find that he did answer your feeble petitions. When you have spoken a word for Jesus, and God has blessed it, why you have thought, "Surely there is a mistake about this! How could my feeble word have a blessing on it?" Beloved, we follow a noble Prince. Jesus is the chief among ten thousand for tenderness as well as for everything else. How tenderly considerate he is! How gentle and generous! He has never said a stinging word to us ever since we knew him. He is that riches which has no sorrow added to it. He has rebuked us; but his rebukes have been like an excellent oil, which has never broken our heads. When we have left him, he has turned and looked upon us, and so he has cut us to the quick; but he has never wounded us with any sword except that which cometh out of his mouth, whose edge is love. When he goes away from us, as David did from those two hundred who could not keep up with him, yet he always comes back again in mercy, and salutes us with favour. We wonder to ourselves that we did not hold him, and vow that we would never let him go; but we wonder still more that he should come back so speedily, so heartily, leaping over the mountains, hastening like a roe or a young hart over the hills of division. Lo! he has come to us. He has come to us, and he makes our hearts glad at his coming. Let us indulge our hearts this morning as we take our share in the precious spoil of his immeasurable love. He loves the great and the small with like love; let us be joyful all round.

There is one choice thing which he will do, that should make us love him beyond measure. David, after a while, went up to Hebron to be made king over Judah. Shall I read you in the second book of Samuel, the second chapter, and the third verse? "And his men that were with him" (and among the rest these weak ones who could not pass over the brook Besor), "and his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household; and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron." Yes, he will bring me up, even me! He will bring you up, you faintest and weakest of the band. There is a Hebron wherein Jesus reigns as anointed King, and he will not be there and leave one of us behind. There is no kingdom for Jesus without his brethren, no heaven for Jesus without his disciples. His poor people who have been with him in faintness and weariness shall be

with him in glory, and their households. Hold on to that additional blessing. I pray you, hold on to it. Do not let slip that word—"and their households." I fear we often lose a blessing on our households through clipping the promise. When the jailer asked what he must do to be saved, what was the answer? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." You have heard that answer hundreds of times, have you not? Did you ever hear the rest of it? Why do preachers and quoters snip off corners from gospel promises? It runs thus: "Thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Lay hold of that blessed enlargement of grace, "and thy house." Why leave out the wives and the children? Will you let the Amalekites have them? Do not be satisfied without household salvation. Let us plead this word of the Lord this morning:—O thou blessed David, whom we have desired to follow, who has helped us so graciously even unto this day, when thou art in thy kingdom graciously remember us, and let it be said of us, "and David went up thither, and his men that were with him David brought up (they did not go up of themselves) every man with his household; and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron;" "Every man with his household." I commend that word to your careful notice. Fathers, have you yet seen your children saved? Mothers, are all those daughters brought in yet? Never cease to pray until it is so, for this is the crown of it all, "Every man with his household."

What I have to say lastly is this: how greatly I desire that you who are not yet enlisted in my Lord's band would come to him because you see what a kind and gracious Lord he is! Young men, if you could see our Captain, you would down on your knees and beg him to let you enter the ranks of those who follow him. It is heaven to serve Jesus. I am a recruiting sergeant, and I would fain find a few recruits at this moment. Every man must serve somebody: we have no choice as to that fact. Those who have no master are slaves to themselves. Depend upon it, you will either serve Satan or Christ, either self or the Saviour. You will find sin, self, Satan, and the world to be hard masters; but if you wear the livery of Christ, you will find him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls. He is the most magnanimous of captains. There never was his like among the choicest of princes. He is always to be found in the thickest part of the battle. When the wind blows cold he always takes the bleak side of the hill. The heaviest end of the cross lies ever on his shoulders. If

he bids us carry a burden, he carries it also. If there is anything that is gracious, generous, kind, and tender, yea lavish and superabundant in love, you always find it in him. These forty years and more have I served him, blessed be his name! and I have had nothing but love from him. I would be glad to continue yet another forty years in the same dear service here below if so it pleased him. His service is life, peace, joy. Oh, that you would enter on it at once! God help you to enlist under the banner of Jesus even this day! Amen.

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## **The Stone Rolled Away**

The angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. - Matthew 28:2

As the holy women went towards the sepulchre in the twilight of the morning, desirous to embalm the body of Jesus, they recollected that the huge stone at the door of the tomb would be a great impediment in their way, and they said one to another, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" That question gathers up the mournful enquiry of the whole universe. They seem to have put into language the great sigh of universal manhood, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" In man's path of happiness lies a huge rock, which completely blocks up the road. Who among the mighty shall remove the barrier? Philosophy attempted the task, but miserably failed. In the ascent to immortality the stone of doubt, uncertainty, and unbelief, stopped all progress. Who could upheave the awful mass, and bring life and immortality to light? Men, generation after generation, buried their fellows; the all-devouring sepulchre swallowed its myriads. Who could stay the daily slaughter, or give a hope beyond the grave? There was a whisper of resurrection, but men could not believe in it. Some dreamed of a future state, and talked of it in mysterious poetry, as though it were all imagination and nothing more. In darkness and in twilight, with many fears and few guesses at the truth, men continued to enquire, "Who shall



roll us away the stone?" Men had an indistinct feeling that this world could not be all, that there must be another life, that intelligent creatures could not all have come into this world that they might perish; it was hoped, at any rate, that there was something beyond the fatal river. It scarce could be that none returned from Avernus: there surely must be a way out of the sepulchre. Difficult as the pathway might be, men hoped that surely there must be some return from the land of death-shade; and the question was therefore ever rising to the heart, if not to the lips, Where is the coming man? Where is the predestined deliverer? Where is he, and who is he, that shall roll us away the stone?

To the women there were three difficulties. The stone of itself was huge; it was stamped with the seal of the law; it was guarded by the representatives of power. To mankind there were the same three difficulties. Death itself was a huge stone not to be moved by any strength known to mortals: that death was evidently sent of God as a penalty for offences against his law - how could it therefore be averted, how removed? The red seal of God's vengeance was set upon that sepulchre's mouth - how should that seal be broken? Who could roll the stone away? Moreover, demon forces, and powers of hell, were watching the sepulchre to prevent escape - who could encounter these and bear departed souls like a prey from between the lion's teeth? It was a dreary question, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the sepulchre? Can these dry bones live? Shall our departed ones be restored to us? Can the multitudes of our race who have gone down to Hades ever return from the land of midnight and confusion?" So asked all heathendom, "Who?" and echo answered, "Who?" No answer was given to sages and kings, but the women who loved the Saviour- found an answer. They came to the tomb of Christ, but it was empty, for Jesus had risen. Here is the answer to the world's enquiry - there is another life; bodies will live again, for Jesus lives. O mourning Rachel, refusing to be comforted, "Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy." Sorrow no longer, ye mourners, around the grave, as those that are without hope; for since Jesus Christ is risen, the dead in Christ shall rise also. Wipe away those tears, for the believer's grave is no longer the place for lamentations, it is but the passage to immortality; it is but the robing-room in which the

spirit shall put aside for awhile her garments, travel-worn with her earthly journey, to put them on again on a brighter morrow, when they shall be fair and white as no fuller on earth could make them.

I purpose, this morning, to talk a little concerning the resurrection of our exalted Lord Jesus; and that the subject may the more readily interest you, I shall, first of all, bid this stone which was rolled away, preach to you; and then shall invite you to hear the angel's homily from his pulpit of stone.

### I. First, LET THE STONE PREACH.

It is not at all an uncommon thing to find in Scripture stones bidden to speak. Great stones have been rolled as witnesses against the people; stones and beams out of the wall have been called upon to testify to sin. I shall call this stone as a witness to valuable truths of which it was the symbol. The river of our thought divides into six streams.

1. First, the stone rolled must evidently be regarded as the door of the sepulchre removed. Death's house was firmly secured by a huge stone; the angel removed it, and the living Christ came forth. The massive door, you will observe, was taken away from the grave—not merely opened, but unhinged, flung aside, rolled away; and henceforth death's ancient prison-house is without a door. The saints shall pass in, but they shall not be shut in. They shall tarry there as in an open cavern, but there is nothing to prevent their coming forth from it in due time. As Samson, when he slept in Gaza, and was beset by foes, arose early in the morning, and took up upon his shoulders the gates of Gaza—post, and bar, and all—and carried all away, and left the Philistine stronghold open and exposed, so has it been done unto the grave by our Master, who, having slept out his three days and nights, according to the divine decree, arose in the greatness of his strength, and bore away the iron gates of the sepulchre, tearing every bar from its place. The removal of the imprisoning stone was the outward type of our Lord's having plucked up the gates of the grave—post, bar, and all—thus exposing that old fortress of death and hell, and leaving it as a city stormed and taken, and henceforth bereft of power. Remember that our Lord was committed to the grave as

a hostage. "He died for our sins." Like a debt they were imputed to him. He discharged the debt of obligation due from us to God, on the tree; he suffered to the full, the great substitutionary equivalent for our suffering, and then he was confined in the tomb as a hostage until his work should be fully accepted. That acceptance would be notified by his coming forth from durance vile; and that coming forth would become our justification —" He rose again for our justification." If he had not fully paid the debt he would have remained in the grave. If Jesus had not made effectual, total, final atonement, he must have continued a captive. But he had done it all. The "It is finished," which came from his own lips, was established by the verdict of Jehovah, and Jesus was set free. Mark him as he rises, not breaking prison like a felon who escapes from justice, but coming leisurely forth like one whose time of gaol-delivery is come; rising, it is true, by his own power, but not leaving the tomb without a sacred permit—the heavenly officer from the court of heaven is deputed to open the door to him, by rolling away the stone, and Jesus Christ, completely justified, rises to prove that all his people are, in him, completely justified, and the work of salvation is for ever perfect. The stone is rolled from the door of the sepulchre, as if to show that Jesus has so effectually done the work that nothing can shut us up in the grave again. The grave has changed its character; it has been altogether annihilated, and put away as a prison-house, so that death to the saints is no longer a punishment for sin, but an entrance into rest. Come, brethren, let us rejoice in this. In the empty tomb of Christ, we see sin for ever put away: we see, therefore, death most effectually destroyed. Our sins were the great stone which shut the mouth of the sepulchre, and held us captives in death, and darkness, and despair. Our sins are now for ever rolled away, and hence death is no longer a dungeon dark and drear, the antechamber of hell, but the rather it is a perfumed bed-chamber, a withdrawing room, the vestibule of heaven. For as surely as Jesus rose, so must his people leave the dead: there is nothing to prevent the resurrection of the saints. The stone which could keep us in the prison has been rolled away. Who can bar us in when the door itself is gone? Who can confine us when every barricade is taken away?

"Who shall rebuild for the tyrant his prison?  
The sceptre lies broken that fell from his hands;

The stone is removed; the Lord is arisen:  
The helpless shall soon be released from their bands."

2. In the second place, regard the stone as a trophy set up. As men of old set up memorial stones, and as at this day we erect columns to tell of great deeds of prowess, so that stone rolled away was, as it were, before the eyes of our faith consecrated that day as a memorial of Christ's eternal victory over the powers of death and hell. They thought that they had vanquished him; they deemed that the Crucified was overcome. Grimly did they smile as they saw his motionless body wrapped in the winding-sheet and put away in Joseph's new tomb; but their joy was fleeting; their boastings were but brief, for at the appointed moment he who could not see corruption rose and came forth from beneath their power. His heel was bruised by the old serpent, but on the resurrection morning he crushed the dragon's head.

"Vain the stone, the watch, the seal,  
Christ has burst the gates of hell;  
Death in vain forbids his rise,  
Christ hath open'd Paradise.  
Lives again our glorious King!  
'Where, O death, is now thy sting?'  
Once he died our souls to save;  
'Where's thy victory, boasting grave?'

Brethren beloved in Christ, as we look at yonder stone, with the angel seated upon it, it rises before us as a monument of Christ's victory over death and hell, and it becomes us to remember that his victory was achieved for us, and the fruits of it are all ours. We have to fight with sin, but Christ has overcome it. We are tempted by Satan: Christ has given Satan a defeat. We by-and-by shall leave this body; unless the Lord come speedily, we may expect to gather up our feet like our fathers, and go to meet our God; but death is vanquished for us, and we can have no cause to fear. Courage, Christian soldiers, you are encountering a vanquished enemy: remember that the Lord's victory is a guarantee for yours. If the Head conquers, the members shall not be defeated. Let not sorrow dim your eyes; let no fears trouble your spirit; you must conquer, for Christ

has conquered. Awaken all your powers to the conflict, and nerve them with the hope of victory. Had you seen your Master defeated, you might expect yourself to be blown like chaff before the wind; but the power by which he overcame he lends to you. The Holy Ghost is in you; Jesus himself has promised to be with you always, even to the end of the world, and the mighty God is your refuge. You shall surely overcome through the blood of the Lamb. Set up that stone before your faith's eye this morning, and say, "Here my Master conquered hell and death, and in his name and by his strength I shall be crowned, too, when the last enemy is destroyed."

3. For a third use of this stone, observe that here is a foundation laid. That stone rolled away from the sepulchre, typifying and certifying as it does the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is a foundation-stone for Christian faith. The fact of the resurrection is the key-stone of Christianity. Disprove the resurrection of our Lord, and our holy faith would be a mere fable; there would be nothing for faith to rest upon if he who died upon the tree did not also rise again from the tomb; then "your faith is vain;" said the apostle, "ye are yet in your sins," while "they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." All the great doctrines of our divine religion fall asunder like the stones of an arch when the key-stone is dislodged, in a common ruin they are all overthrown, for all our hope hinges upon that great fact. If Jesus rose, then is this gospel what it professes to be; if he rose not from the dead, then is it all deceit and delusion. But, brethren, that Jesus rose from the dead is a fact better established than almost any other in history. The witnesses were many: they were men of all classes and conditions. None of them ever confessed himself mistaken or deceptive. They were so persuaded that it was the fact, that the most of them suffered death for bearing witness to it. They had nothing to gain by such a witnessing; they did not rise in power, nor gain honour or wealth; they were truthful, simple-minded men who testified what they had seen and bore witness to that which they had beheld. The resurrection is a fact better attested than any event recorded in any history whether ancient or modern. Here is the confidence of the saints; our Lord Jesus Christ, who witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate, and was crucified, dead, and buried, rose again from the dead, and after forty days ascended to the throne of God. We rest in him; we believe in him. If he had not risen, we had been of all men most

miserable to have been his followers. If he had not risen, his atonement would not have been proved sufficient. If he had not risen, his blood would not have been to us proven to be efficacious for the taking away of sin; but as he has risen, we build upon this truth; all our confidence we rest upon it, and we are persuaded that—

"Raised from the dead, he goes before;  
He opens heaven's eternal door;  
To give his saints a blest abode,  
Near their Redeemer and their God."

My dear hearers, are you resting your everlasting hopes upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? Do you trust in him, believing that he both died and rose again for you? Do you place your entire dependence upon the merit of his blood certified by the fact of his rising again? If so, you have a foundation of fact and truth, a foundation against which the gates of hell shall not prevail; but if you are building upon anything that you have done, or anything that priestly hands can do for you, you are building upon the sands which shall be swept away by the all-devouring flood, and you and your hopes too shall go down into the fathomless abyss wrapped in the darkness of despair. Oh, to build upon the living stone of Christ Jesus! Oh, to rest on him who is a tried cornerstone, elect, precious! This is to build safely, eternally, and blessedly.

4. A fourth voice from the stone is this: here is rest provided. The angel seemed to teach us that as he sat down upon the stone. How leisurely the whole resurrection was effected! How noiselessly, too! What an absence of pomp and parade! The angel descended, the stone was rolled away, Christ rose, and then the angel sat down on the stone. He sat there silently and gracefully, breathing defiance to the Jews and to their seal, to the Roman legionaries and their spears, to death, to earth, to hell. He did as good as say, "Come and roll that stone back again, ye enemies of the risen One. All ye infernal powers, who thought to prevail against our ever-living Prince, roll back that stone again, if so ye dare or can!" The angel said not this in words, but his stately and quiet sitting upon the stone meant all that and more. The Master's work is done, and done for ever, and this stone, no more to be used, this unhinged door, no more

employed to shut in the charnel house, is the type that "it is finished"—finished so as never to be undone, finished so as to last eternally. Yon resting angel softly whispers to us, "Come hither, and rest also." There is no fuller, better, surer, safer rest for the soul than in the fact that the Saviour in whom we trust has risen from the dead. Do you mourn departed friends today? O come and sit upon this stone, which tells you they shall rise again. Do you soon expect to die? Is the worm at the root? Have you the flush of consumption on your cheek? O come and sit you down upon this stone, and bethink you that death has lost its terror now, for Jesus has risen from the tomb. Come you, too, ye feeble and trembling ones, and breathe defiance to death and hell. The angel will vacate his seat for you, and let you sit down in the face of the enemy. Though you be but a humble woman, or a man broken down, and wan, and languid with long years of weary sickness, yet may you well defy all the hosts of hell, while resting down upon this precious truth, "He is not here, but he is risen: he has left the dead, no more to die." I was minded, as I thought over this passage of my discourse, of that time when Jacob journeyed to the house of Laban. It is said he came to a place where there was a well, and a great stone lay upon it, and the flocks and herds were gathered round it, but they had no water till one came and rolled away the great stone from the well's mouth, and then they watered the flocks. Even so the tomb of Jesus is like a great well springing up with the purest and most divine refreshment, but until this stone was rolled away, none of the flocks redeemed by blood could be watered there; but now, every Sabbath day, on the resurrection morning, the first day of the week, we gather round our Lord's open sepulchre, and draw living waters from that sacred well. O ye weary sheep of the fold, O ye who are faint and ready to die, come ye hither; here is sweet refreshment; Jesus Christ is risen: let your comforts be multiplied.

"Every note with wonders swell,  
Sin o'erthrown, and captived hell;  
Where is hell's once dreaded king?  
Where, O death, thy mortal sting?  
Hallelujah."

5. In the fifth place, that stone was a boundary appointed. Do you not see

it so? Behold it then, there it lies, and the angel sits upon it. On that side what see you? The guards affrighted, stiffened with fear, like dead men. On this side what see you? The timid trembling women, to whom the angel softly speaks, "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus." You see, then, that stone became the boundary between the living and the dead, between the seekers and the haters, between the friends and the foes of Christ. To his enemies his resurrection is "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence;" as of old on Mar's Hill, when the sages heard of the resurrection, they mocked. But to his own people, the resurrection is the head-stone of the corner. Our Lord's resurrection is our triumph and delight. The resurrection acts much in the same manner as the pillar which Jehovah placed between Israel and Egypt: it was darkness to Egypt, but it gave light to Israel. All was dark amidst Egypt's hosts, but all was brightness and comfort amongst Israel's tribes. So the resurrection is a doctrine full of horror to those who know not Christ, and trust him not. What have they to gain by resurrection? Happy were they could they sleep in everlasting annihilation. What have they to gain by Christ's resurrection? Shall he come whom they have despised? Is he living whom they have hated and abhorred? Will he bid them rise, will they have to meet him as a judge upon the throne? The very thought of this is enough to smite through the loins of kings to-day; but what will the fact of it be when the clarion trumpet startles all the sons of Adam from their last beds of dust! Oh, the horrors of that tremendous morning, when every sinner shall rise, and the risen Saviour shall come in the clouds of heaven, and all the holy angels with him! Truly there is nothing but dismay for those who are on the evil side of that resurrection stone. But how great the joy which the resurrection brings to those who are on the right side of that stone! How they look for his, appearing with daily growing transport! How they build upon the sweet truth that they shall arise, and with these eyes their Saviour see! I would have you ask yourselves, this morning, on which side you are of that boundary stone now. Have you life in Christ? Are you risen with Christ? Do you trust alone in him who rose from the dead? If so, fear not ye: the angel comforts you, and Jesus cheers you; but oh! if you have no life in Christ, but are dead while you live, let the very thought that Jesus is risen, strike you with fear, and make you tremble, for tremble well you may at that which awaits you.



6. Sixthly, I conceive that this stone may be used, and properly too, as foreshadowing ruin. Our Lord came into this world to destroy all the works of the devil. Behold before you the works of the devil pictured as a grim and horrible castle, massive and terrible, overgrown with the moss of ages, colossal, stupendous, cemented with blood of men, ramparted by mischief and craft, surrounded with deep trenches, and garrisoned with fiends. A structure dread enough to cause despair to every one who goeth round about it to count its towers and mark its bulwarks. In the fulness of time our Champion came into the world to destroy the works of the devil. During his life he sounded an alarm at the great castle, and dislodged here and there a stone, for the sick were healed, the dead were raised, and the poor had the gospel preached unto them. But on the resurrection morning the huge fortress trembled from top to bottom; huge rifts were in its walls; and tottering all its strongholds. A stronger than the master of that citadel had evidently entered it and was beginning to overturn, overturn, overturn, from pinnacle to basement. One huge stone, upon which the building much depended, a corner-stone which knit the whole fabric together, was lifted bodily from its bed and hurled to the ground. Jesus tore the huge granite stone of death from its position, and so gave a sure token that every other would follow. When that stone was rolled away from Jesus' sepulchre, it was a prophecy that every stone of Satan's building should come down, and not one should rest upon another of all that the powers of darkness had ever piled up, from the days of their first apostacy even unto the end. Brethren, that stone rolled away from the door of the sepulchre gives me glorious hope. Evil is still mighty, but evil will come down. Spiritual wickedness reigns in high places; the multitude still clamour after evil; the nations still sit in thick darkness; many worship the scarlet woman of Babylon, others bow before the crescent of Mohammed, and millions bend themselves before blocks of wood and stone; the dark places and habitations of the earth are full of cruelty still; but Christ has given such a shiver to the whole fabric of evil that, depend upon it, every stone will be certain to fall. We have but to work on, use the battering-ram of the gospel, continue each one to keep in his place, and like the hosts around Jericho, to sound the trumpet still, and the day must come when every hoary evil, every colossal superstition, shall be laid low, even with the ground, and the prophecy shall be fulfilled, " Overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come

whose right it is; and I will give it him." That loosened stone on which the angel sits is the sure prognostic of the coming doom of everything that is base and vile. Rejoice, ye sons of God for Babylon's fall draweth near. Sing, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth, for there shall not an evil be spared. Verily, I say unto you, there shall not be one stone left upon another, which shall not be cast down.

Thus has the stone preached to us; we will pause awhile and hear what the angel has to say.

II. THE ANGEL PREACHED two ways: he preached in symbol, and he preached in words.

Preaching in symbol is very popular with a certain party nowadays. The gospel is to be seen by the eye, they tell us, and the people are to learn from the change of colours, at various seasons, such as blue, and green, and violet, exhibited on the priest and the altar, and by lace and by candles, and by banners, and by cruets, and shells full of water; they are even to be taught or led by the nose, which is to be indulged with smoke of incense; and drawn by the ears, which are to listen to hideous intonings or to dainty canticles. Now, mark well that the angel was a symbolical preacher, with his brow of lightning and his robe of snow; but you will please to notice for whom the symbols were reserved. He did not say a word to the keepers—not a word. He gave them the symbolical gospel, that is to say, he looked upon them—and his glance was lightning; he revealed himself to them in his snowwhite garments, and no more. Mark how they quake and tremble! That is the gospel of symbols; and wherever it comes it condemns. It can do no other. Why, the old Mosaic law of symbols, where did it end? How few ever reached its inner meaning! The mass of Israel fell into idolatry, and the symbolic system became death to them. You who delight in symbols, you who think it is Christian to make the whole year a kind of practical charade upon the life of Christ, you who think that all Christianity is to be taught in semi-dramas, as men perform in theatres and puppet-shows, go your way, for ye shall meet no heaven in that road, no Christ, no life. You shall meet with priests, and formalists, and hypocrites, and into the thick woods, and among the dark mountains of destruction shall ye stumble to your

utter ruin. The gospel message is, "Hear, and your soul shall live;" "Incline your ear, and come unto me." . This is the life-giving message, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But, O perverse generation, if ye look for symbols and signs, ye shall be deluded with the devil's gospel, and fall a prey to the destroyer.

Now we will listen to the angel's sermon in words. Thus only is a true gospel to be delivered. Christ is the Word, and the gospel is a gospel of words and thoughts. It does not appeal to the eye; it appeals to the ear, and to the intellect, and to the heart. It is a spiritual thing, and can only be learned by those whose spirits are awakened to grasp at spiritual truth. The first thing the angel said was, " Fear not ye." Oh! this is the very genius of our risen Saviour's gospel—"gospel—Fear not ye." Ye who would be saved, ye who would follow Christ, ye need not fear. Did the earth quake ? Fear not ye: God can preserve you though the earth be burned with fire. Did the angel descend in terrors? Fear not ye: there are no terrors in heaven for the child of God who comes to Jesus' cross, and trusts his soul to him who bled thereon. Poor women, is it the dark that alarms you? Fear not ye: God sees and loves you in the dark, and there is nothing in the dark or in the light beyond his control. Are you afraid to come to a tomb? Does a sepulchre alarm you? Fear not ye: you cannot die. Since Christ has risen, though you were dead yet should you live. Oh, the comfort of the gospel! Permit me to say there is nothing in the Bible to make any man fear who puts his trust in Jesus. Nothing in the Bible, did I say? There is nothing in heaven, nothing on earth, nothing in hell, that need make you fear who trust in Jesus. Fear not ye." The past you need not fear, it is forgiven you; the present you need not fear, it is provided for; the future also is secured by the living power of Jesus. "Because I live" saith he, "ye shall live also." Fear! Why that were comely and seemly when Christ was dead, but now that he lives there remains no space for it ? Do you fear your sins ? They are all gone, for Christ had not risen if he had not put them all away. What is it you fear? If an angel bids you " Fear not," why will you fear ? If every wound of the risen Saviour, and every act of your reigning Lord consoles you, why are you still dismayed? To be doubting, and fearing, and trembling, now that Jesus has risen, is an inconsistent thing in any believer. Jesus is able to succour you in all your temptations; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for

you, he is able to save you to the uttermost: therefore, do not fear. Notice the next word, "Fear not ye: for I know." What! does an angel know the women's hearts? Did the angel know what Magdalen was about! Do spirits read our spirits? 'Tis well. But oh! 'tis better to remember that our heavenly Father knows. Fear not ye, for God knows what is in your heart. You have never made an avowal of anxiety about your soul, you are too bashful even for that; you have not even proceeded so far as to dare to say that you hope you love Jesus; but God knows your desires. Poor heart, you feel as if you could not trust, and could not do anything that is good; but you do at least desire, you do at least seek. All this God knows; with pleasure he spies out your desires. Does not this comfort you—this great fact of the knowledge of God? I could not read what is in your spirit, and perhaps you could not tell me what is there. If you tried, you would say after you had done, "Well, I did not tell him exactly what I felt. I have missed the comfort I might have had, for I did not explain my case." But there is one who deals with you, and knows exactly where your difficulty is, and what is the cause of your present sorrow. "Fear not ye," for your heavenly Father knows. Lie still, poor patient, for the surgeon knows where the wound is, and what it is that ails thee. Hush, my child, be still upon thy great Parent's bosom, for he knows all; and ought not that content thee, for his care is as infinite as his knowledge?

Then the angel went on to say, "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified." There was room for comfort here. They were seeking Jesus, though the world had crucified him. Though the many had turned aside and left him, they were clinging to him in loving loyalty. Now, is there any one here who can say, "Though I am unworthy to be a follower of Christ, and often think that he will reject me, yet there is one thing I am sure of—I would not be afraid of the fear of man for his sake. My sins make me fear, but no man could do it. I would stand at his side if all the world were against him. I would count it my highest honour that the crucified One of the world should be the adored One of my heart. Let all the world cast him out, if he would but take me in, poor unworthy worm as I am, I would never be ashamed to own his blessed and gracious name"? Ah! then, do not fear, for if that is how you feel towards Christ, he will own you in the last great day. If you are willing to own him now, "Fear not ye." I am sure I sometimes feel, when I am looking into my own

heart, as if I had neither part nor lot in the matter, and could claim no interest in the Beloved at all; but, then, I do know this, I am not ashamed to be put to shame for him; and if I should be charged with being a fanatic and an enthusiast in his cause, I would count it the highest honour to plead guilty to so blessed an impeachment for his dear sake. If this be truly the language of our hearts, we may take courage. "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified."

Then he adds, "He is not here: for he is risen." Here is the instruction which the angel gives. After giving comfort, he gives instruction. Your great ground and reason for consolation, seeker, is that you do not seek a dead Christ, and you do not pray to a buried Saviour; he is really alive. To-day he is as able to relieve you, if you go to your closet and pray to him, as he was to help the poor blind man when he was on earth. He is as willing to-day to accept and bless you as he was to bless the leper, or to heal the paralytic. Go to him then at once, poor seeker; go to him with holy confidence, for he is not here, he would be dead if he were—he is risen, living, and reigning, to answer your request.

The angel bade the holy women investigate the empty tomb, but, almost immediately after, he gave them a commission to perform on their Lord's behalf. Now, if any seeker here has been comforted by the thought that Christ lives to save, let him do as the angel said, let him go and tell to others of the good news that he has heard. It is the great means for propagating our holy faith, that all who have learned it should teach it. We have not some ministers set apart, to whom is reserved the sole right of teaching in the Christian church we have no belief in a clergy and a laity. Believers, ye are all God's clerics—all of you. As many of you as believe in Christ are God's clergy, and bound to serve him according to your abilities. Many members there are in the body, but every member has its office; and there is no member in the body of Christ which is to be idle, because forsooth, it cannot do what the Head can do. The foot has its place, and the hand its duty, as well as the tongue and the eye. O you who have learned of Jesus, keep not the blessed secret to yourselves. To-day, in some way or other, I pray you make known that Jesus Christ is risen. Pass the watchword round, as the ancient Christians did. On the first day of the week they said to one another, "The Lord is risen indeed" If any ask

you what you mean by it, you will then be able to tell them the whole of the gospel, for this is the essence of the gospel, that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures—died the substitute for us criminals, rose the representative of us pardoned sinners—died that our sins might die, and lives again that our souls may live. Diligently invite others to come and trust Jesus. Tell them that there is life for the dead in a look at Jesus crucified; tell them that that look is a matter of the soul, it is a simple confidence; tell them that none ever did confide in Christ and were cast away; tell them what you have felt as the result of your trusting Jesus, and who can tell, many disciples will be added to his church, a risen Saviour will be glorified, and you will be comforted by what you have seen ! The Lord follow these feeble words with his own blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **The Stony Heart Removed**

I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. - Ezekiel 36:26

The fall of man was utter and entire. Some things when they have become dilapidated may be repaired; but the old house of mankind is so thoroughly decayed that it must be pulled down even to its foundation, and a new house must be erected. To attempt mere improvement is to anticipate a certain failure. Manhood is like an old garment that is rent and rotten; he that would mend it with new cloth doth but make the rent worse. Manhood is like one of the old skin bottles of the Orientals; he who would put the new wine into it shall find that the bottles will burst, and his wine will be lost. Old shoes and clouted might be good enough for

Gibeonites; but we are so thoroughly outworn that we must be made new, or thrown upon the dunghill. It is a wonder of wonders that such a thing is possible. If a tree loses its branch, a new branch may spring out; if you cut into the bark and mark the letters of your name, in process of time the bark may heal its own wound, and the mark may be erased. But who could give a new heart to the tree? Who could put new sap into it? By what possibility could you change its inner structure? If the core were smitten with death, what power but the divine could ever restore it to life? If a man has injured his bones, the fractured parts soon send forth a healing liquid, and the bone is by-and-by restored to its former strength, if a man hath youth on his side. But if a man's heart were rotten, how could that be cured? If the heart were a putrid ulcer, if the very vitals of the man were rotten, what human surgery, what marvellous medicine could touch a defect so radical as this? Well did our hymn say:

"Can aught beneath a power divine  
The stubborn will subdue?  
'Tis thine, eternal Spirit, thine,  
To form the heart anew.

To chase the shades of death away  
And bid the sinner live!  
A beam of heaven, a vital ray,  
'Tis thine alone to give."

But while such a thing would be impossible apart from God, it is certain that God can do it. Oh, how the Master delighteth to undertake impossibilities! To do what others can do were but like unto man; but to accomplish that which is impossible to the creature is a mighty and noble proof of the dignity of the Creator. He delighteth to undertake strange things; to bring light out of darkness; order out of confusion; to send life into the dead; to heal the leprosy; to work marvels of grace and mercy, and wisdom, and peace—these, I say, God delighteth to do; and so, while the thing is impossible to us, it is possible to him. And more, its impossibility to us commends it to him, and makes him the more willing to undertake it, that he may thus glorify his great name.

According to the Word of God, man's heart is by nature like a stone; but God, through his grace, removes the stony heart and gives a heart of flesh. It is this prodigy of love, this miracle of grace, which is to engage our attention to-night. I trust we shall speak now, not of something that has happened to others only, but of a great wonder which has been wrought in ourselves. I trust we shall talk experimentally, and hear personally, and feel that we have an interest in these splendid deeds of divine love.

Two things we shall talk of to-night. First, the stony heart and its dangers; secondly, the heart of flesh and its privileges.

I. Some few words upon THE STONY HEART AND ITS DANGERS. Why is the heart of man compared to a stone at all?

1. First, because, like a stone it is cold. Few persons like to be always treading upon cold stones in their houses, and hence we floor our habitations; and it is thought to be a part, of the hardship of the prisoner if he has nothing to sit down or rest upon but the cold, cold stone. You may heat a stone for a little season if you thrust it into the fire, but for how short a time will it retain its heat; and though it glowed just now, how very soon it loses all its warmth and returns again to its native coldness. Such is the heart of man. It is warm enough towards sin; it grows hot as coals of juniper, towards its own lusts; but naturally the heart is as cold as ice towards the things of God. You may think you have heated it for a little season under a powerful exhortation, or in presence of a solemn judgment, but how soon it returns to its natural state! We have heard of one who, seeing a large congregation all weeping under a sermon, said, "What a wonderful thing to see so many weeping under the truth!" and another added, "But there is a greater wonder than that—to see how they leave off weeping as soon as the sermon is over, concerning those things which ought to make them weep always and constantly." Ah, dear friends, no warmth of eloquence can ever warn the stony heart of man into a glow of love to Jesus; nay, no force of entreaty can get so much as a spark of gratitude out of the flinty heart of man. Though your hearts renewed by grace should be like a flaming furnace, yet you cannot warm your neighbour's heart with the divine heat; he will think you a fool



for being so enthusiastic; he will turn upon his heel and think you a madman to be so concerned about matters that seem so trivial to him: the warmth that is in your heart you cannot communicate to him, for he is not, while unconverted, capable of receiving it. The heart of man, like marble, is stone-cold.

2. Then, again, like a stone, it is hard. You get the hard stone, especially some sorts of stone which have been hewn from granite-beds, and you may hammer as you will, but you shall make no impression. The heart of man is compared in Scripture to the nether millstone, and in another place it is even compared to the adamant stone; it is harder than the diamond; it cannot be cut; it cannot be broken; it cannot be moved. I have seen the great hammer of the law, which is ten times more ponderous than Nasmyth's great steam hammer, come down upon a man's heart, and the heart has never shown the slightest signs of shrinking. We have seen a hundred powerful shots sent against it, we have marked the great battery of the law with its ten great pieces of ordnance all fired against the heart of man, but man's heart has been harder even than the sheathing of the iron-clad ships, and the great shots of the law have dropped harmlessly against a man's conscience— he did not, he would not feel. What razor-edged sentence can cut your hearts? What needle-warning can prick your consciences? Alas, all means are unavailing! No arguments have power to move a soul so steeled, so thoroughly stony, hard, and impenetrable. Some of you now present, have given more than enough evidence of the hardness of your hearts. Sickness has befallen you, death has come in at your windows, affliction has come up against you, but like Pharaoh, you have said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I will not bow my neck, neither will I do his will. I am my own master, and I will have my own pleasure and my own way. I will not yield to God." O rocks of iron and hills of brass, ye are softer than the proud heart of man!

3. Again, a stone is dead. You can find no feeling in it. Talk to it; it will shed no tears of pity, though you recount to it the saddest tales; no smiles will gladden it, though you should tell it the most happy story. It is dead; there is no consciousness in it; prick it and it will not bleed; stab it and it cannot die, for it is dead already. You cannot make it wince, or start, or

show any signs of sensibility. Now, though man's heart is not like this as to natural things, yet spiritually this is just its condition. You cannot make it show one spiritual emotion. "Ye are dead in trespasses and sins," powerless, lifeless, without feeling, without emotion. Transient emotions towards good men have, even as the surface of a slab is wet after a shower, but real vital emotions of good they cannot know, for the showers of heaven reach not the interior of the stone. Melancthon may preach, but old Adam is too dead for him to quicken him. Ye may go down into the grave where the long sleep has fallen on humanity, and ye may seek to revive it, but there is no power in human tongue to revive the dead. Man is like the deaf adder which will not be charmed, charm we never so wisely. Tears are lost on him; threatenings are but as the whistlings of the wind, the preachings of the law, and even of Christ crucified—all these are null and void and fall hopelessly to the ground, so long as the man's heart continues what is by nature—dead, and hard, and cold.

4. Those three adjectives might be sufficient to give a full description, for if we add two more we shall but in some degree repeat ourselves. Man's heart is like a stone because it is not easily to be softened. Lay a stone in water as long as you will and you shall not find it readily subdued. There are some sorts of stone that yield to the stress of weather, especially in the smoky atmosphere and the sulphurous vapours of London; certain stones crumble to decay, but the stone of a man's heart no climate can affect, no weathers can subdue; it grows harder whether it be the soft sunshine of love or the harsh tempest of judgment that falls upon it. Mercy and love alike make it more solid, and knit its particles closer together; and surely until the Omnipotent himself speak the word, the heart of man grows harder, and harder, and harder, and refuses to be broken. There is an invention, I believe, for liquifying flints, and then afterwards they may be poured out in a solution which is supposed to have the virtue of resisting the action of the atmosphere when put upon certain limestones; but you never can liquify, except by a divine power, the flinty heart of man. Granite may be ground, may be broken into pieces, but unless God gets the hammer in his hand, and even he must put both hands to it, the great granitic heart of man will not yield in any way. Certain stones have their veins, and certain crystallic stones may be so dexterously struck, that they will frequently break even with a slight blow; but you can never find a

vein in man's heart by which the attempt to conquer it will be assisted from within. You may smite right and left with death, with judgment, with mercy, with privileges with tears, with entreaties, with threatenings, and it will not break; nay, even tthe fires of hell, do not melt man's heart, for the damned in hell grow more hard by their agonies, and they hate God, and blaspheme him all the more because of the suffering they endure. Only Omnipotence itself, I say, can ever soften this hard heart of man.

5. So, then, man's heart is cold, and dead, and hard, and cannot be softened; and then, again—and this is but an enlargement of a former thought—it is utterly senseless, incapable of receiving impressions. Remember, again, I am not speaking of the heart of man physically, I am not speaking of it even as I would if I were teaching mental science; we are only now regarding it from a spiritual point of view. Men do receive mental impressions under the preaching of the Word; they often get so uneasy that they cannot shake off their thoughts; but alas! their goodness is as the early cloud, and as the morning dew, and it vanishes as a dream. But, spiritually, you can no more impress the heart of man than you might leave a bruise upon a stone. Wax receives an impression from a seal, but not the stern, unyielding stone; if you have hot running wax you may make what mark you please upon it, but when you have the cold, cold stone, though you bear never so hard upon the stamp, there is no impression, the surface shows no trace of your labour. So is man's heart by nature. I know some who say it is not so, they do not like to hear human nature slandered, so they say. Well, friend, if though hast not this hard heart, why is it thou art not saved? I remember an anecdote of Dr. Gill which hits this nail on the head. It is said that a man came to him in the vestry of his chapel and said, "Dr. Gill, you have been preaching the doctrine of human inability, I don't believe you. I believe that man can repent and can believe, and is not without spiritual power." "Well," said the doctor, "have you repented and believed?" "No," said the other. "Very well, then," said he, "you deserve double damnation." And so I say to the man who boats that he has not such a hard heart as this—have you laid hold of Christ? have you come to him? if you have not, then out of your own heart be you condemned, for you deserve double destruction from the presence of God, for having resisted the influences of God's Spirit and

rejected his grace. I need not say more about the hardness of the human heart, as that will come up incidentally by-and-by, when we are speaking of the heart of flesh.

But now, let us notice the danger to which this hard heart is exposed. A hard heart is exposed to the danger of final impenitence. If all these years the processes of nature have been at work with your heart, and have not softened it, have you not reason to conclude that it may be so even to the end? And then you will certainly perish. Many of you are no strangers to the means of grace. I speak to some of you who have been hearing the gospel preached ever since you were little ones: you went to the Sabbath school; mayhap, you were wont in your boy hood to listen to old Mr. So-and-so, who often brought tears to your eyes, and of late you have been here, and there have been times with this congregation when the word seemed enough to melt the very rocks and make the hard hearts of steel flow down in repentance, and yet you are still the same as ever. What does reason tell you to expect? Surely this should be the natural inference from the logic of facts you will continue as you are now, means will be useless to you, privileges will but become accumulated judgments, and you will go on till time is over, and eternity approaches, unblest, unsaved, and you will go down to the doom of the lost soul. "Oh!" saith one, "I hope not;" and I add, I hope not too; but I am solemnly afraid of it, especially with some of you. Some of you are growing old under the gospel, and you are getting so used to my voice that you could almost go to sleep under it. As Rowland Hill says of the blacksmith's dog, that at first he used to be afraid of the sparks, but afterwards got so used to it, that he could lie and sleep under the anvil; and there are some of you who can sleep under the anvil, with the sparks of God's wrath flying about your nostrils, asleep under the most solemn discourse. I do not mean with your eyes shut, for I might then point to you, but asleep in your hearts, your souls being given to slumber while your eyes may regard the preacher, and your ears may be listening to his voice.

And further, there is another danger, hearts that are not softened grow harder and harder; what little sensibility they seemed to have, at last departs. Perhaps there are some of you that can recollect what you were when you were boys. There is a picture in the Royal Academy at this hour,

which teaches a good moral: there is a mother putting her children to bed, the father happens to be in just when they are going to their slumbers; the little ones are kneeling down saying their prayers; there is only a curtain between them and the room where the father is, and he is sitting down; he is putting his hand to his head, and the tears are flowing very freely, for somehow he cannot stand it; he recollects when he too was taught to pray at his mother's knee, and though he has grown up forgetful of God and the things of God, he remembers the time when it was not so with him. Take care, my dear hearers, that you do not grow worse and worse; for it will be so; we either grow ripe or rotten, one of the two, as years pass over us. Which is it with you?

Then further, a man who has a hard heart is Satan's throne. There is a stone they tell us, in Scotland, at Scone, where they were wont to crown their old kings: the stone on which they crown the old king of hell is a hard heart; it is his choicest throne; he reigns in hell, but he counts hard hearts to be his choicest dominions.

Then again, the hard heart is ready for anything. When Satan sits upon it and makes it his throne, there is no wonder that from the seat of the scorner flow all manner of evil. And besides that, the hard heart is impervious to all instrumentality. John Bunyan, in his history of the "Holy War," represents old Diabolus, the devil, as providing for the people of Mansoul a coat of armour, of which the breastplate was a hard heart. Oh! that is a strong breastplate. Sometimes when we preach the gospel, we wonder that there is not more good done. I wonder that there is so much. When men sit in the house of God, armed up to their very chins in a coat of mail, it is not much wonder that the arrows do not pierce their hearts. If a man has an umbrella, it is no marvel if he does not get wet; and so when the showers of grace are falling, there are many of you who put up the umbrella of a hard heart, and it is no marvel if the dew of grace and the rain of grace do not drop into your souls. Hard hearts are the devil's life-guards. When he once gets a man in an armour of proof—that of a hard heart—"Now," says he, "you may go anywhere." So he sends them to hear the minister, and they make fun of him; he lets them read religious books, and they can find something to mock at there; he will then turn them even to the Bible, and with their hard heart they

may read the Bible pretty safely, for even the Word of God the hard heart can turn to mischief, and find something to find fault with even in the person of Christ, and in the glorious attributes of God himself. I shall not stay longer upon this very painful subject; but if you feel that your hearts are hard, may your prayer go up to God, "Lord, melt my heart. None but a bath of blood divine can take the flint away; but do it Lord, and thou shalt have the praise."

II. Secondly, and briefly, A HEART OF FLESH AND ITS PRIVILEGES. "I will take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." In many—very many who are present to-night my text has been fulfilled. Let us join in praying for others whose hearts are still stony, that God would work this miracle in them, and turn their hearts to flesh.

What is meant by a heart of flesh? It means a heart that can feel on account of sin—a heart that can bleed when the arrows of God stick fast in it; it means a heart that can yield when the gospel makes its attacks—a heart that can be impressed when the seal of God's word comes upon it; it means a heart that is warm, for life is warm—a heart that can think, a heart that can aspire, a heart that can love—putting all in one—a heart of flesh means that new heart and right spirit which God giveth to the regenerate. But wherein does this heart of flesh consist; wherein does its tenderness consist? Well, its tenderness consists in three things. There is a tenderness of conscience. Men who have lost their stony hearts are afraid of sin, even before sin they are afraid of it. The very shadow of evil across their path frightens them. The temptation is enough for them, they flee from it as from a serpent; they would not dally and toy with it, lest they should be betrayed. Their conscience is alarmed even at the approach of evil, and away they fly; and in sin, for even tender hearts do sin, they are uneasy.; As well might a man seek to obtain quiet rest on a pillow stuffed with thorns, as the tender conscience get any peace while a man is sinning. And then, after sin—here comes the pinch—the heart of flesh bleeds as though it were wounded to its very core. It hates and loathes and detests itself that ever it should have gone astray. Ah, stony heart, you can think of sin with pleasure, you can live in sin and not care about it; and after sin you can roll the sweet morsel under your tongue and say, "Who is my master? I care for none; my conscience does not

accuse me." But not so the tender broken heart. Before sin, and in sin, and after sin, it smarts and cries out to God. So also in duty as well as in sin, the new heart is tender. Hard hearts care nothing for God's commandment; hearts of flesh wish to be obedient to every statute. "Only let me know my Master's will and I will do it." The hearts of flesh when they feel that the commandment has been omitted, or that the command has been broken, mourn and lament before God. Oh! there are some hearts of flesh that cannot forgive themselves, if they have been lax in prayer, if they have not enjoyed the Sabbath-day, if they feel that they have not given their hearts to God's praise as they should. These duties which hearts of stone trifle with and despise, hearts of flesh value and esteem. If the heart of flesh could have its way, it would never sin, it would be as perfect as its Father who is in heaven, and it would keep God's command without flaw of omission or of commission. Have you, dear friends, such a heart of flesh as this?

I believe a heart of flesh, again, is tender, not only with regard to sin and duty, but with regard to suffering. A heart of stone can hear God blasphemed and laugh at it; but our blood runs cold to hear God dishonoured when we have a heart of flesh. A heart of stone can bear to see its fellow creatures perish and despise their destruction; but the heart of flesh is very tender over others. "Faith its pity would reclaim, and snatch the firebrand from the flame." A heart of flesh would give its very life-blood if it might but snatch others from going down to the pit, for its bowels yearn and its soul moves toward its fellow sinners who are on the broad road to destruction. Have you, oh, have you such a heart of flesh as this?

Then to put it in another light, the heart of flesh is tender in three ways. It is tender in conscience. Hearts of stone make no bones, as we say, about great mischiefs; but hearts of flesh repent even at the very thought of sin. To have indulged a foul imagination, to have flattered a lustful thought, and to have allowed it to tarry even for a minute is quite enough to make a heart of flesh grieved and rent before God with pain. The heart of stone says, when it has done great iniquity, "Oh, it is nothing, it is nothing! Who am I that I should be afraid of God's law?" But not so the heart of flesh. Great sins are little to the stony heart, little sins are great to the

heart of flesh—if little sins there be. Conscience in the heart of stone is seared as with a hot iron; conscience in the heart of flesh is raw and very tender; like the sensitive plant, it coils up its leaves at the slightest touch, it cannot bear the presence of evil; it is like a delicate consumptive, who feels every wind and is affected by every change of atmosphere. God give us such a blessedly tender conscience as that. Then again, the heart of flesh grows tender of God's will. My Lord Will-be-will is a great blusterer, and it is hard to bring him down to subject himself to God's will. When you have a man's conscience on God's side, you have only half the battle if you cannot get his will. The old maxim—

"Convince a man against his will  
He's of the same opinion still."

is true with regard to this as well as regard to anything else. Oh! there are some of you that know the right, but you will do the wrong. You know what is evil, but you will pursue it. Now, when the heart of flesh is given, the will bends like a willow, quivers like an aspen leaf in every breath of heaven, and bows like an osier in every breeze of God's Spirit. The natural will is stern and stubborn, and you must rend it up by the roots; but the renewed will is gentle and pliable, feels the divine influence, and sweetly yields to it. To complete the picture, in the tender heart there is a tenderness of the affections. The hard heart does not love God, but the renewed heart does. The hard heart is selfish, cold, stolid. "Why should I weep for sin? Why should I love the Lord? Why should I give my heart to Christ?" The heart of flesh says—

"Thou know'st I love thee, dearest Lord,  
But oh! I long to soar  
Far from this world of sin and woe,  
And learn to love thee more."

O may God give us a tenderness of affection, that we may love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.

Now, the privileges of this renewed heart are these. "'Tis here the Spirit dwells, 'tis here that Jesus rests." The soft heart is ready now to receive



every spiritual blessing. It is fitted to yield every heavenly fruit to the honour and praise of God. Oh! if we had none but tender hearts to preach to, what blessed work our ministry would be. What happy success! What sowings on earth! What harvests in heaven! We may indeed pray that God may work this change if it were only that our ministry might be more often a saviour of life unto life, and not of death unto death. A soft heart is the best defence against sin, while it is the best preparative for heaven. A tender heart is the best means of watchfulness against evil, while it is also the best means of preparing us for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall shortly descend from heaven.

Now, my voice fails me, and in your hearts I certainly shall not be heard for my much speaking. Great complaints have been brought against somebody's sermons for being too long, though I hardly think they could have been mine. So let us be brief, and let us conclude; only we must press this enquiry home—Has God taken away the heart of stone and has he given you the heart of flesh. Dear friend, you cannot change your own heart. Your outward works will not change it; you may rub as long as ever you like outside of a bottle, but you could not turn ditch-water into wine; you may polish the exterior of your lanthorn, but it will not give you light until the candle burns within. The gardener may prune a crab tree, but all the pruning in the world won't into an apricot; so you may attend to all the moralities in the world, but these won't change your heart. Polish your shilling, but it will not change into gold; nor will your heart alter its own nature. What, then, is to be done? Christ is the great heart changer. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The Holy Spirit gives faith, and then through faith the mature is renewed. What sayest thou, sinner? Dost thou believe that Christ is able to save thee? Oh, trust him then to save thee, and if thou doest that thou art saved; thy nature is renewed, and the work of sanctification which shall begin to-night, shall go on until it shall come to its perfection, and thou, borne on angel's wings to heaven, "glad the summons to obey," shalt enter into felicity and holiness, and be redeemed with the saints in white, made spotless through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

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## **Storming The Battlements**

Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's. - Jeremiah 5:10

We have been talking very freely during this last week of "glorious victories," of "brilliant successes," of "sieges," and of "stormings." We little know what the dread reality is of which we boast. Could our eyes once behold the storming of a city, the sacking of a town, the pillage of the soldiery, the barbarous deeds of fury, when the blood is up and long delay has maddened their souls; could we see the fields saturated with blood, and soaked with gore; could we spend one hour amongst the corpses and the dying; or if we could only let the din of battle, and the noise of the guns reach our ears, we should not so much rejoice, if we had anything of fellow feeling for others as well as for ourselves. The death of an enemy is to me a cause of regret as well as the death of a friend. Are not *all* my brethren? and doth not Jesus tell me so? Are we not all made of one flesh? and hath not God "made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth?" Let us, then, when we hear of slaughtered enemies, and of thousands that have fallen, cease to rejoice in their death. It would betray a spirit utterly inconsistent with the Christian religion, more akin to Mohamedanism, or to the fierce doctrines of Budha, but not in the least to be brought into compatibility with the truths of the gospel of the glorious God. And yet with all that, far be it from me to check any gladness which this nation may experience, now that it hopes that the incubus of war may at last be removed. Clap your hands, O Britons! Rejoice, ye sons of Albion! there is hope that your swords may yet be sheathed, that your men shall not be mown down as grass before the scythe; that the desolation of your hearths shall now be staid; that the tyrant shall be humbled; and that peace shall be restored. With this view of it, let our hearts leap for joy, and let us sing unto God who hath gotten us the victory; rejoicing that now earth's wounds may be staunch'd; that her blood need not flow any longer; and that peace may be established,

we trust upon a lasting footing. This, I think, should be the Christian view of it. We should rejoice with the hope of better things; but we should lament over the awful death and terrible carnage; the extent of which we know not yet, but which history shall write amongst the black things. My earnest prayer is, that our brave soldiery may honor themselves as much by moderation in victory, as by endurance of privation, and valour in attack. I have nothing more to say upon that subject whatever, I am now about to turn to a different kind of siege, another kind of sacking of cities.

Jerusalem had sinned against God; she had rebelled against the most High, had set up for herself false gods, and bowed before them; and when God threatened her with chastisement, she built around herself strong battlements and bastions. She said "I am safe and secure. What though Jehovah hath gone away, I will trust in the gods of nations. Though the Temple is cast down, yet we will rely upon these bulwarks and strong fortifications that we have erected." "Ah!" says God, "Jerusalem, I will punish thee. Thou art my chosen one, therefore will I chastise thee. I will gather together mighty men, and will speak unto them; I will bid them come unto thee, and they shall visit thee for these things. My soul shall be avenged on such a nation as this." And he calls together the Chaldeans and Babylonians, and says to those fierce men who speak in uncouth language, "Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's." Thus God used wicked men to be his scourge to chastise a still more wicked nation, who were yet the objects of his affection and love.

This morning I shall take my text and address it in four ways, to different classes of men. First I think this may be spoken by God of *his church*. "Go ye up against her," says he to her enemies, "take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's." This may also be spoken to *many a Christian*. God often bids troubles and enemies go up against Christians to take away their battlements that are not the Lord's. This also may be spoken to *the young convert* who is trusting in himself, and has not yet been brought low. God says to doubts, and fears, and convictions and to the law, "Go ye up against him: make not a full end; take away his battlements; for they are not the Lord's." And this also shall be spoken at last to the *impertinent sinner*, who, putting his trust in his own strength,

hopes by joining hand with hand, to go unpunished: God shall say, at last, to his angels, "Go ye up against her." He will, however, in the last case, alter the next phrase - "make a full end; take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's."

I. First, then, I shall regard this text as spoken concerning THE CHURCH. God frequently says to the Church's enemies, "Go ye up against her, but make not a full end take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's." God's church is very fond of building walls which her God has not sanctioned. She is not content to trust in the arm of God, but she will add thereto some extraneous help which God utterly abhors. "Beautiful for situation - the joy of the whole earth - is Mount Zion, upon the sides of the north, the city of the great king. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, even so is God round about his people, from henceforth, for evermore." But his people are not content with God's being round about them, they seek some other protection. The church has very often gone to king Jareb for help, or to the world for aid; and then God has said to her enemies, "Go ye up against her, but make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's. She shall not have them. I am her battlement. She is to have none other."

1. The first I may mention is this. *The church of God has sometimes sought to make the government its battlements.* There was a church anciently in Rome, a holy and pious church of God, whose members worshipped and bowed down before the God of Israel. But a certain wily monarch called Constantine, who believed that should he turn Christian he should thus secure the empire more firmly to himself, and put down sundry other commanders who were helped by the priests in order to gain his own ends and promote his own honor, pretends to see a vision in the skies, and professes to become a Christian, makes himself the head of the church, and leader of the faithful. The church fell into his arms, and then state and church became allied. What was the consequence of the church of Rome becoming allied with the state; Why she has become a corrupt mass of impurity, such a disgrace to the world that the sooner the last vestige of her shall be swept away the better. This was because she built up bulwarks that are not the Lord's, and God has said to her enemies, "Go ye up upon her walls." Yea, her apostacy is now so great,

that doubtless, the Judge of all the earth shall make a "full end" of her, and the prophecy of the Apocalypse shall be fulfilled, "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning and famine, and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." There are true Protestant churches standing now that have made unholy alliances with governments. Christ testified, "My kingdom is not of this world," and yet they have crouched at the feet of kings and monarchs. They have obtained state endowments and grants; and so they have become high, and mighty, and honorable, and they laugh at those pure churches who will not buckle and commit fornication with the kings of the earth, but who stand out for the royal supremacy of the Saviour, and look only to Christ as the head of the Church. They apply to us the epithets of "schismatics," "dissenters," and such-like, but I believe that God shall yet say of every state-church, whether it be the Church of England, Ireland, Scotland or of anywhere else, "Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end;" for there are thousands of pious men in her midst, "take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's." Even now we see a stir throughout the world to take away these battlements. The holy and pious men in the Church of England have multiplied amazingly during the last few years. It is pleasing to see the great improvement in the Establishment. I think no class of Christians have made more speedy advances in reformation than they have. They have a stirring in their midst, and are saying, "Why should we be under the government any longer?" There are many clergymen who have said, "We have no wish whatever for this union: we would be glad to come away from all state control." I wonder they do not do it, and follow their convictions. They are saying, "take away her battlements, they are not the Lord's," and if they do not take them away themselves, we are advancing by slow degrees, and, by the aid of heaven we will take away their battlements for them one of these fine days, and they will wake and find that church-rates and tithes have ceased; that they must stand or fall themselves; that God's church is strong enough to stand herself without government. It will be a happy day for the Church of England - God bless her! I love her - when those battlements are taken down, when the last stone of state patronage is thrown down; when the unneeded help of kings and princes shall be refused. Then she will come out a glorious church - like a sheep from the washing. She will be the honor of our land,

and we who now stand aloof from her will be far more likely to fall into her bosom, for her articles are the very marrow of truth, and many of her sons are the excellent of the earth. Oh, angel, soon blow thy trumpet of war, and give the command! "Go ye up upon her walls, make not a full end." She is one of my churches; "take away her battlements; they are not the Lord's." He has nothing to do with such a battlement, he hates it altogether - state alliance is obnoxious to the God of Israel; and when kings shall become real nursing fathers, they will in another mode afford the gold of Sheba, and the free-will offering of their piety.

2. But there are other churches that are making battlements for themselves. These are to be found amongst us as well as other denominations. There are churches who make battlements out of *the wealth of their members*. It is a respectable congregation, a most respectable church, the members are most of them wealthy. They say, within themselves, "We are a strong and wealthy church; there is nothing can hurt us; we can stand fast." You will find wherever that idea possesses the mind, prayer-meetings will be ill attended; they do not think it necessary to pray much to keep up the cause. "If a five pound note is wanted," says a brother, "we can give it." They do not think it necessary to have a preacher to bring together the multitude, they are strong enough in themselves. They are a glorious corporation of quiet personages; they like to hear a drawing-room preacher; they would think it beneath their dignity to enjoy anything which the populace could understand; that would be a degradation to their high and honorable position. We know some churches now - it would be invidious to point the finger at them - where wealth and rank are reckoned to be the first thing. Now, we do love to have wealth and rank in our own midst, we always thank God when we have brought among us men who can do something for the cause of truth; we bless God when we see Zaecheus, who had abundance of gold and silver, giving some of his gifts to the poor of the Lord's family, we like to see the princes and kings bringing presents and bowing before the King of all the earth; but if any church bows before the golden calf, there will go forth the mandate, "Go ye up upon her walls; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's." And down the church will come God shall humble it; he will bring it down from its high position; he will say, "Though thou sittest on the rocks, and buildest thy

house amongst the stars of heaven; even thence will I pluck thee down and this right hand shall reach thee." God will not have his church relying on man and putting trust in princes. "Cursed shall be such-a-one," he says, "he shall be like a heath in the desert, he shall not see when good cometh; his leaf shall wither and he shall bring forth no fruit unto perfection."

3. There are some other churches relying upon *learning and erudition*. The learning of their ministers seems to be a great fort, bastion, and castle. They say for instance "What do these uneducated and unrefined preachers? Of what use are they. We like men of sound argument, men who give a large amount of biblical criticism, who can decide this, that, and the other." They rely upon their minister; he is their tower of strength; he is their all in all. He happens to be a learned man. They say, "What is the use for any one to oppose him? See the amount of his learning! Why his enemies would be cut in pieces, because he is so mighty and learned." Never let it be said that I have despised learning or true knowledge. Let us have as much as we can. We thank God when men of learning are brought into the church, when God renders them useful. But the church now-a-days is beginning to trust too much to learning, relying too much on philosophy, and upon the understanding of man instead of the Word of God. I do believe a large proportion of professing Christians have their faith in the word of man, and not in the word of God. They say, "Such-and-such a divine said so; that so-and-so beautifully explained that passage, and it must be right." But whatever church shall do this, God will say, "Go ye up upon her walls; make not a full end; take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's."

4. But I think that the worst battlement the churches have now, is an earthwork *of great and extreme caution*. It is held to be improper that certain obnoxious truths in the Bible should be preached; sundry reasons are given why they should be withheld. One is, because it tends to discourage men from coming to Christ. Another is, because certain persons will be offended on account of these rough edges of the gospel. Some would say, "O keep them back! You need not preach such and such a doctrine. Why preach distinguishing grace? Why divine sovereignty? Why election? why perseverance? why effectual calling? These are

calculated to offend the people, they cannot endure such truths." If you tell them about the love of Christ, and the vast mercy of God, and such like it will always be pleasing and satisfying; but you must never preach deep searching law-work, you must not be cutting at the heart and sending the lancet into the soul - that would be dangerous. Hence most churches are shielding themselves behind an ignominious bulwark of extreme caution. You never hear their ministers spoken against; they are quite safe behind the screen you will be very much puzzled to tell what are the real doctrinal views of our modern divines. I believe you will pick up in some poor humble chapel more doctrinal knowledge in half an hour, than in some of your larger chapels in half a century. God's church must be brought once more to rely upon the pure truth, upon the simple gospel, the unalloyed doctrines of the grace of God. O may this church never have any bulwark but the promises of God! May he be her strength and shield! May his Aegis be o'er our head and be our constant guard! May we never depart from the simplicity of the faith! And whether men hear, or whether they forbear, may we say -

"Should all the forms that men devise  
Assault my soul with treach'rous art  
I'll call them vanities and lies  
And bind the gospel to my heart."

II. We shall now address the text to THE CHRISTIAN - THE REAL CHILD OF GOD. The true believer, also, has a proneness to do as the church does - to build up sundry "battlements," which "are not the Lord's," and to put his hope, his confidence, and his affection in something else, besides the word of the God of Israel.

1. The first thing, dearly beloved brethren, whereof we often make a fortress wherein to hide, is - *the love of the creature*. The Christians' happiness should be in God, and God alone. He should be able to say, "All my springs are in thee. From thee, and thee alone, I ever draw my bliss." Christ in his person, his grace, his offices, his mercy, ought to be our only joy, and our glory should be that." Christ is all." But beloved, we are too much inclined by nature to hew out for ourselves broken cisterns that hold no water. There is a drop or two of comfort somewhere in the



bottom of the leaky pitcher, and until it is dried up, we do not believe it is broken at all. We trust in that sooner than in the fountain of living waters. Now whenever any of us foolishly make a battlement of the creature, God will say to afflictions - "Go ye up against her: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's." There is a father - he has a son. That son is as dear to him as his own flesh and blood. Let him take heed lest that child become too much his darling, lest he sets him in the place of the Most High God, and makes an idol of him for as sure as ever he does, God, by affliction, will say to the enemy, "Go up against him: take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord's." There is a husband. He coats upon his wife, as he should do. The Scripture telleth us, that a man cannot love his wife too much: "Husbands love you wives, as Christ also loves the Church" - and that is infinitely. Yet this man has proceeded to a foolish fondness and idolatry. God says, "Go ye up against him make not a full end; take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord's." We fix our love and affection on some dear friend of ours, and there is our hope and trust. God says, "What though ye take counsel together, ye have not taken counsel of me, and therefore, I will take away your trust. What though ye have walked in piety, ye have not walked with me as ye should. Go ye up against her, O death! go ye against her, O affliction! Take away that battlement, it is not the Lord's. Ye shall live on me - ye shall not feed, like Ephraim, on the wind. Ye shall lean on my arm; ye shall not trust in the staff of these broken reeds. Ye shall set your affections on things above, and not on things on earth. For I will blast the Joy of earth. I will send a blight upon your fair harvest. I will make the clouds obscure your sun, and you shall cry unto me, 'O God, thou art my trust, my sun, my hope, my all.'"

Oh, what a mercy it is that he does not make a "full end," beloved! It may seem to be an end sometimes, but it is not a *full* end. There may be an end of our hopes, an end of our faith, an end of our confidence at times, but it is not a full end. There is a little hope left; there is just a drop of oil in the cruse, there is the handful of meal in the barrel: it is not the full end yet. Though he has taken away many joys, and blasted many hopes, though many of our fair flowers have been blighted, he has left something. One star will twinkle in the sky, one faint lamp glimmers from yonder distant cottage - thou art not quite lost, O wanderer of the night.

He has not made a full end; but he may do, unless we come to him.

2. Once more. Many of us are too prone to make battlements out of our *past experience*, and to rely upon that instead of confiding in Jesus Christ. There is a sort of self-complacency which reviews the past, and says, "there I fought Apollyon there I climbed the hill Diffidently; there I waded through the Slough of Despond." The next thought is, "And what a fine fellow am I! I have done all this. Why, there is nothing can hurt me. No, no! If I have done all this, I can do everything else that is to be accomplished. Am I not a great soldier? Shall any make me afraid? No; I have confidence in my own prowess, for my own arm hath won many a victory. Surely I shall never be moved." Such a man cannot but think lightly of the present. He does not want communion with Christ every day. No, he lives on the past. He does not care to have further manifestations of Jesus. He does not want fresh evidence. He looks at the old musty evidences. He makes past grace the bread of his soul, instead of using it as a seasoning to sweeten his meal. What does God say whenever his people do not want him; but live on what they used to have of him, and are content with the love he once gave them? "Ah! I will take away your battlements." He calls out to doubts and fears - "Go ye up upon his walls; take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord's."

3. Then, again, we sometimes get trusting too much to *evidence, and good works*. Ralph Erskine did not say amiss when he remarked, "I have got more hurt by my good works than my bad ones." That seems something like Antinomianism, but it is true; we find it so by experience. "My bad works," said Erskine, "Always drove me to the Saviour for mercy; my good works often kept me from him, and I began to trust in myself." Is it not so with us? We often get a pleasing opinion of ourselves: we are preaching so many times a week, we attend so many prayer meetings; we are doing good in the Sabbath-school; we are valuable deacons; important members of the church; we are giving away so much in charity; and we say, "Surely I am a child of God - I must be. I am an heir of heaven. Look at me! See what robes I wear. Have I not indeed a righteousness about me that proves me to be a child of God?" Then we begin to trust in ourselves, and say, "Surely I cannot be moved, my mountain standeth firm and fast." Do you know what is the usual rule of

heaven when we thus boast? Why the command is given to the foe - "Go ye up against him, make not a full end: take away his battlements; for they are not the Lord's." And what is the consequence? Why, perhaps God suffers us to fall into sin, and down goes self-sufficiency. Many a Christian owes his falls to a presumptuous confidence in his graces. I conceive that outward sin is not more abhorred by one God than this most wicked sin of reliance on ourselves. May none of you ever learn your own weakness by reading a black book of your own backslidings. More to be desired is the other method of God when he sends the light of the Spirit into the heart, and develops our corruption; Satan comes roaring there, conscience begins calling out, "Man you are not perfect." All the corruptions burst up like a volcano that had slept for a little moment. We are taken into the dark chambers of imagery; we look at ourselves, and say, "Where are my battlements gone?" We go to the hill-top again, and see the battlements are all gone. We go by the side of the city - they are all departed. Then we go again to Christ, and say,

"I, the chief of sinners am,  
Jesus died for me."

"Nothing in my hands I bring;  
Simply to thy cross I cling."

Heaven smiles again, for now the heart is right, and the soul is in the most fitting position. Take care of your graces, Christians!

III. Now to bring the text to the young CONVERT, to the man in that state of our religious history which we call conversion to God. All men by nature build battlements for themselves to hide behind. Our father Adam gave us as a portion of our inheritance when we were born, high battlements, very high ones; and we are so fond of them that it is hard to part them. There are different lines of them; multiplied walls of fortifications; and when Christ comes to storm the heart, to carry the city by storm, to take it for himself, there is an over-turning of all these different walls which protect the city.

1. In the forefront of the city of Mansoul, frowns the wall of *carelessness* -

an erection of Satanic masonry. It is made of black granite, and mortal art cannot injure it. Bring law, like a hugh pickaxe, to break it: you cannot knock a single ship off. Fire your shells at it: send against it all the hot cannon balls that any of the ten great mortars of the commandments can fire, and you cannot move it in the least. Bring the great battering ram of powerful preaching against it; speak with a voice that might wake the dead and make almost Satan tremble: the man sits careless and hardened. At last a gracious God cries out - "Take away her battlements, they are not the Lord's." And at a glance down crumbles the battlement. The careless man becomes tender-hearted, the soul that was hard as iron has become soft as wax; the man who once could laugh at gospel warnings, and despise the preaching of the minister, now sits down and trembles at every word. The Lord is in the whirlwind: now he is in the fire, yea, he is in the still small voice. Everything is heard now, for God has taken away the first battlement - the battlement of a hard heart and a careless life. Some of you have got as far as that, God has taken that away. I know many of you by the tears that glisten on your cheeks - those precious diamonds of heaven - testify that you are not careless.

2. The first wall is surmounted, but the city is not yet taken: the Christian minister, under the hand of God, has to storm the next wall - that is the wall of *self-righteousness*. Many poor sermons get their brains knocked out in the attack; many of them are bayoneted by prejudice, in trying to storm that bastion. Thousands of good sermons are spent all in vain in trying to make it totter and shake, especially among you good moral people, children of pious parents, and godly relations. How strong that wall is with you! It does not seem to be made of separate stones, but it is all one great solid rock. *You guilty - you depraved - you fallen*. Yes, you believe it, and you pay a compliment to Scripture in so doing; but you do not *feel* it. You are the humble ones that stoop down - as needs you must, because you cannot sit upright; but you are not the humble ones who stoop willingly and feel that you are less than nothing. You say so; you call yourself a beggar, but you know that you are "rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," in your own opinion. How hard it is to storm this wall! it must be carried at the point of the bayonet of faithful warning; there is no taking it except by boldly climbing up with the shout of "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is

the gift of God." We have to use very rough words to get your self-righteousness down. Ay! and when we think it is nearly overthrown, it is soon piled up again in the night; the devil's sappers and miners are soon out to repair all the breaches. We thought we had carried you by storm, and proved you to be lost and ruined ones; but you take heart and say, "I am not so bad as I seem; I think I am yet very good." We have by the grace of God, to carry that wall before we can get at your hearts.

3. Thus the double rampart is passed, but another still opposes our progress - Christ's warriors know it by the name of *self-sufficiency*. "Ah!" says the man, "I see I am a lost and ruined sinner - my hope has deceived me; but I have another wall I can make myself better. I can build and repair." So he begins piling up the wall, and sits down behind it. He makes the covenant of grace into a covenant of works. He thinks faith is a kind of work, and that we are saved for it. He imagines we are to believe and repent, and that we thus earn salvation. He denies that faith and repentance are God's gifts only, and sits down behind his self-sufficiency, thinking, "I can do all that," Oh! blessed day when God directs his shots against that. I know I hugged that old idea a long while with my "cans," "cans," "cans;" but I found my "cans" would hold no water, and suffered all I put in to run out. There came an election sermon; but that did not please me. There came a law sermon, showing me my powerlessness; but I did not believe it; I thought it was the whim of some old experimental Christian, some dogma of ancient times that would not suit men now. Then there came another sermon, concerning death and sin; but I did not believe I was dead, for I knew I was alive enough, and could repent, and set myself right by-and-bye. Then there came a strong exhortation sermon; but I felt I could set my house in order when I liked, that I could do it next Tuesday week as well as I could do it at once. So did I continually trust in my self-sufficiency. At last, however, when God really brought me to myself, he sent one great shot which shivered it all, and, lo, I found myself utterly defenceless. I thought I was more than mighty angels, and could accomplish all things, then I found myself less than nothing. So also every truly convinced sinner finds that repentance and faith must come from God, that reliance must be placed alone on the Most High; and instead of looking to himself, he is forced to cast himself at the feet of sovereign mercy. I trust, with many of you, that two of the

walls have been broken down; and, now, may God in his grace break down the other, and say to his ministers, "Go ye up upon their walls: take away their battlements; for they are not the Lord's."

Perhaps there are some here who have had their battlements taken away lately, and they think God is about to destroy them. You think you must perish, that you have no goodness, no hope, no help - nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation. Now, hear ye the last words, "make *not* a full end." God *would* make a "full end" of you if he did not take away your battlements, for you would then die inside the walls of self-sufficiency; but he says, "make not a full end." Rely, then, upon his power and grace, for he will not destroy thee.

IV. Now, lastly, I must take this passage as it respects the UNGODLY AND THE SINNER AT LAST. How many there shall be at the last great day who will sit down very comfortably behind certain battlements that they have builded! There is one man - a monarch: "I am irresponsible," says he, "who shall ever bring anything to my charge? I am an autocrat: I give no account of my matters." Oh! he will find out at last, that God is Master of emperors, and Judge of Princes; when his battlements shall be taken away. Another says, "Cannot I do as I like with my own? What if God did make me, I shall not serve him. I shall follow my own will. I have in my own nature everything that is good, and I shall do as my nature dictates. I shall trust in that, and if there be a higher power, he will exonerate me, because I only followed my nature." But he will find his hopes to be visionary and his reason' to be foolish, when God shall say, "The soul that sinneth it shall die:" and when his thundering voice shall pronounce the sentence - "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire." Again, there is a company of men joined hand in hand, and they think they will resist the Eternal yea, they have a plan for subverting the kingdom of Christ. They say, "We are wise and mighty. We have fortified ourselves. We have made a covenant with death and a league with hell," Ah! they little think what will become of their battlements at the last great day, when they shall see them crumble and fall. With what fear and alarm will they then cry: "Rocks, hide us! Mountains, on us fall!" What will they do when God's wrath goes forth as a fire in the day of his fierce anger, when he shall melt their hopes and make them pass away, when he shall blast

all their joys and compel them to stand naked before his presence? Then I picture to myself, in the day of judgment, a band of men who have said on earth, "We will trust in God's mercy. We do not believe in these religions at all: God is merciful, and we will trust in mercy." Now, suppose - what is impossible, because their delusion will be dissipated at death - suppose them, in the dread day of account, to be crouching in the fortress of uncovenanted mercy. The judge opens his eyes upon their city, and says, "Angels! go ye up upon their walls; make a full end; take away their battlements, they are not the Lord's." Then the angels go, and demolish every stone of the bulwarks. They utterly cut off all hope of mercy. Each time they lay on the blow they cry "without holiness no man shall see the Lord! Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins! Ye are saved by grace through faith, but ye trusted in naked mercy, ye shall not have it but ye shall have naked justice and nothing else." Then there is another party who have built a castle of rites and ceremonies. On one side they have a huge piece of granite called "Baptism," and on another they have the "Lord's Supper;" and in the middle they have "Confirmation." They think what a glorious castle they have builded. "We be lost? - We paid tithes of mint, cummin, and anise. We paid tithes of all we possessed. We know that grace is in ceremonies." Out comes the Almighty, and with one word blasts their castle, simply saying "Take away their battlements, for they are not the Lord's." Ungodly men and women! what will ye do at last without battlements, without a rock to hide yourselves, without a wall behind which to conceal yourselves, when the storm of the Terrible One shall be as a blast against the wall? How shall ye stand when your hopes shall melt like airy dreams, like visions of the night that pass away when one awaketh? What will ye do when he despises your image, and when all your hopes are utterly gone?

The Christian man can go away with the reflection that *his battlements can never be taken away, because they are the Lord's*. We rely upon the electing love of Jehovah - Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; we trust in the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ, the Everlasting Son; we depend wholly upon the merits, blood, and righteousness of *Jehovah-Tsidkenu* - the Lord our righteousness; we are confiding in the Holy Spirit. We confess that we are nothing of ourselves - that it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. We do not

acknowledge one scrap of the creature in our salvation nor one atom of self; we rely entirely upon covenant love, upon covenant mercy, covenant oaths, covenant faithfulness, covenant immutability, and resting on these, we know our battlements cannot be taken away. Oh, Christian! with these walls surrounded thou makest laugh at all thy foes. Can the devil touch thee now? he shall only look upon thee and despair. Can doubts and fears take away our battlements? No: they stand fast and firm, and our poor fears are but as straws dashed against the wall by the wind; for, "though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful," and not all the temptations of a sinful world, or our own carnal hearts, can separate us from the Saviour's love. We have a city, the walls of which are mighty, the foundations of which are eternal; we have a God who says, "I the Lord do keep her, and do water her every moment, lest any hurt her, I will keep her day and night." Trust Christian, here, salvation shall God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Surrounded with these, thou mayest smile at all thy foes. But take heed you add nothing to them, for if ye do, the message will be, Take away the battlements, they are not the Lord's."

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## **The Story Of God's Mighty Acts**

We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. - Psalm 44:1

Perhaps there are no stories that stick by us so long as those which we hear in our childhood, those tales which are told us by our fathers, and in our nurseries. It is a sad reflection that too many of these stories are idle and vain, so that our minds in early infancy are tinctured with fables, and



inoculated with strange and lying narratives. Now, among the early Christians and the old believers in the far-off times, nursery tales were far different from what they are now, and the stories with which their children were amused were of a far different class from those which fascinated us in the days of our babyhood. No doubt, Abraham would talk to young children about the flood, and tell them how the waters overspread the earth, and how Noah alone was saved in the ark. The ancient Israelites, when they dwelt in their own land, would all of them tell their children about the Red Sea, and the plagues which God wrought in Egypt when he brought his people out of the house of bondage. Among the early Christians we know that it was the custom of parents to recount to their children everything concerning the life of Christ, the acts of the apostles, and the like interesting narratives. Nay, among our puritanic ancestors such were the stories that regaled their childhood. Sitting down by the fireside, before those old Dutch tiles with the quaint eccentric drawings upon them of the history of Christ, mothers would teach their children about Jesus walking on the water, or of his multiplying the loaves of bread, or of his marvellous transfiguration, or of the crucifixion of Jesus. Oh, how I would that the like were the tales of the present age, that the stories of our childhood would be again the stories of Christ, and that we would each of us believe that, after all, there can be nothing so interesting as that which is true, and nothing more striking than those stories which are written in sacred writ; nothing that can more truly move the heart of a child than the marvellous works of God which he did in the olden times. It seems that the psalmist who wrote this most musical ode had heard from his father, handed to him by tradition, the stories of the wondrous things which God had done in his day; and afterwards, this sweet singer in Israel taught it to his children, and so was one generation after another led to call God blessed, remembering his mighty acts.

Now, my dear friends, this morning I intend to recall to your minds some of the wondrous things which God has done in the olden time. My aim and object will be to excite your minds to seek after the like; that looking back upon what God has done, you may be induced to look forward with the eye of expectation, hoping that he will again stretch forth his potent hand and his holy arm, and repeat those mighty acts he performed in ancient days.

First, I shall speak of the marvellous stories which our fathers have told us, and which we have heard of the olden time; secondly, I shall mention some disadvantages under which these old stories labour with regard to the effect upon our minds; and, then, I shall draw the proper inferences from those marvellous things which we have heard, that the Lord did in the days of yore.

#### I. To begin then, with THE WONDERFUL STORIES WE HAVE HEARD OF THE LORD'S ANCIENT DOINGS.

We have heard that God has at times done very mighty acts. The plain everyday course of the world hath been disturbed with wonders at which men have been exceedingly amazed. God hath not always permitted his church to go on climbing by slow degrees to victory, but he hath been pleased at times to smite one terrible blow, and lay his enemies down upon the earth, and bid his children march over their prostrate bodies. Turn back then, to ancient records, and remember what God hath done. Will ye not remember what he did at the Red Sea, how he smote Egypt and all its chivalry, and covered Pharaoh's chariot and horse in the Red Sea? Have ye not heard tell how God smote Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites, because they withstood the progress of his people? Have ye not learned how he proved that his mercy endureth for ever, when he slew those great kings and cast the mighty ones down from their thrones? Have you not read, too, how God smote the children of Canaan, and drove out the inhabitants thereof, and gave the land to his people, to be a possession by lot for ever? Have you not heard how when the hosts of Jabin came against them, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera? The river of Kishon swept them away, "that ancient river, the river Kishon," and there was none of them left? Hath it not been told you, too, how by the hand of David, God smote the Philistines, and how by his right hand he smote the children of Ammon? Have you not heard how Midian was put to confusion, and the myriads of Arabia were scattered by Asa in the day of his faith? And have you not heard, too, how the Lord sent a blast upon the hosts of Sennacherib, so that in the morning they were all dead men? Tell - tell ye these, his wonders! Speak of them in your streets. Teach them to your children. Let them not be

forgotten, for the right hand of the Lord hath done marvellous things, his name is known in all the earth.

The wonders, however, which most concern us, are those of the Christian era; and surely these are not second to those under the Old Testament. Have you never read how God won to himself great renown on the day of Pentecost? Turn ye to this book of the record of the wonders of the Lord and read. Peter the fisherman stood up and preached in the name of the Lord his God. A multitude assembled and the Spirit of God fell upon them; and it came to pass that three thousand in one day were pricked in their heart by the hand of God, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. And know you not how the twelve apostles with the disciples went everywhere preaching the Word, and the idols fell from their thrones? The cities opened wide their gates, and the messengers of Christ walked through the streets and preached. It is true that at first they were driven hither and thither, and hunted like partridges upon the mountains: but do ye not remember how the Lord did get unto himself a victory, so that in a hundred years after the nailing of Christ to the cross, the gospel had been preached in every nation, and the isles of the sea had heard the sound thereof? And have you forgotten how the heathen were baptized, thousands at a time, in every river? What stream is there in Europe that cannot testify to the majesty of the gospel? What city is there in the land that cannot tell how God's truth has triumphed, and how the heathen has forsaken his false god, and bowed his knee to Jesus the crucified? The first spread of the gospel is a miracle never to be eclipsed. Whatever god may have done at the Red Sea, he hath done still more within a hundred years after the time when Christ first came into the world. It seemed as if a fire from heaven ran along the ground. Nothing could resist its force. The lightning shaft of truth shivered every pinnacle of the idol temple, and Jesus was worshipped from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.

This is one of the things we have heard of the olden times.

And have ye never heard of the mighty things which God did by preachers some hundreds of years from that date? Hath it not been told you concerning Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed, how, whenever he

preached, the church was thronged with attentive hearers; and there, standing and lifting up holy hands, he spake with a majesty unparalleled, the word of God in truth and righteousness; the people listening, hanging forward to catch every word, and anon breaking the silence with the clapping of their hands and the stamping of their feet; then silent again for a while, spell-bound by the mighty orator; and again carried away with enthusiasm, springing to their feet, clapping their hands, and shouting for joy again? Numberless were the conversions in his day. God was exceedingly magnified, for sinners were abundantly saved. And have your fathers never told you of the wondrous things that were done afterwards when the black darkness of superstition covered the earth, when Popery sat upon her throne and stretched her iron rod across the nations and shut the windows of heaven, and quenched the very stars of God and made thick darkness cover the people? Have ye never heard how Martin Luther arose and preached the gospel of the grace of God, and how the nations trembled, and the world heard the voice of God and lived? Have you not heard of Zwingle among the Swiss, and of Calvin in the city of Geneva, and of the mighty works that God did by them? Nay, as Britons have ye forgotten the mighty preacher of the truth - have your ears ceased to tingle with the wondrous tale of the preachers that Wickliffe sent forth into every market town and every hamlet of England, preaching the gospel of God? Oh, doth not history tell us that these men were like fire-brands in the midst of the dry stubble; that their voice was as the roaring of a lion, and their going forth like the springing of a young lion. Their glory was as the firstling of a bullock; they did push the nation before them, and as for the enemies, they said, "Destroy them." None could stand before them, for the Lord their God had girded them with might.

To come down a little nearer to our own times, truly our fathers have told us the wondrous things which God did in the days of Wesley and of Whitefield. The churches were all asleep. Irreligion was the rule of the day. The very streets seemed to run with iniquity, and the gutters were filled full with the iniquity of sin. Up rose Whitefield and Wesley, men whose hearts the Lord had touched, and they dared to preach the gospel of the grace of God. Suddenly, as in a moment, there was heard the rush as of wings, and the church said: "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and

as the doves to their windows?" They come! they come! numberless as the birds of heaven, with a rushing like mighty winds that are not to be withstood. Within a few years, from the preaching of these two men, England was permeated with evangelical truth. The Word of God was known in every town, and there was scarcely a hamlet into which the Methodists had not penetrated. In those days of the slow-coach, when Christianity seemed to have bought up the old wagons in which our fathers once travelled - where business runs with steam, there oftentimes religion creeps along with its belly on the earth, - we are astonished at these tales, and we think them wonders. Yet let us believe them; they come to us as substantial matters of history. And the wondrous things which God did in the olden times, by his grace he will yet do again. He that is mighty hath done great things and holy is his name.

There is a special feature to which I would call your attention with regard to the works of God in the olden time; they derive increasing interest and wonder from the fact that they were all sudden things. The old stagers in our churches believe that things must grow, gently, by degrees; we must go step by step onward. Concentrated action and continued labour, they say, will ultimately bring success. But the marvel is, all God's works have been sudden. When Peter stood up to preach, it did not take six weeks to convert the three thousand. They were converted at once and baptized that very day; they were that hour turned to God, and become as truly disciples of Christ as they could have been if their conversion had taken seventy years. So was it in the day of Martin Luther: it did not take Luther centuries to break through the thick darkness of Rome. God lit the candle and the candle burned, and there was the light in an instant - God works suddenly. If anyone could have stood in Wurtemberg, and have said: "Can Popery be made to quail, can the Vatican be made to shake?" The answer would have been: - "No; it will take at least a thousand years to do it. Popery, the great serpent, has so twisted itself about the nations, and bound them so fast in its coil, that they cannot be delivered except by a long process." "Not so," however, did God say. He smote the dragon sorely, and the nations went free; he cut the gates of brass, and broke in sunder the bars of iron, and the people were delivered in an hour. Freedom came not in the course of years, but in an instant. The people that walked in darkness saw a great light, and upon them that dwelt in

the land of the shadow of death, did the light shine. So was it in Whitefield's day. The rebuking of a slumbering church was not the work of ages; it was done at once. Have ye never heard of the great revival under Whitefield? Take as an instance that at Camslang. He was preaching in the church-yard to a great congregation, that could not get into any edifice; and while preaching, the power of God came upon the people, and one after another fell down as if they were smitten; and at least it was estimated that not less than three thousand persons were crying out at one time under the conviction of sin. He preached on, now thundering like Boanerges, and then comforting like Barnabas, and the work spread, and no tongue can tell the great things that God did under that one sermon of Whitefield. Not even the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost was equal to it.

So has it been in all revivals; God's work has been done suddenly. As with a clap of thunder has God descended from on high; not slowly, but on cherubim right royally doth he ride; on the wings of the mighty wind does he fly. Sudden has been the work; men could scarce believe it true, it was done in so short a space of time. Witness the great revival which is going on in and around Belfast. After carefully looking at the matter, and after seeing some trusty and well-beloved brother who lived in that neighborhood, I am convinced, notwithstanding what enemies may say, that it is a genuine work of grace, and that God is doing wonders there. A friend who called to see me yesterday, tells me that the lowest and vilest men, the most depraved females in Belfast, have been visited with this extraordinary epilepsy, as the world calls it; but with this strange rushing of the spirit, as we have it. Men who have been drunkards have suddenly felt an impulse compelling them to pray. They have resisted; they have sought to their cups in order to put it out; but when they have been swearing, seeking to quench the Spirit by their blasphemy, God has at last brought them on their knees, and they have been compelled to cry for mercy with piercing shrieks, and to agonize in prayer; and then after a time, the Evil one seems to have been cast out of them, and in a quiet, holy, happy frame of mind, they have made a profession of their faith in Christ, and have walked in his fear and love. Roman Catholics have been converted. I thought that an extraordinary thing; but they have been converted very frequently indeed in Ballymena and in Belfast. In fact, I

am told the priests are now selling small bottles of holy water for people to take, in order that they may be preserved from this desperate contagion of the Holy Spirit. This holy water is said to have such efficacy, that those who do not attend any of the meetings are not likely to be meddled with by the Holy Spirit - so the priests tell them. But if they go to the meetings, even this holy water cannot preserve them - they are as liable to fall prey to the Divine influence. I think they are just as likely to do so without as with it. All this has been brought about suddenly, and although we may expect to find some portion of natural excitement, yet I am persuaded it is in the main a real, spiritual, and abiding work. There is a little froth on the surface, but there is a deep running current that is not to be resisted, sweeping underneath, and carrying everything before it. At least there is something to awaken our interest, when we understand that in the small town of Ballymena on market day, the publicans have always taken one hundred pounds for whiskey, and now they cannot take a sovereign all day long in all the public houses. Men who were once drunkards now meet for prayer, and people after hearing one sermon will not go until the minister has preached another, and sometimes a third; and at last he is obliged to say: "You must go, I am exhausted." Then they will break up into groups in their streets and in their houses, crying out to God to let this mighty work spread, that sinners may be converted unto him. "Well," says one, "we cannot believe it." Very likely you cannot, but some of us can, for we have heard it with our ears, and our fathers have told us the mighty works that God did in their days, and we are prepared to believe that God can do the same works now.

I must here remark again, in all these old stories there is one very plain feature. Whenever God has done a mighty work it has been by some very insignificant instrument. When he slew Goliath it was by little David, who was but a ruddy youth. Lay not up the sword of Goliath - I always thought that a mistake of David - lay up, not Goliath's sword, but lay up the stone, and treasure up the sling in God's armory for ever. When God would slay Sisera, it was a woman that must do it with a hammer and a nail. God has done his mightiest works by the meanest instruments: that is a fact most true of all God's works - Peter the fisherman at Pentecost, Luther the humble monk at the Reformation, Whitefield the potboy of the Old Bell Inn at Gloucester in the time of the last century's revival; and so it must

be to the end. God works not by Pharaoh's horses or chariot, but he works by Moses' rod; he doth not his wonders with the whirlwind and the storm; he doth them by the still small voice, that the glory may be his and the honour all his own. Doth not this open a field of encouragement to you and to me? Why may not we be employed in doing some mighty work for God here? Moreover, we have noticed in all these stories of God's mighty works in the olden time, that wherever he has done any great thing it has been by someone who has had very great faith. I do verily believe at this moment that, if God willed it, every soul in this hall would be converted now. If God chose to put forth the operations of his own mighty Spirit, not the most obdurate heart would be able to stand against it. "He will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy." He will do as he pleases; none can stay his hand. "Well," says one, "but I do not expect to see any great things." Then, my dear friend, you will not be disappointed, for you will not see them; but those that expect them shall see them. Men of great faith do great things. It was Elijah's faith that slew the priests of Baal. If he had the little heart that some of you have, Baal's priests had still ruled over the people, and would never have been smitten with the sword. It was Elijah's faith that bade him say: "If the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him." And again: "Choose one bullock for yourselves, cut it in pieces, lay it on wood and put no fire under, call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of Jehovah." It was his noble faith that bade him say: "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape"; and he brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there - a holocaust to God. The reason why God's name was so magnified, was because Elijah's faith in God was so mighty and heroic. When the Pope sent his bull to Luther, Luther burned it. Standing up in the midst of the crowd with the blazing paper in his hand he said: "See here, this is the Pope's bull." What cared he for all the Popes that were ever in or out of hell? And when he went to Worms to meet the grand Diet, his followers said: "You are in danger, stand back." "No," said Luther, "if there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would not fear; I will go" - and into Worms he went, confident in the Lord his God. It was the same with Whitefield; he believed and he expected that God would do great things. When he went into his pulpit he believed that God would bless the people, and God did do so. Little faith may do little things, but great faith shall be greatly



honoured. O God! our fathers have told us this, that whenever they had great faith Thou hast always honoured it by doing mighty works.

I will detain you no longer on this point, except to make one observation. All the mighty works of God have been attended with great prayer, as well as with great faith. Have you ever heard of the commencement of the great American revival? A man unknown and obscure, laid it up in his heart to pray that God would bless his country. After praying and wrestling and making the soul-stirring enquiry: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" he hired a room, and put up an announcement that there would be a prayer-meeting held there at such-and-such an hour of the day. He went at the proper hour, and there was not a single person there; he began to pray, and prayed for half an hour alone. One came in at the end of the half-hour, and then two more, and I think he closed with six. The next week came around, and there might have been fifty dropped in at different times; at last the prayer-meeting grew to a hundred, then others began to start prayer-meetings; at last there was scarcely a street in New York that was without a prayer-meeting. Merchants found time to run in, in the middle of the day, to pray. The prayer-meetings became daily ones, lasting for about an hour; petitions and requests were sent up, these were simply asked and offered before God, and the answers came; and many were the happy hearts that stood up and testified that the prayer offered last week had been already fulfilled. Then it was when they were all earnest in prayer, suddenly the Spirit of God fell upon the people, and it was rumored that in a certain village a preacher had been preaching in thorough earnest, and there had been hundreds converted in a week. The matter spread into and through the Northern States - these revivals of religion became universal, and it has been sometimes said that a quarter of a million people were converted to God through the short space of two or three months. Now the same effect was produced in Ballymena and Belfast by the same means. The brother thought that it lay at his heart to pray, and he did pray; then he held a regular prayer-meeting; day after day they met together to entreat the blessing, and fire descended and the work was done. Sinners were converted, not by ones or twos but by hundreds and thousands, and the Lord's name was greatly magnified by the progress of his gospel. Beloved, I am only telling you facts. Make each of you your

own estimate of them if you please.

II. Agreeable to my division,, I have now to make a few observations upon THE DISADVANTAGES UNDER WHICH THESE OLD STORIES FREQUENTLY LABOUR. When people hear about what God used to do, one of the things they say is: "Oh, that was a very long while ago." They imagine that times have altered since then. Says one: "I can believe anything about the Reformation - the largest accounts that can possibly be given, I can take in." "And so could I concerning Whitefield and Wesley," says another, "all that is quite true, they did labour vigorously and successfully, but that was many years ago. Things were in a different state then from what they are now." Granted; but I want to know what the things have to do with it. I thought it was God that did it. Has God changed? Is he not an immutable God, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever? Does not that furnish an argument to prove that what God has done at one time he can do at another? Nay, I think I may push it a little further, and say what he has done once, is a prophecy of what he intends to do again - that the mighty works which have been accomplished in the olden time shall all be repeated, and the Lord's song shall be sung again in Zion, and he shall again be greatly glorified. Others among you say, "Oh, well I look upon these things as great prodigies - miracles. We are not to expect them every day." That is the very reason why we do not get them. If we had learnt to expect them, we should no doubt obtain them, but we put them up on the shelf, as being out of the common order of our moderate religion, as being mere curiosities of Scripture history. We imagine such things, however true, to be prodigies of providence; we cannot imagine them to be according to the ordinary working of his mighty power. I beseech you, my friends, abjure that idea, put it out of your mind. Whatever God has done in the way of converting sinners is to be looked upon as a precedent, for "his arm is not shortened that He cannot save, nor is his ear heavy that He cannot hear." If we are straitened at all, we are not straitened in ourselves, and with earnestness seek that God would restore to us the faith of the men of old, that we may richly enjoy his grace as in the days of old. Yet there is yet another disadvantage under which these old stories labour. The fact is, we have not seen them. Why, I may talk to you ever so long about revivals, but you won't believe them half so much, nor half so truly, as if one were to occur

in your very midst. If you saw it with your own eyes, then you would see the power of it. If you had lived in Whitefield's day, or had heard Grimshaw preach, you would believe anything. Grimshaw would preach twenty-four times a week: he would preach many times in the course of a sultry day, going from place on horseback. That man did preach. It seemed as if heaven would come down to earth to listen to him. He spoke with a real earnestness, with all the fire of zeal that ever burned in mortal breast, and the people trembled while they listened to him, and said, "Certainly this is the voice of God." It was the same with Whitefield. The people would seem to move to and fro while he spoke, even as the harvest field is moved with the wind. So mighty was the energy of God that after hearing such a sermon the hardest-hearted men would go away and say: "There must be something in it, I never heard the like." Can you not realize these as literal facts? Do they stand up in all their brightness before your eyes? Then I think the stories you have heard with your ears should have a true and proper effect upon your lives.

### III. This brings me in the third place to the PROPER INFERENCES THAT ARE TO BE DRAWN FROM THE OLD STORIES OF GOD'S MIGHTY DEEDS.

I would that I could speak with the fire of some of those men whose names I have mentioned. Pray for me, that the Spirit of God may rest upon me, that I may plead with you for a little time with all my might, seeking to exhort and stir you up, that you may get a like revival in your midst. My dear friends, the first effect which the reading of the history of God's mighty works should have upon us, is that of gratitude and praise. Have we nothing to sing about to-day? - then let us sing concerning days of yore. If we cannot sing to our well-beloved a song concerning what he is doing in our midst, let us, nevertheless, take down our harps from the willows, and sing an old song, and bless and praise his holy name for the things which he did to his ancient church, for the wonders which he wrought in Egypt, and in all the lands wherein he led his people, and from which he brought them out with a high hand and with an outstretched arm. When we have thus begun to praise God for what he has done, I think I may venture to impress upon you one other great duty. Let what God has done suggest to you the prayer that he would repeat the

like signs and wonders among us. Oh! men and brethren, what would this heart feel if I could but believe that there were some among you who would go home and pray for a revival of religion - men whose faith is large enough, and their love fiery enough to lead them from this moment to exercise unceasing intercessions that God would appear among us and do wondrous things here, as in the times of former generations. Why, look you here in this present assembly what objects there are for our compassion. Glancing round, I observe one and another whose history I may happen to know, but how many are there still unconverted - men who trembled and who know they have, but have shaken off their fears, and once more are daring their destiny, determined to be suicides to their own souls and to put away from them that grace which once seemed as if it were striving in their hearts. They are turning away from the gates of heaven, and running post-haste to the doors of hell; and will not you stretch out your hands to God to stop them in this desperate resolve? If in this congregation there were but one unconverted man and I could point him out and say: "There he sits, one soul that has never felt the love of God, and never has been moved to repentance," with what anxious curiosity would every eye regard him? I think out of thousands of Christians here, there is not one who would refuse to go home and pray for that solitary unconverted individual. But, oh! my brethren, it is not one that is in danger of hell fire; here are hundreds and thousands of our fellow-creatures.

Shall I give you yet another reason why you should pray? Hitherto all other means have been used without effect. God is my witness how often I have striven in this pulpit to be the means of the conversion of men. I have preached my very heart out. I could say no more than I have said, and I hope the secrecy of my chamber is a witness to the fact that I do not cease to feel when I cease to speak; but I have a heart to pray for those of you who are never affected, or who, if affected, still quench the Spirit of God. I have done my utmost. Will not you come to the help of the Lord against the mighty? Will not your prayers accomplish that which my preaching fails to do? Here they are; I commend them to you. Men and women whose hearts refuse to melt, whose stubborn knees will not bend; I give them up to you and ask you to pray for them. Carry their cases on your knees before God. Wife! never cease to pray for your unconverted

husband. Husband! never stop your supplication till you see your wife converted. And, O fathers and mothers! have you no unconverted children? have you not brought them here many and many a Sunday, and they remain just as they have been? You have sent them first to one chapel and then to another, and they are just what they were. The wrath of God abideth on them. Die they must; and should they die now, to a certainty you are aware that the flames of hell must engulf them. And do you refuse to pray for them? Hard hearts, brutish souls, if knowing Christ yourself ye will not pray for those who come of your own loins - your children according to the flesh.

Dear friends, we do not know what God may do for us if we do but pray for a blessing. Look at the movement we have already seen; we have witnessed Exeter Hall, St. Paul's Cathedral, and Westminster Abbey, crammed to the doors, but we have seen no effect as yet of all these mighty gatherings. Have we not tried to preach without trying to pray? It is not likely that the church has been putting forth its preaching hand but not its praying hand? O dear friends! let us agonize in prayer, and it shall come to pass that this Music Hall shall witness the sighs and groans of the penitent and the songs of the converted. It shall yet happen that this vast host shall not come and go as now it does, but little the better; but men shall go out of this hall, praising God and saying: - "It was good to be there; it was none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven." Thus much to stir you up to prayer.

Another inference we should draw is that all the stories we have heard should correct any self-dependence which may have crept into our treacherous hearts. Perhaps we as a congregation have begun to depend upon our numbers and so forth. We may have thought: "Surely God must bless us through the ministry." Now let the stories which our fathers have told us remind you, and remind me, that God saves not by many nor by few; that it is not in us to do this but God must do it all; it may be that some hidden preacher, whose name has never been known, will yet start up in this city of London and preach the Lord with greater power than bishops or ministers have ever know before. I will welcome him; God be with him; let him come from where he may; only let God speed him, and let the work be done. Mayhap, however, God intends to bless the agency

used in this place for your good and for your conversion. If so, I am thrice happy to think such should be the case. But place no dependence upon the instrument. No, when men laughed at us and mocked us most, God blessed us most; and now it is not a disreputable thing to attend the Music Hall. We are not so much despised as we once were, but I question whether we have so great a blessing as once we had. We would be willing to endure another pelting in the pillory, to go through another ordeal with every newspaper against us, and with every man hissing and abusing us, if God so pleases, if he will but give us a blessing. Only let him cast out of us any idea that our own bow and sword will get us victory. We shall never get a revival here unless we believe that it is the Lord, and the Lord alone, that can do it.

Having made this statement, I will endeavour to stir you up with confidence that the result may be obtained that I have pictured, and that the stories we have heard of the olden time, may become true in our day. Why should not every one of my hearers be converted? Is there any limitation in the Spirit of God? Why should not the feeblest minister become the means of salvation to thousands? Is God's arm shortened? My brethren, when I bid you pray that God would make the ministry quick and powerful, like a two-edged sword, for the salvation of sinners, I am not setting you a hard, much less an impossible, task. We have but to ask and to get. Before we call, God will answer; and while we are yet speaking he will hear. God alone can know what may come of this morning's sermon, if he chooses to bless it. From this moment you may pray more; from this moment God may bless the ministry more. From this hour other pulpits may become more full of life and vigour than before. From this same moment the Word of God may flow, and run, and rush, and get to itself an amazing and boundless victory. Only wrestle in prayer, meet together in your houses, go to your closets, be instant, be earnest in season and out of season, agonize for souls, and all that you have heard shall be forgotten in what you shall see; and all that others have told you shall be as nothing compared with what you shall hear with your ears and behold with your eyes in your own midst. Oh ye, to whom all this is as an idle tale, who love not God,, neither serve him, I beseech you stop and think for a moment. Oh, Spirit of God, rest on thy servant while a few sentences are uttered, and make them mighty. God has

striven with some of you. You have had your times of conviction. You are trying now, perhaps, to be infidels. You are trying to say now - "There is no hell - there is no hereafter." It will not do. You know there is a hell and all the laughter of those who seek to ruin your souls cannot make you believe that there is not. You sometimes try to think so, but you know that God is true. I do not argue with you now. Conscience tells you that God will punish you for sin. Depend upon it - you will find no happiness in trying to stifle God's Spirit. This is not the path to bliss, to quench those thoughts which would lead you to Christ. I beseech you, take off your hands from God's arm; resist not still His Spirit. Bow the knee and lay hold of Christ and believe on him. It will come to this yet. God the Holy Spirit will have you. I do trust that in answer to many prayers he intends to save you yet. Give way now, but oh, remember if you are successful in quenching the Spirit, your success will be the most awful disaster that can ever occur to you, for if the Spirit forsake you, you are lost. It may be that this is the last warning you will ever have. The conviction you are now trying to put down and stifle may be the last you will have, and the angel standing with the black seal and the wax may be now about to drop it upon your destiny, and say, "Let him alone. He chooses drunkenness - he chooses lust - let him have them;; and let him reap the wages in the everlasting fires of hell." Sinners, believe on the Lord Jesus: repent and be converted every one of you. I am bold to say what Peter did. Breaking through every bond of every kind that could bind my lip, I exhort you in God's name - Repent and escape from damnation. A few more months and years, and ye shall know what damnation means, except ye repent. Oh! fly to Christ while yet the lamp holds out and burns, and mercy is still preached to you. Grace is still presented; accept Christ, resist him no longer; come to him now. The gates of mercy are wide open too-day; come now, poor sinner, and have thy sins forgiven. When the old Romans used to attack a city, it was sometimes their custom to set up at the gate a white flag, and if the garrison surrendered while that white flag was there, their lives were spared. After that the black flag was put up, and then every man was put to the sword. The white flag is up to-day; perhaps tomorrow the black flag will be elevated upon the pole of the law; and then there is no repentance or salvation either in this world or in that which is to come. An old eastern conqueror when he came to a city used to light a brazier of coals, and, setting it high upon a pole he would, with sound of

trumpet proclaim, that if they surrendered while the lamp held out and burned he would have mercy upon them, but that when the coals were out he would storm the city, pull it stone from stone, sow it with salt, and put men, women, and children, to a bloody death. To-day the thunders of God bid you to take the like warning. There is your light, the lamp, the brazier of hot coals. Year after year the fire is dying out, nevertheless there is coal left. Even now the wind of death is trying to blow out the last live coal. Oh! sinner, turn while the lamp continues to blaze. Turn now, for when the last coal is dead thy repentance cannot avail thee. Thy everlasting yelling in torment cannot move the heart of God; thy groans and briny tears cannot move him to pity thee. To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation. Oh, to-day lay hold on Christ, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

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## **Strong Faith In A Faithful God**

I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.  
- Psalm 57:2

David was in the cave of Adullam. He had fled from Saul, his remorseless foe; and had found shelter in the clefts of the rock. In the beginning of this psalm he rings the alarm-bell, and very loud is the sound of it. "Be merciful unto me," and then the clapper hits the other side of the bell. "Be merciful unto me." He utters his misery again and again. "My soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge,



until these calamities be overpast." Thus he solaces himself by faith in his God. Faith is ever an active grace. Its activity, however, is first of all manifested in prayer. This precedes any action. "I will cry," says he, "unto God most high." You know how graciously he was preserved in the cave, even when Saul was close at his heels. Amongst the winding intricacies of those caverns he was enabled to conceal himself, though his enemy, with armed men, was close at hand. The Targum has a note upon this, which may or may not be true. It states that a spider spun its web over the door of that part of the cave where David was concealed. The legend is not unlike one told of another king at a later time. It may have been true of David, and it is quite as likely to be true of the other. If so, David would, in such a passage as this, have directed his thoughts to the little acts God had performed for him which had become great in their results. If God makes a spider spin a web to save his servant's life, David traces his deliverance not to the spider, but to the wonder-working Jehovah, and he saith, "I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me." It is delightful to see these exquisite prayers come from holy men in times of extreme distress. As the sick oyster makes the pearl, and not the healthy one, so doth it seem as if the child of God brought forth gems of prayer in affliction more pure, brilliant, and sparkling than any that he produces in times of joy and exultation.

Our text is capable of three meanings. To these three meanings we shall call your attention briefly. "Unto God who performeth all things for me,." First, there is infinite providence. As it stands, the words, "all things," you perceive, have been added by the translators; not that they were mistaken in so doing, for the unlimited expression, "God that performeth for me," allows them to supply the ellipsis without any violation of the sense. Secondly, there is inviolable faithfulness, as we know that David here referred to God's working out the fulfilment of the promises he had made. We sang just now of the sweet promise of his grace as the performing God. I think Dr. Watts borrowed that expression from this verse. Thirdly, there is a certainty of ultimate completeness. The original has for its root the word "finishing," and now working it out, it means a God that performeth or, as it were, perfects and accomplishes all things concerning me. Whatever there is in his promise or covenant that I may need, he will perfect for me. To begin with:—

I. THE MARVELLOUS PROVIDENCE. The text, as it stands, speaks of a service—"I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me." "All things," that is to say, in everything that I have to do, I am but an instrument in his hand; it is God that doeth it for me. The Christian has no right to have anything to do for which he cannot ask God's help. Nay, he should have no business which he could not leave with his God. It is his to work and to exercise prudence, but it is his to call in the aid of God to his work, and to leave the care of it with the God who careth for him. Any work in which he cannot ask divine cooperation, the care of which he cannot cast upon God, is unfit for him to be engaged in. Depend upon it, if I cannot say of the whole of my life, "God performeth all things for me," there is sin somewhere, evil lurks in the disposition thereof. If I am living in such a state that I cannot ask God to carry out for me the enterprises I have embarked in, and entirely rely on his providence for the issues, then what I cannot ask him to do for me, neither have I any right to do for myself. Let us think, therefore, of the whole of our ordinary life, and apply the text to it. Should we not each morning cry unto God to give us help through the day? Though we are not going out to preach; though we are not going up to the assembly for worship; though it is only our ordinary business, that ordinary business ought to be a consecrated thing. Opportunities for God's service should be sought in our common avocations; we may glorify God very much therein. On the other hand, our souls may suffer serious damage, we may do much mischief to the cause of Christ in the ordinary walk of any one day. It is for us, then, to begin the day with prayer—to continue all through the day in the same spirit, and to close the day by commending whatsoever we have done to that same Lord. Any success attending that day, if it be real success, is of God who gives it to us. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it," is a statement applicable to the whole of Christian life. It is vain to rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, for so he giveth his beloved sleep. If there be any true blessing, such blessing, as Jabez craved, when he said, "Oh! that thou wouldst bless me indeed," it must come from the God of heaven; it can come from nowhere else. Cry then, Christian, concerning your common life to God, say continually I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for you.

Peradventure at this hour you are troubled about some petty little thing, or you have been through the day exercised about some trivial matter. Do you not think we often suffer more from our little troubles than from our great ones? A thorn in the foot will irritate our temper, while the dislocation of a joint would reveal our fortitude. Often the man who would bear the loss of a fortune with the equanimity of Job will wince and fume under a paltry annoyance that might rather excite a smile than a groan. We are apt to be disquieted in vain. Does not this very much arise from our forgetting that God performeth all things for us? Do we not ignore the fact that our success in little things, our rightness in the minutinae of life, our comfort in these inconsiderable trifles depends upon his blessing? Know ye not that God can make the gnat and the fly to be a greater trouble to Egypt than the murrain, the thunder, or the storm? Little trials, if unblest—if unattended with the divine favour, may scourge you fearfully and betray you into much sin. Commend them to God then. And little blessings as you think them, if taken away from you, would soon involve very serious consequences. Thank God then for the little. Put the little into his hand; it is nothing to Jehovah to work in the little, for the great is little to him. There is not much difference, after all, in our littles and our greats to the infinite mind of our glorious God. Cast all on him who numbers the hairs of your head, and suffers not a sparrow to fall to the ground without his decree. Unto God cry about the little things, for he performeth all things for us. Do I speak to some who are contemplating a great change in life? Take not that step, my brother, without much careful waiting upon God; but if thou be persuaded that the change is one that hath the Master's approbation, fear not, for he performeth all things for thee. At this moment, thou hast many perplexities; thou mayest chafe thyself with anxiety, and make thyself foolish with shilly-shallying if thou dost sport with fancy, conjuring up bright dreams, and yielding to dark forebodings. There is many a knot we seek to untie, which were better cut with the sword of faith. We should end our difficulties by leaving them with him who knows the end from the beginning. Up to this moment you have been rightly led: you have the same guide. To this hour, he who sent the cloudy pillar has led you rightly through the devious track-ways of the wilderness; follow still, with a sure confidence that all is well. If ye keep close to him, he performeth all

things for you. Take your guidance from his Word, and, waiting upon him in prayer, you need not fear. Just now, mayhap, in addition to some exciting dilemma, you are surrounded with real trouble and distress. Will it not be well to cry unto God most high, who now, in the time of your strait and difficulty, will show himself again to you a God all-sufficient to his people in their times of need. He is always near. I do not know that he has said, "When thou walkest through the green pastures, I will be with thee, and when thy way lies hard by the river of the water of life, where lilies bloom, I will strengthen thee." I believe he will do so, but I do not remember such a promise; but "When thou goest through the rivers, I will be with thee," is a well-known word of his. If ever he is present, it shall be in trial: if he can be absent, it will certainly not be when his servants most want his aid. Rest ye in him then. But you say, "I can do so little in this time of difficulty." Do what thou canst, but leave the rest to him. If thou seest no way of escape, doth it follow that there is none? If thou seest no help, is it, therefore, to be inferred that help cannot come? Thy Lord and Saviour found no friend among the whole family of man, "Yet," said he, "could I not presently pray to my Father, and he would send me twelve legions of angels?" Were it needful for thy help, the squadrons of heaven would leave the glory-land to come to thy rescue—the least and poorest of the children of God as thou mayest be. He will perform for thee: be thou obedient, trustful, patient. 'Tis thine to obey, 'tis his to command, 'tis thine to perceive, 'tis his to perform. He will perform all things for you. Very likely amongst this audience, some are foolish enough to perplex themselves as to their future life, and forestall the time when they shall grow old and their vigour shall be abated. It is always unwise to anticipate our troubles. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Of all self-torture, that of importing future trouble into present account is, perhaps, the most insane. Do you tell me you cannot help looking into the future. Well, then, look and peer into the distance as far as your weak vision can reach, but do not breathe upon the telescope with your anxious breath and fancy you see clouds. On the contrary, just wipe your eyes with the soft kerchief of some gracious word of promise, and hold your breath while you gaze through that transparent medium. Use the eye-salve of faith. Then, whatever you discern of the future, you will also descry this. He rules and he overrules: he will make all things work together for good; he will surely bring you through. Goodness and

mercy shall follow you all the days of your life, and you shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. He it is who will perform all things for you. Oh! strange infatuation! You see your weakness, you see the temptations that will assail you, and the troubles that threaten you, and you are afraid. Look away from them all. This is no business of yours. Leave it in his hands, who will manage well, who will be sure to do the kindest and the best thing for you; be of good confidence and rest in peace. So shall it be even at life's close. He performeth all things for me. I have the boundary of life in the perspective, the almost certainty that I must die. Unless the Lord comes before my term expires, I must close these eyes, gather up these feet in the bed, breathe a last gasp, and yield my soul to him who gave it. Well, fear not; he helped me to live: he will help me to die. He has made me perform up to this moment my allotted task; yea, he has performed it for me, giving me his grace and working his providence with me. Shall I fear that he will desert me at the last? He performeth not some things, but all things, and he cannot omit this most important thing, which often makes me tremble. No; that must be included, for all things are mine—death as well as life. I leave my dying hour, then, with him, and never boding ill of it, I cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me. I want, dear brethren, just to leave this impression in your mind, that in the great business of life, whatever it is, while we do not sit still and fold our hands for lack of work, yet God worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. This we recognize distinctly; if anything be done aright, successfully, it is God that performs it, and we give him the glory. I want you to feel that, as the task is performed by him in all its details, so to the very close of your life, all shall be performed of his grace through you by himself, to his own honour and praise, world without end. The second run of thought which the text suggests is that of: -

II. INVIOLEABLE FAITHFULNESS. "Unto God that performeth all things for me." The God who made the promises has not left them as pictures, but has made them to fulfil them. It is God who is the actual worker of all that he declared in the covenant of grace should be wrought in and for his people.

Let us think of this as it pertains to our Redeemer's merits. "Unto God

that performeth all things for me." Meritoriously our Saviour-God has performed all things for us. Our sin has been all put away; he bore it all—every particle of it. The righteousness that wraps us is complete; he has woven it all from the top throughout. All that God's infinite, unflinching justice can ask of us has been performed for us by our Surety and our Covenant Head. I need not say I have to fight; my warfare is accomplished. I need not think I have to wash away my sins; as a believer, my sin is pardoned. All things are performed for me. Don't forget amidst your service for Christ what service Christ has rendered to you; do all things for Christ, but let the stimulating motive be that Christ has done all things for you. There is not even a little thing that is for you to do to complete the work of Christ. The temple he has builded wants not that you should find a single stone to make it perfect. The ransom he has paid does not wait until you add the last mite. It is all done. O soul, if Christ has completely redeemed thee and saved thee, rest thou on him, and cry to him, and if sin rebels within thee at this present moment, fly—though thy spirit be shut up as in the Cave Adullam—fly to him by faith—to him who hath done all things for thee as thy Representative and Substitute. After the same manner, all things in us that have ever been wrought there have been performed by God for us. The Holy Spirit has wrought every fraction of good that is within our souls. No one flower that God loves grows in the garden of our souls in the natural soil, self-sown. The first trembling desire after God came from his Spirit. The blade, though very tender would never have sprung up if Jesus had not sown the seed. Though the first rays of dawn were scarcely light, but only rendered the darkness visible, yet from the Sun of Righteousness they came; no light sprang from the natural darkness of our spirit. It could not be that life could be begotten of death, or that light could be the child of darkness. He began the work: he led us when we went tremblingly to the foot of the cross; he helped us when we followed him with staggering steps. The eyes with which we looked to Jesus and believed were opened by him. Christ was revealed to us not by our own discovery, nor by our own tuition, but the Spirit of God revealed the Son of God in our spirit. We looked and we were lightened. The vision and the enlightening were alike from him; he performed all for us. As I look back upon my own spiritual career, when I was seeking the Saviour, I am wonderfully struck with the way in which God performed everything for me; for if he had not, I do remember well

when I should have rendered it impossible for me to have been here to tell of the wonders of his grace. Hard pressed by Satan and by sin, my soul chose strangling rather than life. Had I known more of my own guiltiness, my heart would utterly have broken, and my life have failed. But wisdom and prudence were mingled with the teachings of God's law. He did not suffer the schoolmaster to be too severe, but stayed the soul beneath the dire remorse which conviction caused. I had never believed on him if he had not taught me to believe. To give up hope in self was desperate work, and then to find hope in Christ seemed more desperate still. It appeared to me easy enough to believe in Jesus while one was really believing in one's self, but when "despair" was written upon self, then one was too apt to transfer the despair even to the cross itself, and it appeared impossible to believe. But the Spirit wrought faith in me, and I believed. That is not my testimony only, but the testimony of all my brethren and sisters—in that hour of sore trouble it was God that performed all things for us. Since then and up to this moment, my brethren, if there has been any virtue; if there has been in you anything lovely and of good repute, to whom do you or can you attribute it? Must you not say, "Of him all my fruit was found"? You could not have done without him. If you have made any progress, if you have made any advance, or even if you think you have, believe me, your growth, advance, progress, have all been a mistake unless they have come entirely from him. There is no wealth for us but that which is digged in this mine. There is no strength for us but that which comes from the Omnipotent One himself. "Thou who performest all things for me," must be our cry up to this hour.

What a consolation it is that our God never changes! What he was yesterday he is today. What we find him today we shall find him for ever. Are you struggling against sin? Don't struggle in your own strength: it is God who performeth all things for you. Victories over sin are only sham victories unless we overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and through the power of divine grace. I am afraid of backsliding, but I think I am more afraid still of growing in sanctification apparently in my own strength. It is a dreadful thing for the grey hairs to appear here and there; but it is worse still for the hair to appear to be of raven hue when the man is weak. Only the indication is changed, but not the state itself. May we

have really what we think we have—no surface work, but deep, inner, spiritual life, wrought in us from God—yea, every good spiritual thing from him, who performeth all things for us; and, I say, whatever struggles may come, whatever vehement temptations assail, or whatever thunder-clouds may burst over your heads, you shall not be deserted, much less destroyed. In spiritual things it is God who performeth all things for you. Rest in him then. It is no work of yours to save your own soul; Christ is the Saviour. If he cannot save you, you certainly cannot save yourself. Why rest you your hopes where hopes never ought to be rested? Or let me change the question. Why do you fear where you never ought to have hoped? Instead of fearing that you cannot hold on, despair of holding on yourself, and never look in that direction again. But if the preservation be of God, where is the cause for perturbation with you? In him let your entire reliance be fixed. Cast the burden of your care on him who performeth all things for you. Lastly, the text in its moral, literal acceptance refers to:—

III. THE FINISHING STROKE OF A GRAND DESIGN. It really means, "I will cry unto God most high—unto God who perfecteth all things concerning me." David's career was charged with a great work; it was portentous with a high destiny. He had been anointed when a lad by Samuel. The Lord had said, "I have provided me a king among the sons of Jesse." And Samuel had taken "the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren." He was thus clearly ordained to be king over Israel. His way to the throne was by Adullam. Strange route! To be king over Israel and Judah, he must first become a rebel, a wandering vagabond, known as a chieftain of banditti, hunted about by Saul, the reigning monarch. He must seek refuge in the courts of his country's enemies, the Philistines—being without an earthly refuge, or place to lay his head. Strange way to a throne! Yet the son of David had to go that way, and all the sons of God. The younger brethren of the Crown Prince will have to find their way to their crown by much the same route. But is not this a brave thing? Though Adullam does not look like the way to Zion, where he shall be crowned, David is so confident that what God has said will come to pass, so sure that Samuel's anointing was no farce, but that he must be king, that he praises and blesses God that while he is making of him a houseless wanderer, he is perfecting that which concerns



him, and leading him by a sure path to the throne. Now, can I believe that he who promises that I shall be with him where he is, that I may behold his glory—he who gives the certainty to every believer that he shall enter into everlasting happiness—can I believe tonight that he is perfecting that for me—that the way by which he is taking me tonight, so dark, so gloomy, so full of dangers, is, nevertheless, the shortest way to heaven? that he is tonight using the quickest method to perfect that which concerns my soul? O faith! here is something for thee to do; and if thou canst perform it, thou shalt bring glory to God. The pith of it is this: that if God hath the keeping of us, he will perfect the keeping in the day of Christ. In the hand of Jesus all his people are, and in that hand they shall be for ever and ever. "None shall pluck them out of my hand," saith he. Their preservation shall be perfected. So, too, their sanctification. Every child of God is set apart by Christ, and in Christ, and the work of the Spirit has commenced which shall subdue sin, and extirpate the very roots of corruption; and this work shall be perfected; nay, is being perfected at this very moment. The dragon is being trodden down under foot. The seed of the woman within us is beginning to bruise the serpent's head, and shall clearly bruise it and crush it, even to the death within our soul. He is perfecting us in all things for himself. He has promised to bring us to glory. We have the earnest of that great glory in us now. The new life is there; all the elements of heaven are within us. Now he will perfect all these. He will not suffer one good thing that he has planted within us to die. It is a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. He will perfect all things for us. There is nothing that makes the saints complete but what God will give to us. There shall be lacking us no one trait of loveliness that is needful for the courtiers of the skies; no one virtue that is necessary in us. What a marvellous thing is a Christian! How mean; how noble! How abject; how august! How near to hell; how close to heaven! How fallen, yet lifted up! Able to do nothing; yet doing all things! Doing nothing; yet accomplishing all things; because herein it is that, in the man, and with the man, there is God, and he performeth all things for us. God, give us grace to look away entirely, evermore, from ourselves, and to depend entirely upon him.

Now is there a soul here that desires salvation? My text gives you the clue of comfort. Try—the thing is simple—try. Look to him: he performeth all

things for you. Everything that is wanted to save your soul, your heavenly Father will give you. Jesus, the Saviour, has wrought out all the sinner's wants. You have but to come and take what is already accomplished, and rest in it. "I cannot save myself," say you. You need not: there is One who performeth all things for you. "I am bruised and mangled by the fall," saith one, "as though every bone were broken." "I am incapable of a good thought; there is nothing good in me, or that can come from me." Soul! it is not what thou canst do, but what God can do—what Christ has done—that must be the ground of thy hope. Give thyself up unto God, most high—unto God, who performeth all things for thee, and thou shalt be blessed indeed. God send you away with his own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **Struggles Of Conscience**

How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin. - Job 13:23

There are many persons who long to have a deeper sense of their sinfulness, and then with a certain show of conscientious scruple, they make an excuse for the exercise of simple faith. That spiritual disease, which keeps sinners from Christ, assumes a different shape at different times. In Luther's day the precise evil under which men laboured, was this: they believed in being self-righteous, and so they supposed that they must have good works before they might trust in Christ. In our day the evil has taken another, and that a most extraordinary shape. Men have aimed at being self-righteous after quite a singular fashion; they think they must feel worse, and have a deeper conviction of sin before they may trust in Christ. Many hundreds do I meet with, who say they dare not

come to Christ and trust him with their souls, because they do not feel their need of him enough; they have not sufficient contrition for their sins they have not repented as fully as they have rebelled. Brethren, it is the same evil, from the same old germ of self-righteousness, but it has taken another and I think a more crafty shape. Satan has wormed himself into many hearts under the garb of an angel of light, and he has whispered to the sinner, "Repentance is a necessary virtue; stop until you have repented, and when you have sufficiently mortified yourself on account of sin, then you will be fit to come to Christ, and qualified to trust and rely on him." It is with that deadly evil I want to grapple this morning. I am persuaded it is far more common than some would think. And I think I know the reason of its great commonness. In the Puritanic age, which was noted certainly for its purity of doctrine, there was also a great deal of experimental preaching, and much of it was sound and healthy. But some of it was unscriptural, because it took for its standard what the Christian felt and not what the Saviour said; the inference from a believer's experience, rather than the message which goes before any belief. That excellent man, Mr. Rogers, of Deadham, who has written some useful works, and Mr. Sheppard, who wrote *The Sound Believer*, Mr. Flavel, and many others, give descriptions of what a sinner must be before he may come to Christ, which actually represent what a saint is, after he has come to Christ. These good brethren have taken their own experience; what they felt before they came into light, as the standard of what every other man ought to feel before he may put his trust in Christ and hope for mercy. There were some in the Puritanic times who protested against that theology, and insisted that sinners were to be bidden to come to Christ just as they were; not with any preparation either of feeling or of doing. At the present time there are large numbers of Calvinistic ministers who are afraid to give a free invitation to sinners; they always garble Christ's invitation thus: "If you are a sensible sinner you may come;" just as if stupid sinners might not come;" and then they describe what that feeling of need is, and give such a high description of it that their hearers say, "Well, I never felt like that," and they are afraid to venture for lack of the qualification. Mark you, the brethren speak truly in some respect. They describe what a sinner does feel before he comes, but they make a mistake in putting what a sinner does feel, as if that were what a sinner ought to feel. What the sinner feels, and what the sinner does, until he is

renewed by grace, are just the very opposite of what he ought. We always get wrong when we say one Christian's experience is to be measured by the Word of God; and what the sinner should feel is to be measured by what Christ commands him to feel, and not by what another sinner has felt. Comparing ourselves among ourselves, we are not wise. I do believe there are hundreds and thousands who remain in doubt and darkness, and go down to despair, because there is a description given and a preparation for Christ demanded, to which they cannot attain - a description indeed which is not true, because it is a description of what they feel after they have found Christ, and not what they must feel before they may come to him. Now, then, with all my might I come this morning to break down every barrier that keeps a soul from Christ; and, as God the Holy Spirit shall help me, to dash the battering ram of truth against every wall that has been built up, whether by doctrinal truth or experimental truth, that keeps the sinner from Christ, who desires to come and to be saved by him.

I shall attempt to address you in the following order this morning. First, a little by way of *consolation*; then, a little by way of *instruction*; a little more upon *discrimination* or caution; and in the last place, a few sentences by way of *exhortation*.

I. First, beloved, let me speak to you who are desiring to feel more and more your sins, and whose prayer is the prayer of the text, "Lord how many are mine iniquities and my sins, make me to know my transgression and my sin." Let me try to COMFORT YOU. It ought to give you much solace when you recollect that the best of men have prayed this prayer before you. The better a man is, the more anxious is he to know the worst of his case. The more a man gets rid of sin and the more he lives above his daily faults and errors, the more does he cry "Search me, O God, and know my heart; O try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Bad men do not want to know their badness; it is the good man, the man who has been renewed by grace, who is anxious to discover what is his disease, that he may have it healed. Ought it not then be to some ground of comfort to you, that your prayer is not a prayer which could come from the lips of the wicked, but a prayer which has constantly been offered by

the most advanced of saints, by those who have most grown in grace. Perhaps that is a reason why it would not be offered by you, who just now can scarcely hope to be a saint at all; yet it should be a matter of sweet rejoicing that your prayer cannot be an evil one, because the "Amens" of God's people, even those who are the fathers in our Israel, go up to God with it. I am sure my aged brothers and sisters in Christ now present, can say unanimously, "That has often been my prayer, 'Lord let me know my iniquity and my sin; teach me how vile I am, and lead me daily to Christ Jesus that my sins may be put away.'"

Let this reflection also comfort you - you never prayed like this years ago when you were a careless sinner. It was the last thing you would ever think of asking for; you did not want to know your guilt. No! you found pleasure in wickedness. Sin was a sweet morsel to you; you only wanted to be let alone that you might roll it under your tongue. If any told you of your evil, you would rather they let it alone. "Ah," said you, "what business is that of yours? no doubt I make some mistakes and am a little amiss, but I don't want to be told so." Why, the last meditation you would ever have thought of entertaining would have been a meditation upon your own criminality. When conscience did speak, you said, "Lay down, sir, be quiet!" When God's word came home sharp to you, you tried to blunt its edge - you did not want to feel it. Now, ought it not to be some comfort that you have had such a gracious change wrought in you, that you are now longing for the very feeling which at one time you could not endure? Surely, man, the Lord must have begun a good work in you, for you would not have such wishes and desires as these unless he had put his hand to the plough, and had begun to plough the barren, dry, hard soil of your heart.

Yet further, there is another reason why you should take comfort; it is very probable you do already feel your guilt, and what you are asking for you already have in measure realized. It often happens that a man has the grace which he seeks for, and does not know he has it, because he makes a mistake as to what he should feel when he has the blessing. He has already got the boon which he asks God to give him. Let me just put it in another shape. If you are sorry because you cannot be sorry enough on account of sin, why you are already sorry. If you grieve because you

cannot grieve enough, why you do grieve already. If it is a cause of repentance to you that your heart is very hard and that you cannot repent, why you do repent. My dear hearer, let me assure you for your comfort, that when you go down on your knees and say "Lord, I groan before thee, because I cannot groan; I cannot feel; Lord help me to feel;" why, you do feel, and you have got the repentance that you are asking for. At least you have got the first degree of it; you have got the mustard seed of repentance in tiny grain. Let it alone, it will grow; foster it with prayer and it will become a tree. The very grace which you are asking of God is speaking in your very prayer. It is repentance which asks God that I may repent more. It is a broken heart which asks God to break it. That is not a hard heart which says, "Lord I have a hard heart; soften my heart." It is a soft heart already. That is not a dead soul which says, "Lord I am dead, quicken me." Why, you are quickened. That man is not dumb who says, "Lord I am dumb; make me speak." Why, he speaks already; and that man who says, "Lord I cannot feel," why, he feels already. He is a sensible sinner already. So that you are just the man that Christ calls to him. This experience of yours, which you think is just the opposite of what it ought to be, is just what it should be. Oh, be comforted in this respect. But sit not down in it; be comforted enough to make you run to Jesus now, - just as you are. I take thee, sinner, to be just the man the minister is always seeking after. When we say that Christ came that there might be drink given to the thirsty, you are just the man we mean - you are thirsty. "No," you say, "I don't feel that I am thirsty, I only wish I did." Why, that wish to feel thirsty is your thirst. You are exactly the man; you are far nearer the character than if you said "I do thirst, I have the qualification;" then, I should be afraid you had not got it." But, because you think you have it not, it is all the clearer proof that you have this qualification, if indeed there be any qualification. When I say, "Come unto Christ all ye that labour and are heavy laden;" and you say, "Oh, I don't feel heavy laden enough," why, you are the very man the text means. And when I say, "Whosoever will, let him come," and you say, "I wish I were more willing, I will to be willing," why you are the man. It is only one of Satan's quibbles - a bit of hell's infernal logic to drive you from Christ. Be a match for Satan now, this once and say "Thou lying fiend, thou tellest me I do not feel my need of a Saviour enough. I know I feel my need; and, inasmuch as I long to feel it I do feel it. Christ bids me come to him, and I

will come - now, this morning. I will trust my soul, just as it is, in the hands of him whose body hung upon the tree. Sink or swim, here I am resting on him, and clinging to him as the rock of my salvation."

Take then, these words of comfort.

II. I must now go on to my second point, and give a few words of INSTRUCTION.

And so, my hearer, you anxiously long to know how many are your iniquities and your sins; and your prayer is, "Lord, make me to know my transgression and my sin." Let me instruct thee, then as to how God will answer your prayers. God hath more than one way of answering the same prayer; and though the ways are diverse, they are all equally useful and efficacious. It sometimes happens that God answers this prayer by allowing a man to fall into more and more gross sin. At our last church meeting, a brother, in giving his experience of how he was brought to God, said he could not feel his guilt, his heart was very hard; till it happened one day he was tempted to the utterance of an untruth, and no sooner had he uttered it than he felt what a despicable creature he was to tell a lie to another. So that one sin led him to see the deceitfulness and vileness of his own heart; and from that day he never had to complain that he did not feel his guilt enough, but, on the contrary, he felt too guilty to come to Christ. I believe many a man, who has been educated morally, who has been trained up in such a way that he has never fallen into gross sin, finds it very difficult to say, "Lord, I feel myself to be a sinner." He knows he is a sinner, and he knows it as a matter of fact, but he cannot altogether feel it. And I have known men who have often envied the harlot and the drunkard, because, say they, "Had I been like them, I should feel more bitterly my sin, and should feel I was one of those whom Jesus came to save." It may be, though I could hope it may not be so, that God may suffer thee to fall into sin. God grant it may never be so; but if thou ever shouldst, thou wilt then have cause to say, "Lord, I am vile; now mine eyes sees myself; I abhor myself in dust and ashes, because of this my great sin." Or possibly, you may not actually fall into sin, but be taken to the very verge of it. Did you ever know what it was on a sudden to be overtaken by some fiery temptation, to feel as if the strong

hand of Satan had gripped you about the loins, and was pulling on, you knew not whither, nor why, nor how, but against your will, to the very verge of the precipice of some tremendous sin, and you went on and on, till, on a sudden, just as you were about to take a dive into sin, your eyes were opened, and you said, "Great God, how came I here, - I, who hate this iniquity? - I, who abhor it? - and yet my feet had almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped." Then in the recoil you say, "Great God, hold thou me up, for if thou dost not hold me up, I fall indeed." Then you discover that there is inbred sin in your heart only lacking opportunity to spring out; that your soul is like a magazine of gunpowder, only needing the spark, and there shall come a terrible catastrophe; that you are full of sin, grim with iniquity and evil devices, and that it only wants opportunity and strong temptation to destroy you body and soul, and that for ever. It happens sometimes that this is the way God answers this prayer.

A second method by which the Lord answers this prayer is by opening the eyes of the soul; not so much by providence, as by the mysterious agency of the Holy Spirit. Let me tell thee, my hearer, if thou shouldst ever have thine eyes opened to see thy guilt, thou wilt find it to be the most awful sight that thou hast ever beheld. I have had as much experience of this as any man among you. For five years as a child there was nothing before my eyes but my guilt; thought I do not hesitate to say that those who observed my life would not have seen any extraordinary sin, yet as I looked upon myself, there was not a day in which I did not commit such gross, such outrageous sins against God, that often and often have I wished I had never been born. I know John Bunyan's experience when he said he wished he had been a frog, or a toad, rather than a man, so guilty did he feel himself to be. You know how it is with yourselves. It is as when a housewife cleans her chamber, she looks, and there is no dust; the air is clear, and all her furniture is shining brightly. But there is a chink in the window shutter, a ray of light creeps in, and you see the dust dancing up and down, thousands of grains, in the sunbeam. It is all over the room the same, but she cannot see it only where the sunbeam comes. It is just so with us; God sends a ray of divine light into the heart, and then we see how vile and full of iniquity it is. I trust, my hearer, that your prayer may not be answered as it was in my case, by terrible conviction, awful



dreams, nights of misery, and days of pain. Take care; you are praying a tremendous prayer when you are asking God to show you your wickedness. Better for you to modify your prayer, and put it thus, - "Lord, let me know enough of my iniquity to bring me to Christ; not so much as to keep me from him, not so much as to drive me to despair; but only enough to be divorced from all trust in myself, and to be led to trust in Christ alone." Otherwise, Like Moses, you may be constrained to cry out in a paroxysm of agony, "O Lord, kill me I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight, and let me not see my wretchedness."

Still, however, the practical question recurs, and you ask me again, "Tell me how I can feel the need of my Saviour." The first advice I give you is this: Particularise your sins. Do not say "I am a sinner;" it means nothing; everybody says that. But say this, "Am I a liar? Am I a thief? Am I a drunkard? Have I had unchaste thoughts? Have I committed unclean acts? Have I in my soul often rebelled against God? Am I often angry without a cause? Have I a bad tempter? Am I covetous? Do I love this world better than the world to come? Do I neglect prayer? Do I neglect the great salvation?" Put the yourself much more readily than by taking yourself in the gross as being a sinner. I have heard of a hypocritical old Monk who used to whine out, while he whipped his back as softly as he could, "Lord, I am a great sinner, as big a sinner as Judas;" and when some one said, "Yes that you are - you are like Judas, a vile old hypocrite," then he would say, "No I am not." Then he would go on again, "I am a great sinner." Some one would say, "You are a great sinner, you broke the first commandment;" and then he would say, "No I have not." Then when he would go on and say, "I am a great sinner," some one would say, "Yes, you have broken the second commandment," and he would say, "No I have not;" and the same with the third and the fourth, and so on right through. So it came to pass he had kept the whole ten according to his own account, and yet he went on crying he was a great sinner. The man was a hypocrite, for if he had not broken the commandments, how could he be a sinner at all? You will find it better not to dwell on your sins in the mass, but to pen them, count them over, and look at them individually, one by one.

Then let me advise you next to hear a personal ministry. Sit not where the

preacher preaches to you in the plural number, but where he deals with you as a man alone, by yourself. Seek out a preacher like Rowland Hill, of whom it is said that if you sat in the back seat in the gallery, you always had a notion that Mr. Hill meant you; or, that if you sat in the doorway where he could not see you, yet you were quite convinced he must know you were there, and that he was preaching right at you. I wonder indeed, if men ever could feel their sins under some ministers - genteel ministers, intellectual, respectable, who never speak to their hearers as if they did anything wrong. I say of these gentlemen what Hugh Latimer said of many ministers in his day, that they are more fit to dance a morris-dance than to deal with the souls of men. I believe there are some this day more fit to deliver smart lectures and bring out pleasing things to soothe carnal minds, than to preach the Word of God to sinners. We want the like of John the Baptist back again, and Boanerges; we want men like Baxter to preach,

"As though they might not preach again,  
As dying men to dying men."

We want men like John Berride, who have pulled the velvet out of their mouths years ago and cannot speak fine words - men that hit hard, that draw the bow and pull the arrow to its very head, and send it right home, taking deadly aim at the heart and the conscience of men, ploughing deep, hitting at the private lusts and at the open sins, not generalising but particularizing, not preaching to men in the mass but to men in the detail, not to the mob and the crowd, but to each man separately and individually. Grow not offended with the minister if he come home too close to you; remember that is his duty. And if the whip goes right round you, and stings you, thank Cod for it, be glad of it. Let me, if I sit under a ministry, sit under a man who uses the knife with me sometimes, a man who will not spare me, a man who will not flatter me. If there should be flattery anywhere, let it not be at any rate in the pulpit. He who deals with men's souls should deal with them very plain; the pulpit is not the place for fine words, when we have to deal with the solemnities of eternity. Take that advice, then, and listen to a personal, home-smiting ministry.

Next to that, if thou wouldst know thy sins, study much the law of God let the twentieth chapter of Exodus be often before your eyes, and take with it as a commentary, Christ's sermon, and Christ's speech when he said, "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart." Understand that God's commandments mean not only what they say in words, but that they touch the thought, the heart, the imagination. Think of that sentence of David, "Thy commandments are exceeding broad." And thus, I think, thou wilt soon come to detect the heinousness of thy sin, and the blackness of thy guilt. And if thou wouldst know still more, spend a little time in contemplating the fatal end of thy sin, shouldst thou die impenitent. Dare to look downward to that fire which must be thy eternal doom, unless Jesus Christ save thee. Be wise, sinner, and look at the harvest which thou shalt surely reap if thou sowest tares; sometimes let these words ring in thy ears, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Open thy ears and listen to the end of this text - "Where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Let such a passage as this be chewed over in your soul, "The wicked shall be cast into hell with all the nations that forget God." These solemn thoughts may help you. Such books as Allaine's *Alarm*, Baxter's *Call to the Uncoverted*, Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, may have a good effect on your mind, in helping you to see the greatness of your guilt, by making you meditate upon the greatness of its punishment. But if thou wouldst have a better, and more effectual way still, I give thee one other piece of advice. Spend much of your time in thinking upon the agonies of Christ, for the guilt of thy sin is never so clearly seen anywhere as in the fact that it slew the Saviour. Think what an evil thing that must be which cost Christ his life, in order to save thee. Consider, I say, poor soul, how black must be that vileness which could only be washed out with his precious blood! how grievous those offences which could not be expiated unless his body were nailed to the tree, his side pierced, and unless he died in fever and in thirst, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Go thou to the garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives, and see the Saviour in his bloody sweat! Go thou to Pilate's hall, and see him in his shameful accusations! Go thou to the hall of Herod's praetorian guard, and see there how the mighty men set Christ at nought! And go then, last of all, to Calvary, and see that spectacle of woe, and if these do not show thee the blackness of thy sin, then nothing

can. If the death of Christ do not teach thee thy need of a Saviour, then what remedy remains for a heart so hard, for a soul so blind as thine?

Thus have I given you words of instruction. Forget them not; put them into practice. Be ye not hearers only, but doers of the word.

III. And now, very briefly indeed, a few sentences by way of DISCRIMINATION.

Thou art longing, my hearer, to know thy great guilt and to feel thy need of Jesus. Take care that thou dost discriminate between the work of the Spirit and the work of the devil. It is the work of the Spirit to make thee feel thy self a sinner, but it never was his work to make thee feel that Christ could forget thee. It is the work of the Spirit to make thee repent of sin; but it is not the work of the Spirit to make thee despair of pardon; that is the devil's work. You know Satan always works by trying to counterfeit the work of the Spirit. He did so in the land of Egypt. Moses stretched out his rod and turned all the waters into blood. Out came Jannes and Jambres and by their cunning and sleight of hand, they have a large piece of water brought, and they turn that into blood. Then Moses fills the land with frogs - the ungracious sorcerers have a space cleared and they fill that with frogs; thus they opposed the work of God by pretender to do the same work; so will the devil do with thee. "Ah!" says God the Holy Spirit; "Sinner thou canst not save thyself" "Ah!" says the devil, "and he cannot save thee either." "Ah!" says God the Holy Spirit "thou hast a hard heart, only Christ can soften it." "Ah!" says the devil, "but he wont soften it unless thou dost soften it first." "Ah!" says God the Spirit "thou hast no qualification, thou art naked, and ruined, and undone." "Yes," says the devil, "it is no use your trusting Christ, because you have no good in you, and you cannot hope to be saved." "Ah!" says God the Spirit, "thou dost not feel thy sin; thou art hard to repent, because of thy hardness." "Ah!" says the devil, "and because thou art so hard-hearted Christ cannot save thee." Now do learn to distinguish between the one and the other. When a poor penitent sometimes thinks of destroying himself, do you think that is the Spirit's work? "It is the devil's work; 'he was a murderer from the beginning.'" One sinner says, "I am so guilty, I am sure I can never be pardoned." Is that the Spirit's

teaching - that lie? Oh! that comes from the father of lies. Take heed, whenever you read a biography like that of John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, as you read, say, "that is the Spirit's work, Lord send me that" - "that is the devil's work, Lord keep me from that." Do not be desirous to have the devil tearing your soul to pieces; the less you have to do with him the better, and if the Holy Ghost keeps Satan from you, bless him for it. Do not wait to have the terrors and horrors that some have, but come to Christ just as you are. You do not want those terrors and horrors, they are of little use. Let me remind you of another thing; I ask you not to acquaint yourself with your sins so as to hope to know them all, because you cannot number them with man's poor arithmetic. Young, in his *Night Thoughts*, says, "God hides from all eyes but his own that desperate sight - a human heart." If you were to know only the tenth part of how bad you have been you would be driven mad. You who have been the most moral, the most excellent in character, if all the past sins of your heart could stand before you in their black colours, and you could see them in their true light, you would be in hell, for indeed it is hell to discover the sinfulness of sin. Do you mean to say that you would go down on your knees and ask God to send you to hell, or drive you mad? Be not so foolish; say, "Lord, let me know my guilt enough to drive me to Christ; but do not gratify my curiosity by letting me know more; no, give me enough to make me feel that I must trust Christ, or else be lost, and I shall be well content if thou givest me that, though thou deniest me more.

Once again, my dear hearers, listen to this next caution, for it is very important. Take care thou dost not try to make a righteousness out of thy feelings. If you say, "I may not go to Christ till I feel my need of him" - that is clear legality; you are on the wrong track altogether, because Christ does not want you to feel your need in order to prepare for him; he wants no preparation, and anything which you think to be a preparation is a mistake. You are to come just as you are - today, as you are, now - not as you will be, but just now, as you now are. I do not say to you, "Go home and seek God in prayer; I say come to Christ now at this very hour;" you will never be in a better state than you are now, for you were never in a worse state, and that is the fittest state in which to come to Christ. He that is very sick is just in the right state to have a doctor; he that is filthy and begrimed is just in the right state to be washed; he that is naked is

just in the right state to be clothed. That is your case. But you say, "I do not feel my need." Just so: your not feeling it proves you to have the greater need. You cannot trust your feelings, because you say, you have not any. Why, if God were to hear your prayers and make you feel your need, you would begin to trust in your feelings, and would be led to say, "I trust Christ because I feel my need;" that would be just saying, "I trust myself." All these things are but Popery in disguise; all this preaching to sinners that they must feel this and feel that before they trust in Jesus, is just self-righteousness in another shape. I know our Calvinistic brethren will not like this sermon - I cannot help that - for I do not hesitate to say, that Phariseism is mixed with Hyper-Calvinism more than with any other sect in the world. And I do solemnly declare that this preaching to the prejudice and feelings of what they call sensible sinners, is nothing more than self-righteousness taking a most cunning and crafty shape, for it is telling the sinner that he must be something before he comes to Christ. Whereas the gospel is preached not to sensible sinners, or sinners with any other qualifying adjective, but to sinners *as sinners*, to sinners *just as they are*; it is not to sinners as repentant sinners, but to sinners *as sinners*, be their state what it may, and their feelings whatever they may. Oh, sinners, Mercy's door is wide open flung to you this morning; let not Satan push you back saying, "You are not fit;" *You are not fit!* that is to say, you have all the fitness Christ wants, and that is none at all. Come to him just as you are. "Oh," says one, "but you know that hymn of Hart's?"

'All the fitness he requireth  
Is to feel your need of him.'

I cannot get that." Let me counsel you then, never to quote part of a hymn, or part of a text: quote it all: -

"All the fitness he requireth  
Is to feel your need of him;  
This he gives you,  
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

Come and ask him to give it to you, and believe he will give it you. Do believe my Master is longing to save you: trust him, act on that better,

sinner, and you shall be saved, or else I will be lost with you. Do but believe that my Master has got a loving heart, and that he is able to forgive, and that he has a mighty arm and is able to deliver you. Do him the honour now of not measuring his corn with your bushel. "For his ways are not your ways, neither are his thoughts your thoughts. "As high as the heaven is above the earth, so high are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts." To-day he says to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Sinner, if thou believest and art not saved, why God's Word is a lie, and God is not true. And wilt thou ever dream that to be the case? No, sinner; close in now with the proclamation of this gospel, and say, -

"I'll to the gracious King approach,  
Whose sceptre mercy gives;  
Perhaps he may command my touch,  
And then the suppliant lives.

"Perhaps he will admit my plea,  
Perhaps will hear my prayer;  
But if I perish, I will pray,  
And perish only there."

Thou canst not perish trusting in Christ. Though thou hast no good works and no good feelings, yet if thine arms are round the cross, and if the blood be sprinkled on thy brow, when the destroying angel shall pass through the world, he shall pass over thee. Thus is it written: - "When I see the blood, I will pass over you;" - not "when I see your feelings about the blood," - not "when I see your faith in the blood," but "when I see the blood, I will pass over you." learn to discriminate between a sense of sin which would humble thee, and a sense of sin which would only make thee proud; when thou hast come to say, "I have felt my sin enough, and therefore I am fit to come to Christ," it is nothing but pride dressed in the garb of humility.

Let me tell the one more thing before I have done with thee on this point. Anything which keeps thee from Christ is sin, whatever though thou hast which keeps thee from trusting Christ to-day is a sinful thought; and

every hour thou continuest as thou art, as unbeliever in Christ, the wrath of God abideth on thee. Now why shouldst thou be asking for a thing which may help to keep thee from Christ all the longer? You know now that you have nothing good in you; why not trust in Christ for all? But you say, "I must first of all feel more." Poor soul, if you were to feel more acutely, you would find it all the harder to trust Christ. I prayed to God that he would show me my guilt; I little thought how he would answer me. Why I was such a fool that I would not come to Christ unless the devil dragged me there. I said, "Christ cannot have died for me, because I have not felt miserable enough." God heard me, and, believe me, I will never pray that prayer again; for when I began to feel my guilt, then I said, "I am too wicked to be saved," and I found the very thing I had been asking for was a curse upon me, and not a blessing. So, if thou shouldst feel what thou askest to feel, it might be the cause of thy condemnation. Be wise, therefore, and listen to my Master's voice; stay not to gather together the fuller's soap, and the refiner's fire, but come thou and wash now in Jordan, and be clean; come, and stop not till thy heart be turned up with the plough, and thy soul hewn down with the axe. Come as thou art to him now. What man! wilt not thou come to Christ, when he has said, "Whosoever will, let him come?" Wilt thou not trust him when he looks down and smiles on thee and says, "Trust me, I will never deceive thee?" What, canst thou not say to him, "Master, I am very guilty, but thou hast said, 'Come now, and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' Lord, this mercy is too great, but I believe it, I take thee at thy word; thou hast said, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will forgive your iniquities." Lord, I come to thee, I know not how it is that thou canst forgive such an one as I am, but I believe thou canst not lie, and on that promise do I rest my soul. I know thou hast said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" Lord, I cannot understand how there can be power in the blood to wash away all manner of blasphemy, but thou hast said it, and believe it. It is thy business to make thy own word true, not mine, and thou hast said, "Whosoever will, let him come;" Lord, I am not worthy, but I do will to come, or if I do not will, yet I will to will, therefore will I come, just as I am, I know I have no good feeling to recommend myself to thee, but then thou dost not want good feeling in me, thou wilt give me all I want.



Oh my dear hearers, I feel so glad I have such a gospel as this to preach to you. If you have not received it, I pray God the Holy Ghost to send it home to you. It is so simple that men cannot believe it is true. If I were to bid you take off your shoes and run from here to York and you would be saved, why you would do it at once, and the road to York would be thronged; but when it is nothing but the soul-quickenings words, "Believe and live," it is too easy for your proud hearts to do. If I told you to go and earn a thousand pounds and endow a church with it, and you would be saved, you would think the price very cheap; but when I say, "Trust Christ and be saved," you cannot do that - it is too simple. Ah, madness of the human heart! strange, strange, besotted sin, when God makes the path plain, men will not run in it for that very reason; and when he sets the door wide open, that is the very reason they will not come in. They say if the door was half a-jar and they had to push it open, they would come in. God has made the gospel too plain and too simple to suit proud hearts. May God soften proud hearts, and make you receive the Saviour.

IV. Now I come to, my last point, which I have already trenched upon, and that is by way of EXHORTATION.

Poor sinner, seven years ago you were saying just what you are saying now, and when seven more years shall have some, you will be saying just the same. Seven years ago you said, "I would trust Christ, but I do not feel as I ought." Do you feel any better now? And when another seven years are come you will feel just as you do now. You will say, "I would come, but I do not feel fit - I do not feel my need enough." Ay, and it will keep going on for ever, till you go down to the pit of hell, saying as you go down, "I do not feel my need enough," and then the lie will be detected, and you will say, "It never said in the Word of God, 'I might come to Christ when I felt my need enough,' but it said 'Whosoever will, let him come.' I would not come as I was, therefore I am justly cast away." Hear me, sinner, when I bid thee come to Jesus as thou art, and give thee these reasons for it.

In the first place, it is a very great sin not to feel your guilt, and not to mourn over it, but then it is one of the sins that Jesus Christ atoned for on the tree. When his heart was pierced,; he paid the ransomed price for

your hard heart. Oh! sinner, if Christ had only died that we might be forgiven of other sins except our hard hearts, we should never go to heaven for we have, all of us, even we who have believed, committed that great sin of being impenitent before him. If He had not died to wash that sin away as well as every other sin, where should we be? The fact that thou canst not weep, nor sorrow as thou wouldst, is an addition to thy guilt; but did not Christ wash you from that sin, black though it be? Come to him, he is able to save you even from this.

Again, come to Jesus, because it is He only who can give you that heart for which you seek. If men were not to come to Christ till they feel as they should feel, they would never come at all. I will freely confess that if I had never trusted Christ until I felt I might have trusted him, I never could I trusted him, and could not trust him now. For there are times with me when after I have preached the gospel as plainly as I could, I have returned to my own chamber and my heart has been dead, lumpish, lying like a log within my spirit, and I have thought then if I could not come to Christ as a sinner, I could not come anyhow else. If I found in the text one word before that word "sinner" - "Jesus Christ came into the world to save" - and then an adjective, and then "sinners," I should be lost. It is just because the text says, "sinners" just as they are, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," that I can hope he came to save me. If it had said Jesus Christ came into the world to save soft-hearted sinners, I should have said, "Lord, my heart is like adamant." If it had said Jesus came into the world to save weeping sinners, I should have said, "Lord, though I press my eyelids, I could not force a tear." If it had said Jesus came into the world to save sinners that felt their need of him, I should say, "I do not feel the need of it; I know I do need thee, but I do not feel it." But, Lord, thou camest to save sinners, and I am saved. I trust thou camest to save me, and here I am, sink or swim, I rest on thee. If I perish, I will perish trusting thee; and if I must be lost, in thy hands it shall be; for in my own hands I will not be in any respect, or in any degree whatever. I come to that cross, and under that cross I stand; "thy perfect righteousness my beauty is - my glorious dress."

Come sinner to Christ, because he can soften thine heart, and thou canst never soften it thyself. He is exalted on high to give repentance and

remission of sins; not merely the remission, but the repentance too. He gives his grace not merely to those who seek it, but even to those that seek it not. He gives repentance not to those who repent themselves, but to those who cannot repent. And to those who are saying, "Lord I would, but cannot feel;" "I would, but cannot weep;" I say Christ is just the Saviour for you - a Christ that begins at the beginning and does not want you to begin - a Christ that shall go to the end, and won't want you to finish - a Christ that does not ask you to say Alpha, and then he will be the Omega: but he will be both Alpha and Omega. Christ, that is the beginning and the end, the first and the last. The plain gospel is just this, "Look unto *me*, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth." "But, Lord, I cannot see anything." "Look unto *me*." "But, Lord, I do not feel." "Look unto *me*." "But, Lord, I cannot say I feel my need." "Look unto *me*, not unto thyself; all this is looking to thyself." "But, Lord, I feel sometimes that I could do anything, but a week passes, and then I am hard of heart." "Look unto *me*." "But Lord, I have often tried." "Try no more, look unto *me*." "Oh, but Lord thou knowest." "Yes. I know all things. I know everything, all thine iniquity and thy sins, but look unto *me*." "Oh, but often, Lord, when I have heard a sermon I feel impressed, yet it is like the morning cloud and the early dew; it passes away." "Look unto *me*," not to thy feelings or thy impressions, look unto *me*." "Well," says one, "but will that really save me, just looking to Christ?" My dear soul, if that does not save thee I am not saved. The only way in which I have been saved, and the only gospel I can find in the Bible is looking to Christ. "But if I go on in sin," says one. But you cannot go on in sin; your looking to Christ will cure you that habit of sin. "But if my heart remains hard?" It cannot remain hard; you will find that looking to Christ will keep you from having a hard heart. It is just as we sing in the penitential hymn of gratitude, -

"Dissolved by thy mercy I fall to the ground,  
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

You will never feel as you ought until you do not feel what you ought; you will never come to Christ until you do not feel that you can come. Come as thou art; come in all thy poverty, and stubbornness, and hardness, just as you are now, take Christ to be your all in all. Sound your songs ye angels, smite your golden harps ye redeemed ones; there are sinners

snatched from hell to-day; there are men who have trusted Christ this morning. Though they scarcely know it, their sins are all forgiven; their feet are on the rock; the new song shall soon be in their mouth, and their goings shall be stablished. Farewell, ye brethren, turn to God this morning; God shall keep you, and you shall see his face in glory everlasting. Amen.

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## Substitution

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. - 2 Corinthians 5:21

A book is the expression of the thoughts of the writer. The book of nature is an expression of the thoughts of God. We have God's terrible thoughts in the thunder and lightning; God's loving thoughts in the sunshine and the balmy breeze; God's bounteous, prudent, careful thoughts in the waving harvest and in the ripening meadow. We have God's brilliant thoughts in the wondrous scenes which are beheld from mountain-top and valley; and we have God's most sweet and pleasant thoughts of beauty in the little flowers that blossom at our feet. But you will remark that God has in nature given most prominence to those thoughts that needed to have the pre-eminence. He hath not given us broad acres overspread with *flowers*, for they were not needed in such abundance, but he hath spread the fields with corn, that thus the absolute necessities of life might be supplied. We needed most of the thoughts of his providence; and he hath quickened our industry, so that God's providential care may be read as we ride along the roads on every side. Now, God's book of grace is just like his book of nature; it is his thoughts written out. This great book, the Bible, this most precious volume is the heart of God made legible; it is the gold of God's love beaten out into leaf gold, so that therewith our thoughts might be plated, and we also might have golden, good, and holy thoughts concerning him. And you will mark that, as in nature so in grace, the most necessary is the most prominent. I see in God's word a rich abundance of flowers of glorious eloquence; often I find a prophet marshalling his words like armies for might, and like kings for majesty. But far more frequently I read simple declarations of the truth. I see here and there a brilliant thought of beauty, but I find whole fields of plain didactic doctrine, which is food for the soul; and I find whole chapters full of Christ which is divine manna, whereon the soul doth feed. I see starry words to make the Scriptures brilliant, sweet thoughts to make them fair, great thoughts to make them impressive,

terrible thoughts to make them awful; but necessary thoughts, instructive thoughts, saving thoughts, are far more frequent, because far more necessary. Here and there a bed of flowers, but broad acres of living corn of the gospel of the grace of God. You must excuse me, then, if I very frequently dwell on the whole topic of salvation. But last Sabbath I brought you one shock of this wheat, in the fashion of Christ's promise, which saith, "He that calleth on the name of the Lord, shall be saved." And then I sought to show how men might be saved. I bring you now another shock cut down in the self same field, teaching you the great philosophy of salvation, the hidden mystery, the great secret, the wonderful discovery which is brought to light by the gospel; how God is just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. Let us read the text again, and then at once proceed to discuss it. I intend to do to-day, as I did last Sunday; I shall just be as simple as ever I can; and I shall not attempt one single flight of eloquence or oratory, even if I am capable of it; but just go along the ground, so that every simple soul may be able to understand. - "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

*Note the doctrine; the use of it; the enjoyment of it.*

I. First, THE DOCTRINE. There are three persons mentioned here. "*He (that is God) hath made him (that is Christ) who knew no sin, to be sin for us (sinners) that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*" Before we can understand the plan of salvation, it is necessary for us to know something about the three persons, and, certainly, unless we understand them in some measure, salvation is to us impossible.

1. Here is first, GOD. Let every man know what God is. God is a very different Being from what some of you suppose. The God of heaven and of earth - the Jehovah of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob, Creator and Preserver, the God of Holy Scripture, and the God of all grace, is not the God that some men make unto themselves, and worship. There be men in this so called Christian land, who worship a god who is no more God than Venus or Bacchus! A god made after their own hearts; a god not fashioned out of stone or wood, but fashioned from their own thoughts, out of baser stuff than ever heathen attempted to make a god of. The God

of Scripture has three great attributes, and they are all three implied in the text.

The God of Scripture is a *sovereign* God; that is, he is a God who has absolute authority, and absolute power to do exactly as he pleaseth. Over the head of God there is no law, upon his arm there is no necessity; he knoweth no rule but his own free and mighty will. And though he cannot be unjust, and cannot do anything but good, yet is his nature absolutely free; for goodness is the freedom of God's nature. God is not to be controlled by the will of man, nor the desires of man, nor by fate in which the superstitious believe; he is God, doing as he willeth in the armies of heaven, and in this lower world. He is a God, too, who giveth no account of his matters; he makes his creatures just what he chooses to make them, and does with them just as he wills. And if any of them resent his acts, he saith unto them: - "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" God is good; but God is sovereign, absolute, knowing, nothing that can control him. The monarchy of this world, is no constitutional and limited monarchy; it is not tyrannical, but it is absolutely in the hands of an all-wise God. But mark, it is in no hands but his; no cherubim, not seraphim can assist God in the dispensation of his government.

"He sits on no precarious throne,  
Nor borrows leave to be."

He is the God of predestination; the God upon whose absolute will, the hinge of fate doth turn.

"Chain'd to his throne, a volume lies,  
With all the fates of men,  
With every angel's form and size,  
Drawn by th' eternal pen.  
His providence unfolds the book,  
And makes his councils shine,  
Each opening leaf, and every stroke,

Fulfils some deep design."

This is the God of the Bible, this is the God whom we adore; no weak, pusillanimous God, who is controlled by the will of men, who cannot steer the bark of providence; but a God unalterable, infinite, unerring. This is the God we worship; a God as infinitely above his creatures, as the highest thought an fly; and higher still than that.

But, again, the God who is here mentioned, is *a God of infinite justice*. That he is a sovereign God, I prove from the words, that he *hath made* Christ to be sin. He could not have done it if he had not been sovereign. That he is a just God, I infer from my text; seeing that the way of salvation is a great plan of satisfying justice. And we now declare that the God of Holy Scripture is a God of inflexible justice; he is not the God whom some of you adore. You adore a god who winks at great sins; you believe in a god who calls your crimes peccadilloes and little faults. Some of you worship a god who does not punish sin; but who is so weakly merciful, and so mercilessly weak, that he passes by transgression and iniquity, and never enacts a punishment. You believe in a god, who, if man sins, does not demand punishment for his offense. You think that a few good works of your own will pacify him, that he is so weak a ruler, that a few good words uttered before him in prayer will win sufficient merit to reverse the sentence, if, indeed, you think he ever passes a sentence at all. Your god is no God; he is as much a false god as the god of the Greeks, or of ancient Nineveh. The God of Scripture is one who is inflexibly severe in justice, and will by no means clear the guilty. "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power; and will not at all acquit the wicked." The God of Scripture is a ruler, who, when his subjects rebel, marks their crime, and never forgives them until he has punished it, either upon them, or upon their substitute. He is not like the god of some sectaries, who believe in a god without an atonement, with only some little show upon the cross, which was not, as they say, a real suffering of sin. Their god, the god of the Socinian, just blots out sin without exacting any punishment; he is not the God of the Scriptures. The God of the Bible is as severe as if he were unmerciful, and as just as if he were not gracious; and yet he is as gracious and as merciful as if he were not just - yea, more so.



And one more thought here concerning God, or else we cannot establish our discourse upon a sure basis. The God who is here means, is a *God of grace*: think not that I am now contradicting myself. The God who is inflexibly severe, and never pardons sin without punishment, is yet a God of illimitable love. Although as a Ruler he will chastise, yet, as the Father-God, he loveth to bestow his blessing. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." God is love in its highest degree. He is love rendered more than love. Love is not God, but God is love; he is full of grace, he is the plenitude of mercy, - he delighteth in mercy. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his thoughts of love above our thoughts of despair; and his ways of grace above our ways of fear. This God, in whom these three great attributes harmonize - illimitable sovereignty, inflexible justice, and unfathomable grace - these three make up the main attributes of the one God of heaven and earth whom Christians worship. It is this God, before whom we must appear; it is he who has made Christ to be sin for us, though he knew no sin.

2. Thus, we have brought the first person before you. The second person of our text is *the Son of God* - Christ, who knew no sin. He is the Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds: begotten, not made; being of the same substance with the Father, co-equal, co-eternal, and co-existent. Is the Father Almighty? So is the Son Almighty. Is the Father infinite? So is the Son infinite. He is very God of very God: having a dignity not inferior to the Father, but being equal to him in every respect, - God over all, blessed for evermore. Jesus Christ also, is the son of Mary, a man like unto ourselves. A man subject to all the infirmities of human nature, except the infirmities of sin; a man of suffering and of woe; of pain and trouble; of anxiety and fear; of trouble and of doubt; of temptation and of trial; of weakness and death. He is a man just as we are, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Now, the person we wish to introduce to you, is this complex being, God and man. Not God humanized, not man Deified; but God, purely, essentially God; man, purely man; man, not more than man; God, not less than God, - the two standing in a sacred union together, the God-Man. Of this God in Christ, our text says that he knew no sin. It does not say that he did not sin; that

we know: but it says more than that; he did not *know* sin; he knew not what sin was. He saw it in others, but he did not know it by experience. He was a perfect stranger to it. It is not barely said, that he did not take sin into his heart; but, he did not know it. It was no acquaintance of his. He was the acquaintance of grief; but he was not the acquaintance of sin. He knew no sin of any kind, - no sin of thought, no sin of birth, no original, no actual transgression; no sin of lip, or of hand, did ever Christ commit. He was pure, perfect, spotless; like his own divinity, without spot or blemish, or any such thing. This gracious person, is he who is spoken of in the text. He was a person utterly incapable of committing anything that was wrong. It has been asserted lately, by some ill-judged one, that Christ was capable of sin. I think it was Irving who started some such idea, that if Christ was not capable of sinning, he could not have been capable of virtue. "For," say they, "if a man must necessarily be good, there is no virtue in his goodness." Out upon their ridiculous nonsense. Is not God necessarily good? And who dares deny that God is virtuous? Are not the glorified spirits in heaven necessarily pure? and yet are they not holy because of that very necessity? Are not the angels, now that they are confirmed, necessarily faultless? and shall any one dare to deny angelic virtue! The thing is not true; it needs no freedom in order to create virtue. Freedom and virtue generally go together; but necessity and virtue are as much brother and sister as freedom and virtue. Jesus Christ was not capable of sin; it was as utterly impossible for Christ to have sinned, as for fire to drown or for water to burn. I suppose both of these things might be possible under some peculiar circumstances; but it never could have been possible for Christ to have committed or to have endured the shadow of the commission of a sin. He did not know it. He knew no sin.

3. Now I have to introduce the third person. We will not go far for him. The third person is *the sinner*. And where is he? Will you turn your eyes within you, and look for him, each one of you? He is not very far from you. He has been a drunkard: he has committed drunkenness and revelling and such like, and we know that the man who committeth these things, hath no inheritance in the kingdom of God. There is another, he has taken God's name in vain; he has sometimes, in his hot passion, asked God to do most fearful things against his limbs and against his soul. Ah! there is the sinner. Where is he? I hear that man, with tearful

eye, and with sobbing voice exclaim, "Sir, he is here!" Methinks I see some woman here, in the midst of us, some of us have accused her perhaps, and she standeth alone trembling, and saith not a word for herself. Oh! that the Master might say, "neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." I believe, I must believe, that somewhere amongst these many thousands, I hear some palpitating heart, and that heart, as it beats so hurriedly crieth, "Sin, sin, sin, wrath, wrath, wrath, how can I get deliverance?" Ah! thou art the man, a born rebel; born into the world a sinner, thou hast added to thy native guilt thine own transgressions. Thou hast broken the commandments of God, thou hast despised God's love, thou hast trampled on his grace, thou hast gone on hitherto until now, the arrow of the Lord is drinking up thy spirit; God hath made thee tremble, he hath made thee to confess thy guilt and thy transgression. Hear me, then, if your convictions are the work of God's Spirit, you are the person intended in the text, when it says, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we " - that is you - "might be made the righteousness of God in him."

I have introduced *the persons*, and now I must introduce you to *a scene* of a great exchange which is made according to the text. The third person whom we introduce is *the prisoner at the bar*. As a sinner, God, has called him before him, he is about to be tried for life or death. God is gracious, and he desires to save him; God is just, and he must punish him. The sinner is to be tried; if there be a verdict of guilty brought in against him, how will the two conflicting attributes work in God's mind? He is loving, he wants to save him; he is just, he must destroy him! How shall this mystery be solved, and the riddle be solved? Prisoner at the bar, canst thou plead "Not Guilty?" He stands speechless; or, if he speaks, he cries, "I am Guilty!"

Shouldst thou smite my soul to hell,  
Thy righteous law approves it well.

Then, you see, if he has pleaded guilty himself, there is no hope of there being any flaw in the evidence. And even if he had pleaded "not guilty," yet the evidence is most clear, for God, the Judge, has seen his sin, and recorded all his iniquities; so that there would be no hope of his escaping.

The prisoner is sure to be found guilty. How can he escape? Is there a flaw in the indictment? No! it is drawn up by infinite wisdom, and dictated by eternal justice; and there is no hope there. Can he turn king's evidence? Ah! if we could be saved by turning king's evidence, we should all of us be saved. There is an anomaly in our law which often allows the greater criminal to escape, whilst the lesser criminal is punished. If the one is dastard and coward enough by betraying his comrade he may save himself. If you turn to the *Newgate Calendar* - if any of you have patience enough to read so vile a piece of literature - you will see that the greatest of two murderers has escaped whilst the other has been hanged, because he turned king's evidence. You have told of your fellows; you have said, "Lord, I thank thee, I am not as other men; I am not as that adulterer, or even as that publican. I bless thee, I am not like my neighbor, who is an extortioner, a thief, and so on." You are telling against your neighbor; you are joint sinners, and you are telling a tale against him. There is no hope for you; God's law knows of no such injustice as a man escaping by turning informer upon others. How then shall the prisoner at the bar escape? Is there any possibility? Oh! how did heaven wonder! how did the stars stand still with astonishment! and how did the angels stay their songs a moment, when for the first time, God showed how he might be just, and yet be gracious! Oh! I think I see heaven astonished, and silence in the courts of God for the space of an hour, when the Almighty said, "Sinner. I must and will punish thee on account of sin! But I love thee; the bowels of my love yearn over thee. How can I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My justice says 'smite,' but my love stays my hand, and says, 'spare, spare the sinner!' Oh! sinner, my heart hath devised it; my Son, the pure and perfect shall stand in thy stead, and be accounted guilty, and thou, the guilty, shall stand in my Son's stead and be accounted righteous!" It would make us leap upon our feet in astonishment if we did but understand this thoroughly - the wonderful mystery of the transposition of Christ and the sinner. Let me put it so plainly that every one can understand: Christ was spotless; sinners were vile. Says Christ "My father, treat me as if I were a sinner; treat the sinner as if he were me. Smite as sternly as thou pleasest, for I will bear it, and thus the bowels of thy love may overflow with grace, and yet thy justice be unsullied, for the sinner is no sinner now." He stands in Christ's stead, and with the Saviour's garments on, he is accepted." Do you say that such

an exchange as this is unjust? Will you say that God should not have made his Son a substitute for us, and have let us go? Let me remind you it was purely voluntary on the part of Christ. Christ was willing to stand in our stead; he had to drink the cup of our punishment, but he was quite willing to do it. And let me tell you yet one more unanswerable thing, the substitution of Christ was not an unlawful thing, because the sovereign God made him a substitute. We have read in history of a certain wife whose attachment to her husband was so great, that the wife has gone into the prison and exchanged clothes with him; and while the prisoner was escaping, the wife has remained in the prison-house; and so the prisoner has escaped by a kind of surreptitious substitution. In such a case there was a clear breach of law, and the prisoner escaping might have been pursued and again imprisoned. But in this case the substitution was made by the highest authority. The text says, God "hath made him to be sin for us;" and inasmuch as Christ did stand in my room, place, and stead, he did not make the exchange unlawfully. It was with the full determinate counsel of Almighty God, as well as with his own consent, that Christ stood in the sinner's place, as the sinner doth now in Christ's place. Old Martin Luther was a man for speaking a thing pretty plainly, and sometimes he spoke the truth so plainly that he made it look very much like a lie. In one of his sermons he said, "Christ was the greatest sinner that ever lived." Now, Christ never was a sinner, but yet Martin was right. He meant to say, all the sins of Christ's people were taken off them and put on Christ's head, and so Christ stood in God's sight as if he had been the greatest sinner that ever lived. He never was a sinner; he never knew sin; but good Martin, in his zeal to make men understand what it was, said, "Sinner, you became Christ; Christ, you became a sinner!" It is not quite the truth; the sinner is treated as if he were Christ, and Christ is treated as if he were the sinner. That is what is meant by the text God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Let me just give you two illustrations of this. The first shall be taken from the Old Testament. When, of old, men did come before God with sin, God provided a sacrifice which should be the representative of Christ, inasmuch as the sacrifice died instead of the sinner. The law ran, "He that sins shall die." When men had committed sin they brought a bullock or a

sheep before the altar; they put their hand on the bullock's head and acknowledged their guilt; and by that deed their guilt was typically removed from themselves to the bullock. Then, the poor bullock, which had done no wrong, was slaughtered, and cast out as a sin offering, which God had rejected. That is what every sinner must do with Christ, if he is to be saved. A sinner, by faith, comes and puts his hand on Christ's head, and confessing all his sin, it is not his any longer, it is put on Christ. Christ hangs upon the tree; he bears the cross and endures the shame; and so the sin is all gone and cast into the depths of the sea. Take another illustration. We read in the New Testament, that "the Church (that is, the people of God) is Christ's bride." We all know that, according to the law, the wife may have many debts; but no sooner is she married than her debts cease to be hers, and become her husband's at once. So that if a woman be overwhelmed with debt, so that she is in daily fear of the prison, let her but once stand up and give her hand to a man and become his wife, and there is none in the world can touch her; the husband is liable for all, and she says to her creditor, "Sir, I owe you nothing; my husband did not owe you anything; I incurred the debt; but, inasmuch as I have become his wife, my debts are taken off from me, and become his." It is even so with the sinner and Christ. Christ marieth the sinner and putteth forth his hand, and taketh the Church to be his. She is in debt to God's justice immeasurably; she owes to God's vengeance an intolerable weight of wrath and punishment; Christ says, "Thou art my wife: I have chosen thee, and I will pay thy debts." And he has paid them, and got his full discharge. Now, whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus hath peace with God, because "he hath made Christ to be sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

And now, I shall have finished the explanation of the text, when I just bid you *remember the consequences of this great substitution*. Christ was made sin; we are made the righteousness of God. It was in the past, long further back than the memory of angels can reach - it was in the dark past, before cherubim or seraphim had flapped the un navigated ether - when as yet worlds were not, and creation had not a name, God foresaw the sin of man, and planned his redemption. An eternal covenant was formed between the Father and the Son; wherein the Son did stipulate to suffer for his elect; and the Father on his part, did covenant to justify

them through the Son. Oh, wondrous covenant, thou art the source of all the streams of atoning love. Eternity rolled on, time came, and with it soon came the fall, and then when many years had run their round the fullness of time arrived, and Jesus prepared to fulfill his solemn engagement. He came into the world, and was made a man From that moment, when he became a man; mark the change that was wrought in him. Before, he had been entirely happy; he had never been miserable never sad; but now as the effects of that terrible covenant, which he had made with God, his Father begins to pour wrath upon him. What, you say does God actually account his Son to be a sinner? Yes, he does; His Son agreed to be the substitute, to stand in the sinner's stead. God begins with him at his birth; he puts him in a manger. If he had considered him as a perfect man, he would have provided him a throne: but considering him as a sinner, he subjects him to woe and poverty from beginning to end. And now see him grown to manhood; see him - griefs pursue him, sorrows follow him. Stop, griefs, why follow ye the perfect? why pursue ye the immaculate? Justice, why dost thou not drive these griefs away? - "the pure should be peaceful, and the immaculate should be happy." The answer comes: "This man is pure in himself, but he has made himself impure by taking his people's sin." Guilt is imputed to him, and the very imputation of guilt brings grief with all its reality. At last, I see death coming with more than its usual horrors; I see the grim skeleton with his dart well sharpened; I see behind him, Hell. I mark the grim prince of darkness, and all the avengers uprising from their place of torment; I see them all besetting the Saviour; I notice their terrible war upon him in the garden; I note him as he lies there wallowing in his blood in fearful soul-death. I see him as in grief and sorrow, he walks to Pilate's bar; I see him mocked and spit upon; I behold him tormented, maltreated, and blasphemed; I see him nailed to the cross; I behold the mocking continued, and the shame unabated; I mark him shrieking for water, and I hear him complaining of the forsakings of God! I am astonished. Can this be just that a perfect being should suffer thus? - Oh, God, where art thou, that thou canst thus permit the oppression of the innocent? Hast thou ceased to be King of Justice, else why dost thou not shield the perfect One? The answer comes: Be still; he is perfect in himself, but he is the sinner now - he stands in the sinner's stead; the sinner's guilt is on him, and, therefore it is right, it is just, it is what he hath himself agreed

to, that he should be punished as if he were a sinner, that he should be frowned upon, that he should die, and that he should descend to *Hades* unblest, uncomforted, unhelped, unhonored, and unowned. This was one of the effects of the great change which Christ made.

And, now, take the other side of the question, and I have done with explanation. What was the effect on *us*? Do you see that sinner there dabbling his hand in lust, defiling his garments with every sin the flesh had ever indulged in? Do you hear him cursing God? Do you mark him breaking every ordinance that God hath rendered sacred? But do you see him in a little season pursuing his way to heaven? He has renounced these sins; he has been converted, and has forsaken them; he is going on the way to heaven. Justice, art thou asleep? That man has broken thy law; is he to go to heaven? Hark, how the fiends come rising from the pit and cry - "That man deserves to be lost; he may not be now what he used to be, but his past sins, must have vengeance." And, yet there he goes safely on his way to heaven, and I see him looking back on all the fiends that accuse him. He cries out, "Behold, who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" And when one would think all hell would be up in arms and accuse, the grim tyrant lieth still, and the fiends have nought to say; and I see him turning his face heavenward to the throne of God, and hear him cry "Who is he that condemneth?" as with unblushing countenance he challengeth the Judge. Oh! justice, where art thou? This man has been a sinner, a rebel; why not smite him to the dust for his impertinent presumption in thus challenging the justice of God? Nay, says Justice, he hath been a sinner, but I do not look upon him in that light now; I have punished Christ instead of him: that sinner is no sinner now - he is perfect. How? perfect! Perfect, because Christ was perfect, and I look upon him as if he were Christ. Though in himself all black as the gates of Kedar, I consider him to be fair as the curtains of Solomon. I make Christ the sinner, and I punish Christ; I make the sinner Christ, and I magnify and exalt him. And I will put a crown of pure gold upon his head, and by-and-bye, I will give him a place among them that are sanctified, where he shall, harp in hand, for ever praise the name of the Lord. This is the grand result to sinners of the great exchange. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."



II. Now, I have to come towards the close, to my second point, upon which I shall be brief but laborious. WHAT IS THE USE OF THIS DOCTRINE? Turn to the Scriptures and you will see. "Now, then, we are ambassadors for God, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, for " - here is our grand argument - "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." Men and brethren, I am about to pray to you; I am about to beseech and exhort you; may the Spirit of God help me to do it with all the earnestness which becomes me. You and I shall face each other soon before the bar of the great judge, and I shall be responsible in the day of account for all I preach to you; not for my style or talent, or want of talent, I shall only be responsible for my earnestness and zeal in this matter. And, now, before God I entreat you most earnestly to be reconciled to him, you are by nature at enmity with God; you hate him, you neglect him, your enmity shows itself in various ways. I beseech you now be reconciled to God. I might entreat you to be reconciled, because it would be a fearful thing to die with God for your enemy. Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? who can abide with the eternal burnings? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for our God is a consuming fire. Beware, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. I beseech you therefore, be reconciled to God. I might on the other hand, use another argument, and remind you that those who are reconciled to God, are thereby proved to be the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. There are crowns for God's friends; there are harps for them that love him; there is prepared a mansion for every one that seeketh unto him. Therefore, if thou wouldst be blessed throughout eternity, be reconciled to God. But I shall not urge that; I shall urge the reason of my text. I beseech thee, my hearer, be reconciled to God, because if thou repentest, it is proof that Christ has stood in thy stead. Oh, if this argument do not melt thee, there is none in heaven or earth that can. If thy heart melteth not at such an argument as this, then it is harder than the nether millstone, sure thou hast a soul of stone, and a heart of brass, if thou wilt not be reconciled to God who hath written this for thine encouragement.

I beseech thee be reconciled to God, because in this there is proof that God is loving you. Thou thinkest God to be a God of wrath. Would he

have given his own Son to be punished if he had hated thee? Sinner if God had anything but thoughts of love towards thee, I ask, would he have given up his Son to hang upon the cross? Think not my God a tyrant; think him not a wrathful God, destitute of mercy. His Son, torn from his bosom and given up to die, is the best proof of his love. Oh, sinner, I need not blame thee if thou didst hate thy enemy, but I must blame thee, call thee mad, if thou dost hate thy friend. Oh, I need not wonder if thou wouldst not be reconciled to one who would not be reconciled to thee; but, inasmuch as thou wilt not by nature be reconciled to the God who gave his own Son to die, I must marvel at the stupidity into which thine evil nature hath hurried thee. God is love; wilt thou be unreconciled to love? God is grace; wilt thou be unreconciled to grace. Oh, rebel that thou art of deepest dye if still thou art unreconciled. Remember, too, oh, soul, that the way is open for thy reconciliation, Thou needest not be punished; yea, thou shalt not be. If thou knowest thyself to be a sinner, by the Spirit's teaching, God will not punish thee to maintain His justice: that justice is sufficiently maintained by the punishment of Christ. He saith, "be reconciled." The child runneth away from his father when he hath sinned, because he fears his father will punish him; but when his father burns the rod, and with a smiling face says, "child, come hither," sure it must be an unloving child that would not run into such a father's arms. Sinner thou deservest the sword; God has snapped the sword across the knee of Christ's atonement, and now he says "Come to me." You deserve infinite, eternal wrath, and the displeasure of God; God has quenched that wrath for all believers, and now he says, "Come to me and be reconciled." Do you tell me that you are not sinners? I was not preaching to you. Do you tell me that you have never rebelled against God? I warn you that though *you* cannot find your own sins out, *God* will find them out. Do you say, "I need no reconciliation, except that which I can make myself?" Be warned that if thou rejectest Christ, thou rejectest thine only hope; for all that thou canst do is less than nothing and vanity. I was not preaching to thee, when I said, "Be reconciled." I was preaching to thee, poor afflicted conscience; I was preaching to thee - thou that hast been a great sinner and transgressor, thou that feelest thy guilt; to thee, thou adulterer, trembling now under the lash of conviction; to thee; thou blasphemer, quivering now from head to foot; I preach to thee thou thief, whose eye is now filled with the tear of penitence; thou feelest that hell

must be thy portion, unless thou art saved through Christ; I preach to thee, thou that knowest thy guilt; I preach to thee and to every one such, and I beseech thee to be reconciled to God, for God is reconciled to thee. Oh, let not your heart stand out against this.

I cannot plead as I could wish. Oh! if I could I would plead with my heart, with my eyes, and my lips, that I might lead you to the Saviour. You need not rail at me and call this an Arminian style of preaching; I care not for your opinion, this style is Scriptural. "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Poor broken-hearted sinner, God is as much preaching to you this morning, and bidding you be reconciled, as if he stood here himself in his own person; and though I be a mean and puny man by whom he speaketh, he speaketh now as much as if it were by the voice of angels, "Be reconciled to God." Come, friend, turn not thine eye and head away from me; but give me thine hand and lend me thine heart whilst I weep over thine hand and cry over thine heart, and beseech thee not to despise thine own mercy, not to be a suicide to thine own soul, not to damn thyself. Now that God has awakened thee to feel that thou art an enemy, I beseech thee now to be his friend. Remember, if thou art now convinced of sin, there is no punishment for thee. He was punished in thy stead. Wilt thou believe this? Wilt thou trust in it, and so be at peace with God? If thou sayest, "No!" then I would have thee know that thou hast put away thine own mercy. If thou sayest, "I need no reconciliation," thou hast thrust away the only hope thou canst ever have. Do it at thine own hazard; I wash my hands of thy blood. But, but, but, if thou knowest thyself to need a Saviour if thou wouldst escape the hellish pit, if thou wouldst walk among them that are sanctified, I again, in the name of him that will condemn thee at the last day, if thou rejectest this invitation, implore and beseech thee to be reconciled to God. I am his ambassador. When I have done this sermon, I shall go back to court. Sinner, what shall I say of thee. Shall I go back and tell my Master that thou intendest to be his enemy for ever? Shall I go back and tell him, "They heard me, but they regarded not?" they said in their hearts, "we will go away to our sins and our follies, and we will not serve your God, neither fear him!" Shall I tell him such a message as that? Must I be driven to go back to his palace with such a fearful story? I beseech thee, send me not back so, lest my Master's wrath

wax hot, and he say,

"They that despised my promised rest,  
Shall have no portion there"

But oh! may I not go back to court to-day, and tell the Monarch on my knees, "There be some my Lord, that have been great rebels, but when they saw themselves rebels, they threw themselves at the foot of the cross, and asked for pardon. They had strangely revolted, but I heard them say, 'If he will forgive me I will turn from my evil ways, if he will enable me!' They were gross transgressors, and they confessed it; but I heard them say, 'Jesus, thy blood and righteousness are my only trust.'" Happy ambassador, I will go back to my Master with a gladsome countenance, and tell him that peace is made between many a soul and the great God. But miserable ambassador who has to go back and say, "There is no peace made." How shall it be? The Lord decide it! May many hearts give way to Omnipotent grace now, and may enemies of grace be changed into friends, that God's elect may be gathered in, and his eternal purpose accomplished.

III. And now, I close up by noticing the SWEET ENJOYMENT which this doctrine brings to a believer. Mourning Christian! dry up your tears. Are you weeping on account of sin? Why weepest thou? Weep because of thy sin, but weep not through any fear of punishment. Has the evil one told thee that thou shalt be condemned? Tell him to his face that he lies. Ah! poor distressed believer; art thou mourning over thine own corruptions? Look to thy perfect Lord, and remember, thou art complete in him, thou art in God's sight as perfect as if thou hadst never sinned; nay, more than that, the Lord our righteousness hath put a divine garment upon thee, so that thou hast more than the righteousness of man - thou hast the righteousness of God. Oh! thou that art mourning by reason of in-bred sin and depravity, remember, none of thy sins can condemn thee. Thou hast learned to hate sin; but thou hast learned to know that sin is not thine - it is put on Christ's head. Come, be of good cheer: thy standing is not in thyself - it is in Christ; thine acceptance is not in thyself, but in thy Lord; with all thy sin, thou art as much accepted to-day as in thy sanctification; thou art as much accepted of God to-day, with all thine

iniquities, as thou wilt be when thou standest before his throne, rendered free from all corruption. Oh! I beseech thee, lay hold on this precious thought, perfection in Christ! For thou art perfect in Christ Jesus. With thy Saviour's garment on, thou art holy as the holy ones; thou art now justified by faith; thou hast now peace with God. Be of good cheer; do not fear to die; death has nothing terrible in it to thee; Christ hath extracted all the gall from the sting of death. Tremble not at judgment; judgment will not bring thee another acquital, to add to the acquital already given in thy cause.

Bold shalt thou stand at that great day,  
For who aught to thy charge can lay  
Fully absolved by Christ thou art,  
From sin's tremendous guilt and smart.

Ah, when thou comest to die, thou shalt challenge God; for thou shalt say, "My God, thou canst not condemn me, for thou hast condemned Christ for me, thou hast punished Christ in my stead. 'Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who also sitteth on the right hand of God and maketh intercession for us:'" Christian, be glad; let thy head lack no oil, and thy face no ointment; "go thy way; eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God hath accepted thy works." Do as Solomon bids us do; live happily all the days of thy life; for thou art accepted in the beloved - thou art pardoned through the blood, and justified through the righteousness of Christ. What hast thou to fear? Let thy face ever wear a smile; let thine eyes sparkle with gladness; live near thy Master; live in the suburbs of the celestial city, as by-and-by when thy time has come thou shalt borrow better wings than angels ever wore, and out soar the cherubim, and rise up where thy Jesus sits - sit at his right hand, even as he has overcome and has sat down upon his Father's right hand; and all this because the divine Lord, "was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

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# The Sum And Substance Of All Theology

All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. - John 6:37

What a difference there is between the words of Christ, and those of all mere man! Most men speak many words, yet say but little; Christ speaks few words, yet says very much. In modern books, you may read scores of pages, and scarcely come across a new thought; but when Christ speaks, every syllable seems to tell. He hits the nail on the head each time He lifts the hammer of His Word. The Words of Christ are like ingots of solid gold; we preachers too often beat out the gold so thin, that whole acres of it would scarcely be worth a farthing. The Words of Christ are always to be distinguished from those of His creatures, not only for their absolute truthfulness, but also for their profound fulness of matter. In all His language He is "full of grace and truth." Look at the text before us. Here we have, in two small sentences, the sum and substance of all theology. The great questions which have divided the Church in all ages, the apparently contradictory doctrines which have set one minister of Christ against his fellow, are here revealed so simply and plainly, "that he may run that readeth" (Habakkuk ii.2). Even a child may understand the Words of Christ, though perhaps the loftiest human intellect cannot fathom the mystery hidden therein.

Take the first sentence of my text: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." What a weighty sentence! Here we have taught us what is called, in the present day, "High Calvinistic doctrine" - the purpose of God; the certainty that God's purpose will stand; the invincibility of God's will; and the absolute assurance that Christ "shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

Look at the second sentence of my text: "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Here we have the richness, the fulness, the unlimited extent of the

power of Christ to save those who put their trust in Him. Here is a text upon which one might preach a thousand sermons. We might take these two sentences as a life-long text, and never exhaust the theme.

Mark, too, how our Lord Jesus Christ gives us the whole truth. We have many ministers who can preach well upon the first sentence: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." Just set them going upon Election, or everlasting covenant engagements, and they will be earnest and eloquent, for they are fond of dwelling upon these points, and a well-instructed child of God can hear them with delight and profit. Such preachers are often the fathers of the Church, and the very pillars thereof; but, unfortunately, many of these excellent brethren cannot preach so well upon the second sentence of my text: "And him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." When they get to that truth, they are half afraid of it; they hesitate to preach what they consider to be a too open salvation. They cannot give the gospel invitation as freely as they find it in the Word of God. They do not deny it, yet they stutter and stammer sadly, when they get upon this theme.

Then, on the other hand, we have a large number of good ministers who can preach on this second clause of the text, but they cannot preach on the first clause. How fluent is their language as they tell out the freeness of salvation! Here they are much at home in their preaching; but, we are sorry to be compelled to say that, very often, they are not much at home when they come to doctrinal matters, and they would find it rather a difficult matter to preach fluently on the first sentence of my text. They would, if they attempted to preach from it, endeavour to cut out of it all that savours of Divine Sovereignty. They do not preach the whole "truth" which "is in Jesus."

Why is it that some of us do not see both sides of God's revealed truth? We persist in closing one eye; we will not see all that may be seen if we open both our eyes; and, sometimes, we get angry with a brother because he can see a little more than we do. I think our text is very much like a stereoscopic picture, for it presents two views of the truth. Both views are correct, for they are both photographed by the same light. How can we bring these two truths together? We get the stereoscope of the scripture,

and looking with both eyes, the two pictures melt into one. God has given us, in His Word, the two pictures of divine truth; but we have not all got the stereoscope properly adjusted to make them melt into one. When we get to heaven, we shall see how all God's truth harmonizes. If we cannot make these two parts of truth harmonize now, at any rate we must not dare to blot out one of them, for God has given them both.

Now, as God shall help me this morning, I want to expand both sentences of my text with equal fidelity and plainness. I shall not expect to please some of you while speaking on the first sentence, and I shall not be surprised if I fail to please others of you when I come to the second sentence; but, in either case, it will be a small matter to me if I have an easy conscience because I have proclaimed what I believe to be the whole truth of God. I am sure you will be willing to give a patient hearing to that which you may not fully receive, if you believe it to be declared in all honesty. Reject what I say, if it be not true, but if it be the Word of God, receive it; and, be it known unto you that it is at your peril if you dare to reject the truthful Word of the glad tidings of God.

I. I will begin with the first sentence of the text: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." We have here, first, **THE FIRM FOUNDATION UPON WHICH OUR SALVATION RESTS.**

It rests, you perceive, not on something which man does, but on something which God the Father does. The Father gives certain persons to His Son, and the Son says, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." I take it that the meaning of the text is this, - that, if any do come to Jesus Christ, it is those whom the Father gave to Christ. And the reason why they come, - if we search to the very bottom of things, - is, that the Father puts it into their hearts to come. The reason why one man is saved, and another man is lost, is to be found in God; not in anything which the saved man did, or did not do; not in anything which he felt, or did not feel; but in something altogether irrespective of himself, even in the sovereign grace of God. In the day of God's power, the saved are made willing to give their souls to Jesus. The language of Scripture must explain this point. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to



become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 12, 13). "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Romans ix. 16). If you want to see the fount of grace, you must go to the everlasting God; even as, if you want to know why that river runs in this direction, and not in that, you must trace it up to its source. In the case of every soul that is now in heaven, it was the will of God that drew it thither. In the case of every spirit that is on its way to glory now, unto God and unto Him alone must be the honour of its salvation; for He it is who makes one "differ from another" (1 Cor. iv. 7).

I do not care to argue upon this point, except I put it thus: If any say, "It is man himself who makes the difference," I reply, "You are involving yourself in a great dilemma; if man himself makes the difference, then mark - man himself must have the glory." Now, I am certain you do not mean to give man the glory of his own salvation; you would not have men throw up their caps in heaven, and shout, "Unto ourselves be the glory, for we, ourselves, were the hinge and turning point of our own salvation." No, you would have all the saved cast their crowns at the feet of Jesus, and give to Him alone all the honour and all the glory. This, however, cannot be, unless, in that critical point, that diamond hinge upon which man's salvation shall turn, God shall have the control, and not the will of man. You know that those who do not believe this truth as a matter of doctrine, do believe it in their hearts as a matter of experience.

I was preaching, not very long ago, at a place in Derbyshire, to a congregation, nearly all of whom were Methodists, and as I preached, they were crying out, "Hallelujah! Glory! Bless the Lord!" They were full of excitement, until I went on to say in my sermon, "This brings me to the doctrine of Election." There was no crying out of "Glory!" and "Hallelujah!" then. Instead, there was a great deal of shaking of the head, and a sort of telegraphing round the place, as though something dreadful was coming. Now, I thought, I must have their attention again, so I said, "You all believe in the doctrine of Election?" "No, we don't, lad," said one. "Yes, you do, and I am going to preach it to you, and make you cry 'Hallelujah!' over it." I am certain they mistrusted my power to do that;

so, turning a moment from the subject, I said, "Is there any difference between you and the ungodly world?" "Ay! Ay! Ay!" "Is there any difference between you and the drunkard, the harlot, the blasphemer?" "Ay! Ay! Ay!" Ay! there was a difference indeed. "Well, now," I said, "there is a great difference; who made it, then?" for, whoever made the difference, should have the glory of it. "Did you make the difference?" "No, lad," said one; and the rest all seemed to join in the chorus. "Who made the difference, then? Why, the Lord did it; and did you think it wrong for Him to make a difference between you and other men?" "No, no," they quickly said. "Very well, then; if it was not wrong for God to make the difference, it was not wrong for Him to purpose to make it, and that is the doctrine of Election." Then they cried, "Hallelujah!" as I said they would.

The doctrine of Election is God's purposing in His heart that He would make some men better than other men; that He would give to some men more grace than to other men; that some should come out and receive the mercy; that others, left to their own free will, should reject it; that some should gladly accept the invitations of mercy, while others, of their own accord, stubbornly refuse the mercy to which the whole world of mankind is invited. All men, by nature, refuse the invitations of the gospel. God, in the sovereignty of His grace, makes a difference by secretly inclining the hearts of some men, by the power of His Holy Spirit, to partake of His everlasting mercy in Christ Jesus. I am certain that, whether we are Calvinists or Arminians, if our hearts are right with God, we shall all adoringly testify: "We love Him, because He first loved us." If that be not Election, I know not what it is.

II. Now, in the second place, note THE CERTAINTY OF THE ETERNAL SALVATION OF ALL WHO WERE GIVEN TO JESUS; "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me."

This is eternally settled, and so settled that it cannot be altered by either man or devil. All whose names are written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, all whom God the Father designed to save when He gave up His well-beloved Son to die upon the cross of Calvary, shall in time be drawn by the Holy Spirit, and shall surely come

to Christ, and be kept by the Spirit, through the precious blood of Christ, and be folded for ever with His sheep, on the hill-tops of glory.

Mark! "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." Not one of those whom the Father hath given to Jesus shall perish. If any were lost, the text would have to read: "Almost all," or, "All but one;" but it positively says "All," without any exception; even though one may have been, in his unregenerate state, the very chief of sinners. Yet even that chosen one, that given one, shall come to Jesus; and when he has come, he shall be held by that strong love that at first chose him, and he shall never be let go, but shall be held fast, even unto the end. Miss Much-afraid, and Mrs. Despondency, and Mr. Feeble-mind, shall as certainly come to the arms of Christ, as Mr. Great-heart, and Mr. Faithful, and Mr. Valiant-for-Truth. If one jewel were lost from Christ's crown, then Christ's crown would not be all-glorious. If one member of the body of Christ were to perish, Christ's body would not be complete. If one of those who are one with Christ should miss his way to eternal live, Christ would not be a perfect Christ.

"All that the Father giveth Me Shall come to Me." "But suppose they will not come?" I cannot suppose any such thing, for He says they "shall come." They shall be made willing in the day of God's power. God knows how to make a passage through the heart of man; and though man is a free agent, yet God can incline him, willingly, to come to Jesus. There are many sentences even in Wesley's hymn-book which contain this truth. If God took away freedom from man, and then saved him, it would be but a small miracle. For God to leave man free to come to Jesus, and yet to so move him as to make him come, is a divinely-wrought miracle indeed. If we were for a moment to admit that man's will could be more than a match for God's will, do you not see where we should be landed? Who made man? God! Who made God? Shall we lift up man to the sovereign throne of Deity? Who shall be master, and have his way, God or man? The will of God, that says they "shall come", knows how to make them come.

"But suppose it should be one of those who are living in the interior of Africa, and he does

not hear the gospel; what then?" He shall hear the gospel; either he shall come to the gospel, or the gospel shall go to him. Even if no minister should go to such a chosen one, he would have the gospel specially revealed to him rather than that the promise of the Almighty God should be broken.

"But suppose there should be one of God's chosen who has become so bad that there is no hope for him? He never attends a place of worship; never listens to the gospel; the voice of the preacher never reaches him; he has grown hardened in his sin, like steel that has been seven times annealed in the fire; what then?" That man shall be arrested by God's grace, and that obdurate, hard-hearted one shall be made to see the mercy of God; the tears shall stream down his cheeks, and he shall be made willing to receive Jesus as Saviour. I think that, as God could bend my will, and bring me to Christ, He can bring anybody.

Why was I made to hear His voice,  
And enter while there's room;  
When thousands make a wretched choice,  
And rather than come?

"'Twas the same love the spread the feast,  
That sweetly forced me in;  
Else I had still refused to taste,  
And perish'd in my sin."

Yes, "sweetly forced me in;" - there is no other word that can so accurately describe my case. Oh, how long Jesus Christ stood at the door of my heart, and knocked, and knocked, and knocked in vain! I asked: "Why should I leave the pleasures of this world?" Yet still He knocked, and there was music in every sound of His pleading voice; but I said, "Nay, let Him go elsewhere." And though, through the window, I could see His thorn-crowned head, and the tears standing in His eyes, and the prints of the nails in His hands, as He stood and knocked, and said, "Open to Me," yet I heeded Him not. Then He sent my mother to me, and she pleaded, "let the Saviour in, Charlie;" and I replied, in action, though not in words,

"Nay, I love thee, my mother; but I do not love Christ, thy Saviour." Then came the black hours of sickness; but in effect I said, "Nay, I fear not sickness, nor death itself; I will still defy my Maker." But it happened, one day, that He graciously put in His hand by the hole of the door, and I moved toward Him, and then I opened the door, and cried, "Come in! Come in!" Alas! alas! He was gone; and for five long years I stood, with tears in mine eyes, and I sought Him weeping, but I found Him not. I cried after Him, but He answered me not. I said, "Whither is He gone? Oh, that I had never rejected Him? Oh, that He would but come again!" Surely the angels must then have said, "A great change has come over that youth; he would not let Christ in when He knocked, but now he wants Christ to come." And when He did come, do you think my soul rejected Him? Nay, nay; but I fell down at His feet, crying, "Come in! Come in! thou Blessed Saviour. I have waited for Thy salvation, O my God!"

There is no living soul beyond the reach of hope, no chosen one whom Christ cannot bring up even from the very gates of hell. He can bare His arm, put out His hand, and pluck the brand "out of the fire" (Zechariah iii.2). In a horrible pit, in the miry clay, His jewels have been hidden; but down from the throne of light He can come, and thrusting in His arm of mercy, He can pull them out, and cause them to glitter in His crown for ever. Let it be settled in our hearts, as a matter of fact, that what God has purposed to do, He will surely accomplish.

I need not dwell longer upon this point, because I think I have really brought out the essence of this first sentence of my text: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." Permit me just to remark, before I pass on, that I am sometimes sad on account of the alarm that some Christians seem to have concerning this precious and glorious doctrine. We have, in the Baptist denomination, - I am sorry to have to say it, - many ministers, excellent brethren, who, while they believe this doctrine, yet never preach it. On the other hand, we have some ministers, excellent brethren, who never preach anything else. They have a kind of barrel-organ that only plays five tunes, and they are always repeating them. It is either Election, Predestination, Particular Redemption, Effectual Calling, Final Perseverance, or something of that kind; it is always the same note.

But we have also a great many others who never preach concerning these doctrines, though they admit they are doctrines taught in Sacred Scripture. The reason for their silence is, because they say these truths are not suitable to be preached from the pulpit. I hold such an utterance as that to be very wicked. Is the doctrine here - in this Bible? If it is, as God hath taught it, so are we to teach it. "But," they say, "not in a mixed assembly." Where can you find an unmixed assembly? God has sent the Bible into a mixed world, and the gospel is to be preached in "all the world", and "to every creature." "Yes," they say, "preach the gospel, but not these special truths of the gospel; because, if you preach these doctrines, the people will become Antinomians and Hyper-Calvinists." Not so; the reason why people become Hyper-Calvinists and Antinomians, is because some, who profess to be Calvinists, often keep back part of the truth, and do not, as Paul did, "declare all the counsel of God"; they select certain parts of Scripture, where their own particular views are taught, and pass by other aspects of God's truth. Such preachers as John Newton, and in later times, your own Christmas Evans, were men who preached the whole truth of God; they kept back nothing that God has revealed; and, as the result of their preaching, Antinomianism could not find a foot-hold anywhere. We should have each doctrine of Scripture in its proper place, and preach it fully; and if we want to have a genuine revival of religion, we must preach these doctrines of Jehovah's sovereign grace again and again. Do not tell me they will not bring revivals. There was but one revival that I have ever heard of, apart from Calvinistic doctrine, and that was the one in which Wesley took so great a part; but then George Whitefield was there also to preach the whole Word of God. When people are getting sleepy, if you want to arouse and wake them up thoroughly, preach the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty to them; for that will do it right speedily.

III. I shall now turn very briefly to the second sentence of my text: "And him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

"Now," says somebody, "he is going to knock down all that he has been building up." Well, I would rather be inconsistent with myself than with my Master; but I dare not alter this second sentence, and I have no desire

to alter it. Let it stand as it is, all its glorious simplicity: -

"HIM THAT COMETH TO ME I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT."

Let the whole world come, still this promise is big enough to embrace them all in its arms. There is no mistake here, the wrong man cannot come. If any sinner come to Christ, he is sure to be the right one. Mark, too, as there is no limitation in the person coming, so there is no limitation in the manner of the coming. Says one, "Suppose I come the wrong way?" You cannot come the wrong way; it is written, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." "No man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father" (John vi.44,65). If, then, you come to Christ in any way, you are drawn of the Father, and He cannot draw the wrong way. If you come to Christ at all, the power and will to come have been given you of the Father. If you come to Christ, He will in no wise cast you out; for no possible or conceivable reason will Jesus ever cast out any sinner who comes to Him. There is no reason in hell, or on earth, or in heaven, why Jesus should cast out the soul that comes to Him. If Satan, the foul accuser of the brethren, brings reasons why the coming sinner should not be received, Jesus will "cast down" the accuser, but He will not "cast out" the sinner. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give your rest," is still His invitation and His promise, too.

Let us suppose a case by the way of illustration. Here is a man in Swansea, - ragged, dirty, coal-begrimed, - who has received a message from Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria. It reads in this wise: "You are hereby commanded to come, just as you are, to our palace at Windsor, to receive great and special favours at our hand. You will stay away at your peril." The man reads the message, and at first scarcely understands it; so he thinks, "I must wash and prepare myself." Then, he re-reads the royal summons, and the words arrest him: "Come just as your are." So he starts, and tells the people in the train where he is going, and they laugh at him. At length he arrives at Windsor Castle; there he is stopped by the guard, and questioned. He explains why he has come, and shows the Queen's message; and he is allowed to pass. He next meets with a gentlemen in waiting, who, after some explanations and

expressions of astonishment, allows him to enter the ante-room. When there, our friend becomes frightened on account of his begrimed and ragged appearance; he is half inclined to rush from the place with fear, when he remembers the works of the royal command: "Stay away at your peril." Presently, the Queen herself appears, and tells him how glad she is that he has come just as he was. She says she purposes that he shall be suitably clothed, and be made one of the princes of her court. She adds, "I told you to come as you were. It seemed to be a strange command to you, but I am glad you have obeyed, and so come."

I do think this is what Jesus Christ says to every creature under heaven. The gospel invitation runs thus: "Come, come, come to Christ, just as you are." "But, let me feel more." No, come just as you are. "But let me get home to my own room, and let me pray." No, no, come to Christ just as you are. As you are, trust in Jesus, and He will save you. Oh, do dare to trust Him! If anybody shall ask, "Who are you?" answer, "I am nobody." If anyone objects, "You are such a filthy sinner," reply, "Yes, 'tis true, so I am; but He Himself told me to come." If anyone shall say, "You are not fit to come," say, "I know I am not fit; but He told me to come." Therefore, -

"Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;  
Jesus ready stands to save you,  
Full of pity join'd with power;  
He is able,  
He is willing; doubt no more.

"Let not conscience make you linger,  
Nor fitness fondly dream;  
All the fitness He requireth,  
Is to feel you need of Him:  
This He gives you;  
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."

Sinner, trust in Jesus: and if thou dost perish trusting in Jesus, I will perish with thee. I will make my bed in hell, side by side with thee, sinner, if thou canst perish trusting in Christ, and thou shalt lie there, and taunt



me to all eternity for having taught thee falsely, if we perish. But that can never be; those who trust in Jesus shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. Come to Jesus, and He will in no wise cast thee out.

May the Lord bless the words I have spoken! Though hastily suggested to my mind, and feebly delivered to you, the Lord bless them, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **A Summary Of Experience And A Body Of Divinity**

For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. - 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

In Thessalonica the conversions to the faith were remarkable. Paul came there without prestige, without friends, when he was in the very lowest condition; for he had just been beaten and imprisoned at Philippi, and had fled from that city. Yet it mattered not in what condition the ambassador might be; God, who worketh mighty things by weak instruments, blessed the word of his servant Paul. No doubt when the apostle went into the synagogue to address his own countrymen he had great hopes that, by reasoning with them out of their own scriptures, he might convince them that Jesus was the Christ. He soon found that only a few would search the Scriptures and form a judgment on the point; but the bulk of them refused, for we read of the Jews of Berea, to whom Paul fled from Thessalonica, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind,

and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Paul must have felt disappointed with his own countrymen; indeed, he had often cause to do so. His heart was affectionately warm toward them, but their hearts were very bitter towards him, reckoning him to be a pervert and an apostate. But if he seemed to fail with the Jews, it is evident that he was abundantly successful with the Gentiles. These turned from their idols to serve the living God, and their turning was so remarkable that the Jew's charged Paul and Silas with turning the world upside down.

In those days there was a good deal of practical atheism abroad, and therefore the wonder was not so much that men left their idols, as that they turned unto the living God. It became a matter of talk all over the city, and the Jews in their violence helped to make the matter more notorious; for the mobs in the street and the attack upon the house of Jason all stirred the thousand tongues of rumour. Everybody spoke of the sudden appearance of three poor Jews, of their remarkable teaching in the synagogue, and of the conversion of a great multitude of devout Greeks, and of the chief women not a few. It was no small thing that so many had come straight away from the worship of Jupiter and Mercury to worship the unknown God, who could not be seen, nor imaged; and to enter the kingdom of one Jesus who had been crucified. It set all Macedonia and Achaia wondering; and as with a trumpet blast it aroused all the dwellers in those regions. Every ship that sailed from Thessalonica carried the news of the strange ferment which was moving the City; men were caring for religion and were quitting old beliefs for a new and better faith. Thessalonica, situated on one of the great Roman roads, and center of a large trade, thus became a center for the gospel. Wherever there are true conversions there will be more or less of this kind of sounding forth of the gospel. It was especially so at Thessalonica; but it is truly so in every church where the Spirit of God is uplifting men from the dregs of evil, delivering them from drunkenness, and dishonesty, and uncleanness, and worldliness, and making them to become holy and earnest in the cause of the great Lord. There is sure to be a talk when grace triumphs. This talk is a great aid to the gospel: it is no small thing that men should have their attention attracted to it by its effects; for it is both natural and just that thoughtful men should judge of doctrines by their results; and if the most beneficial results follow from the preaching

of the word, prejudice is disarmed, and the most violent objectors are silenced.

You will notice that in this general talk the converts and the. hers were greatly mixed up:—"For they themselves show of us manner of entering in we had unto you." I do not know that it is possible for the preacher to keep himself distinct from those who profess to be converted by him. He is gladly one with them in love to, their souls, but he would have it remembered that he cannot be responsible for all their actions. Those who profess to have been converted under any ministry have it in their power to damage that ministry far more than any adversaries can do. "There!" says the world, when it detects a false professor, "this is what comes of such preaching." They judge unfairly, I know; but most men are in a great hurry, and will not examine the logic of their opponents; while many others are so eager to judge unfavorably, that a very little truth, or only a bare report, suffices to condemn both the minister and his doctrine. Every man that lives unto God with purity of life brings honor to the gospel which converted him, to the community to which he belongs, and to the preaching by which he was brought to the knowledge of the truth; but the reverse is equally true in the case of unworthy adherents. Members of churches, will you kindly think of this? Your ministers share the blame of your ill conduct if ever you disgrace yourselves. I feel sure that none of you wish to bring shame and trouble upon your pastors, however careless you may be about your own reputations. Oh, that we could be freed from those of whom Paul says, "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." When these are in a church they are its curse. The Thessalonians were not such: they were such a people that Paul did not blush to have himself implicated in what they did. He was glad to say that the outsiders "show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven."

Quitting this line of thought, I would observe that these two verses struck me as being singularly full. Oceans of teaching are to be found in them. A

father of the church in the first ages was wont to cry, "I adore the infinity of Holy Scripture." That remark constantly rises from my lips when I am studying the sacred Word. This book is more than a book,—it is the mother of books, a mine of truth, a mountain of meaning. It was an ill-advised opinion which is imputed to the Mahommedans at the destruction of the Alexandrian Library, when they argued that everything that was good in it was already in the Koran, and therefore it might well be destroyed. Yet it is true with regard to the inspired Word of God, that it contains everything which appertains to eternal life. It is a revelation of which no man can take the measure, it compasses heaven and earth, time and eternity. The best evidence of its being written by an Infinite mind is its own infinity. Within a few of its words there lie hidden immeasurable meanings, even as perfume enough to sweeten leagues of space may be condensed into a few drops of otto of roses.

The first part of my text contains a summary of Christian experience; and the second part contains a body of divinity. Here is ample room and verge enough. It is not possible to exhaust such a theme.

I. The first part of the text contains A SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE; "What manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." Here we have in miniature the biography of a Christian man.

It begins, first, with the entering in of the word,— "What manner of entering in we had unto you." When we preach the word you listen, and, so far, the word is received. This is a very hopeful circumstance. Still, the hearing with the outward ear is comparatively a small matter; or, at least, only great because of what may follow from it. The preacher feels even with some who listen with attention that he is outside the door; he is knocking, and he hopes that he is heard within; but the truth is not yet received, the door remains shut, an entrance is not granted, and in no case can he be content to speak with the person outside the door; he desires an entrance for the Word. All is fruitless until Christ entereth into the heart. I have seen the following: the door has been a little opened, and the man inside has come to look at the messenger, and more distinctly to hear what he may have to say; but he has taken care to put the door on

the chain, or hold it with his hand, for he is not yet ready to admit the guest who is so desirous of entertainment. The King's messenger has sometimes tried to put his foot within when the door has stood a little open, but he has not always been successful, and has not even escaped from a painful hurt when the door has been forced back with angry violence. We have called again and again with our message, but we have been as men who besieged a walled city, and were driven from the gates; yet we had our reward, for when the Holy Spirit sweetly moved the hard heart the city gates have opened of their own accord, and we have been received joyfully. We have heard the hearty cry, "Let the truth come in! Let the gospel come in! Let Christ come in! Whatever there is in him we are willing to receive; whatever he demands we are willing to give; whatever he offers us we are glad to accept. Come and welcome! The guest-chamber is prepared. Come and abide in our house for ever!"

The truth has its own ways of entrance; but in general it first affects the understanding. The man says, "I see it: I see how God is just, and yet the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. I see sin laid on Christ that it may not be laid on me, and I perceive that if I believe in Jesus Christ my sins are put away by his atonement." To many all that is wanted is that they should understand this fundamental truth; for their minds are prepared of God to receive it. Only make it plain and they catch at it as a hungry man at a piece of bread. They discover in the gospel of our Lord Jesus the very thing for which they have been looking for years, and so the truth enters by the door of the understanding.

Then it usually commences to work upon the conscience, conscience being the understanding exercised upon moral truth. The man sees himself a sinner, discovering guilt that he was not aware of; and he is thus made ready to receive Christ's pardoning grace. He sees that to have lived without thinking of God, without loving God, without serving God was a great and grievous crime: he feels the offensiveness of this neglect. He trembles; he consents unto the law that it is good, and he allows that, if the law condemns him, he is worthy to be condemned.

When it has thus entered into the understanding and affected the conscience, the word of God usually arouses the emotions. Fear is

awakened, and hope is excited. The man begins to feel as he never felt before. His whole manhood is brought under the heavenly spell; his very flesh doth creep in harmony with the amazement of his soul. He wonders and dreads, weeps and quivers, hopes and doubts; but no, emotion is asleep; life is in all. When a tear rises to his eye he brushes it away, but it is soon succeeded by another. Repentance calls forth one after another of these her sentinels. The proud man is broken down; the hard man is softened. The love of God in providing a Saviour, the unsearchable riches of divine grace in passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin,—these things amaze and overwhelm the penitent. He finds himself suddenly dissolved, where aforesaid he was hard as adamant for the word is entering into him, and exercising its softening power.

By-and-by the entrance is complete; for the truth carries the central castle of Mansoul, and captures his heart. He who once hated the gospel now loves it. At first he loves it, hoping that it may be his, though fearing the reverse; yet owning that if it brought no blessing to himself, yet it was a lovable and desirable thing. By-and-by the man ventures to grasp it, encouraged by the word that bids him lay hold on eternal life. One who in digging his land finds a treasure, first looks about for fear lest some one else should claim it; anon he dares to examine his prize more carefully, and at length he bears it in his bosom to his own home. So is it with the gospel; when a man finds it by the understanding, he soon embraces it with his heart; and, believe me, if it once gets into the heart, the arch-enemy himself will never get it out again. Oh, that such an entrance with the gospel might commence the spiritual life of all here present who are as yet unsaved.

What comes next? Well, the second stage is conversion. "They themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned from idols to serve the living and true God." There came a turning, a decided turning. The man has come so far in carelessness, so far in sin and unbelief; but now he pauses, and he deliberately turns round, and faces in that direction to which hitherto he had turned his back. Conversion is the turning of a man completely round, to hate what he loved and to love what he hated. Conversion is to turn to God decidedly and distinctly by an act and deed of the mind and will. In some senses we

are turned; but in others, like these Thessalonians, we turn. It is not conversion to think that you will turn, or to promise that you will turn, or resolve that you will turn, but actually and in very deed to turn, because the word has had a true entrance into your heart. You must not be content with a reformation; there must be a revolution: old thrones must fall, and a new king must reign. Is it so with you?

These Thessalonians turned from their idols. Do you tell me that you have no idols? Think again, and you will not be quite so sure. The streets of London are full of fetich worship, and almost every dwelling is a joss-house crammed with idols. Why, multitudes of men are worshipping not calves of gold, but gold in a more portable shape. Small circular idols of gold and silver are much sought after. They are very devoutly worshipped by some, and great things are said concerning their power. I have heard the epithet of "almighty" ascribed to an American form of these idols. Those who do not worship gold may yet worship rank, name, pleasure, or honour. Most worship self, and I do not know that there is a more degrading form of worship than for a man to put himself upon a pedestal and bow down thereto and worship it. You might just as well adore cats and crocodiles with the ancient Egyptians as pay your life's homage to yourselves. No wooden image set up by the most savage tribe can be more ugly or degrading than our idol when we adore ourselves. Men worship Bacchus still. Do not tell me they do not: why, there is a temple to him at every street corner. While every other trade is content with a shop or a warehouse, this fiend has his palaces, in which plentiful libations are poured forth in his honour. The gods of unchastity and vice are yet among us. It would be a shame even to speak of the things which are done of them in secret. The lusts of the flesh are served even by many who would not like to have it known. We have gods many and lords many in this land. God grant that we may see, through the preaching of the gospel, many turning from such idols. If you love anything better than God you are idolaters: if there is anything you would not give up for God it is your idol: if there is anything that you seek with greater fervour that is your idol, and conversion means a turning from every idol.

But then that is not enough, for some men turn from one idol to another. If they do not worship Bacchus they become teetotalers, and possibly they

worship the golden calf, and become covetous. When men quit covetousness they sometimes turn to profligacy. A change of false gods is not the change that will save: we must turn unto God, to trust, love, and honor him, and him alone.

After conversion comes service. True conversion causes us "to serve the living and true God." To serve him means to worship him, to obey him, to consecrate one's entire being to his honour and glory, and to be his devoted servant.

We are, dear friends, to serve the "living" God. Many men have a dead God still. They do not feel that he hears their prayers, they do not feel the power of his Spirit moving upon their hearts and lives. They never take the Lord into their calculations; he never fills them with joy, nor even depresses them with fear; God is unreal and inactive to them. But the true convert turns to the living God, who is everywhere, and whose presence affects him at every point of his being. This God he is to worship, obey, and serve.

Then it is added, to serve the true God; and there is no serving a true God with falsehood. Many evidently serve a false god, for they utter words of prayer without their hearts, and that is false prayer, unfit for the true God, who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. When men's lives are false and artificial they are not a fit service for the God of truth. A life is false when it is not the true outcome of the soul, when it is fashioned by custom, ruled by observation, restrained by selfish motives, and governed by the love of human approbation. What a man does against his will is not in truth done by himself at all. If the will is not changed the man is not converted, and his religious life is not true. He that serves the true God acceptably does it with delight; to him sin is misery, and holiness is happiness. This is the sort of service which we desire our converts to render: we long to see rebels become sons. Oh the sacred alchemy of the Holy Spirit, who can turn men from being the slaves of sin to become servants of righteousness!

Carefully notice the order of life's progress: the entering in of the word produces conversion, and this produces service. Do not put those things



out of their places. If you are converts without the word entering into you, you are unconverted; and if professing to receive the word you are not turned by it, you have not received it. If you claim to be converted, and yet do not serve God, you are not converted; and if you boast of serving God without being converted, you are not serving God. The three things are links which draw on each other.

A fourth matter follows to complete this Christian biography, namely, waiting—"To wait for his Son from heaven." That conversion which is not followed up by waiting is a false conversion, and will come to nothing. We wait, dear brethren, in the holy perseverance of faith; having begun with Christ Jesus our Lord we abide in him; we trust, and then we wait. We do not look upon salvation as a thing which requires a few minutes of faith, and then all is over; salvation is the business of our lives. We receive salvation in an instant, but we work it out with fear and trembling all our days. He that is saved continues to be saved, and goes on to be saved from day to day, from every sin and from every form of evil. We must wait upon the Lord, and renew the strength of the life which he has imparted. As a servant waiteth on her mistress, or a courtier upon his king, so must we wait upon the Lord.

This waiting also takes the shape of living in the future. A man who, waits is not living on the wages of today, but on the recompenses of a time which is yet to come; and this is the mark of the Christian, that his life is spent in eternity rather than in time, and his citizenship is not of earth but of heaven. He has received a believing expectancy which makes him both watch and wait. He expects that the Lord Jesus will come a second time, and that speedily. He has read of his going up. into heaven, and he believes it; and he knows that he will so come in like manner as he went up into heaven. For the second advent he looks with calm hope: he does not know when it may be, but he keeps himself on the watch as a servant who waits his lord's return. He hopes it may be today, he would not wonder if it were tomorrow, for he is always looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of God. The coming of the Lord is his expected reward. He does not expect to be rewarded by men, or even to be rewarded of God with temporal things in this life, for he has set his affection upon things yet to be revealed, things eternal and infinite. In the

day when the Christ shall come, and the heavens which have received him shall restore him to our earth, he shall judge the world in righteousness, and his people with his truth, and then shall our day break and our shadows flee away. The true believer lives in this near future; his hopes are with Jesus on his throne, with Jesus crowned before an assembled universe.

The convert has come to this condition, he is assured of his salvation. See how he has been rising from the time when he first held the door ajar! He is assured of his salvation; for Paul describes him as one who is delivered from the wrath to come; and therefore he looks with holy delight to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Once he was afraid of this, for he feared that he would come to condemn him; but now he knows that when the Lord appears his justification will be made plain to the eyes of all men. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." And so he cries, " Even so, come. Lord Jesus!" He would hasten rather than delay the appearing of the Lord. He groans in sympathy with travailing creation for the manifestation of the sons of God. He cries with all the redeemed host for the day of the Saviour's glory. He could not do this were he not abundantly assured that the day would not seal his destruction, but reveal his full salvation.

Here, then, you have the story of the Christian man briefly summed up, and I think you will not find a passage of merely human writing which contains so much in so small a compass. It has unspeakable wealth packed away into a narrow casket. Do you understand it? Is this the outline of your life? If it is not, the Lord grant that his word may have an entrance into you this morning, that you may now believe in Jesus Christ and then wait for his glorious appearing.

II. I shall want you to be patient with me while I very briefly unfold the second half of this great roll. Here even to a greater degree we have mullum in parvo, much in little; A BODY OF DIVINITY packed away in a nutshell. " To wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

To begin my body of divinity, I see here, first, the Deity of Christ. "To wait

for his Son." "His Son." God has but one Son in the highest sense. The Lord Jesus Christ has given to all believers power to become the sons of God, but not in the sense in which he, and he alone, is the Son of God." Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" "When he bringeth in the First-begotten into the world he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him." The Eternal Filiation is a mystery into which it is better for us never to pry. Believe it; but how it is, or how it could be, certainly it is not for you or for me to attempt to explain. There is one "Son of the Highest," who is "God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before all worlds," whom we with all our souls adore, and own to be most truly God; doing so especially every time in the benediction we associate him with the Father and with the Holy Spirit as the one God of blessing.

Side by side with this in this text of mine is his humanity. "His son, whom he raised from the dead." It is for man to die. God absolutely considered death not; he therefore took upon himself our mortal frame, and was made in fashion as a man; then willingly for our sakes he underwent the pangs of death, and being crucified, was dead, and so was buried, even as the rest of the dead. He was truly man, "of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting": of that we are confident. There has been no discussion upon that point in these modern times, but there was much questioning thereon in years long gone; for what is there so clear that men will not doubt it or mystify it? With us there is no question either as to his Deity, which fills us with reverence; or his manhood, which inspires us with joy. He is the Son of God and the Son of Mary. He, as God, is "immortal, invisible"; and yet for our sakes he was seen of men and angels, and in mortal agony yielded up the ghost. He suffered for our salvation, died upon the cross, and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, being verily and truly man.

Notice a third doctrine which is here, and that is the unity of the Divine Person of our Lord; for while the apostle speaks of Christ as God's Son from heaven, and as one who had died, he adds, "even Jesus": that is to say, one known, undivided Person. Although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ. There is but one Person of our blessed and adorable Lord: "one altogether; not by confusion of substance, but by

unity of Person." He is God, he is man; perfect God and perfect man; and, as such, Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man. There have been mistakes about this also made in the church, though I trust not by any one of us here present. We worship the Lord Jesus Christ in the unity of his divine Person as the one Saviour of men.

Furthermore, in our text we perceive a doctrine about ourselves very plainly implied, namely, that men by nature are guilty, for otherwise they would not have needed Jesus, a Saviour. They were lost, and so he who came from heaven to earth bore the name of Jesus, "for he shall save his people from their sins." It is clear, my brethren, that we were under the divine wrath, otherwise it could not be said, "He hath delivered us from the wrath to come." We who are now delivered were once "children of wrath, even as others." And when we are delivered it is a meet song to sing, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." We were guilty, else we had not needed a propitiation by the Saviour's death: we were lost, else we had not needed one who should seek and save that which is lost; and we were hopelessly lost, otherwise God himself would not have shared our nature to work the mighty work of our redemption. That truth is in the text, and a great deal more than I can mention just now.

But the next doctrine, which is one of the fundamentals of the gospel, is that the Lord Jesus Christ died for these fallen men. He could not have been raised from the dead if he had not died. That death was painful, and ignominious; and it was also substitutionary: "for the transgression of my people was he stricken." In the death of Christ lay the essence of our redemption. I would not have you dissociate his life from his death, it comes into his death as an integral part of it; for as the moment we begin to live we, in a sense, begin to die, so the Man of Sorrows lived a dying life, which was all preparatory to his passion. He lived to die, panting for the baptism wherewith he was to be baptized, and reaching forward to it. But it was especially, though not only, by his death upon the cross that Jesus put away our sin. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Not even the tears of Christ, nor the labours of Christ could have redeemed us if he had not given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice. "Die he, or justice must," or man must die. It was his bowing the head

and giving up of the ghost which finished the whole work. "It is finished" could not have been uttered except by a bleeding, dying Christ. His death is our life. Let us always dwell upon that central truth, and when we are preaching Christ risen, Christ reigning, or Christ coming, let us never so preach any of them as to overshadow Christ crucified. "We preach Christ crucified." Some have put up as their ensign, "We preach Christ glorified"; and we also preach the same; but yet to us it seems that the first and foremost view of Jesus by the sinner is as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Therefore do we preach first Christ crucified, while at the same time we do not forget that blessed hope of the child of God,—namely, Christ in glory soon to descend from heaven.

The next doctrine I see in my text is the acceptance of the death of Christ by the Father. "Where is that?" say you. Look! "Whom he raised from the dead." Not only did Jesus rise from the dead, but the Father had a distinct hand therein. God as God gave the token of his acceptance of Christ's sacrifice by raising him from the dead. It is true, as we sometimes sing,

"If Jesus had not paid the debt,  
He ne'er had been at freedom set."

The Surety would have been held in prison to this day if he had not discharged his suretyship engagements, and wiped out all the liabilities of his people. Therefore it is written, "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." In his glorious uprising from the dead lies the assurance that we are accepted, accepted in the Beloved: the Beloved being himself certainly accepted because God brought him again from the dead.

Further on, we have another doctrine, among many more. We have here the doctrine of our Lord's resurrection, of which we spake when we mentioned the acceptance of his offering. Christ is risen from the dead. I pray you, do not think of the Lord Jesus Christ as though he were now dead. It is well to dwell upon Gethsemane, Golgotha, and Gabbatha; but pray remember the empty tomb, Emmaus, Galilee, and Olivet. It is not

well to think of Jesus as for ever on the cross or in the tomb. "He is not here, but he is risen." Ye may "come and see the place where the Lord lay," but he lies there no longer he hath burst the bands of death by which he could not be holden: for it was not possible that God's holy One could see corruption. The rising of Jesus from the dead is that fact of facts which establishes Christianity upon an historical basis, and at the same time guarantees to all believers their own resurrection from the dead. He is the firstfruits and we are the harvest.

Further, there is here the doctrine of his ascension: "to wait for his Son from heaven." It is clear that Jesus is in heaven, or he could not come from it. He has gone before us as our Forerunner. He has gone to his rest and reward; a cloud received him out of sight; he has entered into his glory.

I doubt not our poet is right when he says of the angels -

"They brought his chariot from on high,  
To bear him to his throne;  
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,  
"The glorious work is done!"

That ascension of his brought us the Holy Spirit. He "led captivity captive, and received gifts for men," and he gave the Holy Ghost as the largess of his joyous entry to his Father's courts, that man on earth might share in the joy of the Conqueror returning from the battle. "Lift up your heads, o ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in," was the song of that bright day.

But the text tells us more: not only that he has gone into heaven, but that he remains there; for these Thessalonians were expecting him to come "from heaven," and therefore he was there. What is he doing? "I go to prepare a place for you." What is he doing? He is interceding with authority before the throne. What is he doing? He is from yonder hill-top looking upon his church, which is as a ship upon the sea .buffeted by many a storm. In the middle watch ye shall see him walking on the waters; for he perceives the straining of the oars, the leakage of the

timbers, the rending of the sails, the dismay of the pilot, the trembling of the crew; and he will come unto us, and save us. He is sending heavenly succours to his weary ones; he is ruling all things for the salvation of his elect, and the accomplishment of his purposes. Glory be to his blessed name!

Jesus is in heaven with saving power, too, and that also is in the text: "His Son from heaven, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come." I alter the translation, for it is a present participle in the case of each verb, and should run, "Even Jesus, delivering us from the wrath coming." He is at this moment delivering. "Wherefore also he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." He is away in heaven, but he is not divided from us; he is working here the better because he is there. He has not separated himself from the service and the conflict here below; but he has taken the post from which he can best observe and aid. Like some great commander who in the day of battle commands a view of the field, and continues watching, directing, and so winning the fight, so is Jesus in the best place for helping us. Jesus is the master of legions, bidding his angels fly hither and thither, where their spiritual help is needed. My faith sees him securing victory in the midst of the earth. My God, my King, thou art working all things gloriously from thy vantage ground, and ere long the groans and strifes of battle shall end in Hallelujahs unto the Lord God Omnipotent! Christ's residence in the heavens is clearly in the text.

Here is conspicuously set forth the second coming, a subject which might well have occupied all our time,— "To wait for his Son from heaven." Every chapter of this epistle closes with the Second Advent. Do not deceive yourselves, oh ye ungodly men who think little of Jesus of Nazareth! The day will come when you will change your minds about him. As surely as he died, he lives, and as surely as he lives he will come to this earth again! With an innumerable company of angels, with blast of trumpet that shall strike dismay into the heart of all his enemies, Jesus comes! And when he cometh there shall be a time of judgment, and the rising again of the dead, and "Every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of

him." He may come tomorrow! We know not the times and the seasons; these things are in the Father's keeping; but that he comes is certain, and that he will come as a thief in the night to the ungodly is certain too. Lay no flattering unction to your souls as though when he was crucified there was an end of him; it is but the beginning of his dealings with you, though you reject him. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

A further doctrine in the text is that Christ is a deliverer—"Jesus delivering us from the wrath coming,." What a blessed name is this! Deliverer! Press the cheering title to your breast. He delivereth by himself bearing the punishment of sin. He has delivered, he is delivering, he always will deliver them that put their trust in him.

But there was something to be delivered from, and that is, the coming wrath, which is mentioned here. "Oh," saith one, "that is a long, way off, that wrath to come!" If it were a long way off it were wise for you to prepare for it. He is unsafe who will be destroyed most certainly, however distant that destruction may be. A wise man should not be content with looking as an ox doth, as far as his eye can carry him, for there is so much beyond, as sure as that which is seen. But it is not far-off wrath which is here mentioned; the text saith, "who delivereth us from the wrath coming"; that is, the wrath which is now coming; for wrath is even now upon the unbelieving. As for those Jews who had rejected Christ. the apostle says of them in the sixteenth verse of the next chapter, "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." The siege of Jerusalem, and the blindness of Israel, are a terrible comment upon these words. "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." It is said of every one that believeth not in Christ Jesus, that "the wrath of God abideth on him." "God is angry with the wicked every day." This wrath abideth upon some of you. It is the joy of believers that they are delivered from this wrath which is daily coming upon unbelievers, and would come upon themselves if they had not been delivered from it by the atoning sacrifice.



There is evidently in the text the doctrine of a great division between men and men. "He hath delivered us." All men have not faith, and therefore all men are not delivered from wrath. Today there is such a division; the "condemned-already" and the "justified" are living side by side; but ere long the separation shall be more apparent. While some will go away into everlasting punishment, the people of God will be found pardoned and absolved, and so will be glorified for ever.

Lastly, there is here the doctrine of assurance. Some say, "How are you to know that you are saved?" It can be known; it ought to be known. "Surely," cries one, "it is presumption to say that you are sure." It is presumption to live without knowing that you are delivered from wrath. Here the apostle speaks of it as a thing well known, that "Jesus delivers us from the wrath coming." He does not say "if," or "perhaps," but he writes that it is so, and therefore he knew it, and we may know it. My brother, you may know that you are saved. "That would make me inexpressibly happy," cries one. Just so, and that is one of the reasons why we would have you know it this day. God saith, "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life," and therefore the believer may be sure that he has it. Our message is, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." God make you to escape that dreadful doom! May you be delivered from the wrath which is coming for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **The Sun Of Righteousness**

In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom

coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. - Psalm 19:4-6

The Sun of righteousness. - Malachi 4:2

We should feel quite justified in applying the language of the 19th Psalm to our Lord Jesus Christ from the simple fact that he is so frequently compared to the sun; and especially in the passage which we have given you as our second text, wherein he is called "the Sun of Righteousness." But we have a higher justification for such a reading of the passage, for it will be in your memories that, in the 10th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul, slightly altering the words of this psalm, applies them to the gospel and the preachers thereof. "Have they not heard?" said he, "Yea, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." So that what was here spoken of the sun by David, is referred by Paul to the gospel, which is the light streaming from Jesus Christ, "the Sun of Righteousness." We can never err if we allow the New Testament to interpret the Old: comparing spiritual things with spiritual is a good mental and spiritual exercise for us; and I feel, therefore, that we shall not be guilty of straining the text at all when we take the language of David in relation to the sun, and use it in reference to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do not your hearts often say, "What shall we do, or what shall we say to render honor unto our Redeemer?" Have you not often felt confounded as to what offering you shall bring to him? If you had been Possessor of all the worlds, you would have laid them at his feet; if the universe had been your heritage, you would cheerfully have resigned it to him, and felt happy in stripping yourself of everything, that he might be rendered the more glorious by your sacrifice. Since you have not all this wealth, have you not again and again asked of your soul,

"Oh what shall I do,  
My Savior to praise?"

I would write the best of poems if so I could extol him, but the faculty is

not in me; I would sing the sweetest of songs, and compose the most melting music, if I could, and count art, and wit, and music exalted by being handmaidens to him; but, wherewithal shall I adore him, before whom the best music on earth must be but discord; and how shall I set him forth, the very skirts of whose garments are bright with insufferable light? At such times you have looked the whole world through to find metaphors to heap upon him; you have culled all the fair flowers of nature, and made them into garlands to cast at his feet, and you have gathered all earth's gems and precious things wherewith to crown his head, but you have been disappointed with the result, and have cried out with our poet: -

"The whole creation can afford  
But some faint shadows of my Lord;  
Nature, to make his beauties known,  
Must mingle colors not her own."

At such times, while ransacking land, and sea, and sky for metaphors, you have probably looked upon the sun, and have said: "This great orb, the lord of light and lamp of day, is like my Savior; it is the faint image of his excellent glory whose countenance shineth as the sun in its strength." You have done well to seize on such a figure. What Milton calls the golden-tressed sun is the most glorious object in creation, and in Jesus the fullness of glory dwells; the sun is at the same time the most influential of existences, acting upon the whole world, and truly our Lord is, in the deepest sense, "of this great world both eye and soul; he "with benignant ray sheds beauty, life, and joyance from above. The sun is, moreover, the most abiding of creatures; and therein it is also a type of him who remaineth from generation to generation, and is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. The king of day is so vast and so bright that the human eye cannot bear to gaze upon him; we delight in his beams, but we should be blinded should we continue to peer into his face; even yet more brilliant is our Lord by nature, for as God he is a consuming fire, but he deigns to smile upon us with milder beams as our brother and Redeemer. Jesus, like the sun, is the center and soul of all things, the fullness of all good, the lamp that lights us, the fire that warms us, the magnet that guides and controls us; he is the source and fountain of all life, beauty,

fruitfulness, and strength; he is the fosterer of tender herbs of penitence, the quickener of the vital sap of grace, the ripener of fruits of holiness, and the life of everything that grows within the garden of the Lord. Whereas to adore the sun would be idolatry; it were treason not to worship ardently the divine Sun of Righteousness.

Jesus Christ is the great, the glorious, the infinitely blessed; even the sun fails to set hire forth; but, as it is one of the best figures we can find, be it ours to use it this day. We will think of Jesus as the Sun this morning; first as in the text; secondly, as he is to us; and then, thirdly, for a few minutes, we will bask in his beams.

#### I. First, then, we will contemplate Jesus AS THE SUN IN THE TEXT.

Note how the passage begins: "In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun." Kings were accustomed in their pompous progresses through their dominions to have canopies of splendor borne aloft over them, so that marching in the midst of their glittering soldiery they were themselves the main attraction of the gorgeous pageant. Our Lord Jesus Christ in his church is, as it were, traversing the heavens in a majestic tabernacle, and, like the sun, scattering his beams among men. The Redeemer is canopied by the adoration of his saints, for he "inhabith the praises of Israel." He is from day to day advancing in his glorious matchings through the universe, conquering and to conquer, and he will journey onward till the dispensation shall terminate, and the gospel age shall be closed by his second advent. When the text saith that there is a tabernacle set for the sun in the firmament, we are reminded of Christ as dwelling in the highest heavens. He is not alone the Christ of ancient history, but he is the Christ of to-day. Think not always of him as the lowly man despised and rejected, as nailed to the cross, or buried in the tomb; he is not here, for he is risen, but he still exists, not as a dream or phantom, but as the real Christ. Doubt it not, for up yonder, in the seventh heaven, the Lord has set a tabernacle for the Sun of Righteousness. There Jesus abides in splendor inconceivable, the joy and glory of all those blessed spirits who, having believed in him on the earth, have come to behold him in the heavens.

"Bright, like a sun, the Savior sits,  
And spreads eternal noon;  
No evenings there, nor gloomy nights,  
To want the feeble moon."

That Jesus lives is a deep well of consolation to the saints, and did we always remember it our hearts would not be troubled. If we always remembered that Jesus both lives and reigns; our joys would never wither. We worship him, it is true, as one who was slain and hath redeemed us unto God by his blood; but we also extol him as one who is "alive for evermore, and hath the keys of death and of hell."

Let your faith to-day behold Jesus sitting at the right hand of God, even the Father. He sits there because his atoning work is done, and he is receiving the infinite reward which his Father promised him. He is exalted as a king upon his throne, expecting until his enemies are made his footstool. He dwells within his tabernacle of praise, adored and admired by angels and glorified spirits. He sits there, not as a weary one, feeble and exhausted, but with the keys of universal monarchy at his girdle, for "the government is upon his shoulder, and his name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God." I want you fully to grasp the thought of the living Savior,—of the Sun in his tabernacle in the highest heavens, for this must be the fulcrum upon which we shall work this morning. We shall get our leverage here: the living Savior, the mighty Savior, the reigning Savior; he is the church's joy and hope in the present and for all years to come.

The text proceeds to speak of Jesus as the sun, and describes him first as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber. A beautiful description indeed of the sun when he rises in the early morning. He comes forth from the vast obscure, as from within a secret chamber. He withdraws the veil of night, and floods the earth with fluid gold. From curtains of purple and vermillion, he looks forth, and scatters orient pearl around him. Clad with a blaze of glory, he begins the race of day. Thus our Lord Jesus Christ when he rose from the dead, was as the sun unveiling itself. He came forth from the sepulcher as a bridegroom from his chamber. Observe that dear name of bridegroom. The Lord of heaven and earth,

between whom and us there was an infinite distance, has deigned to take our humanity into union with himself of the most intimate kind. Among men, there is no surer mode of making peace between two contending parties, than for a marriage to be established between them. It has often so been done, and thus wars have been ended, and alliances have been established. The Prince of Peace on heaven's side condescends to be married to our nature, that henceforth heaven and earth may be as one. Our Lord came as the bridegroom of his church out of his chamber, when he was born of the virgin and was revealed to the shepherds and the wise men of the east; yet, in a certain sense, he still continued in his chamber as a bridegroom all his life, for he was hidden and veiled, the Jewish world knew not their king; though he spake openly in their streets and sought not mystery, yet he was unknown, they did not discern him; and in some respects he did not then desire to be discerned, for he often bade his disciples to tell no man what was done. That was the time when the bridegroom was in his chamber, being made perfect through suffering and perfectly conformed unto his church, hearing her sicknesses and her sorrows, suffering her wants, enduring her shame, and thus completing the marriage union between the two. To this end, he actually descended by dark steps of anguish into the silent inner room of the grace, and there he slept in his chamber, perfectly wedded to his church. Come and look at him, you who admire the lover of your souls; he stooped to death and the sepulcher, because manhood had fallen under their yoke; his church was subject to death, and he must die. She deserved to stiffer the penalty due to God's insulted law, and, therefore, Jesus bowed his head to the stroke.

"Yea, said the Son, with her I'll go  
Through all the depths of sin and woe;  
And on the cross will even dare  
The bitter pains of death to bear."

And he did bear them, and in the darksome chamber of the tomb, he proved how true a bridegroom he was to his church. Before his great race began, of which we are soon to speak, it behoved our mighty champion to descend into the lowest parts of the earth, and sleep among the dead. Before every day there is a night wherein darkness seems to triumph. It behoved Christ to suffer, and then to rise again. His descent was

necessary to his ascent; his sojourn in the chamber to his race and victory.

Thus I have introduced to you the prelude of the race, the bridegroom in his chamber. Now observe the coming out of it. The sun comes forth, at the appointed hour, from the gates of day, and begins to gladden the earth; even so on the third day, early in the morning, Jesus, our Lord, arose from his sleep, and there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulcher. Then did the Sun of Righteousness arise. Then did the great Bridegroom come forth from his chamber, and begin his joyful race. It must have been a ravishing sight to have beheld the risen Savior; well might the disciples hold him by the feet and worship him. Methinks, if ever angels sung more sweetly at one time than another, it must have been on that first Easter morning, when they saw the divine champion break his bonds of death asunder, and rise into the glorious resurrection life. Then was he revealed to the sons of men; and, no longer hidden: he began to tell his disciples the meaning of those enigmas which had been dark to them; things which they had not understood, which seemed inexplicable, were all opened up by him, for now was his time to come out of his chamber. His words, though plain enough, had aforetime hidden him even from those who loved him; but now he speaketh no more in proverbs, but showeth them openly concerning himself and the Father. He hath laid aside the incognito in which he traversed the earth as a stranger, and he is now divinely familiar with his friends, bidding them even touch his hands and his side. In his death the veil was rent, and in his resurrection the High Priest came forth in his robes of glory and beauty. A little while he was gone away, but he returned from the secret chambers of the ivory palaces, and showed himself unto his disciples. Blessed were the eyes that saw him in that day.

Though during the forty days in which our Lord lingered among his followers upon earth we may truly say that he had come out of his chamber, we perceive that he more fully did so when, after the forty days had been accomplished, he took his disciples to the top of Olivet, and there ascended into heaven, out of their sight. Then had the sun indeed ascended above the horizon to make his glories stream along the heavens.

See ye not the angelic bands poising themselves upon the wing in mid-air, waiting until he shall return all gloving with the victory non in long and deadly fight. Mark ye well that matchless spectacle as he is "seen of angels."

"The helmed cherubim  
And sworded seraphim  
Are seen in glittering ranks, with wings displayed."

They have hastened to meet the Prince of Glory, and attend him to his ancient patrimony. Right glad are an the heavenly band to welcome back the Captain of the Lord's host, and, therefore, they harp in loud and solemn quire to Heaven's triumphant Heir. As for the glorified of mortal race, redeemed of old by his blood which in the fullness of time was shed, they hail him with gladdest hymn, and lift up their sweetest symphonies to extol him who finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. Then the bridegroom came out of his chamber with fit marriage music: his beauties hidden awhile in the chamber, where he vies regarded as without form or comeliness, blazed forth with renewed splendor, such as confounded both sun and moon.

In another respect, Christ came out of his chamber at his ascension, because, when he ascended on high, leading captivity captive, he received and gave gifts for men. The gifts were intended for the manifestation of himself. His church, which is his body, was by his own command sitting still in the chamber, tarrying till power was given. But, on a sudden, the bridegroom's power was felt, for there was heard the sound as of a rushing mighty wind, which filled all the place, and then descending upon each favored head came the cloven tongue, and, straightway, you could see that the bridegroom had come out of his chamber, for the multitude in the street began to hear his voice. It was Peter that spake, we say, but far rather was it Christ, the bridegroom, who spake by Peter. It was the sun, from the chambers of the east, bursting through the clouds, and beginning to shine on Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and Rome, and Egypt, and making the multitudes in far off lands to see the day which prophets and kings had waited for, but which had never visited their eyes. Do you hear the joyful



motion among the people, the joy mingled with the sorrows of repentance? This is the singing of birds, and these the dewdrops which hail the rising sun. The people cry, "What must we do to be saved?"—the shadows are fleeing. They believe in Jesus, and are baptized into his name,—the true light is shining. Three thousand souls are added in one day to the church, for truly the bridegroom is awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine (Psalm 78:65). Then was the gospel race commenced with a glorious burst of strength, such as only our champion could have displayed. Meditate at your leisure upon this first general manifestation of our Lord to the general multitude. He had not gone out of Israel before. "I am not sent," said he, "save to the lost sheep of the House of Israel." Palestine was his chamber: he went to the windows of it, and looked forth on Tyre and Sidon wistfully; but he had not come forth of his chamber till that day, when the gospel began to be preached to the Gentiles also, and in fulfillment of the gift of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out upon all flesh, the apostles went everywhere preaching the word. When even we, the dwellers in the far off northern isles, received the gospel, then, indeed, had the bridegroom come forth out of his chamber.

But enough of this, or time will fail me. After the coming forth, we have to consider in the text his course. The course of Jesus has been as that of the sun, or like that of a mighty champion girded for running.

Notice, under this head, his continuance. Our Lord's gospel has been no meteor that flashed for a while and then passed away, but it has remained as the sun in the heavens. What systems of philosophy have come and none since on Calvary the Christ of God was lifted up! What speculations, what lo-heres and lo-theres have shone forth, have dazzled fools, and have been quenched in night, since he left the chamber of his marriage! Yet he continues still the same; nor, brethren, are there any marks of decrepitude either in him or in his gospel. They tell us that the idolatry of Hindostan is evidently crumbling: it falls not yet, but it is worm-eaten through and through. Equally sure is it that the false prophet holds but a feeble swats among his followers, and we can all see that though popery makes desperate efforts, and its extremities are vigorous, yet it is paralyzed at its heart, and the Vatican is made to feel than its time of

power is short.

As for the gospel, it wears the dew of its youth after eighteen centuries of struggles; and it predominates most in those young nations which have evidently a history before them. The old systems are now most favored by those nations which are left behind in the race of civilisation, but the peoples whom God has made quick by nature are those to whom he has given to be receptive of his grace. There are grand days coming for the church of God. Voltaire said that he lived in the twilight of Christianity; and so he did, but it was the twilight of the morning, not the twilight of the evening. Glory be unto God, the little cloud the size of a man's hand is spreading; it begins to cover the heavens, and the day is not far distant when the sound of abundance of rain shall be heard. Christ was not a strong man, who bounded forth at a leap, and then put forth no more strength, but he rejoiced to continue his work, and to run his race. He was not a shooting star that sparkles for a moment, but a sun that shall shine throughout the livelong day.

Note next in this metaphor the unity of our Lord's course, for it is clear in the text: "Rejoicing as a strong man to run the race." A race is one thing; there is the one goal, and the man gathers up his strength to reach it. He has nothing else to think of. They may throw the golden apples in his road, but he does not observe them; they may sound harp and sackbut to the right, and breathe the lute or sweeter instruments of music to the left, but he is deaf to all; he has a race to run, and he throws his whole strength into it. This is a fit image of our Lord; he has never turned aside, he has never been compelled to retrace his steps, to revise his doctrine, to amend his system, or change his tactics. On, on, on has the course of Jesus been, shining more and more unto the perfect day.

A certain people now-a-days who yet dare to call themselves Christians, are always hankering after something new, pining for novelties, and boasting of their fresh discoveries, though, forsooth, their fresh things are only fragments of broken images of heresies, which our fathers dashed to shivers centuries ago. The great thinkers of the present day are nothing more than mere translators—you know the London meaning of that word—buyers of old shoes who patch them up, and send them forth again as if

they were something new. Old shoes and clouted are common enough among those Gibeonites who would deceive Israel, and whose boast is that they have come from far, and bring us treasures of wisdom from remote regions. Sirs, we want not your new things, for our Lord's race is the same as of old, and as he continues in one course so also will we. To spread righteousness and, in so doing, to save sinners and to glorify God, this is the one purpose of Christ; from it he will never cease, and nothing shall ever tempt him from the pursuit of it. Look, I pray you, with pleasure and see how our Lord, from his first coming out of his chamber until now, has continued still in the gospel to thine forth with rays of glory, without variableness or shadow of a turning. Though we believe not, he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself; he changes not in work or way. For Zion's sake he worketh hitherto, and the pleasure of the Lord prospers in his hand.

But now, observe next, the notable idea of strength which the text conveys to us. "Rejoicing as a strong man to run his race." It is no drudgery the ascended Lord to carry on his cause;

"The baffled prince of hell  
In vain new efforts tries,  
Truth's empire to repel  
By cruelty and lies;  
Th' infernal gates shall rage in vain  
Conquest awaits the Lamb once slain."

There is a race to be run but Jesus is strong enough for it; he does not come panting up to the starting place, and thence go creeping on, but like a strong man he surveys the course. He knows that he is equal to it, and, therefore, he delights in it. When he began his race he was opposed, but the opposition only made him triumph the more readily, for "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." When our Lord arose like the sun, the clouds were thick and heavy, but he painted their fleecy skirts with gold; persecution hung over the eastern horizon, but he turned it into the imperial purple of his sovereignty. As he pursued his course the ice of centuries melted, the dense gloom of ages disappeared. No chains could bind him, and no bonds could hold him. He

dashed on with undiminished energy, and the gates of hell could not prevail.

As no cloud has ever stayed the sun as he has "whirled his car along the ethereal plain," so no difficulties impeded the onward course of the gospel in the days of its dawning. To the first days of the church Thomson's lines to the sun are fully applicable -

"Now, flaming up the heavens, the potent sun  
Melts into limpid air the high-raised clouds,  
And morning fogs, that hover'd round the hills,  
In party-coloured bands; till wide, unveiled,  
The face of nature shines, from where earth seems  
Far stretch'd around, to meet the bending sphere."

The gospel soon shed its light in every land, and all nations felt its benign power. Men ceased to persecute, and bowed before the cross.

Anon fresh clouds arose, and the church passed through them. Errors and heresies multiplied, filthy dreamers led away a huge apostacy, Rome became the mother of harlots and abominations, but the true church, and the true Christ within her, went right on. The church was not less triumphant in her second trial than in her first. Rome Papal was overcome as, surely as Rome Pagan. Popes were no more her conquerors than bloody emperors had been of yore. To the thoughtful eye the sun of Christ is not less bright over the valleys of Piedmont than over the waves of the sea which bore Paul and his fellow apostles. The champion's race was as eager and as triumphant as before.

Since then, dense banks of spiritual deadness and false teaching have barred the visible heavens, and have appeared to mortal sight an ebon wall impenetrable as steel, but the Lord reigneth. He that sitteth in the heavens doth laugh, the Lord doth have them in derision. Strong is his right hand, and his enemies shall be broken. On goes the Sun of Righteousness, nothing impedes him, his tabernacle is above them all, he rideth on the heavens, yea, he rideth on the wings of the wind. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength.

Christ has failed in nothing, the decrees have been executed, the eternal purposes have been fulfilled, the elect have been saved, his kingdom is established, and shall continue as long as the sun. Who shall stay his hand? Who shall resist his will?

Observe, therefore, how the force is coupled with joy. Weakness brings sorrow, but strength begets joy. Christ is always glad, and he would have his people rejoice, for his cause goeth right on and he shall not fail nor be discouraged. He rejoices as he divides the spoil with the strong. When a man has a task to do which is easy to him, and which he can readily perform, he sings at his work; and so this day doth Christ rejoice over his church with joy, and triumph over her with singing. His cause goes on in spite of foes, and his strength is so great, that even the battle fills him with delight. I remember to have heard a Welsh preacher make use of the following simile. He was speaking of the joy of Christ in heaven, and he said, "You tell me that the church is sorrowful on earth and I tell you that Christ is joyous in heaven; and then you ask me how this can be? You see yonder mother with her babe, and she is washing the child; its face is foul and she desires to see it shine with brightness, she would see it white as the marble mingled with the redness of the rose. Therefore she washes it; but the child cries, it is fretful and knows not what is good for it, so it whines and struggles; the mother does not cry, or share its sorrow, she keeps on singing because she knows that all is right, and that her darling will smile like a cherub when all is over; she sees the good results coming, while the babe only feels the present discomfort, so she sings her song and never stops, let the child cry as it may." And so the Lord Jesus has pleasure in his work; he is purifying his church, and making her fit to be presented to himself, and though she winces and laments, it is the flesh that makes her so to do. The Lord sings still joyously, because he sees the end from the beginning! Earth may be swathed in mist, but the sun is never so, he shines gloriously evermore.

The text mentions one other fact connected with Jesus as the sun,—"There is nothing hid from the heat thereof;" by which is meant, nothing is able to escape the powerful influence of Christ Jesus. His own chosen people must, in due season, feel his power to save. They may wander as they do, and sin as they may, but when the time appointed

comes, they shall be redeemed out of the land of the enemy. The sun's power is felt in the darkest and deepest mines; that there is a sun still shining might be discoverable even in the bowels of the earth! and so, in the darkest haunts of sin, God's elect shall be made to feel the sovereign power and omnipotent grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you and I shall die, and when we shall be buried in the grave, we shall not there be hid from the heat of this Sun of Righteousness, by-and-by he shall kindle life within our bones again; he shall create a soul within the ribs of death, and we shall spring upward as the grass, and as the willows by the watercourses, when the sun renews the year. Our dry bones shall live, and in our flesh shall we see God. Meanwhile, while the gracious operations of Christ thus fall on all his elect, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof, other operations are at work on all the sons of men. He rules in providence over all people, whether they believe in him or not, and if men do not accept the gospel, yet they are affected by it, in some way or other. Even the darkest parts of the world feel something of the presence of the Christ of God. Responsibility is heaped on those that hear of him and reject him; he becomes a savor of death unto death where he is not a savor of life unto life. There is nothing hid from the heat thereof. Oh, how this ought to encourage you Christian people to work! The Lord has gone before you; there is nothing hid from the heat of his presence. Jesus is King of the darkest settlements of the heathen, and he reigns in the lowest haunts of London's vice. Go there, for you are not intruders; you have a right to go any there in your Master's dominions; and the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof. Be not afraid to face the vilest blasphemer, or the most foul-mouthed infidel, for Christ is Master, and if you bring the gospel before his enemy, he will be made to feel its power, either so as to yield to it a willing submission, or else to be condemned by it, In either case, you shall have done your part, and uttered your testimony, and freed your head of his blood.

In these thoughts combined, we see Christ Jesus, the risen Savior, pursuing his ever glorious course till he shall descend again the second time to take his people to himself to reign with him.

II. Very briefly indeed in the second place. Let us think for a moment of JESUS AS A SUN TO US. Worship and bless our Savior, it is ever meet

and right to do so. Let him be extolled and be very high. Some would give him a secondary place, let it never be so with us. As the sun is the center, so is Christ; as the sun is the great motor, the first source of motive power, so is Christ to his people; as the sun is the fountain from which light, life, and heat perpetually flow, so is the Savior; as the sun is the fructifier by which fruits multiply and ripen, so is Christ: and as the sun is the regulator and rules the day, and marks the seasons, even so is Jesus owned as Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Think these thoughts over in the following respects. When you take the Bible remember that Christ is the center of the Scriptures. Do not put election in the center; some do, and they make a one-sided system. Do not put man in the center,—some do, and they fall into grievous errors. Christ is the center of the entire system of the gospel, and all will be seen to move with regularity when you perceive that he is the chief fixed point; you cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly of him. He is the center and King of all truth.

He is the center of the Church too. Not the pastor, not the church itself, not any rule or government, no bishop, no priest, and no Pope can be our center, Christ alone is our central sun. We follow as planets where he leads the way: around him we revolve, but we own no other Lord.

Let it be so in the world that even there Christ governs and is the center of all history. You will understand history better when you know this, for this is the key of the world's story, the reason for the rise and fall of empires. You shall understand all things when you know Immanuel, God with us.

And let him have this place in your hearts. There enthrone him! Establish him as the central sun, and let him rule your entire being, enlightening your understanding, warming your hearts, filling all your powers, passions, and faculties with the fullness of his presence. To have Christ in us, the hope of glory—oh, what blessedness! But let us take care that it is so, for we know not Christ aright unless we give him such a place in our hearts as the sun occupies in God's world.

III. But time fails me, and we must now pass on to the last point, and let us for a minute or two BASK IN HIS BEAMS. How shall we do it?

First, we must realize that he is. Sinner, saint, Christ lives: he who trod the wave of Galilee lives on. He who was marked with the nails rules on. Oh, sinner, does not that comfort you? The Savior lives, the redeemer lives; he who forgives sins still lives. Saint, does not this comfort you? The man of the tender heart still lives, with a bosom still to be leaned upon, and with lips still ready to speak endearing words. There is a tabernacle for the sun; he is not extinct; he thineth still, he blesses still. Bask in his beams, then, by realising that he is.

Then come and lay your souls beneath his divine influence. O my soul, if thou art guilty come and rest in his atonement, if thou art unrighteous come and take his righteousness. If thou art feeble lay hold upon his strength. If thou canst not pray accept him as thine intercessor. If thou art in thyself nothing, take him to be thy all in all. Some creatures delight to warm themselves in the sun, but oh, what a pleasure it is to sun ones self in the presence of Christ. Never mind how little I am, how nothing I am, how vile I am, how foul I am; all I am he has taken to himself, and all he has belongs to me. I sin, but he has taken all my sin: he is righteous and all his righteousness is mine. I am feeble, he is mighty; his mightiness is mine, I wrap myself in his omnipotence. Christ is all and Christ is mine. Why, I utterly fail when trying to talk about such things as these; talking is but stuttering on such a theme. Faith must enjoy rather than express her delight. Come, plunge ye all into this sea of sweetness, dive deep into this abyss of happiness—Christ Jesus is yours for ever and for ever. The sun is very great but it is all for me, and Christ is very bright and glorious, but he is all my own.

Then next, if you would sun yourself in his beams, imbibe the joy of his strength. He is like a bridegroom rejoicing to run his race. Now, brethren and sisters, I am often afraid lest in serving God, we should grow dispirited and downcast, and think that things are not going on as they should, the joy of the Lord is your strength. If you begin to say, "Our cause is very feeble, the gospel will not prevail among us, you will slacken your efforts." Do not so, but remember that Jesus Christ does not fret or



sadden himself about his kingdom. He runs on full of strength and rejoices as he runs; and I bid you in the power of the Holy-Spirit, do the same. Cast away your doubts and fears, the kingdom is the Lord's, and he will deliver his adversaries, into your hands. I fret and worry myself sometimes about these inventors of new doctrines, and those ritualists who bring up the old rates and stale tallow of the past ages. Let us fret no more, but think that these are only like the clouds to the great sun; the gospel will still proceed in its career. Let us laugh the enemies of God to scorn and defy them to their faces. They defy the Lord God of Israel as did the Philistine of old, but God himself is mightier than they, and the victory is sure to the true church and to the gospel of his Son. Be ye very courageous! Be not alarmed with sudden fear! Trust in Jehovah, for the Lord will surely give unto his own servants the victory in the day of battle.

And brethren, if you would sun yourselves in Christ's beams, let me bid you reflect his light whenever you receive it. He is the sun, and you are the planet, but every planet shines, shines with borrowed light. It conceals no light, but sends back to other worlds what the sun has given to it. Cast back on men the light which Jesus gives you. Triumph in Christ's circuit, that it is so broad as to comprehend the world, and compass all time. Enlarge your oven hearts, and let your light thine far and wide, believing that the power of God which gives you light will go with the light which you reflect. Comfort your hearts! "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Who shall stop the Christ of God in his race? Let him first go pluck the sun from his sphere. Who shall stay the champion of God who has girt himself for his race? Whosoever cometh in his way woe unto him, for if Samson smote a thousand men hip and thigh, what shall our immortal Samson do? Let all the armies of pope and devil come against him, he will utterly defy them, and drive them like chaff before the wind.

Sing ye unto his name, for he hath triumphed gloriously! Begin the everlasting song, for he is the Lord and God, and to the uttermost ages shall he reign; yea, for ever and ever is he priest and King.

God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **The Sunday School Teacher - A Steward**

Give an account of thy stewardship. - Luke 16:2

We have heard many times in our lives, that we are all stewards to Almighty God. We hold it as a solemn truth of our religion, that the rich man is responsible for the use which he makes of his wealth; that the talented man must give an account to God of the interest which he getteth upon his talents; that every one of us, in proportion to our time and opportunities, must give an account for himself before Almighty God. But, my dear brothers and sisters, our responsibility is even deeper and greater than that of other men. We have the ordinary responsibility which falls upon all professors of religion, to give an account of all we have to God; but besides this, you and I have the extraordinary responsibilities of our official standing—you, as teachers for Christ in your classes; and others of us as preachers for him before the great congregation. The first responsibility is too heavy for any man to fulfill. Apart from divine grace, it is not possible that any man should so use all that God has given him as to be accepted at last with a "Well done thou good and faithful servant;" yet even if that were possible, it would still remain an utter impossibility for us fully to sustain the fearful weight of responsibility which rests upon us as teachers of the Word of God to our fellow immortals. Upon our necks there are two yokes; Sovereign grace can make them light and easy, but apart from that they will gall our shoulders; for they are, of themselves, too heavy for us to bear. Common responsibility is as Solomon's whip; but extraordinary responsibility derived from official standing when not regarded, will be as the scorpion of Rehoboam, its little finger shall be thicker than its father's loins. Woe unto the watchman who warns them not; woe unto the minister who fails to teach the truth; woe unto the Sabbathschool teacher who is unfaithful to his

trust. Now, let us try to stir one another up, upon this seriously important matter. You will pray for me while I preach, that I may utter some things that may do good to all now present, and I will labor that God may, in answer to your prayers, give me words and thoughts which shall be blessed to you.

Now, first, let me show *the meaning of our being stewards* then let us consider *what kind of account we shall have to give*; and lastly, let us notice *the days of reckoning when we OUGHT to cast up our account, and the days of reckoning when we MUST give in our account.*

### I. First, then, THE STEWARD—WHAT IS HE?

In the first place, the steward is a *servant*. He is one of the greatest of servants; but he is only a servant. Perhaps he is the bailiff of a farm, and looks, to all intents and purposes, like a country farmer: he rides over his master's estate, and has many men under him; still he is only a servant, he is under authority, he is only a steward. Perhaps he is steward in the house of some gentleman, who employs him to see after the whole of his establishment, in order that he may be free from cares. In that capacity he is himself a master, but still he is a servant; for he has one over him. Let him be as proud as he pleases, he has little to be proud of, for the only rank he holds in life, is the rank of a servant, Now, the minister, and the Sunday-school teacher specially stand in the rank of servants. Why, we are none of us our own masters; we are not independent gentlemen. who may do as we please, our classes are not our own farms, which we may till in our own manner, and neglect if we please, out of which we may produce any harvest, or none at all, at our own discretion. No, we are nothing better than stewards, and we are to labor for our Master in heaven. What a strange thing it is to see a minister or a teacher giving himself fine airs, as if he were everybody in the world and might do as he pleased. Is it not an anomaly? How is he to talk about the sacrifices that he makes, when he is spending only his master's property? How is he to boast about the time which he expends, when his time is not his own? It is all his Master's. He is a servant, and therefore, do he what he may, lie only discharges the duty for which he is well rewarded. He has no reason to be proud, or to lord it over others, for whatever his power among them

may be, he is himself neither more nor less than a servant. Let each of us try to recollect that henceforth "I am only a servant." If a superintendent puts a teacher to a class which she does not like, she will recollect that she is a *servant*. She does not allow her servants at home to stand up and say, they are not going to do scullerywork but will only wait at table; they are servants, and must do as they are bidden; and if we felt that we were servants, we should not object to do what we are told for Christ's sake: though we would not do it at the dictation of men yet for Christ's sake we do it as unto the Lord. We do not suppose that our servants will come to us at night, and expect us to say to them, "You have done your work very well to-day," we do not imagine that they will look for constant commendation. They are servants, and when they get their wages, that is their encomium on their work. They may judge they are worth their money, or else we should not keep them. When you do your work for Jesus, recollect you are only a servant. Do not expect always to have that encouragement, which some people are constantly crying after. If you get encouragement from your pastor from other teachers, from your friends, be thankful; but if you do not get it, go on with your work notwithstanding. You are a servant, and when you receive your reward, that is of grace, and not of debt, then you will have the highest encomium that can be passed upon you, the plaudit of your Lord, and eternal glow with him whose you are, and whom you desire to serve.

But still while the steward is a servant, he is an *honorable one*. It does not do for the other servants in the house to tell him that he is a servant. He will not endure that: he knows it, and feels it he desires to act and work as such, but at the same time, he is an honored servant. Now, those who serve Christ in the office of teaching, are honorable men and women. I remember to have heard a very unseemly discussion between two persons, as to whether the minister was not superior to the Sabbath-school teacher. It reminded me of that talk of the disciples, as to who among them was the greatest. Why, we are all of us "the least," if we feel aright, and though we must each of us exalt our office as God hath given it to us, yet, I see not anywhere in the Bible, anything that should lead me to believe that the office of the preacher is more honorable than that of the teacher. It seems to me, that every Sunday-school teacher has a right to put "Reverend" before his name as much as I have, or if not, if he

discharges his trust he certainly is a "Right Honourable." He teaches his congregation and preaches to his class. I may preach to more, and he to less, but still he is doing the same work, though in a smaller sphere. I am sure I can sympathise with Mr. Carey, when he said of his son Felix, who left the missionary work to become an ambassador, "Felix has drivelled into an ambassador;" meaning to say, that he was once a great person as a missionary, but that he had afterwards accepted a comparatively insignificant office. So I think we may say of the Sabbath-school teacher, if he gives up his work because he cannot attend to it, on account of his enlarged business, he drivels into a rich merchant. If he forsakes his teaching because he finds there is so much else to do, he drivels into something less than he was before; with one exception, if he is obliged to give up to attend to his own family, and makes that family his Sabbath-school class, there is no drivelling there; he stands in the same position as he did before. I say they who teach, they who seek to pluck souls as brands from the burning, are to be considered as honored persons, second far to him from whom they received their commission; but still in some sweet sense lifted up to become fellows with him, for he calls them his brethren and his friends. "The servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends, for all things I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

Only one more thought here. The steward is also a servant *who has very great responsibility attached to his position*. A sense of responsibility seems to a right man always a weighty thing. To do a thing where there is no responsibility involved at all, is a very slight matter, and hence we find in ordinary affairs that the labor which involves no trust is but poorly paid. But where there is a large amount of trust reposed the labor is paid in proportion. Now the work of the Sabbath-school teacher is one of the most responsible in the world. It has sometimes staggered me to think how greatly God trusts you and me. You remember the story of the prodigal. It finds a counterpart in each of us, who after long wandering in sin have come home to Jesus. I sometimes think that a prudent father, when the prodigal was restored to his house, could receive him to his heart, would press him to his bosom, and give him a share of all his wealth, but would be very slow to trust him in any matter of responsibility. The next market-day the old gentlemen would say, "Now

John I love you with all my heart, but you know you ran away once, and spent your living riotously; I must send your elder brother to market; I cannot trust you with my purse: I love you; I have totally forgiven you, at the same time I cannot yet rely upon you." Why does not God say so to us? Instead of that, when he takes poor prodigals to his heart, he trusts us with his most precious jewels, he trusts us with immortal souls. He permits us to be the means of seeking his lost sheep, and then allows us to feed the lambs after they are gathered. He puts the prodigal into the most important station, and hath confidence in him. Then my brethren and sisters, seeing he hath been gracious enough to repose confidence in such unworthy persons, shall we deceive him? Oh no; let us earnestly labor as stewards that every part of the estate committed to us shall be found in good order when our Master comes; that every jot and tittle of our account shall be found correct when he sums it up in the great day of the audit before his throne. Our office is a very very solemn one. Some think little of it. Some take it upon themselves very lightly. Giddy youths are enticed into the school and not rendered more sober by their connection with it. Let such depart from us. We want none but those who are sober, none but those who solemnly weigh what they are doing, and who enter upon the work as a matter involving life or death, not as a trivial affair which concerns the interests of time, but an awfully solemn thing which even an angel would be incapable of performing, unless he had the abundant assistance of God the Holy Spirit. I have thus endeavored very simply to set forth the idea couched in the word "stewardship." We are servants highly honored, very responsible, and much trusted.

II. And now, THE ACCOUNT—"Give an account of thy stewardship." Let us briefly think of this giving an account of our stewardship.

Let us first notice that when we shall come to give an account of our stewardship before God, that account must be given in *personally*, by every one of us. While we are here, we talk in the mass; but when we come before God, we shall have to speak as individuals. You hear persons boasting about "our Sabbath-school." Many persons are wicked enough to call the Sabbath-school "their school," when they never see it by the year together. They say, "I hope our school is flourishing," when they never

subscribe a halfpenny, when they never give the teachers a word of encouragement, or even a smile, and do not know how many children the school contains. Yet they call it theirs. Thieves that they are, taking to themselves that which does not belong to them! Well, but we, in our measure, make the same mistake. As a ministry, we often talk of the doings of the "body," and what wonders have been done by the "denomination" Now, let us recollect, when we come before God, there will be no judging us in denominations, no dealing with us in schools and in churches, but the account must be given for each one by himself: So, then, thou that hast the infant class, thou wilt have to give thine own account. It was but the other day thou wast finding fault with the conduct of the senior class, and thou wast told then to look at home. Conscience told thee so. But at last, when thou shalt have to stand before God, thou wilt have no account to give of the senior class, but of that infant class committed to thee. And you, my sister, you have been seven or eight years a teacher—you must give an account for yourself, not for that other teacher of another class, of whom you have often boasted, because she has been the means of bringing six seven children to Christ lately. Remember, her six won't be put with your none at all, in order to make the total at the year's end look respectable; but there will stand your great blank at the end of your labors, and there will remain the dark mark for your negligence, for your unpunctuality, your carelessness in your class, without the relief of the bright side of the diligent teacher's success. You must be judged each of you for yourself, not in parties, but one by one. This makes it terrible work, for a man to be looked at all alone. I have known people who could not bear to stand up in a pulpit; the very fact of so many eyes looking upon them seemed so horrible, but how will it be when we must stand up and hear our hearts read by the all-searching eye of God, and when the whole of our career in the offices which we now hold will be published before the sun, and that, I repeat it, without the salvo of the success of others, without any addition to our labors derived from the diligence of other teachers? Come, Mr. Steward, what is your account? Not that one, sir, not that one; *your* account. "Lord, I have brought in the account of the Sunday-school books." "No, not that, the account of *your own* class?" "Well, my Master, I have brought in the account of the class for the last twentyfive years, showing how many were converted." "No, not that; the account of *your own class while you were*

*its teacher.*" "Well, I have brought in the account of the class during the time I was teacher with So-and-so." "No, not that; the account of the class while you were the teacher of it *alone*, the account of how you taught what you taught, how you prayed, how earnestly you labored, how diligently you studied, and what you sought to do for Christ." Not the addenda of the other teacher who helped you in another part of the duty, but your own personal account alone must be brought in before God. "Give an account of *thy* stewardship." Putting it in this light, what account will some of you give in at the last and great day? Just let me stop a minute to charge your memories. What kind of account will it be? I trust a very large number here can humbly in their hearts say "I have done but little, but I did *that* sincerely and prayerfully; may God accept it through Jesus Christ!" But I fear there are some others, who, if they are true to their consciences, will say, "I have done but little; I did that little carelessly. I did it without prayer; I did it without the help of the Holy Spirit." Then, my brother and sister, I hope you will add after that, "Oh, my God, forgive me, and help me from this good hour to be diligent in this divine business, fervent in my spirit, serving the Lord." And may God bless you in that prayer! Make no resolve, but offer a prayer which is better far; and may you be heard in heaven, the dwellingplace of God.

And note again, that while this account must be personal it must be *exact*. You will not, when you present your account before God, present the gross total, but every separate item. When thou givest in thine account of thy stewardship, it will be thus. Thou hadst so many children. What didst thou say to this child, and to this, and to this, and to the other? How often didst thou pray for that child with his bitter temper; for that child with his unbending obstinacy, for that child with its quickness, and its sweet affection; for that child, that sulky one; for that child, the headstrong, vicious one, that had learned all the evils of the street, and seemed to taint others? What didst thou do for each one of these? How didst thou labor for the conversion of every one? And to make the account still more particular it will run thus—What didst thou do for each child on each Sabbath? Thou heardest one child utter an ill word: didst thou reprove it? Thou sawest another child oppress a little one: didst thou deliver the less out of his hand and reprove him and teach both children to love each other? Didst thou notice the follies of each and strive to understand the



temperament of each, so that thou shouldest fit thy discourse or thy prayer to each? Didst thou travail in birth for the conversion of each one? Didst thou agonise in prayer with God, and then didst thou agonise in exhortation with them, beseeching them to be reconciled to Christ? I believe the account will be far more minute than this, when God shall come to try our hearts and reins as well as our works and ways. My poor way of putting it does but becloud the truth which I seek to bring forth, but nevertheless so shall it be; a special and exact account shall be given. And then there shall be an account given, for every opportunity; not only for every child, but for every opportunity of doing good to the child. Did you avail yourself of that afternoon, when the child was in a peculiarly solemn frame because his little brother lay at home dead? Did you seek to send the arrows home when providence had made a wound in his little heart because he had lost his dear mother? Did you seek to turn every event which occurred in the school to account, whether it was joyous or the reverse? God gave you the opportunity, and he will at last ask you what you did with it. We shall many of us make but a sorry account, for we have neglected much that we ought to have done; and the general confession must be ours as teachers, "We have done those things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done."

And then remember, again, the account will be exact as to everything that we did. We shall not only be examined as to how we addressed the school; we may have had peculiar gifts for that, and we may have done well; it will be, "How did you address your own class?" and not that alone, but "How did you study the lessons?" If thou hadst no time it will not be required of thee to do what thou couldst not do, but if thou hadst much leisure how didst thou spend it? Was it for thy children, for thy Master's good, that thou mightest find polished shafts to shoot forth from thy bow, that God might bless thee, by giving thee strength to send them home into the heart? And then, what didst thou do in thy closet? Wast thou cold and careless there? Were thy children forgotten, or didst thou bring them on thy heart, and in thine arms, and with tears and cries commend them to Christ? Ah, Sunday-school teachers, your closet shall be turned into the open air one day, and the contents of your secret chambers be published before the sun. Oh, ye whose cobwebbed closets witness

against you; oh, ye against whom the beam out of the wall explaineth because your voice has not been heard there, against whom the very floor might bear witness, because it hath never felt the weight of your knees, how will you stand this searching test? How will you endure this day of burning, when God shall try you for everything you did, and everything you did not do which you ought to have done, in connection with the work of teaching your children? The account must be exact and precise, as well as personal. I shall not stop to enlarge upon that; your own conscience and judgment can enlarge upon it at home.

Now, remember, once again, that the account must be *complete*. You will not be allowed to leave out something, you will not be allowed to add anything. Perhaps some of you would like to begin with to-morrow, or next Sabbathday, and strike out the past. No, Sunday-school teacher, when God says, "Give an account of thy stewardship," you will have to begin with the day when you first were a teacher. Ah, my God, how many there are who profess to preach the Word, who might well beg that thou wouldest let many a year of their ministry be buried in forgetfulness! Ah, might not some of us fall upon our knees and say "Lord, let me give account of my diligent years, not of my idle years?" But we must begin with our ordination, we must end with our death, and you must begin with the first hour when you sat down in your class, and you must end when life ends, and not till then. Does not this put a very solemn aspect upon your account, some of you? You are always saying, "I will be better to morrow." Will that blot out yesterday? "I must be more diligent in future." Will that redeem the lost opportunities which have departed in the years gone by No; if you have loitered long, and lingered much, you will find the hardest running of to-day will not make up for the loitering of yesterday. There have been some men who, after spending many years in sin, have been doubly diligent for Christ afterwards, but they have always felt that they have only done the day's work in the day, and they mourned over those years which the locusts had eaten, as gone beyond recall. Oh! catch the moments as they fly, Sabbath-school teachers; use the days as they come. Do not be talking about making up for the badness of the first part of the account by the brilliant character of the conclusion; you cannot do it, you must give an account for each day separately, for each year by itself; and do what you may to retrieve your losses, the losses

still stand upon the book, and the Master will say, at last, "How came these here?" And, though they are all covered up in Sovereign grace, if thou believest in Christ Jesus, yet thou wouldest not wish to have any the more stains for that. Because Christ hath washed thee, thou dost not desire to make thyself filthy; because he hath atoned thou dost not desire to commit sin. No, live, my brothers and sisters, as Sundayschool teachers should live. Live as if your own salvation depended upon the strictness of your fulfilling your duty; and yet recollect your salvation does not depend upon that, but on your personal interest in the everlasting covenant, and in the all-prevailing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Israel's strength and Redeemer.

III. And now, though there are many other things I might say, I fear lest I might weary you, therefore, let me notice some occasions when it will be WELL for you all to give an account of your stewardship; and then notice when you MUST give an account of it.

You know there is a proverb, that "short reckonings make long friends," and a very true proverb it is. A man will always be at friendship with his conscience as long as he makes short reckonings with it. It was a good rule of the old Puritans, that of making frank and full confession of sin every night; not to leave a week's sin to be confessed on Saturday night, or Sabbath morning, but to recall the failures, imperfections, and mistakes of the day, in order that we might learn from one day of failure how to achieve the victory on the morrow, and that washing ourselves daily from our sins we might preserve the purity and whiteness of our garments. Brothers and sisters, do the same; make short reckonings. And it will be well for you every Sabbath evening, or at any other time, if so it pleaseth you, to make a reckoning of what you do on the Sabbath. I do not say this in order that you may be encouraged in any self-righteous congratulation that you have done well; because, if you make your reckoning correct, you will never have much cause to congratulate yourself, but always cause to mourn that you did your duty so ill compared with what you ought to have done. When the Sabbath is over and you have been twice to the house of God to teach your class, just sit down and try to recollect what were the points in which you failed. Perhaps you exhibited a hasty temper; you spoke to a boy too sharply

when he was a little rebellious. Perhaps you were too complacent; you saw sin committed, and ought to have reproved it, and you did not do so. If you find out your own failing, that is half the way to a cure. Next Sabbath you can try and set it right.

Then, there are times which Providence puts in your way, which will be excellent seasons for reckoning. For instance, every time a boy or girl leaves the school, there is an opportunity afforded you of thinking to yourselves, "Well, how did I deal with Betsy? How did I treat John? Did I give William such teaching as will help him in his future life, to maintain integrity in the midst of temptation, and preserve righteousness when he shall be subjected to imminent perils? How did I teach the girl? Did I so teach her that she will know her duty when she goes into the world? Did I strive with all my might to lead her to the foot of the cross?" There are many solemn questions which you may put concerning the child. And when you meet with any of them grown up in after years, you will find that a very proper season for giving an account of your stewardship to your conscience, by seeing whether you really did with that person, when a child, as you could have desired.

Then, there is a peculiar time for casting up accounts when a child dies. Ah! what a host of thoughts cluster around the dying-bed of a child whom we have taught. Next to the father and the mother, I should think the Sabbath-school teacher will take the most interest in the dying one. You will recollect, "There lies withering the flower which my hand hath watered; there is an immortal soul about to pass the portals of eternity, whom I have taught. O God, have I taught this dying child the truth, or have I deceived him! Have I dealt faithfully with him? Have I told him of his ruin? Have I set before him how he was fallen in Adam and depraved in himself? Have I told him about the great redemption of Christ? Have I shown him the necessity of regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit? or have I amused him with tales about the historical parts of the Bible and pieces of morality, and kept back the weightier matters of the law? Can I put my hand into his dying hand, and silently lifting my heart to heaven, can I say, "O God thou knowest I am clear of his blood?" Ah! that is a thing that stings the minister often—when he recollects that any of his congregation are dying. When I stand sometimes by the dying-bed of any

of the ungodly in my congregation, it brings many a tearful thought to me. Have I been as earnest as I ought to have been? Did I cry to this man, "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, stay not in all the plain, flee to the mountains! Did I pray for him, weep over him, tell him of his sin, preach Christ simply, plainly, boldly, to him? Was there not an occasion when I used lightness when I ought to have been solemn? Might there not have been a season when I uttered something by mistake, which may have been a pillow for the armhole of his conscience on which he might rest? Have not I helped to smooth his path to hell, instead of putting blocks in his way, and chains across his path that he might be turned out of it and led to seek the Saviour?" Ah! while we know that salvation is all of grace let none of us imagine we are free from the blood of souls, unless we warn them with diligence, unless we preach with faithfulness; for this same Bible which tells me that Christ shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, tells me that if I warn them not, their blood, if they perish, shall be required at my hand.

But now, teacher, let me tell you an occasion when you must give in your account. You may put off all these seasons if you like; you may live as carelessly as you please, but if you have a particle of heart in you, you will have to give an account when you are sick, and cannot go to your class. If your conscience is worth having—which some people's consciences are not, for they are dead and seared—if your conscience is an awakened one, when you are put out of your work, you will begin to think how you did it. You should read the letters of that holy man Rutherford. If ever there was a man who preached the gospel sweetly and with divine unction, I should think it must have been he; and yet when he was shut up in Aberdeen, and could not get out to his much-loved flock, he begun to say, "Ah, if the Lord will let me go out to preach again, I will never be such a dull drone as I was wont to be. I will preach with tears in mine eyes, so that the people may be comforted, and the sinners converted." Perhaps when you are lying ill in your bed-room, little Jane comes to see you, and says, "I hope you will soon get well, teacher;" or William, or Thomas calls and enquires about you every Sunday afternoon, and asks the servant to give his love to you, and hopes that teacher will soon come back again. Then is the time when I know you will be sure to cast up your account. You will say, "Ah, when I get back to my class, I won't teach them as I used to do. I

will study my lesson more, I will pray more. I won't be so hot or so fast with them as I was wont to be. I will bear with their ill manners. Ah, if my Master will give me, like Hezekiah, another fifteen years of labor, and will give me more grace, I will strive to be better." You will be sure to cast up your accounts when you get sick.

But if you do not do it then, I will tell you when you must; that is when you come *to die*. What a dreadful thing it must be to be an unfaithful preacher on a dying-bed. (Oh that I may be saved from that!) To be upon one's bed when life is over; to have had great opportunities, mighty congregations, and to have been so diligent about something else as to have neglected to preach the full and free gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! methinks as I lie in my bed a-dying, I should see spectres and grim things in the room. One would come and stare upon me and say, "Ah! you are dying. Remember how many times I sat in the front of the gallery, and listened to you, but you never once told me to escape from the wrath to come; you were talking to me about something I did not understand; but the simple matter of the gospel you never preached to me, and I died in doubt and trembling. And now you are coming to me to the hell which I have inherited because you were unfaithful." And when in our grey and dying age we see the generations which have grown up around our pulpits, we shall think of them all. We shall think of the time when as striplings we first began to preach; we shall recollect the youths that then crowded, then the men, and then the grey heads that passed away. And methinks as they come on in grim procession, they will everyone leave a fresh curse upon our conscience because we were unfaithful. The death-bed of a man who has murdered his fellows, of some grim tyrant who has let the bloodhounds of war loose upon mankind, must be an awful thing. When the soldier, and the soldier's widow, and the murdered man of peace rise up before him; when the smoke of devastated countries seems to blow into his eyes and make them sore and red; when the blood of men hangs on his conscience like a great red pall; when bloody murder, the grim chamberlain, draws red curtains round his bed, and when he begins to approach the last end where the murderer must inherit his dreary doom, it must be a fearful time indeed. But, methinks to have murdered souls must be more awful still—to have distributed poison to children instead of bread, to have given them stones when they asked us for right

food, to have taught them error when we ought to have taught them the truth as it is in Jesus, or to have spoken to them with cold listlessness when earnestness was needed. Oh, how your children seem to curse you, when you lie there and have been unfaithful to your charge. Yes, you will have to cast up your account then; and let me tell you, though your hope must all be fixed on Jesus, and that must be the consolation of your life and death, yet it will be very sweetest; remember when you come to die that you have been successful in winning souls to Christ. Ah! that will bring a little life into the cheek of the consumptive teacher, who sickens young when you remind her that there was a little girl who, a year before she was taken ill, kissed her hand, and said, "Good bye, teacher, we shall meet in heaven. Do not you recollect, teacher, telling me the story of Jesus on the cross, and taking me home one Sunday afternoon, and putting your arms around my neck, and kneeling down and praying that God would bless me? Oh my teacher, that brought me to Jesus." Yes, teacher, when you are lying on your bed, pale and consumptive, you will recollect that there is one up there beside your Saviour who will receive you into eternal habitations—that young spirit who has gone before you, who by your means was emancipated from the wickedness and bondage of a sinful world. Happy is the teacher who has the hope of meeting a whole band of such in heaven. Such a thought often cheers me. Let the world say what it will, I know when I die there is many a spirit that will think of me in after years as the man who preached the gospel to him; many a drunkard brought to Jesus, and many a harlot reclaimed. And to the teacher it must be the same to think that when he claps his wings and mounts from this lower valley of earth to heaven, he will see a bright spirit coming down to meet him, and he will hear the Spirit saying -

"Sister spirit, come away,"

And when he opens his eyes, he will see that the song came from the lips of one to whom he had been blessed as the means of conversion. Happy you who shall be welcomed at the gates of Paradise by your spiritual sons and daughters, and who shall have beside your Master's welcome, the welcome of those whom he hath given you to be jewels in your crown of glory for ever and ever.

Now to conclude. We must all give an account to God in the day of judgment. That is the thing which makes death so terrible. Oh, Death, if thou wert all, what art thou but a pinch, and all is over! But after Death the judgment. This is the sting of the dragon to the ungodly. The last great day is come. The books are opened—men, women, and children are assembled. Many have come, and some on the right, and some on the left, have already heard the sentence. It is now your turn. Teacher! what account will you render? In the first place, are you in Christ yourself? or have you taught to others what you did not know yourself? Have I any such here? Doubtless, I have. for alas! there are many such in our schools. Oh, my friend, what wilt thou say when the Master, opening the book, shall ask thee, "What hadst thou to do, to declare my statutes?" Will you look at him and say, "Lord I taught in thy schools, and thou hast eaten and drunk in our streets." If you should say so, he will say, "Verily, I never knew you, depart from me ye cursed." Then, what have you to say with regard to your schools—for although our state at last will really be settled according to our interest in Christ, you will be *judged* by your works, as evidences. The Scripture always says that we are to be judged according to our works. Well, then, the book is opened. You hear your own name read, and you hear that one brief sentence—"Inasmuch as thou hast been faithful over a few things I will make thee a ruler over many things—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" Oh heaven of heavens! and is this the reward of the little trouble of teaching a few children? Oh, Master, thou givest ingots of gold for our grains of dust—our fragments of service thou rewardest with crowns and kingdoms! But he turns to others, and to you he says, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me. Depart from me into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Which of these two shall be said to *me*? Which of these two shall be said to *you*? "Oh! as in God's sight I charge you by him who is the Judge of quick and dead, by the swiftness of his chariot-wheels which now are bringing him here, by the solemnity of his awful tribunal, by that sentence which shall never be reversed, judge yourselves, for then ye shall not be judged. Give an account of your stewardship to your conscience, and to your God. Confess your sins, seek his help, and begin from this hour, by his Holy Spirit, to undertake his work afresh; so shall ye stand before his face, clothed in the righteousness of your Redeemer and washed in his blood. Though not boasting in your



works you shall be able to stand accepted in him, and your works shall follow when you rise from your labors, and you shall be among the blessed that die in the Lord.

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## **Supposing Him To Be The Gardener**

Supposing him to be the gardener. - John 20:15

I was sitting about a fortnight ago in a very lovely garden, in the midst of all kinds of flowers which were blooming in delightful abundance all around. Screening myself from the heat of the sun under the overhanging boughs of an olive, I cast my eyes upon palms and bananas, roses and camellias, oranges and aloes, lavender and heliotrope. The garden was full of color and beauty, perfume and fruitfulness. Surely the gardener, Whoever he might be, who had framed, and fashioned, and kept in order that lovely spot, deserved great commendation. So I thought, and then it came to me to meditate upon the church of God as a garden, and to suppose the Lord Jesus to be the gardener, and then to think of what would most assuredly happen if it were so. "Supposing him to be the gardener," my mind conceived of a paradise where all sweet things flourish and all evil things are rooted up. If an ordinary worker had produced such beauty as I then saw and enjoyed on earth, what bounty and glory must surely be brought forth "supposing him to be the gardener"! You know the "him" to whom we refer, the ever-blessed Son or God, whom Mary Magdalene in our text mistook for the gardener. We will for once follow a saint in her mistaken track; and yet we shall find ourselves going in a right way. She was mistaken when she fell into "supposing him to be the gardener"; but if we are under his Spirit's teaching we shall not make a mistake if now we indulge ourselves in a quiet meditation upon our ever-blessed Lord, "supposing him to be the gardener."

It is not an unnatural supposition, surely; for if we may truly sing

"We are a garden walled around,  
Chosen and made peculiar ground,"

that enclosure needs a gardener. Are we not all the plants of his right hand planting? Do we not all need watering and tending by his constant and gracious care? He says, "I am the true vine: my Father is the husbandman," and that is one view of it; but we may also sing, "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine"—that is to say, he acted as gardener to it. Thus has Isaiah taught us to sing a song of the Well-beloved touching his vineyard. We read of our Lord just now under these terms—"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice." To what purpose does he dwell in the vineyards but that he may see how the vines flourish and care for all the plants? The image, I say, is so far from being unnatural that it is most pregnant with suggestions and full of useful teaching. We are not going against the harmonies of nature when we are "supposing him to be the gardener."

Neither is the figure unscriptural; for in one of his own parables our Lord makes himself to be the dresser of the vineyard. We read just now that parable so full of warning. When the "certain man" came in and saw the fig tree that it brought forth no fruit, he said unto the dresser of his vineyard, "Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?" Who was it that intervened between that profitless tree and the axe but our great Intercessor and Interposer? He it is who continually comes forward with "Let it alone this year also till I shall dig about it and dung it." In this case he himself takes upon himself the character of the vine-dresser, and we are not wrong in "supposing him to be the gardener."

If we would be supported by a type, our Lord takes the name of "the Second Adam," and the first Adam was a gardener. Moses tells us that the Lord God placed the man in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. Man in his best estate was not to live in this world in a paradise of indolent luxury, but in a garden of recompensed toil. Behold, the church

is Christ's Eden, watered by the river of life, and so fertilized that all manner of fruits are brought forth unto God; and he, our second Adam, walks in this spiritual Eden to dress it and to keep it; and so by a type we see that we are right in "supposing him to be the gardener." Thus also Solomon thought of him when he described the royal Bridegroom as going down with his spouse to the garden when the flowers appeared on the earth and the fig tree had put forth her green figs; he went out with his beloved for the reservation of the gardens, saying, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes." Neither nature, nor Scripture, nor type, nor song forbids us to think of our adorable Lord Jesus as one that careth for the flowers and fruits of his church. We err not when we speak of him, "supposing him to be the gardener." And so I sat me still, and indulged the suggested line of thought, which I now repeat in your hearing, hoping that I may open many roads of meditation for your hearts also. I shall not attempt to think out such a subject thoroughly, but only to indicate in which direction you may look for a vein of precious ore.

I. "Supposing him to be the gardener," we have here THE KEY TO MANY WONDERS in the garden of his church.

The first wonder is that there should be a church at all in the world; that there should be a garden blooming in the midst of this sterile waste. Upon a hard and flinty rock the Lord has made the Eden of his church to grow. How came it to be—here an oasis of life in a desert of death? how came faith in the midst of unbelief, and hope where all is servile fear, and love where hate abounds? "Ye are of God, little children, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Whence this being "of God" where all beside is fast shut up in the devil? How came there to be a people for God, separated, and sanctified, and consecrated, and ordained to bring forth fruit unto his name? Assuredly it could not have been so at all if the doing of it had been left to man. We understand its existence, "supposing him to be the gardener," but nothing else can account for it. He can cause the fir tree to flourish instead of the thorn, and the myrtle instead of the briar; but no one else can accomplish such a change. The garden in which I sat was made on the bare face of the rock, and almost all the earth of which its terraces were composed had been brought up there, from the shore

below, by hard labor, and so upon the rock a soil had been created. It was not by its own nature that the garden was found in such a place; but by skill and labor it had been formed: even so the church of God has had to be constructed by the Lord Jesus, who is the author as well as the perfecter of his garden. Painfully, with wounded hands, has he built each terrace, and fashioned each bed, and planted each plant. All the flowers have had to be watered with his bloody sweat, and watched by his tearful eyes the nail-prints in his hands, and the wound in his side are the tokens of what it cost him to make a new Paradise. He has given his life for the life of every plant that is in the garden, and not one of them had been there on any other theory than "supposing him to be the gardener."

Besides, there is another wonder. How comes the church of God to flourish in such a clime? This present evil world is very uncongenial to the growth of grace, and the church is not able by herself alone to resist the evil influences which surround her. The church contains within itself elements which tend to its own disorder and destruction if left alone; even as the garden has present in its soil all the germs of a tangled thicket of weeds. The best church that ever Christ had on earth would within a few years apostatise from the truth if deserted by the Spirit of God. The world never helps the church; it is all in arms against it; there is nothing in the world's air or soil that can fertilise the church even to the least degree. How is it, then, that notwithstanding all this, the church is a fair garden unto God, and there are sweet spices grown in its beds, and lovely flowers are gathered by the Divine hand from its borders? The continuance and prosperity of the church can only be accounted for by "supposing him to be the gardener." Almighty strength is put to the otherwise impossible work of sustaining a holy people among men; almighty wisdom exercises itself upon this otherwise insuperable difficulty. Hear ye the word of the Lord, and learn hence the reason for the growth of his church below. "I, the Lord, do keep it: I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." That is the reason for the existence of a spiritual people still in the midst of a godless and perverse generation. This is the reason for an election of grace in the midst of surrounding vice, and worldliness, and unbelief. "Supposing him to be the gardener," I can see why there should be fruitfulness, and beauty, and sweetness even in the center of the wilderness of sin.

Another mystery is also cleared up by this supposition. The wonder is that ever you and I should have been placed among the plants of the Lord. Why are we allowed to grow in the garden of his grace? Why me, Lord? Why me? How is it that we have been kept there, and borne with in our barrenness, when he might long ago have said, "Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?" Who else would have borne with such waywardness as ours? Who could have manifested such infinite patience? Who could have tended us with such care, and when the care was so ill-rewarded who would have renewed it so long from day to day, and persisted in designs of boundless love? Who could have done more for his vineyard? who could or would have done so much? An mere man would have repented of his good intent, provoked by our ingratitude. None but God could have had patience with some of us! That we have not long ago been slipped off as fruitless branches of the vine; that we are left still upon the stem, in the hope that we may ultimately bring forth fruit, is a great marvel. I know not how it is that we have been spared, except upon this ground—"supposing him to be the gardener"—for Jesus is all gentleness and grace, so slow with his knife, so tardy with his axe, so hopeful if we do but show a bud or two, or, perchance, yield a little sour berry—so hopeful, I say, that these may be hopeful prognostics of something better by-and-by. Infinite patience! Immeasurable longsuffering! where are ye to be found save in the breast of the Well-beloved? Surely the hoe has spared many of us simply and only because he who is meek and lowly in heart is the gardener.

Dear friends, there is one mercy with regard to this church which I have often had to thank God for, namely, that evils should have been shut out for so long a time. During the period in which we have been together as pastor and people, and that is now some twenty-nine years, we have enjoyed uninterrupted prosperity, going from strength to strength in the work of the Lord. Alas! we have seen many other churches that were quite as hopeful as our own rent with strife, brought low by declension, or overthrown by heresy. I hope we have not been apt to judge their faults severely; but we must be thankful for our own deliverance from the evils which have afflicted them. I do not know how it is that we have been kept together in love, helped to abound in labor, and enabled to be firm in the

faith, unless it be that special grace has watched over us. We are full of faults; we have nothing to boast of; and yet no church has been more divinely favored: I wonder that the blessing should have lasted so long, and I cannot make it out except when I fall into "supposing him to be the gardener." I cannot trace our prosperity to the pastor, certainly; nor even to my beloved friends the elders and deacons, nor even to the best of you with your fervent love and holy zeal. I think it must be that Jesus has been the gardener, and he has shut the gate when I am afraid I have left it open; and he has driven out the wild boar of the wood just when he had entered to root up the weaker plants. He must have been about at nights to keep off the prowling thieves, and he must have been here, too, in the noontide heat to guard those of you who have prospered in worldly goods, from the glare of too bright a sun. Yes, he has been with us, blessed be his name! Hence all this peace, and unity, and enthusiasm. May we never grieve him so that he shall turn away from us; but rather let us entreat him, saying, "Abide with us. Thou that dwellest in the gardens, let this be one of the gardens in which thou dost deign to dwell until the day break and the shadows flea away." Thus our supposition is a key to many wonders.

II. Let your imaginations run along with mine while I say that "supposing him to be the gardener" should be A SPUR TO MANY DUTIES.

One of the duties of a Christian is joy. That is a blessed religion which among its precepts commands men to be happy. When joy becomes a duty, who would wish to neglect it? Surely it must help every little plant to drink in the sunlight when it is whispered among the flowers that Jesus is the gardener. "Oh," you say, "I am such a little plant; I do not grow well; I do not put forth so much leafage, nor are there so many flowers on me as on many round about me!" It is quite right that you should think little of yourself: perhaps to droop your head is a part of your beauty: many flowers had not been half so lovely if they had not practiced the art of hanging their heads. But supposing him to be the gardener," then he is as much a gardener to you as he is to the most lordly palm in the whole domain. In the Mentone garden right before me grew the orange and the aloe, and others of the finer and more noticeable plants; but on a wall to my left grew common wallflowers and saxifrages, and tiny herbs such as

we find on our own rocky places. Now, the gardener had cared for all of these, little as well as great; in fact, there were hundreds of specimens of the most insignificant growths all duly labelled and described. The smallest saxifrage could say, "He is my gardener just as surely as he is the gardener of the Gloire de Dijon or Mar,chal Neil." Oh feeble child of God, the Lord taketh care of you! Your heavenly Father feedeth ravens, and guides the flight of sparrows: should he not much more care for you, oh ye of little faith? Oh little plants, you will grow rightly enough. Perhaps you are growing downward just now rather than upward. Remember that there are plants of which we value the underground root much more than we do the hull above ground. Perhaps it is not yours to grow very fast; you may be a slow-growing shrub by nature, and you would not be healthy if you were to run to wood. Anyhow, be this your joy, you are in the garden of the Lord, and, "supposing him to be the gardener," he will make the best of you. You cannot be in better hands.

Another duty is that of valuing the Lord's presence, and praying for it. We ought whenever the Sabbath morning dawns to pray our Well-beloved to come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits. What can we do without him? All day long our cry should go up to him, "O Lord, behold and visit this vine, and the vineyard which thy right hand has planted." We ought to agonize with him that he would come and manifest himself to us as he does not unto the world. For what is a garden if the gardener never comes near it? What is the difference between it and the wilderness if he to whom it belongs never lifts up spade or pruning-hook upon it? So that it is our necessity that we have Christ with us, "supposing him to be the gardener;" and it is our bliss that we have Christ walking between our beds and borders, watching every plant, training, tending, maturing all. "Supposing him to be the gardener," it is well, for from him is our fruit found. Divided from him we are nothing; only as he watches over us can we bring, forth fruit. Let us have done with confidence in man, let us forego all attempts to supply facts of his spiritual presence by routine or rant, ritualism or rowdyism; but let us pray our Lord to be ever present with us, and by that presence to make our garden grow.

"Supposing him to be the gardener," there is another duty, and that is, let each one of us yield himself up entirely to him. A plant does not know

how it ought to be treated; it knows not when it should be watered or when it should be kept dry: a fruit-tree is no judge of when it needs to be pruned, or digged, or dunged. The wit and wisdom of the garden lieth not in the flowers and shrubs, but in the gardener. Now, then, if you and I are here to-day with any self-will and carnal judgment about us, let us seek to lay it all aside that we may be absolutely at our Lord's disposal. You might not be willing to put yourself implicitly into the hand of any mere man (pity that you should); but, surely, thou plant of the Lord's right-hand planting, thou mayest put thyself without a question into his dear hand. "Supposing him to be the gardener," thou mayest well say, "I would neither have will, nor wish, nor wit, nor whim, nor way, but I would be as nothing in the gardener's hands, that he may be to me my wisdom and my all. Here, kind gardener, thy poor plant bows itself to thy hand; train me as thou wilt. Depend upon it, happiness lives next door to the spirit of complete acquiescence in the will of God, and it will be easy to exercise that perfect acquiescence when we suppose the Lord Jesus to be the gardener. If the Lord hath done it; what has a saint to say? Oh thou afflicted one, the Lord hath done it: wouldest thou have it otherwise? Nay, art thou not thankful that it is even so, because so is the will of him in whose hand thy life is, and whose are all thy ways? The duty of submission is very plain, "supposing him to be the gardener."

One more duty I would mention, though others suggest themselves. "Supposing him to be the gardener," then let us bring forth fruit to him. I do not address a people this morning who feel no care as to whether they serve God or not. I believe that most of you do desire to glorify God; for being saved by grace, you feel a holy ambition to show forth his praises who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. You wish to bring others to Christ, because you yourselves have been brought to life and liberty in him. Now, let this be a stimulus to your fruitbearing, that Jesus is the gardener. Where you have brought forth a single cluster, bring, forth a hundred! "supposing him to be the gardener." If he is to have the honor of it, then labor to do that which will give him great renown. If our spiritual state were to be attributed to ourselves, or to our minister, or to some of our fellow Christians, we might not feel that we were tinder a great necessity to be fruitful; but if Jesus be the gardener, and is to bear the blame or the honor of what we produce, then let us use



up every drop of sap and strain every fibre, that, to the utmost of which our manhood is capable, we may produce a fair reward for our Lord's travail. Under such tutorship and care we ought to become eminent scholars. Doth Christ train us? Oh let us never cause the world to think meanly of our Master. Students feel that their alma mater deserves great things of them, so they labor to make their university renowned. And so, since Jesus is tutor and university to us, let us feel that we are bound to reflect credit upon so great a teacher, upon so divine a name. I do not know how to put it, but surely we ought to do something worthy of such a Lord. Each little flower in the garden of the Lord should wear its, brightest hues, and pour forth its rarest perfume, because Jesus cares for it. The best of all possible good should be yielded by every plant in our Father's garden, supposing Jesus to be the gardener.

Thus much, then, on those two points—a key to many wonders, and a spur to many duties.

III. Thirdly, I have found in this supposition A RELIEF FROM CRUSHING RESPONSIBILITY. One has a work given him of God to do, and if he does it rightly he cannot do it carelessly. The first thing when he wakes he asks, "How is the work prospering?" and the last thought at night is, "What can I do to fulfill my calling?" Sometimes the anxiety even troubles his dreams, and he sighs, "O Lord, send now prosperity!" How is the garden prospering which we are set to tend? Are we broken-hearted because, nothing appears to flourish? Is it a bad season? or is the soil lean and hungry? It is a very blessed relief to an excess of care if we can fall into the habit of "supposing him to be the gardener." If Jesus be the Master and Lord in all things it is not mine to keep all the church in order. I am not responsible for the growth of every Christian, nor for every backslider's errors, nor for every professor's faults of life. This burden must not lie on me so that I shall be crushed thereby. "Supposing him to be the gardener," then, the church enjoys a better oversight than mine; better care is taken of the garden than could be taken by the most vigilant watchers, even though by night the frost devoured them, and by day the heat. "Supposing him to be the gardener," then all must go well in the long run. He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep; we need not fret and despond. I beg you earnest workers, who are becoming

depressed, to think this out a little. You see it is yours to work under the Lord Jesus; but it is not yours to take the anxiety of his office into your souls as though you were to bear his burdens. The under-gardener, the work-man in the garden, needs not fret about the whole garden as though it were all left to him. No, no; let him not take too much upon himself. I pray you, bound your anxiety by the facts of the case. So you have a number of young people around you, and you are watching for their souls as they that must give account. This is well; but do not be worried and wearied; for, after all, the saving and the keeping of those souls is not in your hands, but it rests with One far more able than yourself. Just think that the Lord is the gardener. I know it is so in matters of providence. A certain man of God in troublous times became quite unable to do his duty because he laid to heart so much the ills of the age; he became depressed and disturbed, and he went on board a vessel, wanting to leave the country, which was getting into such a state that he could no longer endure it. Then one said to him, Mr. Whitelock, are you the manager of the world? No, he was not quite that. "Did not God get on pretty well with it before you were born, and don't you think he will do very well with it when you are dead?" That reflection helped to relieve the good man's mind, and he went back to do his duty. I want you thus to perceive the limit of your responsibility: you are not the gardener himself; you are only one of the gardener's boys, set to run on errands, or to do a bit of digging, or to sweep the paths. The garden is well enough managed even though you are not head manager in it.

While this relieves us of anxiety it makes labor for Christ very sweet, because if the garden does not seem to repay us for our trouble we say to ourselves, "It is not, my garden after all. 'Supposing him to be the gardener,' I am quite willing to work on a barren piece of rock, or tie up an old withered bough, or dig a worthless sod; for, if it only pleases Jesus, the work is for that one sole reason profitable to the last degree. It is not mine to question the wisdom of my task, but to set about it in the name of my Master and Lord. 'Supposing him to be the gardener,' lifts the ponderous responsibility of it from me, and my work becomes pleasant and delightful."

In dealing with the souls of men, we meet with cases which are extremely

difficult. Some persons are so timid and fearful that you do not know how to comfort them; others are so fast and presumptuous that you hardly know how to help them. A few are so double-faced that you cannot understand them, and others so fickle that you cannot hold them. Some flowers puzzle the ordinary gardener: we meet with plants which are covered with prickles, and when you try to train them they wound the hand that would help them. These strange growths would make a great muddle for you if you were the gardener; but "supposing him to be the gardener," you have the happiness of being able to go to him constantly, saying, "Good Lord, I do not understand this singular creature; it is as odd a plant as I am myself. Oh, that thou wouldest manage it, or tell me how. I have come to tell thee of it."

Constantly our trouble is that we have so many plants to look after that we have not time to cultivate any one in the best manner, because we have fifty more all wanting attention at the time; and then before we have done with the watering-pot we have to fetch the hoe and the rake and the spade, and we are puzzled with these multitudinous cares, even as Paul was when he said, "That which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Ah, then, it is a blessed thing to do the little we can do and leave the rest to Jesus, "supposing him to be the gardener."

In the church of God there is a discipline which we cannot exercise. I do not think it is half so hard to exercise discipline as it is not to be able to exercise it when yet you feel that it ought to be done. The servants of the householder were perplexed when they might not root up the tares. "Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares?" "An enemy hath done this." "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" "Not so," said he, "lest ye root, up the wheat with them." This afflicts the Christian minister when he must not remove a pestilent, hindering weed. Yes, but "supposing him to be the gardener," and it is his will to let that weed remain, what have you and I to do but to hold our peace? He has a discipline more sure and safe than ours, and in due time the tares shall know it. In patience let us possess our souls.

And then, again, there is that succession in the garden which we can not keep up. Plants will die down, and others must be put into their places or

the garden will grow bare, but we know not where to find these fresh flowers. We say, "When yonder good man dies who will succeed him?" That is a question I have heard many a time, till I am rather weary of it. Who is to follow such a man? Let us wait till he is gone and needs following. Why sell the man's coat when he can wear it himself? We are apt to think when this race of good brethren shalt die of it that none will arise worthy to unloose the lachets of their shoes. Well, friend, I could suppose a great many things, but this morning my text is, "Supposing him to be the gardener," and on that supposition I expect that the Lord has other plants in reserve which you have not yet, seen, and these wilt exactly fit into our places when they become empty, and the Lord will keep up the true apostolical succession till the day of his second advent. In every time of darkness and dismay, when the heart sinks and the spirits decline, and we think it is all over with the church of God, let us fall back on this, "Supposing him to be the gardener," and expect to see greater and better things than these. We are at the end of our wits, but he is not at the beginning of his yet: we are nonplussed, but he never will be; therefore let us wait and be tranquil, "supposing him to be the gardener."

IV. Fourthly, I want you to notice that this supposition will give you A DELIVERANCE FROM MANY GLOOMY FEARS. I walked down the garden, and I saw a place where all the path was strewn with leaves and broken branches, and stones, and I saw the earth upon the flower-beds, tossed about, and roots lying quite out of the ground: all was in disorder. Had a dog been amusing himself? or had a mischievous child been at work? If so, it was a great pity. But no: in a minute or two I saw the gardener come back, and I perceived that he had been making all this disarrangement. He had been cutting, and digging, and hacking, and mess-making; and all for the good of the garden. It may be it has happened to some of you that you have been a good deal clipped lately, and in your domestic affairs things have not been in so fair a state as you could have wished: it may be in the Church we have seen ill weeds plucked up, and barren branches lopped, so that everything is en deshabelle. Well, if the Lord has done it out, gloomy fears are idle. "Supposing him to be the gardener," all is well.

As I was talking this over with my friend, I said to him—"Supposing him

to be the gardener," then the serpent will have a bad time of it. Supposing Adam to be the gardener, then the serpent gets in and has a chat with his wife, and mischief comes of it; but supposing Jesus to be the gardener, woe to thee, serpent: there is a blow for thy head within half a minute if thou dost but show thyself within the boundary. So, if we are afraid that the devil should get in among us let us always in prayer entreat that there may be no space for the devil, because the Lord Jesus Christ fills all, and keeps out the adversary. Other creatures besides serpents intrude into gardens; caterpillars and palmerworms, and all sorts of destroying creatures are apt to devour our churches. How can we keep them out? The highest wall cannot exclude them: there is no protection except one, and that is, "supposing him to be the gardener." Thus it is written, "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts."

I am sometimes troubled by the question, What if roots of bitterness should spring up among us to trouble us? We are all such fallible creatures, supposing some brother should permit the seed of discord to grow in his bosom, then there may be a sister in whose heart the seeds will also spring up, and from her they will fly to another sister, and be blown about till brethren and sisters are all bearing rue and wormwood in their hearts. Who is to prevent this? Only the Lord, Jesus by his Spirit. He can keep out this evil, "supposing him to be the gardener." The root which beareth wormwood will grow but little where Jesus is. Dwell with us, Lord, as a church and people: by thy Holy Spirit reside with us and in us, and never depart from us, and then no root of bitterness shall spring up to trouble us.

Then comes another fear. Suppose the living waters of God's Spirit should not come to water the garden, what then? We cannot, make them flow, for the Spirit is a sovereign, and he flows where he pleases. Ah, but the Spirit of God will he in our garden, "supposing our Lord to be the gardener." There is no fear of our not being watered when Jesus undertakes to do it. "He will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." But what if the sunlight of his love should not shine on the garden? If the fruits should never ripen, if there should be no

peace, no joy in the Lord? That cannot happen "supposing him to be the gardener;" for his face is the sun, and his countenance scatters those health-giving beams, and nurturing warmths, and perfecting influences which are needful for maturing the saints in all the sweetness of grace to the glory of God. So, "supposing him to be the gardener" at this the close of the year, I fling away my doubts and fears, and invite you who bear the church upon your heart to do the same. It is all well with Christ's cause because it is in his own hands. He shall not fail nor be discouraged. The pleasure of the, Lord shall prosper in his hands.

V. Fifthly, here is A WARNING FOR THE CARELESS, "supposing him to be the gardener." In this great congregation many are to the church what weeds are to a garden. They are not planted by God; they are not growing under his nurture, they are bringing forth no fruit to his glory. My dear friend, I have tried often to get at you, to impress you, but I cannot. Take heed; for one of these days, "supposing him to be the gardener," he will reach you, and you shall know what that word meaneth, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath, not planted shall be rooted up." Take heed to yourselves, I pray.

Others among us are like the branches of the vine which bear no fruit. We have often spoken very sharply to these, speaking honest truth in unmistakable language, and yet we have not touched their consciences. Ah, but "supposing him to be the gardener," he will fulfill that sentence: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." He will get at you, if we cannot. Would God, ere this old year were quite dead, you would turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart; so that instead of being a weed you might become a choice flower; that instead of a dry stick, you might be a sappy, fruit-bearing, branch of the vine. The Lord make it to be so; but if any here need the caution, I pray them to take it to heart at once. "Supposing him to be the gardener," there will be no escaping from his eye; there will be no deliverance from his hand. As "he will thoroughly purge his floor, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire," so he will thoroughly cleanse his garden and cast out every worthless thing.

VI. Another set of thoughts may well arise as A QUIETUS TO THOSE

WHO COMPLAIN, "Supposing him to be the gardener." Certain of us have been made to suffer much physical pain, which often bites into the spirits, and makes the heart to stoop: others have suffered heavy temporal losses, having had no success in business, but, on the contrary, having had to endure privation, perhaps even to penury. Are you ready to complain against the Lord for all this? I pray you, do not so. Take the supposition of the text into your mind this morning. The Lord has been pruning you sharply, cutting off your best boughs, and you seem to be like a thing despised that is constantly tormented with the knife. Yes, but "supposing him to be the gardener," suppose that your loving Lord has wrought it all, that from his own hand all your grief has come, every cut, and every gash, and every slip: does not this alter the case? Hath not the Lord done it? Well, then, if it be so, put your finger to your lip and be quiet, until you are able from your heart to say, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." I am persuaded that the Lord hath done nothing amiss to any one of his people; that no child of his can rightly complain that he has been whipped with too much severity; and that no one branch of the vine can truthfully declare that it has been pruned with too sharp an edge. No; what the Lord has done is the best that could have been done, the very thing that you and I, if we could have possessed infinite wisdom and love, would have wished to have done; therefore let us stop each thought of murmuring, and say, "The Lord hath done it," and be glad.

Especially I speak to those who have suffered bereavement. I can hardly express to you how strange I feel at this moment when my sermon revives a memory so sweet dashed with such exceeding bitterness. I sat with my friend and secretary in that garden some fifteen days ago, and we were then in perfect health, rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord. We returned home, and within five days I was smitten with disabling pain; and worse, far worse than that, he was called upon to lose his wife. We said to one another as we sat there reading the word of God and meditating, "How happy we are! Dare we think of being so happy? Must it not speedily end?" I little thought I should have to say for him, "Alas, my brother, thou art brought very low, for the delight of thine eyes is taken from thee." But here is our comfort: the Lord hath done it. The best rose in the garden is gone. Who has taken it? The gardener came this way and gathered it. He

planted it and watched over it, and now he has taken it. Is not this most natural? Does anybody weep because of that? No; everybody knows that it is right, and according to the order of nature that he should come and gather the best in the garden. If you are sore troubled by the loss of your beloved, yet dry your grief by supposing him to be the gardener." Kiss the hand that has wrought you such grief? Brethren beloved, remember the next time the Lord comes to your part of the garden, and he may do so within the next week, he will only gather his own flowers, and would you prevent his doing so even if you could?

VII. "Supposing him to be the gardener," then there is AN OUTLOOK FOR THE HOPEFUL. "Supposing him to be the gardener," then I expect to see in the garden where he works the best possible prosperity: I expect to see no flower dried up, no tree without fruit: I expect to see the richest, rarest fruit, with the daintiest bloom upon it, daily presented to the great Owner of the garden. Let us expect that in this church, and pray for it. oh, if we have but faith we shall see great things. It is our unbelief that straitens God. Let us believe great things from the work of Christ by his Spirit in the midst of his people's hearts, and we shall not be disappointed.

"Supposing him to be the gardener," then, dear friends, we may expect divine intercourse of unspeakable preciousness. Go back to Eden for a minute. When Adam was the gardener, what happened? The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day. But "supposing him to be the gardener," then we shall have the Lord God dwelling among us, and revealing himself in all the glory of his power, and the plenitude of his Fatherly heart; making us to know him, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. What joy is this!

One other thought. "Supposing him to be the gardener," and God to come and walk among the trees of the garden, then I expect he will remove the whole of the garden upward with himself to fairer skies; for he rose, and his people must rise with him. I expect a blessed transplantation of all these flowers below to a clearer atmosphere above, away from all this smoke and fog and damp, up where the sun is never clouded, where flowers never wither, where fruits never decay. Oh, the glory we shall



then enjoy up yonder, on the hills of spices in the garden of God. "Supposing him to be the gardener" what a garden will he form above, and how shall you and I grow therein, developing beyond imagination." It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Since he is the author and finisher of our faith, to what perfection will he conduct us, and to what glory will he bring us! Oh, to be found in him! God grant we may be! To be plants in his garden, "Supposing him to be the gardener," is all the heaven we can desire.

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## Sweet Comfort For Feeble Saints

A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory - Matthew 12:20

Babbling fame ever loves to talk of one man or another. Some there be whose glory it trumpets forth, and whose honor it extols above the heavens. Some are her favorites, and their names are carved on marble, and heard in every land, and every clime. Fame is not an impartial judge; she has her favorites. Some men she extols, exalts, and almost deifies; others, whose virtues are far greater, and whose characters are more deserving of commendation, she passes by unheeded, and puts the finger of silence on her lips. You will generally find that those persons beloved by fame are men made of brass or iron, and cast in a rough mould. Fame caresseth Caesar, because he ruled the earth with a rod of iron. Fame loves Luther, because he boldly and manfully defied the Pope of Rome, and with knit brow dared laugh at the thunders of the Vatican. Fame admires Knox; for he was stern, and proved himself the bravest of the brave. Generally, you will find her choosing out the men of fire and mettle, who stood before their fellow-creatures fearless of them; men who were made of courage; who were consolidated lumps of fearlessness, and never knew what timidity might be. But you know there is another class of persons equally virtuous, and equally to be esteemed - perhaps even more so - whom fame entirely forgets. You do not hear her talk of the gentle-minded Melancthon - she says but little of him - yet he did as much, perhaps, in the Reformation, as even the mighty Luther. You do not hear fame talk much of the sweet and blessed Rutherford, and of the heavenly words that distilled from his lips; or of Archbishop Leighton, of whom it was said, that he was never out of temper in his life. She loves the rough granite peaks that defy the storm-cloud: she does not care for the more humble stone in the valley, on which the weary traveller resteth; she wants something bold and prominent; something that courts popularity; something that stands out before the world. She does not care for those who retreat in shade. Hence it is, my brethren, that the blessed

Jesus, our adorable Master, has escaped fame. No one says much about Jesus, except his followers. We do not find his name written amongst the great and mighty men; though, in truth, he is the greatest, mightiest, holiest, purest, and best of men that ever lived; but because he was "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," and was emphatically the man whose kingdom is not of this world; because he had nothing of the rough about him, but was all love; because his words were softer than butter, his utterances more gentle in their flow than oil; because never man spake so gently as this man; therefore he is neglected and forgotten. He did not come to be a conqueror with his sword, nor a Mohammed with his fiery eloquence; but he came to speak with a "still small voice," that melteth the rocky heart; that bindeth up the broken in spirit, and that continually saith, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden;" "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Jesus Christ was all gentleness; and this is why he has not been extolled amongst men as otherwise he would have been. Beloved! our text is full of gentleness; it seems to have been steeped in love; and I hope I may be able to show you something of the immense sympathy and the mighty tenderness of Jesus, as I attempt to speak from it. There are three things to be noticed: first, *mortal frailty*; secondly, *divine compassion*; and thirdly, *certain triumph* - "till he send forth judgment unto victory."

I. First, we have before us a view of MORTAL FRAILITY - bruised reed and smoking flax - two very suggestive metaphors, and very full of meaning. If it were not too fanciful - and if it is I know you will excuse me - I should say that the *bruised reed is an emblem of a sinner in the first stage of his conviction*. The work of God's Holy Spirit begins with bruising. In order to be saved, the fallow ground must be ploughed up; the hard heart must be broken; the rock must be split in sunder. An old divine says there is no going to heaven without passing hard by the gates of hell - without a great deal of soul-trouble and heart-exercise. I take it then that the bruised reed is a picture of the poor sinner when first God commences his operation upon the soul; he is as a bruised reed, almost entirely broken and consumed; there is but little strength in him. *The smoking flax I conceive to be a backsliding Christian*; one who has been a burning and a shining light in his day, but by neglect of the means of

grace, the withdrawal of God's Spirit, and falling into sin, his light is almost gone out - not quite - it never can go out, for Christ saith, "I will not quench it;" but it becomes like a lamp when ill supplied with oil - almost useless. It is not quite extinguished - it smokes - it was a useful lamp once, but now it has become as smoking flax. So I think these metaphors very likely describe the contrite sinner as a bruised reed, and the backsliding Christian as smoking flax. However, I shall not choose to make such a division as that, but I shall put both the metaphors together, and I hope we may fetch out a few thoughts from them.

And first, the encouragement offered in our text applies to *weak ones*. What in the world is weaker than the bruised reed, or the smoking flax? A reed that groweth in the fen or marsh, let but the wild duck light upon it, and it snaps; let but the foot of man brush against it and it is bruised and broken; every wind that comes howling across the river makes it shake to and fro, and well nigh tears it up by the roots. You can conceive of nothing more frail or brittle, or whose existence depends more upon circumstances than a bruised reed. Then look at smoking flax - what is it? It has a spark within it, it is true, but it is almost smothered; an infant's breath might blow it out; or the tears of a maiden quench it in a moment; nothing has a more precarious existence than the little spark hidden in the smoking flax. *Weak things*, you see, are here described. Well, Christ says of them, "The smoking flax I will not quench; the bruised reed I will not break." Let me go in search of the weaklings. Ah! I shall not have to go far. There are many in this house of prayer this morning who are indeed weak. Some of God's children, blessed be his name, are made strong to do mighty works for him; God hath his Samsons here and there who can pull up Gaza's gates, and carry them to the top of the hill; he hath here and there his mighty Gideons, who can go to the camp of the Midianites, and overthrow their hosts; he hath his mighty men, who can go into the pit in winter, and slay the lions; but the majority of his people are a timid, weak race. They are like the starlings that are frightened at every passer by; a little fearful flock. If temptation comes, they fall before it; if trial comes, they are overwhelmed by it; their frail skiff is danced up and down by every wave; and when the wind comes, they are drifted along like a sea-bird on the crest of the billows; weak things, without strength, without force, without might, without power. Ah! dear friends, I

know I have got hold of some of your hands now, and your hearts too; for you are saying, "Weak! Ah, that I am. Full often I am constrained to say, I would, but cannot sing; I would, but cannot pray; I would, but cannot believe." You are saying that you cannot do anything; your best resolves are weak and vain; and when you cry, "My strength renew," you feel weaker than before. You are weak, are you? Bruised reeds and smoking flax? Blessed be God, this text is for you then. I am glad you can come in under the denomination of weak ones, for here is a promise that he will never break nor quench them, but will sustain and hold them up. I know there are some very strong people here - I mean strong in their own ideas. I often meet with persons who would not confess any such weakness as this. They are strong minds. They say, "Do you think that we go into sin, sir? Do you tell us that our hearts are corrupt? We do not believe any such thing; we are good, and pure, and upright; we have strength and might." To you I am not preaching this morning; to you I am saying nothing; but take heed - your strength is vanity, your power is a delusion, your might is a lie - for however much you may boast in what you can do, it shall pass away; when you come to the real contest with death, you shall find that you have no strength to grapple with it: when one of these days of strong temptation shall come, it will take hold of you, moral man, and down you will go; and the glorious livery of your morality will be so stained, that though you wash your hands in snow water, and make yourselves never so clean, you shall be so polluted that your own clothes shall abhor you. I think it is a blessed thing to be weak. The weak one is a sacred thing; the Holy Ghost has made him such. Can you say, "No strength have I?" Then this text is for you.

Secondly, the things mentioned in our text are not only weak, but *worthless* things. I have heard of a man who would pick up a pin as he walked along the street, on the principle of economy; but I never yet heard of a man who would stop to pick up bruised reeds. They are not worth having. Who would care to have a bruised reed - a piece of rush lying on the ground? We all despise it as worthless. And smoking flax, what is the worth of that? It is an offensive and noxious thing; but the worth of it is nothing. No one would give the snap of a finger either for the bruised reed or smoking flax. Well, then, beloved, in our estimation there are many of us who are worthless things. There are some here, who,

if they could weigh themselves in the scales of the sanctuary, and put their own hearts into the balance of conscience, would appear to be good for nothing - worthless, useless. There was a time when you thought yourselves to be the very best people in the world - when if any one had said that you had more than you deserved, you would have kicked at it, and said, "I believe I am as good as other people." You thought yourselves something wonderful - extremely worthy of God's love and regard; but you now feel yourselves to be worthless. Sometimes you imagine God can hardly know where you are, you are such a despicable creature - so worthless - not worth his consideration. You can understand how he can look upon an animalcule in a drop of water, or upon a grain of dust in the sunbeam, or upon the insect of the summer evening; but you can hardly tell how he can think of you, you appear so worthless - a dead blank in the world, a useless thing. You say, "What good am I? I am doing nothing. As for a minister of the gospel, he is of some service; as for a deacon of the church, he is of some use; as for a Sabbath-school teacher, he is doing some good; but of what service am I?" But you might ask the same question here. What is the use of a bruised reed? Can a man lean upon it? Can a man strengthen himself therewith? Shall it be a pillar in my house? Can you bind it up into the pipes of Pan, and make music come from a bruised reed? Ah! no; it is of no service. And of what use is smoking flax? the midnight traveller cannot be lighted by it; the student cannot read by the flame of it. It is of no use; men throw it into the fire and consume it. Ah! that is how you talk of yourselves. You are good for nothing, so are these things. But Christ will not throw you away because you are of no value. You do not know of what use you may be, and you cannot tell how Jesus Christ values you after all. There is a good woman there, a mother, perhaps, she says, "Well, I do not often go out - I keep house with my children, and seem to be doing no good." Mother, do not say so, your position is a high, lofty, responsible one; and in training up children for the Lord, you are doing as much for his name as yon eloquent Apollos, who so valiantly preached the word. And you, poor man, all you can do is to toil from morning till night, and earn just enough to enable you to live day by day, you have nothing to give away, and when you go to the Sabbath-school, you can just read, you cannot teach much - well, but unto him to whom little is given of him little is required. Do you not know that there is such a thing as glorifying God by sweeping the street crossing? If

two angels were sent down to earth, one to rule an empire, and the other to sweep a street, they would have no choice in the matter, so long as God ordered them. So God, in his providence, has called you to work hard for your daily bread; do it to his glory. "Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to his honor." But, ah! I know there are some of you here who seem useless to the Church. You do all you can; but when you have done it, it is nothing; you can neither help us with money, nor talents, nor time, and, therefore, you think God must cast you out. You think if you were like Paul or Peter you might be safe. Ah! beloved, talk not so; Jesus Christ saith he will not quench the useless flax, nor break the worthless bruised reed; he has something for the useless and for the worthless ones. But mark you, I do not say this to excuse laziness - to excuse those that can do, but do not; that is a very different thing. There is a whip for the ass, a scourge for idle men, and they must have it sometimes. I am speaking now of those who cannot do it; not of Issacher, who is like a strong ass, crouching down between two burdens, and too lazy to get up with them. I say nothing for the sluggard, who will not plough by reason of the cold, but of the men and women who really feel that they can be of little service - who cannot do more; and to such, the words of the text are applicable.

Now we will make another remark. The two things here mentioned are *offensive* things. A bruised reed is offensive, for I believe there is an allusion here to the pipes of Pan, which you all know are reeds put together, along which a man moves his mouth, thus causing some kind of music. This is the organ, I believe which Jubal invented, and which David mentions, for it is certain that the organ we use was not then in use. The bruised reed, then, would of course spoil the melody of all the pipes; one unsound tube would so let the air out, as to produce a discordant sound, or no sound at all, so that one's impulse would be to take the pipe out and put in a fresh one. And, as for smoking flax, the wick of a candle or anything of that kind, I need not inform you that the smoke is offensive. To me no odour in all the world is so abominably offensive as smoking flax. But some say, "How can you speak in so low a style?" I have not gone lower than I could go myself, nor lower than you can go with me; for I am sure you are, if God the Holy Ghost has really humbled you, just as offensive to your own souls, and just as offensive to God as a bruised reed

would be among the pipes, or as smoking flax to the eyes and nose. I often think of dear old John Bunyan, when he said he wished God had made him a toad, or a frog, or a snake, or anything rather than a man, for he felt he was so offensive. Oh! I can conceive a nest of vipers, and I think that they are obnoxious; I can imagine a pool of all kinds of loathsome creatures, breeding corruption, but there is nothing one half so worthy of abhorrence as the human heart. God spares from all eyes but his own that awful sight - a human heart; and could you and I but once see our heart, we should be driven mad, so horrible would be the sight. Do you feel like that? Do you feel that you must be offensive in God's sight - that you have so rebelled against him, so turned away from his commandments, that surely you must be obnoxious to him? If so, my text is yours.

Now, I can imagine some woman here this morning who has departed from the paths of virtue; and, while she is standing in the throng up there, or sitting down, she feels as if she had no right to tread these hallowed courts, and stand among God's people. She thinks that God might almost make the chapel break down upon her to destroy her, she is so great a sinner. Never mind, broken reed and smoking flax! Though thou art the scorn of man, and loathsome to thyself, yet Jesus saith to thee, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." There is some man here who hath something in his heart that I know not of - who may have committed crimes in secret, that we will not mention in public; his sins stick like a leech to him, and rob him of all comfort. Here you are young man, shaking and trembling, lest your crime should be divulged before high heaven; you are broken down, bruised like a reed, smoking like flax. Ah! I have a word for thee too. Comfort! comfort! comfort! Despair not; for Jesus saith he will not quench the smoking flax, he will not break the bruised reed.

And yet, my dear friends, there is one thought before I turn away from this point. Both of these articles, however worthless they may be, *may yet be of some service*. When God puts his hand to a man, if he were worthless and useless before, he can make him very valuable. You know the price of an article does not depend so much upon the value of the raw material to begin with - bruised reeds and smoking flax; but by Divine workmanship both these things become of wondrous value. You tell me



the bruised reed is good for nothing; I tell you that Christ will take that bruised reed and mend it up, and fit it in the pipes of heaven. Then when the grand orchestra shall send forth its music, when the organs of the skies shall peal forth their deep-toned sounds, we shall ask, "What was that sweet note heard there, mingling with the rest?" And some one shall say, "It was a bruised reed." Ah! Mary Magdalene's voice in heaven, I imagine, sounds more sweet and liquid than any other; and the voice of that poor thief, who said "Lord, remember me," if it is a deep bass voice, is more mellow and more sweet than the voice of any other, because he loved much, for he had much forgiven him. This reed may yet be of use. Do not say you are good for nothing; you shall sing up in heaven yet. Do not say you are worthless; at last you shall stand before the throne among the blood-washed company, and shall sing God's praise. Ay! and the smoking flax too, what good can that be? I will soon tell you. There is a spark in that flax somewhere; it is nearly out, but still a spark remaineth. Behold the prairie on fire! See you the flames come rolling on? See you stream after stream of hot fire deluging the plain till all the continent is burnt and scorched - till heaven is reddened with the flame? Old night's black face is scarred with the burning, and the stars appear affrighted at the conflagration. How was that mass ignited? By a piece of smoking flax dropped by some traveller, fanned by the soft wind, till the whole prairie caught the flame. So one poor man, one ignorant man, one weak man, even one backsliding man, may be the means of the conversion of a whole nation. Who knows but that you who are nothing now, may be of more use than those of us who appear to stand better before God, because we have more gifts and talents? God can make a spark set a world on fire - he can light up a whole nation with the spark of one poor praying soul. You may be useful yet; therefore be of good cheer. Moss groweth upon gravestones; the ivy clingeth to the mouldering pile; the mistletoe groweth on the dead branch; and even so shall grace, and piety, and virtue, and holiness, and goodness, come from smoking flax and bruised reeds.

II. Thus, then, my dear friends, I have tried to find out the parties for whom this text is meant, and I have shown you somewhat of mortal frailty; Now I mount a step higher - to DIVINE COMPASSION.

"The bruised reed he will not break,  
the smoking flax he will not quench."

Notice what is first of all stated, and then let me tell you that Jesus Christ means a great deal more than he says. First of all, what does he say? He says plainly enough that he will not break the bruised reed. There is a bruised reed before me - a poor child of God under a deep sense of sin. It seems as if the whip of the law would never stop. It keeps on, lash, lash, lash; and though you say, "Lord, stop it, and give me a little respite," still comes down the cruel thong, lash, lash, lash. You feel your sins. Ah! I know what you are saying this morning: "If God continues this a little longer my heart will break: I shall perish in despair; I am almost distracted by my sin; if I lie down at night I cannot sleep; it appears as if ghosts were in the room - ghosts of my sins - and when I awake at midnight, I see the black form of death staring at me, and saying, 'Thou art my prey, I shall have thee;' while hell behind seems to burn." Ah! poor bruised reed, he will not break you; conviction shall be too strong; it shall be great enough to melt thee, and to make thee go to Jesus' feet; but it shall not be strong enough to break thy heart altogether, so that thou shouldst die. Thou shalt never be driven to despair; but thou shalt be delivered; thou shalt come out of the fire, poor bruised reed, and shalt not be broken.

So there is a backslider here this morning; he is like the smoking flax. Years gone by you found such happiness in the ways of the Lord, and such delight in his service, that you said, "There I would for ever stay.

'What peaceful hours I then enjoyed;  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void,  
The world can never fill.'"

You are smoking, and you think God will put you out. If I were an Arminian, I should tell you that he would; but being a believer in the Bible, and nothing else, I tell you that he will not quench you. Though you are smoking, you shall not die. Whatever your crime has been, the Lord says, "Return ye backsliding children of men, for I will have mercy upon you." He will not cast thee away, poor Ephraim; only come back to him -

he will not despise thee, though thou hast plunged thyself in the mire and dirt, though thou art covered from head to foot with filthiness; come back, poor prodigal, come back, come back! Thy father calls thee. Hearken poor backslider! Come at once to him whose arms are ready to receive thee.

It says he will not quench - he will not break. But there is more under cover than we see at first sight. When Jesus says he will not break, he means more than that; he means, "I will take that poor bruised reed; I will plant it hard by the rivers of waters, and (miracle of miracles) I will make it grow into a tree whose leaf shall not wither; I will water it every moment; I will watch it; there shall be heavenly fruits upon it; I will keep the birds of prey from it; but the birds of heaven, the sweet songsters of paradise shall make their dwellings in the branches." When he says that he will not break the bruised reed, he means more; he means that he will nourish, that he will help, and strengthen, and support and glorify - that he will execute his commission on it, and make it glorious for ever. And when he says to the backslider that he will not quench him, he means more than that - he means that he will fan him up to a flame. Some of you, I dare say, have gone home from chapel and found that your fire had gone nearly out; I know how you deal with it; you blow gently at the single spark, if there is one, and lest you should blow too hard, you hold your finger before it; and if you were alone and had but one match, or one spark in the tinder, how gently would you blow it. So, backslider, Jesus Christ deals with thee; he does not put thee out; he blows gently; he says, "I will not quench thee;" he means, "I will be very tender, very cautious, very careful;" he will put on dry material, so that by-and-by a little spark shall come to a flame, and blaze up towards heaven, and great shall be the fire thereof.

Now I want to say one or two things to Little-Faiths this morning. The little children of God who are here mentioned as being bruised reeds or smoking flax are just as safe as the great saints of God. I wish for a moment to expand this thought, and then I will finish with the other head. These saints of God who are called bruised reeds and smoking flax are just as safe as those who are mighty for their Master, and great in strength, for several reasons. First of all, *the little saint is just as much*

*God's elect as the great saint.* When God chose his people, he chose them all at once, and altogether; and he elected one just as much as the other. If I choose a certain number of things, one may be less than the rest, but one is as much chosen as the other; and so Mrs. Fearing and Miss Despondency are just as much elected as Great-Heart, or Old Father Honest. Again: *the little ones are redeemed equally with the great ones!* the feeble saints cost Christ as much suffering as the strong ones; the tiniest child of God could not have been purchased with less than Jesus' precious blood; and the greatest child of God did not cost him more. Paul did not cost any more than Benjamin - I am sure he did not - for I read in the Bible that *"there is no difference."* Besides, when of old they came to pay their redemption-money, every person brought a shekel. The poor shall bring no less, and the rich shall bring no more than just a shekel. The same price was paid for the one as the other. Now then little child of God, take that thought to thy soul. You see some men very prominent in Christ's cause - and it is very good that they should be - but they did not cost Jesus a farthing more than you did; he paid the same price for you that he paid for them. Recollect again, *you are just as much a child of God as the greatest saint.* Some of you have five or six children. There is one child of yours, perhaps, who is very tall and handsome, and has, moreover, gifts of mind; and you have another child who is the smallest of the family, perhaps has but little intellect and understanding. But which is the most your child? "The most!" you say; "both alike are my children, certainly, one as much as the other." And so, dear friends, you may have very little learning, you may be very dark about divine things, you may but "see men as trees walking," but you are as much the children of God as those who have grown to the stature of men in Christ Jesus. Then remember, poor tried saint, that *you are just as much justified as any other child of God.* I know that I am completely justified.

His blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress.

I want no other garments, save Jesus' doings, and his imputed righteousness.

The boldest child of God wants no more; and I who am "less than the least of all saints," can be content with no less, and I shall have no less. O

Ready-to-Halt, thou art as much justified as Paul, Peter, John the Baptist, or the loftiest saint in heaven. There is no difference in that matter. Oh! take courage and rejoice.

Then one thing more. *If you were lost, God's honor would be as much tarnished as if the greatest one were lost.* A queer thing I once read in an old book about God's children and people being a part of Christ and in union with him. The writer says - "A father sitteth in his room, and there cometh in a stranger; the stranger taketh up a child on his knee, and the child hath a sore finger; so he saith, 'My child, you have a sore finger;' 'Yes!' 'Well, let me take it off, and give thee a golden one!' The child looketh at him and saith, 'I will not go to that man any more, for he talks of taking off my finger; I love my own finger, and I will not have a golden one instead of it.'" So the saint saith, "I am one of the members of Christ, but I am like a sore finger, and he will take me off and put a golden one on." "No," said Christ, "no, no; I cannot have any of my members taken away; if the finger be a sore one, I will bind it up; I will strengthen it." Christ cannot allow a word about cutting his members off. If Christ lose one of his people, he would not be a whole Christ any longer. If the meanest of his children could be cast away, Christ would lack a part of his fullness; yea, Christ would be incomplete without his Church. If one of his children must be lost, it would be better that it should be a great one, than a little one. If a little one were lost, Satan would say, "Ah! you save the great ones, because they had strength and could help themselves; but the little one that has no strength, you could not save him." You know what Satan would say; but God would shut Satan's mouth, by proclaiming, "They are all here, Satan, in spite of thy malice, they are all here; every one is safe; now lie down in thy den for ever, and be bound eternally in chains, and smoke in fire!" So shall *he* suffer eternal torment, but not one child of God ever shall.

One thought more and I shall have done with this head. *The salvation of great saints often depends upon the salvation of little ones.* Do you understand that? You know that my salvation, or the salvation of any child of God, looking at second causes, very much depends upon the conversion of some one else. Suppose your mother is the means of your conversion, you would, speaking after the manner of men, say, that your

conversion depended upon hers; for her being converted, made her the instrument of bringing you in. Suppose such-and-such a minister to be the means of your calling; then your conversion, in some sense, though not absolutely, depends upon his. So it often happens, that the salvation of God's mightiest servants depends upon the conversion of little ones. There is a poor mother; no one ever knows anything about her; she goes to the house of God, her name is not in the newspapers, or anywhere else; she teaches her child, and brings him up in the fear of God; she prays for that boy; she wrestles with God, and her tears and prayers mingle together. The boy grows up. What is he? A missionary - a William Knibb - a Moffat - a Williams. But you do not hear anything about the mother. Ah! but if the mother had not been saved, where would the boy have been? Let this cheer the little ones; and may you rejoice that he will nourish and cherish you, though you are like bruised reeds and smoking flax.

Now, to finish up, there is a CERTAIN VICTORY.

"Till he send forth judgment unto victory."

Victory! There is something beautiful in that word. The death of Sir John Moore, in the Peninsular war, was very touching; he fell in the arms of triumph; and sad as was his fate, I doubt not that his eye was lit up with lustre by the shout of victory. So also, I suppose, that Wolfe spoke a truth when he said, "I die happy," having just before heard the shout, "they run, they run." I know victory even in that bad sense - for I look not upon earthly victories as of any value - must have cheered the warrior. But oh! how cheered the saint when he knows that victory is his! I shall fight during all my life, but I shall write "*vici*" on my shield. I shall be "more than conqueror through him that loved me." Each feeble saint shall win the day; each man upon his crutches; each lame one; each one full of infirmity, sorrow, sickness, and weakness, shall gain the victory. "They shall come with singing unto Zion; as well the blind, and lame, and halt, and the woman with child, together." So saith the Scripture. Not one shall be left out; but he shall "send forth judgment unto victory." Victory! victory! victory! This is the lot of each Christian; he shall triumph through his dear Redeemer's name.

Now a word about this victory. I speak first to aged men and women. Dear brethren and sisters, you are often, I know, like the bruised reed. Coming events cast their shadows before them; and death casts the shadow of old age on you. You feel the grasshopper to be a burden; you feel full of weakness and decay; your frame can hardly hold together. Ah! you have here a special promise. "The bruised reed I will not break." "I will strengthen thee." "When thy heart and thy flesh faileth, I will be the strength of thy heart and thy portion for ever."

Even down to old age, all my people shall prove  
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;  
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,  
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne.

Tottering on thy staff, leaning, feeble, weak, and wan; fear not the last hour; that last hour shall be thy best; thy last day shall be a consummation devoutly to be wished. Weak as thou art, God will temper the trial to thy weakness; he will make thy pain less, if thy strength be less; but thou shalt sing in heaven, Victory! victory! victory! There are some of us who could wish to change places with you, to be so near heaven - to be so near home. With all your infirmities, your grey hairs are a crown of glory to you; for you are near the end as well as in the way of righteousness.

A word with you middle-aged men, battling in this life's rough storm. You are often bruised reeds, your religion is so encumbered by your worldly callings, so covered up by the daily din of business, business, business, that you seem like smoking flax; it is as much as you can do to serve your God, and you cannot say that you are "fervent in spirit" as well as "diligent in business." Man of business, toiling and striving in this world, he will not quench thee when thou art like smoking flax; he will not break thee when thou art like the bruised reed, but will deliver thee from thy troubles, thou shalt swim across the sea of life, and shalt stand on the happy shore of heaven, and shalt sing, "Victory" through him that loved thee.

Ye youths and maidens! I speak to you, and have a right to do so. You and I oftentimes know what the bruised reed is, when the hand of God blights

our fair hopes. We are full of giddiness and waywardness, it is only the rod of affliction that can bring folly out of us, for we have much of it in us. Slippery paths are the paths of youths, and dangerous ways are the ways of the young, but God will not break or destroy us. Men, by their over caution, bid us never tread a step lest we fall; but God bids us go, and makes our feet like hind's feet that we may tread upon high places. Serve God in early days; give your hearts to him, and then he will never cast you out, but will nourish and cherish you.

Let me not finish without saying a word to little children. You who have never heard of Jesus, he says to you, "The bruised reed I will not break; the smoking flax I will not quench." I believe there is many a little prattler, not six years old, who knows the Saviour. I never despise infantile piety; I love it. I have heard little children talk of mysteries that grey-headed men knew not. Ah! little children who have been brought up in the Sabbath-schools, and love the Saviour's name, if others say you are too forward, do not fear, love Christ still.

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,  
Still will look upon a child;  
Pity thy simplicity,  
And suffer thee to come to him.

He will not cast thee away; for smoking flax he will not quench, and the bruised reed he will not break.

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## **The Sweet Uses Of Adversity**

Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. - Job 10:2

And will God contend with man? If God be angry, can he not take away



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

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

seat in despair.

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

1. My first answer on God's part, my brother, is this - it may be that God is contending with thee that he may show his own power in upholding thee. God delighteth in his saints; and when a man delights in his child, if it be a child noted for its brightness of intellect, he delights to see it put through hard questions, because he knows that it will be able to answer them all. So God glories in his children. He loves to hear them tried, that the whole world may see that there is none like them on the face of the earth, and even Satan may be compelled before he can find an accusation against them, to resort to his inexhaustible fund of lies. Sometimes God on purpose puts his children in the midst of this world's trials. On the right, left, before, behind, they are surrounded. Within and without the battle rages. But there stands the child of God, calm amidst the

bewildering cry, confident of victory. And then the Lord pointeth joyously to his saint, and he saith, "See, Satan, he is more than a match for thee. Weak though he is, yet through my power, he all things can perform." And sometimes God permits Satan himself to come against one of his children; and the black fiend of hell in dragon's wings, meets a poor Christian just when he is faint and weary from stumblings in the valley of humiliation. The fight is long and terrible, and, well it may be, for it is a worm combating with the dragon. But see what that worm can do. It is trodden under foot, and yet it destroys the heel that treads upon it. When the Christian is cast down he utters a cry, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for though I fall yet shall I rise again." And so God pointeth to his child and with, "See there! see what I can do: I can make flesh and blood more mighty than the most cunning spirit; I can make poor feeble foolish man, more than a match for all the craft and might of Satan." And what will you say to this third proof that God puts us through? Sometimes God doth as it were, himself enter into the lists; oh, let us wonder to tell it. God to prove the strength of faith, sometimes himself makes war on faith. Think not that this is a stretch of the imagination. It is plain simple fact. Have ye never heard of the brook Jabbok, and of that angel-clothed God who fought with Jacob there, and permitted Jacob to prevail? What was this for? It was this: thus had God determined, "I will strengthen the creature so much, that I will permit it to overcome its Creator." Oh, what noble work is this, that while God is casting down his child with one hand, he should be holding him up with the other: letting a measure of omnipotence fall on him to crush him, while the like omnipotence supports him under the tremendous load. The Lord shows the world - "See what faith can do! "Well does Hart sing of faith -

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

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

may be the first reason.

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

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

3. Another reason may be found in this. It may be the Lord contends with thee because thou hast some secret sin which is doing thee sore damage. Dost thou remember the story of Moses? Never a man better beloved than he of the Lord his God, for he was faithful in all his house as a servant. But dost thou remember how the Lord met him on the way as he was going to Egypt, and strove with him? find why? Because he had in his house an uncircumcised child. This child was, so long as it had not God's seal upon it, a sin in Moses; therefore God strove with him till the thing was done. Now, too often we have some uncircumcised thing in our house, some joy that is evil, some amusement that is sinful, some pursuit that is not agreeable to his will. And the Lord meets us often as he did Moses, of whom it is written - "The Lord met him by the way in the inn,

and sought to kill him." - Exodus 4:24. Now search and look, for if the consolations of God be small with thee, there is some secret sin within. Put it away, lest God smite thee still more sorely, and vex thee in his hot displeasure. Trials often discover sins - sins we should never have found out if it had not been for them. We know that the houses in Russia are very greatly infested with rats and mice. Perhaps a stranger would scarcely notice them at first, but the time when you discover them is when the house is on fire; then they pour out in multitudes. And so doth God sometimes burn up our comforts to make our hidden sins run out; and then he enables us to knock them on the head and get rid of them. That may be the reason of your trial, to put an end to some long-fostered sin. It may be, too, that in this way God would prevent some future sin, some sin hidden from thine own eyes into which thou wouldst soon fall if it were not for his troubling thee by his providence. There was a fair ship which belonged to the great Master of the seas; it was about to sail from the port of grace to the haven of glory. Ere it left the shore the great Master said, "Mariners, be brave! Captain, be thou bold! for not a hair of your head shall perish; I will bring you safely to your desired haven. The angel of the winds is commissioned to take care of you on your way." The ship sailed right merrily with its streamers flying in the air. It floated along at a swift rate with a fair wind for many and many a day. But once upon a time there came a hurricane which drove them from the course, strained their mast until it bent as if it must snap in twain. The sail was gone to ribbons; the sailors were alarmed and the captain himself trembled. They had lost their course. "They were out of the right track," they said; and they mourned exceedingly. When the day dawned the waves were quiet, and the angel of the winds appeared; and they spoke unto him, and said, "Oh angel, wast thou not bidden to take charge of us, and preserve us on our journeys?" He answered, "It was even so, and I have done it. You were steering on right confidently, and you knew not that a little ahead of your vessel lay a quicksand upon which she would be wrecked and swallowed up quick. I saw that there was no way for your escape but to drive you from your course. See, I have done as it was commanded me: go on your way." Ah, this is a parable of our Lord's dealings with us. He often drives us from our smooth course which we thought was the right track to heaven. But there is a secret reason for it; there is a quicksand ahead that is not marked in the chart. We know

nothing about it; but God seeth it, and he will not permit this fair vessel, which he has himself insured, to be stranded anywhere; he will bring it safely to its desired haven.

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

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

Sweet is the affliction which gives us fellowship with Christ. Blessed is the plough that ploughs deep furrows, if the furrows be like his. Blessed is the mouth that spits upon us, if the spittle be from the same cause as that which defiled his face. Blessed are the nails and thorns, and vinegar and spear, if they but make us somewhat like to him, in whose glory we shall be partakers when we shall see him as he is. This is a matter which all cannot understand, for it is a path which no unhallowed foot hath trodden, and no careless eye hath so much as seen it. But the true believer can rejoice therein, for he has had fellowship with Christ in his sufferings.

5. To the child Of God I shall give only one more reason. The Lord, it may

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

Surely, I cannot answer this question better. If I have not hit upon the right reason, search and look my dearly beloved; for the reason is not far off if ye but look for it - the reason why he contendeth with you.

II. I have thus done with the saints; I shall now turn myself to address THE SEEKING SINNER, who is wondering that he has found no peace



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

1. My first answer shall be this. Perhaps, my dear hearer, God is contending with you for awhile, because as yet you are not thoroughly awakened. Remember, Christ will not heal your wound till he has probed it to its very core. Christ is no unqualified physician, no foolish surgeon, who would close up a wound with proud flesh in it; but he will take the lances, and cut, and cut, and cut again crossways, and he will lay the sore open, expose it, look into it, make it smart; and then after that, he will close up its mouth and make it whole. Perhaps thou hast not as yet known thine own vileness, thine own lost state. Now, Christ will have thee know thy poverty before he will make thee rich. His Holy Spirit will convince thee of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. He will strip thee, and though the pulling off of thy own righteousness be like

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

2. Another answer I will give you is this: perhaps God contends with thee in order to try thy earnestness. There are many Mr. Pliables, who set out on the road to heaven for a little time, and the first boggy piece of road they come to, they creep out on that side which is nearest to their own house, and go back again. Now, God meets every pilgrim on the road to heaven and contends with him. If you can hold your own, and say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him;" if you can dare to do it, and be importunate with God, and say, "Though he never hear me, if I perish I will pray, and perish only there;" then you have got the mastery and you shall succeed. God's Spirit is teaching you how to wrestle and agonize in prayer. I have seen a man, when he has become solemnly in earnest about his soul, pray as though he was a very Samson, with the two gates of mercy in his hand, rocking them to and fro as though he would sooner pull them up - gates, and bar, and all - than he would go away without obtaining a blessing. God loves to see a man mighty in prayer, intent upon getting the blessing, resolved that he will have Christ, or he will perish seeking him. Now, be in earnest. Cry aloud! spare not! Rise in the

night-watches! pour out your heart like water before the Lord, for he will answer thee when he hath heard the voice of thy crying; he will hearken to thy supplication and give thee the desire of thy heart.

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

"Whate'er consists not with thy love,  
O help me to resign."  
"The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from its throne,  
And worship only thee."

4. Then drawing near to a conclusion let me have your most solemn attention while I give one more hint as to the reason why you have not yet found peace. My dear hearers, perhaps it is because you do not thoroughly understand the plan of salvation. I do feel that all ministers, - and here perhaps, I am as great a sinner as any other, and I condemn myself while I chastise others - we all of us do in some way or other, I fear, help to dim the lustre of God's grace, as manifested in the cross of

Christ. Often am I afraid lest I should prefer Calvinism to Calvary, lest I should put the sinner's sense of need like a quickset hedge round the cross, and keep the poor sinner from getting as near as he would to the bleeding Lamb of God. Ah, my dear hearers, remember if you would be saved, your salvation comes wholly and entirely from Jesus Christ, the dying Son of God. View him yonder, sinner, sweating in the garden! See the red drops of blood as they fall from that dear face! Oh, see him sinner, see him in Pilate's hall. View the streams of gore as they gush from those lacerated shoulders. See him, sinner, see him on his cross! View that head still marked with the wounds with which the thorns pierced his temples! Oh, view that face emaciated and marred! See the spittle still hanging there - the spittle of cruel mockers! See the eyes floating in tears with languid pity! Look, too, at those hands, and view them as they stream like fountains of blood! Oh, stand and listen while he cries, "Lama Sabachthani!" Sinner, thy life is in him that died; thy healing is in yonder wounds; thy salvation is in his destruction. "Oh," says one, "but I cannot believe." Ah, brother, that was once my mournful cry. But I will tell you how I came to believe. Once upon a time, I was trying to make myself believe, and a voice whispered, "Vain man, vain man, if thou wouldst believe, come and see!" Then the Holy Spirit led me by the hand to a solitary place. And while I stood there, suddenly there appeared before me One upon his cross. I looked up, I had then no faith. I saw his eyes suffused with tears, and the blood still flowing: I saw his enemies about him hunting him to his grave; I marked his miseries unutterable; I heard the groaning which cannot be described; and as I looked up, he opened his eyes and said to me, "The Son of Man is come into the world to seek and to save that which was lost." I clapped my hands, and I said, "Jesus, I do believe, I must believe what thou hast said, I could not believe before, but the sight of thee has breathed faith into my soul. I dare not doubt - it were treason, it were high treason to doubt thy power to save." Dissolved by his agonies, I fell on the ground, and embraced his feet, and when I fell, my sin fell also! And I rejoiced in love divine that blots out sin and saves from death.

Oh my friend, you will never get faith by trying to make yourself have it. Faith is the gift of Christ! go and find it in his veins. There is a secret spot where faith is treasured up; it is in the heart of Christ; go and catch it

sinner as it flows therefrom. Go to your chamber, and sit down and picture Christ in holy vision, dying on the tree, and as your eye sees, your heart shall melt, your soul shall believe, and you shall rise from your knees and cry, "I know whom I may believe, and I am persuaded he is able to save that which I have committed to him until that day."

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

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## **The Sword Of The Spirit**

Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. - Ephesians 6:17

To be a Christian is to be a warrior. The good soldier of Jesus Christ must not expect to find ease in this world: it is a battle-field. Neither must he reckon upon the friendship of the world; for that would be enmity against God. His occupation is war. As he puts on piece by piece of the panoply provided for him, he may wisely say to himself, "This warns me of danger; this prepares me for warfare; this prophesies opposition."

Difficulties meet us even in standing our ground; for the apostle, two or three times, bids us—"Stand." In the rush of the fight, men are apt to be carried off their legs. If they can keep their footing, they will be victorious; but if they are borne down by the rush of their adversaries, everything is lost. You are to put on the heavenly armor in order that you may stand; and you will need it to maintain the position in which your Captain has placed you. If even to stand requires all this care, judge ye what the warfare must be! The apostle also speaks of withstanding as well as standing. We are not merely to defend, but also to assail. It is not

enough that you are not conquered; you have to conquer: and hence we find, that we are to take, not only a helmet to protect the head, but also a sword, with which to annoy the foe. Ours, therefore, is a stern conflict, standing and withstanding; and we shall want all the armor from the divine magazine, all the strength from the mighty God of Jacob.

It is clear from our text that our defense and our conquest must be obtained by sheer fighting. Many try compromise; but if you are a true Christian, you can never do this business well. The language of deceit fits not a holy tongue. The adversary is the father of lies, and those that are with him understand the art of equivocation; but saints abhor it. If we discuss terms of peace, and attempt to gain something by policy, we have entered upon a course from which we shall return in disgrace. We have no order from our Captain to patch up a truce, and get as good terms as we can. We are not sent out to offer concessions. It is said that if we yield a little, perhaps the world will yield a little also, and good may come of it. If we are not too strict and narrow, perhaps sin will kindly consent to be more decent. Our association with it will prevent its being so barefaced and atrocious. If we are not narrow-minded, our broad doctrine will go down with the world, and those on the other side will not be so greedy of error as they now are. No such thing. Assuredly this is not the order which our Captain has issued. When peace is to be made, he will make it himself, or he will tell us how to behave to that end; but at present our orders are very different.

Neither may we hope to gain by being neutral, or granting an occasional truce. We are not to cease from conflict, and try to be as agreeable as we can with our Lord's foes, frequenting their assemblies, and tasting their dainties. No such orders are written here. You are to grasp your weapon, and go forth to fight.

Neither may you so much as dream of winning the battle by accident. No man was ever holy by a happy chance. Infinite damage may be done by carelessness; but no man ever won life's battle by it. To let things go on as they please, is to let them bear us down to hell. We have no orders to be quiet, and take matters easily. No; we are to pray always, and watch constantly. The one note that rings out from the text is this:—TAKE THE

**SWORD! TAKE THE SWORD!** No longer is it, talk and debate! No longer is it, parley and compromise! The word of thunder is—Take the sword. The Captain's voice is clear as a trumpet—Take the sword! No Christian man here will have been obedient to our text unless with clear, sharp, and decisive firmness, courage, and resolve, he takes the sword. We must go to heaven sword in hand, all the way. **"TAKE THE SWORD."** On this command I would enlarge. May the Holy Spirit help me!

It is noteworthy that there is only one weapon of offense provided, although there are several pieces of armor. The Roman soldier usually carried a spear as well as a sword. We have seen frequent representations of the legionary standing upon guard as sentry, and he almost always stands with a spear in his right hand, while his sword hangs at his side. But Paul, for excellent reasons, concentrates our offensive weapon in one, because it answers for all. We are to use the sword, and that only. Therefore, if you are going to this fight, see well to your only weapon. If you are to have no other, take care that you have this always in your hand. Let the Captain's voice ring in your ear, "Take the sword! Take the sword!", and so go forth to the field.

Notice, first, the sword you are to take is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. That is our first head; and the second is equally upon the surface of the text: This sword is to be ours. We are ordered to take the sword of the Spirit, and so make it our own sword.

I. First, the Word of God which is to be our one weapon is of noble origin; for **IT IS "THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT."** It has the properties of a sword, and those were given it by the Spirit of God.

Here we note that the Holy Spirit has a sword. He is quiet as the dew, tender as the anointing oil, soft as the zephyr of eventide, and peaceful as a dove; and yet, under another aspect, he wields a deadly weapon. He is the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning, and he beareth not the sword in vain. Of him it may be said, "The Lord is a man of war: Jehovah is his name."

The Word of God in the hand of the Spirit wounds very terribly, and

makes the heart of man to bleed. Do you not remember, some of you, when you used to be gashed with this sword Sunday after Sunday? Were you not cut to the heart by it, so as to be angry with it? You almost made up your mind to turn away from hearing the gospel again. That sword pursued you, and pierced you in the secrets of your soul, and made you bleed in a thousand places. At last you were "pricked in the heart", which is a far better thing than being "cut to the heart"; and then execution was done, indeed. That wound was deadly, and none but he that killed could make you alive. Do you recollect how, after this, your sins were slain one after another? Their necks were laid on the block, and the Spirit acted as an executioner with his sword. After that, blessed be God, your fears, and doubts, and despair, and unbelief, were also hacked to pieces by this same sword. The Word gave you life; but it was at the first a great killer. Your soul was like a battle-field after a great fight, under the first operations of the divine Spirit, whose sword returneth not empty from the conflict.

Beloved, the Spirit of God has war with the Amalek of evil and error from generation to generation. He will spare none of the evils which now pollute the nations; his sword will never be quiet till all these Canaanites are destroyed. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ not only by what he reveals, but also by what he overturns. The strife may be weary, but it will be carried on from age to age, till the Lord Jesus shall appear; for ever shall the Spirit of God espouse the cause of love against hate, of truth against error, of holiness against sin, of Christ against Satan. He will win the day, and those who are with him shall in his might be more than conquerors. The Holy Spirit has proclaimed war, and wields a two-edged sword.

The Holy Spirit wields no sword but the Word of God. This wonderful Book, which contains the utterances of God's mouth, is the one weapon which the Holy Ghost elects to use for his warlike purposes. It is a spiritual weapon, and so is suitable to the Holy Spirit. The weapons of his warfare are not carnal: he never uses either persecution or patronage, force or bribery, glitter of grandeur, or terror of power. He works upon men by the Word, which is suitable to his own spiritual nature, and to the spiritual work which is to be accomplished. While it is spiritual, this weapon is "mighty through God." A cut from the Word of God will cleave



a man's spirit from head to foot; so sharp is this sword. Though by long practice in sin a man may have coated himself as with mail impenetrable, yet the Word of the Lord will divide the northern iron and the steel. The Holy Ghost can make a man feel the divine power of the sacred Word in the very center of his being. For battling with the spirits of man, or with spirits of an infernal kind, there is no weapon so keen, so piercing, so able to divide between the joints and marrow, so penetrating as to the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Word, in the Spirit's hand, gives no dash-wound, but cuts into the man's heart, and so wounds him that there is no healing save by supernatural power. The wounded conscience will bleed; its pains will be upon it day and night; and though it seek out a thousand medicines, no salve but one can cure a gash which this terrible sword has made. This weapon is two-edged; indeed, it is all edge; and whichever way it strikes, it wounds and kills. There is no such a thing as the flat of the sword of the Spirit: it has a razor edge every way. Beware how you handle it, you critics; it may wound even you: it will cut you to your destruction, one of these days, except ye be converted. He that uses the Word in the Lord's battles may use it upon carnal hopes, and then strike back upon unbelieving fears; he may smite with one edge the love of sin, and then with the other the pride of self-righteousness. It is a conquering weapon in all ways, this wondrous sword of the Spirit of God.

The Word, we say, is the only sword which the Spirit uses. I know the Holy Ghost uses gracious sermons; but it is only in proportion as they have the Word of God in them. I know the Holy Ghost uses religious books; but only so far as they are the Word of God told out in other language. Conviction, conversion, and consolation still are wrought, and only by the Word of God. Learn, then, the wisdom of using the Word of God for holy purposes. The Spirit has abundant ability to speak of his own self, apart from the written Word. The Holy Ghost is God, and therefore he is the greatest spirit in the universe. All wisdom dwells in him. He thought out the laws which govern nature and direct providence. The Holy Spirit is the great teacher of human spirits: he taught Bezaleel and the artificers in the wilderness how to make the fine linen, and the gold and carved work for the tabernacle. All arts and sciences are perfectly known to him, and infinitely more than men can ever discover. Yet he will not use these things in this holy controversy. In the quarrel of

his covenant he neither uses philosophy, nor science, nor rhetoric. In contending against the powers of darkness, "The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God." "It is written" is his master-stroke. Words which God has spoken by holy men of old, and has caused to be recorded on the sacred page—these are the battle-axe and weapons of war of his Spirit. This Book contains the Word of God, and is the Word of God; and this it is which the Holy Ghost judges to be so effectual a weapon against evil that he uses this, and this only, as his sword in the great conflict with the powers of darkness.

The Word is the sword of the Spirit because it is of his own making. He will not use a weapon of human workmanship, lest the sword boast itself against the hand that wields it. The Holy Ghost revealed the mind of God to the minds of holy men; he spake the word into their hearts, and thus he made them think as he would have them think and to write what he willed them to write: so that what they spoke and wrote was spoken and written as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Blessed be the Holy Spirit for deigning to use so many writers, and yet himself to remain the veritable Author of this collection of holy books. We are grateful for Moses, for David, for Isaiah, for Paul, for Peter, for John, but most of all for that superintending Editor, that innermost Author of the whole sacred volume—even the Holy Ghost. A warrior may well be careful as to the make of his sword. If a man had made his own sword, had tempered the metal, had himself passed the blade through many fires, and wrought it to perfection, then, if he were a skillful workman, he would feel confidence in his sword. When work is done nowadays, it is, as a rule, badly done. Work done by contract is usually scamped in some part or another; but when a man does a work for himself he is likely to do it thoroughly, and produce an article which he can depend upon. The Holy Ghost has made this Book himself: every portion of it bears his initial and impress; and thus he has a sword worthy of his own hand, a true Jerusalem blade of heavenly fabric. He delights to use a weapon so divinely made, and he does use it right gloriously.

The Word of God is also the sword of the Spirit because he puts the edge upon it. It is because he is in it that it is so keen and cutting. I believe in the inspiration of Holy Scripture, not only in the day when it was written,

but onward, and even to this day. It is still inspired; still doth the Holy Ghost breathe through the chosen words. I told you the sword was all edge; but I would add that the Holy Spirit makes it so. It would have no edge at all if it were not for his presence within it, and his perpetual working by it. How many people read their Bibles, and yet derive no more benefit therefrom than if they had read an old almanack! In fact, they would more easily keep awake over an ancient Bradshaw than over a chapter of Scripture. The ministers of the gospel may preach God's Word in all sincerity and purity, and yet, if the Spirit of God be not present, we might as well have preached mere moral essays, for no good can come of our testimony. The Holy Ghost rides in the chariot of Scripture, and not in the waggon of modern thought. Scripture is that ark of the covenant which contains the golden pot of manna, and also bears above it the divine light of God's shining. The Spirit of God worketh in, by, and through, and with the Word; and if we keep to that Word, we may rest assured that the Holy Ghost will keep with us, and make our testimony to be a thing of power. Let us pray the blessed Spirit to put an edge on our preaching, lest we say much and accomplish little. Hear us in this thing, O blessed One!

It is "the sword of the Spirit" because he alone can instruct us in the use of it. You think, young man, that you can pick up your Bible, and go and preach from it at once, properly and successfully. You have made a presumptuous mistake. A sword is a weapon which may do hurt to the man who flourishes with it in mere wanton pride. No one can handle the sword of the Spirit aright save the chosen man whom God hath ordained from before the foundation of the world, and trained in feats of arms. By this the elect of God are known—that they love the Word of God, and they have a reverence for it, and discern between it and the words of man. Notice the lambs in the field, just now; and there may be a thousand ewes and lambs; but every lamb finds out its own mother. So does a true-born child of God know where to go for the milk which is to nourish his soul. The sheep of Christ know the Shepherd's voice in the Word, and a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers. God's own people have discernment to discover and relish God's own Word. They will not be misled by the cunning craftiness of human devices. Saints know the Scriptures by inward instinct. The holy life,

which God has infused into believers by his Spirit, loves the Scriptures, and learns how to use them for holy purposes. Young soldier, you must go to the training-ground of the Holy Spirit to be made a proficient swordsman. You will go in vain to the metaphysician or to the logician; for neither of these knows how to handle a spiritual weapon. In other arts they may be masters; but in the sacred use of diving theology they are mere fools. In the things of the Word we are dunces till we enter the school of the Holy Ghost. He must take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us. He must teach us how to grip this sword by faith, and how to hold it by watchfulness, so as to parry the adversary's thrust, and carry the war into the foeman's territory. He is well taught who can swing this great two-handed sword to and fro, and mow a lane through the midst of his opponents, and come out a conqueror at the end. It may take a long time to learn this art; but we have a right skillful Teacher. Those of us who have been in this warfare thirty or forty years feel that we have not yet reached the full use of this sword; nay, I know for one, that I need daily to be taught how to use this mysterious weapon, which is capable of so much more than I have yet supposed. It is the sword of the Spirit, adapted for the use of an Almighty arm, and therefore equal to the doing of far more than we think. Holy Spirit, teach us now feats of arms by this thy sword!

But, chiefly, it is the sword of the Spirit, because he is the great Master in the use of it. Oh, that he would come and show us this morning how he can thrust and cleave with it! In this house of prayer we have often seen him at his work. Here the slain of the Lord have been many. We have seen this sword take off the head of many a Goliath doubt, and slay a horde of cares and unbeliefs. We have seen the Spirit pile up heaps on heaps of the slain when the Word of conviction has gone forth, and men have seen sin to be sin, and fallen down as dead before the Lord and his law. We also know what the use of the sword by the Spirit of God means, for within our own being he has left marks of his prowess. He has killed our doubts and fears, and left no more mistrusts to worry us. There was a man of God who was frequently subject to doubts, even doubts upon the fundamentals of religion. He hated this state of mind; but still he could not get rid of the habit of evil questioning. In answer to prayer, the Spirit came, and convinced him of the pride of his intellect, and of the

wickedness of setting up his judgment against the Word of the Lord; and from that day forward he was never the subject of another fit of unbelief. He saw things clearly in the light of the Holy Spirit; and that is to see them indeed. The great giant of doubt is sorely wounded by the sword of the Spirit—yea, he is slain outright; for the Spirit works in the believer such a conviction of the truth that assurance banishes suspicion. When the Holy Spirit deals with the lusts of the flesh, and the lusts of the eye and the pride of life, these also lie at his feet, trophies to the power of his mighty weapon, even the Word of God! The Holy Spirit is glorious in the use of this sword. He finds that this weapon suits his hand, and he seeks no other. Let us use it also, and be glad to do so. Though it is the sword of the Spirit, yet our feebler hand may grasp it; yea, and find in the grasping that somewhat of the divine power comes unto our arm.

Dear brethren, is it not a very high honor put upon you, as soldiers of the cross, that you should be allowed, nay, commanded to take the sword of the Spirit? The raw recruit is not trusted with the general's sword; but here are you armed with the weapon of God the Holy Ghost, and called upon to bear that sacred sword which is so gloriously wielded by the Lord God himself. This we are to bear, and no other. Does the timid heart enquire, "Wherewithal, my Master, shall I meet my adversaries"? "Here," saith the Holy Ghost, "take this! This is my own sword; I have done great marvels with it; take it, and nothing shall stand against you." When you remember the potency of this sword, when the Spirit tests it upon yourself, you may take it with confidence, and use it in your holy war with full assurance. That Word of God which could convert you, can convert anybody; if it could kill your despair, it can remove another man's despondency; if it has conquered your pride and self-will, it can subdue the like in your children and your neighbors. Having done what it has certainly done for you, you may have a full persuasion that, before its power, no case is hopeless. Wherefore, see to it, that you use from this day forth no other weapon than the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

II. This fairly lands me in the second portion of my discourse. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit; but **IT IS ALSO TO BE OUR SWORD.**

Here I must begin again, and go over much the same ground. We shall need a sword. Our warfare is not child's play: we mean business. We have to deal with fierce foes, who are only to be met with keen weapons. Buffets will not suffice in this contest; we must come to sword-cuts. You may be of a very quiet spirit, but your adversaries are not so. If you attempt to play at Christian warfare, they will not. To meet the powers of darkness is no sham battle. They mean mischief. Nothing but your eternal damnation will satisfy the fiendish hearts of Satan and his crew. You must take not so much a flag to unfurl, or a drum to beat, as a sword to use, and a specially sharp sword too. In this combat you will have to use a sword such as even evil spirits can feel, capable of dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow. If you are to live through this fight, and come off victorious, no form of conflict will suffice less sharp and cutting than sword-work. Depend upon it that in this struggle you will be forced to come to close quarters. The foe aims at your heart, and pushes home. A spear will not do, nor bow and arrow; the enemy is too near for anything but hand-to-hand fighting. Brethren, our foes are not only of our house, but of our heart. I find an enemy within which is always near, and I cannot get away from him. I find that my antagonist will get his hand on my throat if he can. If our foes were far away, and we could play upon them with artillery which would kill at six or seven miles' distance, we might lead a pretty easy life. But no; they are here! At our doors! Yea, within us; nearer than hands and feet. Now for the short sword: the claymore of Holy Scripture, to stab and cut, near and now. No sling and stone will avail us here, but we must take the sword. You have to slay your foe, or your foe will slay you. It is with us Christians as it was with the Highlanders in battle, when their leader called out to them, "Lads, there they are! If you dinna kill them they will kill you." There is no room for peace: it is war to the knife, not only now, but to life's end.

The use of the sword is needful for attack. I have reminded you several times already that it will not suffice for the Christian to guard against sin, and ward off temptation from himself; he has to assail the powers of evil. In our case, the best method of defense is an attack. I have heard of one who would bring an action in law to gain his ends, for he thought this better than being the defendant. That may be matter of question; but in war it is often safer to assail than defend. Carry the warfare into the

enemy's territory. Be trying to win from the adversary, and he will not win so much from you. Do not merely be sober yourselves, but attack drunkenness. Do not be content with being from superstition yourself, but expose it wherever it appears. Do not merely be devout when you feel obliged to be so, but pray for the growth of the kingdom; pray always. Do not merely say, "I will keep Satan out of my family by bringing up my children aright", but go to the Sunday-school, and teach other children, and so carry the war over the border. God forbid that we should ever go to war as a nation! But if we were at war with some nation on the Continent, I should certainly say, "Let the continentals have the battles on their own ground: we do not want a campaign over here." It is wise to keep the war in the enemy's own regions. If we had fought the devil more in the world, he might never have been able to invade the church so terribly as he has done. Attack with the sword, for it is your calling, and thus will you best defend yourself.

We need the sword for real fighting. Do you think that you can dream yourselves into heaven? or ride there in the chariot of ease? Or fly on the wings of brass music? You make a great mistake if you so imagine. A real war is raging, your opponents are in deadly earnest, and you must take your sword.

And, further, we need this sword: this sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We say with David, "There is none like that; give it me." It has wrought such wonders that we prefer it to all others. No other will match the enemy's weapon. If we fight the devil with human reason, the first time our wooden sword comes in contact with a Satanic temptation it will be cut in pieces. If you do not wield a true Jerusalem blade you are in grave peril; your weapon will break off at the hilt, and where will you be? Standing defenceless, with nothing but the handle of a broken sword in your hand, you will be the object of your adversary's ridicule. You must have this sword, for no other will penetrate the foe, and no other will last out the battle. After twenty years, what has become of the pious resolutions of your youth? What is the staying power of your consecration made in the hour of enthusiasm? Alas, how little trust can be placed in it! What would become of us after thirty years of fighting, if we had not the Word of God to rely upon? The Word of the Lord endureth for ever; but

nothing else does. We may do well in early days, but we shall fail in old age if we have not eternal verities to fall back upon.

I can commend this sword to you all, my brethren, although you are so varied in character. This sword suits every hand. Youth or age may alike use this weapon. These dear girls from the Orphanage, and yonder lads from the Bible-class, may fight the battle of their youth with the Word of God; for Holy Scripture may impress and guide our freshest life. You that have grown grey, you that have passed seventy or eighty, you will value the Bible more than ever, and you will find that this sword is the best for veteran warriors. Young men and young women, here is a sword suited for all of you, and well does it become the hand of the feeblest and the gentlest. The Holy Ghost has in the sacred Word prepared an implement of warfare suited for great minds and small, for the cultured and the uneducated. A wonderful sword this is, which, in the hand of faith, reveals an adaptation marvellous to the last degree.

Whatever others may say, it is sufficient for us that this is the regulation sword. A soldier is not left to choose his own equipment; he must carry such arms as his sovereign appoints. This is the regulation sword in Christ's army. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is what you are bidden to take; and if you in wilfulness resolve to exchange it for another, you commit an act of rebellion, and you make the change at your own risk and peril. Come, then, let us each one take the Word of God, and carry it nearer our hearts than ever; for such is the word of command, "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Now, see what we are told to do. We need a sword; we need this sword; we are to take this sword. Note that we are not told that we may lay it down: the demand to take the sword is continuous, and there is no hint of its being suspended. There is a time, of course, when the soldier of her Majesty may remove his sword from his side, and put off his regimentals; there is never such a time with a Christian. One might have thought, from what we have seen of late, that orders had come from headquarters that the soldiers were to lay down the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and take to lighter weapons. Entertainments, amusements, farces, and sing-song are now used to do what the gospel has failed to achieve! Is it



not sadly so? Well, if any will try these silly toys, I can only say that they have no command from their Lord to warrant them in their proceedings. Take all these things, and see what they will do; but you make the trial at your own risk, and on your own heads the result of failure will fall.

The standing-orders are to take the sword of the Spirit, and no new regulation has ever been issued by the great Captain of salvation. From the days of Paul till now, the word stands, "Take the sword of the Spirit." All other things will surely fail, and hence the one sole abiding command is, "Take the sword of the Spirit." We are not told to hang up this sword for exhibition. Certain people have a handsomely-bound Bible to lie upon the table of the best room; and a fine ornament it is. A Family Bible is a treasure. But I pray you do not let your love of the Bible end there. With a soldier in war, a sword is not meant to be hung up in the tent, nor even to be flourished in the air; but it is issued to be used. Nor are we to push this sword into a sheath, as many do who take the Bible, and add so much of criticism, or of their own opinion to it, that its edge is not felt. Many men use their low opinion of inspiration as a scabbard into which they push the Bible down. Their vast knowledge makes a beautiful scabbard, and they push down the sword, saying, "Keep still there! O sword of the Lord, rest and be quiet!" After we have preached our heart out, and men have felt the power of it, they make a desperate effort to imprison the Word in their unbelieving theory, or in their worldliness. They hold down the Word all the week with a firm hand, for fear its edge or point should wound them. It is the scabbard of culture, or philosophy, or of progress, and in this they shut up the living Word of God as in a coffin.

We are not to bury the Word under other matters; but we are to take it as a sword: which means, as I understand it, first, believe it. Believe every portion of it; believe it with a true and real faith, not with a mere credal faith, which says, "This is the orthodox thing." Believe it as a matter of fact for every day, affecting your life. Believe it. And when you have believed it, then study it. Oh, for a closer study of the Word of God! Are there not some of you who have never even heard or read all that the Lord has said? Are there not passages of the Bible which have never been read by you? It is a melancholy fact that there should be even a line of the sacred Scriptures which has never once come under your eye. Do read the

Bible right through, from beginning to end. Begin tomorrow: nay, begin to-day, and go steadily through the whole of the sacred books, with prayer and meditation. Never let it be suspected by you that God has recorded truths in his Word which you have never even once read. Study the Word, and work out its meaning. Go deep into the spirit of inspiration. He gets most gold who digs the deepest in this mine. They used to say of certain mines in Cornwall that the deeper you went the richer was the ore; assuredly is it so with the mines of inspired Scripture. The deeper you go under the Spirit's guidance the larger is the reward for your toil. Take the sword with the grip of sincere faith; hold it fast by a fuller knowledge, and then exercise yourself daily in its use. The sword is to be taken for earnest fight. You will not be long before occasion arises in such a world as this. You will have to parry with it, to pierce with it, to cut with it, and to kill with it. "Where shall I begin?" says one. Begin at home, and, for many a day, you will have your hands full. When you have slain all the rebels at home, and long before that, you may take a turn at those around you in the world, and in the professing church. Inside your own heart you will find a band of bandits which should be exterminated. There will always be need to keep the sword going within your own territory. End this civil war before you go into foreign parts. When the war within the city of Mansoul has been victoriously carried through, besiege the heart of your friend, your child, your neighbor. Behold, the world lieth in the wicked one! Errors abound, and colossal systems of falsehood still stand aloft. Men are still dragged down by the arch-deceiver. Surely, we feel our swords flying out of their sheaths when we think of the millions who are being ruined by sin and error. Oh, for a mighty onslaught upon the powers of darkness!

Once more, we are to take this sword with a purpose. We are to use it that we may be able to stand and to withstand. If you want to stand, draw the sword, and smite your doubts. How fiercely unbelief assails! Here comes a doubt as to your election. Pierce it through with the Word. Anon comes a doubt as to the precious blood. Cleave it from head to foot with the assurance of the Word that the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin. Here comes another doubt, and yet another. As quick as arm can move, drive texts of Scripture through every new fallacy, every new denial of truth, and spit the whole of them upon the rapier of the Word. It will be

for your good to kill these doubts outright. Do not play with them, but fight them in real earnest. You will find that temptations also will come in hordes. Meet them with the precepts of sacred Writ, and slay even the desire of evil by the Spirit's application of the Holy Word. The washing of water by the Word is a glorious cleanser. Discouragements will arise like mists of the morning. Oh, that God's Word may shine them away with the beams of the promises! Your afflictions multiply, and you will never be able to overcome impatience and distrust except by the infallible Word of God. You can bear trial, and bear it patiently, if you use this weapon to kill anxiety. You will "stand fast in the evil day", and having done all, you will still stand, if this sword be in your hand.

You have not only to stand fast yourselves, but you have to win souls for Christ. Do not try to conquer sin in others, or capture a heart for Jesus, except with the sword of the Spirit. How the devil laughs when we try to make converts apart from Holy Scripture and the Holy Spirit! He laughs, I say; for he derides our folly. What can you do, you children, playing with your little wooden swords—what can you do against men covered from head to foot with the steel mail of the habit of sin? Sunday-school teachers, teach your children more and more the pure Word of God; and preachers, do not try to be original, but be content to take of the things of Christ, and show them to the people; for that is what the Holy Ghost himself does; and you will be wise to use his method and his sword. No sinner around you will be saved except by the knowledge of the great truths contained in the Word of God. No man will ever be brought to repentance, to faith, and to life in Christ, apart from the constant application of the truth through the Spirit. I hear great shouting, great noises everywhere, about great things that are going to be done: let us see them. The whole world is going to be embraced within the church; so they say. I fear the world will not be much the better for inclusion in such a church. Big boasters should heed the word of the wise man, "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." If the champion goeth forth with any other sword than the Word of God, he had better not boast at all; for he will come back with his sword broken, his shield cast away, and himself grimy with dishonor. Defeat awaits that man who forsakes the Word of the Lord.

I have done when I have asked you to remember that the text is in the present tense: Take unto you the sword of the Spirit even now. What varieties of people there are here this morning! Believers have come hither in all sorts of perils; let them each one take the sword of the Spirit, and they will overcome every foe. Here, too, are seekers who wish to be Christians; but they cannot compass it. What is the matter this morning? "Oh," says one, "I have been in the habit of sinning, and the habit is very strong upon me." Fight with sinful habits with the Word of God, as the sword of the Spirit: so only will you conquer your evil self. Find a text of Scripture that will cleave your sin down to the chine, or stab it to the heart. "Alas! Satan tempts me horribly," cries one; "I have been lately assailed in many ways." Have you? You are not the first. Our divine Lord in the wilderness was tempted of the devil. He might have fought Satan with a thousand weapons; but he chose to defeat him with this one only. He said, "It is written; it is written; it is written." He pricked the foeman so sorely with this sharp point, that the arch-adversary thought to try the same sword; and he also began to say, "It is written." But he cut himself with this sword, for he did not quote the passages correctly, nor give the whole of them; and the Master soon found the way to knock aside his sword, and wound him still more. Follow your Lord's example. "Oh, but," says one, "I am so low in spirits." Very well; fight lowness of spirits with the Word of God. "The doctor recommended me," says one, "to take a little spirits to raise my spirits." Those doctors are always having this sin laid to their charge. I am not so sure that they are not often maligned. You like the dose, and that is why you take it. Try the Word of God for lowness of spirits, and you will have found a sure remedy. I find, if I can lay a promise under my tongue, like a sweet lozenge, and keep it in my mouth or mind all the day long, I am happy enough. If I cannot find a Scripture to comfort me, then my inward troubles are multiplied. Fight despondency and despair with the sword of the Spirit. I cannot tell what your particular difficulty may be at this moment; but I give you this direction for all holy warfare—"Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." You must overcome every enemy; and this weapon is all you need. If you, my hearer, would overcome sin and conquer unbelief, take such a word as this, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" and as you look you shall be saved, and doubt shall die, and sin be slain. God grant you his Spirit's aid, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **The Sympathy Of The Two Worlds**

There is joy in the: presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. - Luke 15:10

Man's heart is never big enough to hold either its joys or its sorrows. You never heard of a man whose heart was exactly full of sorrow; for no sooner is it full, than it overflows. The first prompting of the soul is to tell its sorrow to another. The reason is, that our heart is not large enough to hold our grief; and we need to have another heart to receive a portion thereof. It is even so with our joy. When the heart is full of joy, it always allows its joy to escape. It is like the fountain in the marketplace; whenever it is full it runs away in streams, and so soon as it ceases to overflow, you may be quite sure that it has ceased to be full. The only full heart is the overflowing heart. You know this, beloved, you have proved it to be true; for when your soul has been full of joy, you have first called together your own kindred and friends, and you have communicated to them the cause of your gladness; and when those vessels have been full even to the brim, you have been like the woman who borrowed empty vessels of her neighbors, for you have asked each of them to become partakers in your joy, and when the hearts of all your neighbors have been full, you have felt as if they were not large enough, and the whole world has been called upon to join in your praise. You bade the fathomless ocean drink in your joy; you spoke to the trees and bade them clap their hands, while the mountains and hills were invoked by you to break forth into singing; the very stars of heaven seemed to look down upon you, and you bade them sing for you, and all the world was full of music through the music that was in your heart. And, after all, what is man but the great musician of the world? The universe is a great organ

with mighty pipes. Space, time, eternity, are like the throats of this great organ; and man, a little creature, puts his fingers on the keys, and wakes the universe to thunders of harmony, stirring up the whole creation to mightiest acclamations of praise. Know ye not that man is God's high priest in the universe? All things else are but the sacrifice; but he is the priest,—carrying in his heart the fire, and in his hand the wood, and in his mouth the two-edged sword of dedication, with which he offers up all things to God.

But I have no doubt, beloved, the thought has sometimes struck us that our praise does not go far enough. We seem as if we dwelt in an isle cut off from the mainland. This world, like a fair planet, swims in a sea of ether un navigated by mortal ship. We have sometimes thought that surely our praise was confined to the shores of this poor narrow world, that it was impossible for us to pull the ropes which might ring the bells of heaven, that we could by no means whatever reach our hands so high as to sweep the celestial chords of angelic harps. We have said to ourselves there is no connection between earth and heaven. A huge black wall divides us. A strait of un navigable waters shuts us out. Our prayers cannot reach to heaven, neither can our praises affect the celestials. Let us learn from our text how mistaken we are. We are, after all, however much we seem to be shut out from heaven, and from the great universe, but a province of God's vast united empire, and what is done on earth is known in heaven; what is sung on earth is sung in heaven; and there is a sense in which it is true that the tears of earth are wept again in paradise, and the sorrows of mankind are felt again, even on the throne of the Most High.

My text tells us, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth." It seems as if it showed me a bridge by which I might cross over into eternity. It doth, as it were, exhibit to me, certain magnetic wires which convey the intelligence of what is done here to spirits in another world. It teaches me that there is a real and wonderful connection between this lower world, and that which is beyond the skies, where God dwelleth, in the land of the happy.

We shall talk about that subject a little this morning. My first head will be

*the sympathy of the world above with the world below; the second, the judgment of the angels—they rejoice over repenting sinners; we shall see what is their ground for so doing. The third, will be a lesson for the saints; if the angels in heaven rejoice over repenting sinners, so should we.*

I. In the first place, our text teaches us THE SYMPATHY OF THE TWO WORLDS. Imagine not, O son of man, that thou art cut off from heaven: for there is a ladder, the top whereof doth rest at the foot of the throne of the Almighty, the base whereof is fixed in the lowest place of man's misery! Conceive not that there is a great gulph fixed between thee and the *Father*, across which his mercy cannot come, and over which thy prayers and faith can never leap. Oh, think not, son of man, that thou dwellest in a storm-girt island, cut off from the continent of eternity. I beseech thee, believe that there is a bridge across that chasm, a road along which feet may travel. This world is not separated, for all creation is but one body. And know thou, O son of man, though thou in this world doth but dwell, as it were on the foot, yet from the feet even to the head, there are nerves and veins that do unite the whole, The same great heart which beats in heaven beats on earth. The love of the *Eternal Father* which cheers the celestial, makes glad the terrestrial too. Rest assured that though the glory of the celestial be one and the glory of the terrestrial be another, yet are they but another in appearance, for after all, they are the same Oh! list thee, son of man, and thou wilt soon learn that thou art no stranger in a strange land—a homeless Joseph in the land of Egypt, shut out from his Father, and his children, who still remain in the happy paradise of Canaan. No, thy Father loves thee still. There is a connection between thee and him. Strange that though leagues of distance lie between the finite creature and the infinite Creator, yet there are links that unite us both! When a tear is wept by thee, think not thy Father doth not behold; for, "Like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Thy sigh is able to move the heart of Jehovah; thy whisper can incline his ear unto thee; thy prayer can stay his hands; thy faith can move his arm. Oh! think not that God sits on high in an eternal slumber, taking no account of thee. "Shall a mother forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Engraven upon the Father's

hand thy name remains; and on his heart recorded there thy person stands. He thought of thee before the worlds were made; before the channels of the sea were scooped, or the gigantic mountains lifted their heads in the white clouds, he thought of thee. He thinketh on thee still. "I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro in every place, to show himself strong on the behalf of all them that fear him. Thou art not cut off from him. Thou dost move in him; in him thou dost live and have thy being. "He is a very present help in time of trouble."

Remember, again, O heir of immortality, that thou art not only linked to the Godhead, but there is another one in heaven with whom thou hast a strange, yet near connection. In the center of the throne sits one who is thy brother, allied to thee by blood. *The Son of God*, eternal, equal with his Father, became in the fullness of time the Son of Mary, an infant of a span long. He was, yea is, bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh. Think not that thou art cut off from the celestial world, while he is there; for is he not thy head, and hath he not himself declared that thou art a member of his body, of his flesh and of his bones? Oh, man, thou art not separated from heaven whilst Jesus tells thee -

"I feel at my heart all thy sighs and thy groans,  
For thou art most near me, my flesh and my bones,  
In all thy distresses, thy Head feels the pain,  
They all are most needful, not one is in vain."

Oh, poor, disconsolate mourner, Christ remembers thee every hour. Thy sighs are his sighs; thy groans are his groans; thy prayers are his prayers:  
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"He in his measure feels afresh,  
What every member bears."

Crucified he is when thou art crucified; he dies when thou diest; thou livest in him, and he lives in thee, and because he lives shalt thou live also: thou shalt rise in him, and thou shalt sit together in the heavenly places with him. Oh, never was husband nearer to his wife, and never



head nearer to the members, and never soul nearer to the body of this flesh, than Christ is unto thee, and while it is so, think not that heaven and earth are divided. They are but kindred worlds; two ships moored close to one another, and one short plank of death will enable you to step from one into the other: this ship, all black and coaly, having done the coasting trade, the dusty business of to-day, and being full of the blackness of sorrow; and that ship all golden, with its painted pennon flying, and its sail all spread, white as the down of the sea-bird, fair as the angel's wing—I tell thee, man, the ship of heaven is moored side by side with the ship of earth, and rock though this ship may, and careen though she will on stormy winds and tempests, yet the invisible and golden ship of heaven sails by her side never sundered, never divided, always ready, in order that when the hour shall come, thou mayest leap from the black, dark ship, and step upon the golden deck of that thrice happy one in which thou shalt sail for ever.

But, O man of God, there are other golden links besides this which bind the present to the future, and time unto eternity. And what are time and eternity, after all, to the believer, but like the Siamese twins, never to be separated? This earth is heaven below, the next world is but a heaven above; it is the same house—this is the lower room, and that the upper, but the same roof cover both, and the same dew falls upon each. Remember, beloved, that *the spirits of the just made perfect* are never far from you and me if we are lovers of Jesus. All those who have passed the flood have still communion with us. Do we not sing -

"The saints on earth, and all the dead,  
But one communion make;  
All join in Christ, the living Head,  
And of his grace partake."

We have but one Head for the church triumphant and for the church militant;

"One army of the living God,  
To his command we bow;  
Part of the host have cross'd the flood,

And part are crossing now."

Doth not the apostle tell us that the saints above are a cloud of witnesses? After he had mentioned Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Gideon, and Barak, and Jephthah, did he not say, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight." Lo, we are running in the plains, and the glorified ones are looking down upon us. Thy mother's eyes follow thee, young man; a father's eyes are looking down upon thee, young woman. The eyes of my godly grandmother, long since glorified, I doubt not, rest on me perpetually. No doubt, in heaven they often talk of us. Methinks they sometimes visit this poor earth—they never go out of heaven, it is true, for heaven is everywhere to them. This world is to them but just one corner of God's heaven, one shady bower of paradise.

The saints of the living God, are, I doubt not, very near unto us, when we think them very far away. At any rate, they still remember us, still look for us; for this is ever upon their hearts—the truth that they without us cannot be made perfect. They cannot be a perfect church till all are gathered in, and therefore do they long for our appearing.

But, to come to our text a little more minutely. It assures us that *the angels* have communion with us. Bright spirits, first-born sons of God, do ye think of me? Oh, cherubim, great and mighty; seraphim, burning, winged with lightning, do ye think of us? Gigantic is your stature. Our poet tells us that the wand of an angel might make a mast for some tall admiral; and doubtless he was right when he said so. Those angels of God are creatures mighty and strong, doing his commandments, hearkening to his word—and do they take notice of us? Let the Scripture answer, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto those that shall be heirs of salvation?" "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him." "For he shall give his angels charge over thee; to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Yes, the brightest angels are but the serving men of the saints; they are our lacqueys and our footmen. They wait upon us; they are the troops of our body guard; and we might, if our eyes were opened, see what Elisha saw, horses of fire and chariots of fire

round about us; so that we should joyously say, "More are they that are with us than they that are against us."

Our text tells us that the angels of God rejoice over repenting sinners. How is that? They are always as happy as they can be; how can they be any happier? The text does not say that they are any happier; but perhaps that they show their happiness more. A man may have a Sabbath every day, as he ought to have if he be a Christian, and yet on the first day of the week he will let his Sabbatism come out plainly; for then the world shall see that he doth rest. "A merry heart hath a continual feast;" but then even the merry heart hath some special days on which it feasteth well. To the glorified every day is a Sabbath, but of some it can be said, "and that Sabbath was an high day." There are days when the angels sing more loudly than usual; they are always harping well God's praise, but sometimes the gathering hosts who have been flitting far through the universe, come home to their center; and round the throne of God, standing in serried ranks, marshalled not for battle but for music, on certain set and appointed days they chant the praises of the Son of God, "who loved us and gave himself for us." And do you ask me when those days occur? I tell you, the birthday of every Christian is a sonnet day in heaven. There are Christmas-days in paradise, where Christ's high mass is kept, and Christ is glorified not because he was born in a manger, but because he is born in a broken heart. There are days—good days in heaven; days of sonnet, red letter days, of overflowing adoration. And these are days when the shepherd brings home the lost sheep upon his shoulder, when the church has swept her house and found the lost piece of money; for then are these friends and neighbors called together, and they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory over one sinner that repenteth.

I have thus, I hope, shown you that there is a greater connection between earth and heaven than any of us dreamed. And now let none of us think, when we look upward to the blue sky, that we are far from heaven; it is a very little distance from us. When the day comes we shall go post-haste there, even without horses and chariots of fire. Balaam called it a land that is very far off; we know better—it is a land that is very near. Even now

"By faith we join our hands  
With those that went before.  
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands  
Upon the eternal shore."

All hail, bright spirits! I see you now. All hail, angels! All hail, ye brethren redeemed! A few more hours, or days, or months, and we shall join your happy throng; till then your joyous fellowship, your sweet compassion shall ever be our comfort and our consolation—and having weathered all storms of life, we shall at last anchor with you within the port of everlasting peace.

II. But the angels are said to sing whenever a sinner repents. Let us see if there is any JUDGMENT IN THEIR SONG, or whether they make a mistake. Why do angels sing over penitent sinners?

In the first place, I think it is because they remember the days of creation. You know, when God made this world, and fixed the beams of the heavens in sockets of light, the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy; as they saw star after star flying abroad like sparks from the great anvil of Omnipotence, they began to sing; and every time they saw a new creature made upon this little earth, they praised afresh. When first they saw light they clapped their hands, and said, "Great is Jehovah; for he said 'Light be!' and light was." And when they saw sun and moon, and stars, again they clapped their hands, and they said, "He hath made great lights; for his mercy endureth for ever. The sun to rule the day; for his mercy endureth for ever. The moon to rule the night; for his mercy endureth for ever." And over everything he made, they chanted evermore that sweet song, "Creator, thou art to be magnified; for thy mercy endureth for ever." Now, when they see a sinner returning, they see the creation over again; for repentance is a new creation. No man ever repents until God makes in him a new heart and a right spirit. I do not know that ever since the day when God made the world, with the exception of new hearts, the angels have seen God make anything else. He may, if he hath so pleased, have made fresh worlds since that time. But perhaps the only instance of new creation they have

ever seen since the first day, is the creation of a new heart and a right spirit within the breast of a poor penitent sinner. Therefore do they sing, because creation cometh over again.

I doubt not, too, that they sing because they behold God's works afresh shining in excellence. When God first made the world, he said of it, "It is very good"—he could not say so now. There are many of you that God could not say that of. He would have to say the very reverse. He would have to say, "No, that is very bad, for the trail of the serpent hath swept away thy beauty, that moral excellence which once dwelt in manhood has passed away;" but when the sweet influences of the Spirit bring men to repentance and faith again, God looks upon man, and he saith, "It is very good." For what his Spirit makes is like himself—good, and holy and precious; and God smiles again over his twice-made creation, and saith once more, "It is very good." Then the angels begin again, and praise his name, whose works are always good and full of beauty.

But, beloved, the angels sing over sinners that repent, because they know what that poor sinner has escaped. You and I can never imagine all the depths of hell. Shut out from us by a black veil of darkness, we cannot tell the horrors of that dismal dungeon of lost souls. Happily, the wailings of the damned have never startled us, for a thousand tempests were but a maidens whisper, compared with one wail of a damned spirit. It is not possible for us to see the tortures of those souls who dwell eternally within an anguish that knows no alleviation. These eyes would become sightless balls of darkness if they were permitted for an instant to look into that ghastly shrine of torment. Hell is horrible, for we may say of it, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the horrors which God hath prepared for them that hate him. But the angels know better than you or I could guess. They know it; not that they have felt it, but they remember that day when Satan and his angels rebelled against God. They remember the day when the third part of the stars of heaven revolted against their liege Lord; and they have not forgotten how the red right hand of Jehovah Jesus was wrapt in thunder; they do not forget that breach in the battlements of heaven when, down from the greatest heights to the lowest depths, Lucifer and his hosts were hurled. they have never forgotten how, with sound of trumpet, they

pursued the flying foe down to the gulphs of black despair; and, as they neared that place where the great serpent is to be bound in chains, they remember how they say, Tophet, which was prepared of old, the pile whereof is fire and much wood, and they recollect how, when they winged back their flight, every tongue was silent, although they might well have shouted the praise of him who conquered Lucifer; but on them all there did sit a solemn awe of one who could smite a cherubim, and cast him in hopeless bonds of everlasting despair. They knew what hell was, for they had looked within its jaws, and seen their own brothers, fast enclosed within them; and, therefore, when they see a sinner saved, they rejoice, because there is one less to be food for the never-dying worm—one more soul escaped out of the mouth of the lion.

There is yet a better reason. The angels know what the joys of heaven are, and therefore, they rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. We talk about pearly gates and golden streets, and white robes, and harps of gold, and crowns of amaranth, and all that; but if an angel could speak to us of heaven, he would smile and say, "All these fine things are but child's talk, and ye are little children, and ye cannot understand the greatness of eternal bliss, and therefore God has given you a child's horn book, and an alphabet, in which you may learn the first rough letters of what heaven is, but what it is thou dost not know. O mortal, thine eye hath never yet beheld its splendours; thine ear hath never yet been ravished with its melodies; thy heart has never been transported with its peerless joys." Thou mayest talk and think, and guess, and dream, but thou canst never measure the infinite heaven which God has provided for his children: and therefore it is, when they see a soul saved and a sinner repenting, that they clap their hands; for they know that all those blessed mansions are theirs, since all those sweet places of everlasting happiness are the entail of every sinner that repenteth.

But I want you just to read the text again, while I dwell upon another thought. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner *that repenteth*." Now, why do they not save their joy till that sinner dies and goes to heaven? Why do they rejoice over him when he repents? My Arminian friend, I think, ought to go to heaven, to set them right upon this matter. According to his theory, it must be very wrong of them,

because they rejoice prematurely. According to the Arminian doctrine a man may repent, and yet he may be lost, he may have grace to repent and believe, and yet he may fall from grace and be a castaway. Now, angels, don't be too fast. Perhaps you may have to repent of this one day, if the Arminian doctrine be true, I would advise you to save your song for greater joys. Why, angels, perhaps the men that you are singing over to-day, you will have to mourn over to-morrow. I am quite sure that Arminius never taught his doctrine in heaven. I do not know whether he is there—I hope he is, but he is no longer an Arminian; but if he ever taught his doctrine there, he would be put out. The reason why angels rejoice is because they know that when a sinner repents, he is absolutely saved; or else they would rejoice prematurely, and would have good cause for retracting their merriment on some future occasion. But the angels know what Christ meant when he said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand;" and therefore they rejoice over repenting sinners, because they know they are saved.

There is yet one more fact I will mention, before I leave this point. It is said that the angels "rejoice over *one* sinner that repenteth." Now this evening it shall be my happy privilege to give the right hand of fellowship to no less than forty-eight sinners that have repented, and there will be great joy and rejoicing in our churches to-night, because these forty-eight have been immersed on a profession of their faith. But how loving are the angels to men; for they rejoice over *one* sinner that repenteth. There she is, in that garret where the stars look between the tiles. There is a miserable bed in that room, with but one bit of covering, and she lieth there to die! Poor creature! many a night she has walked the streets in the time of her merriment. but now her joys are over; a foul disease, like a demon is devouring her heart! She is dying fast, and no one careth for her soul! But there, in that chamber, she turns her face to the wall, and she cries, "O thou that savedst Magdalene, save me; Lord I repent; have mercy upon me; I beseech thee." Did the bells ring in the street? Was the trumpet blown? Ah! no. Did men rejoice? Was there a sound of thanksgiving in the midst of the great congregation? No; no one heard it; for she died unseen. But stay! There was one standing at her bedside, who noted well that tear; an angel, who had come down from heaven to watch

over this stray sheep, and mark its return. and no sooner was her prayer uttered than he clapped his wings, and there was seen flying up to the pearly gates a spirit like a star. The heavenly guards came crowding to the gate, crying, "What news, O son of fire?" He said, "'Tis done." "And what is done?" they said, "Why, she has repented." "What! she who was once a chief of sinners? has she turned to Christ?" "'Tis even so," said he. And then they told it through the streets, and the bells of heaven rang marriage peals, for Magdalene was saved, and she who had been the chief of sinners was turned unto the living God.

It was in another place. A poor neglected little boy in ragged clothing had run about the streets for many a-day. Tutored in crime, he was paving his path to the gallows; but one morning he passed by a humble room, where some men and women were sitting together teaching poor ragged children. He stepped in there a wild Bedouin of the streets; they talked to him, they told him about a soul and about an eternity—things he had never heard before; they spoke of Jesus, and of good tidings of great joy to this poor friendless lad. He went another Sabbath. and another; his wild habits hanging about him, for he could not get rid of them; At last it happened that his teacher said to him one day, "Jesus Christ receiveth sinners." That little boy ran, but not home, for it was but a mockery to call it so—where a drunken father and a lascivious mother kept a hellish riot together. He ran, and under some dry arch, or in some wild unfrequented corner, he bent his little knees, and there he cried, that poor creature in his rags, "Lord save me, or I perish;" and the little Arab was on his knees—the little thief was saved! He said -

"Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly;"

And up from that old arch, from that forsaken hovel, there flew a spirit, glad to bear the news to heaven, that another heir of glory was born to God. I might picture many such scenes; but will each of you try to picture your own? You remember the occasion when the Lord met with you. Ah! little did you think what a commotion there was in heaven. If the Queen had ordered out all her soldiers, the angels of heaven would not have stopped to notice them; if all the princes of earth had marched in pageant through the streets, with all their robes, and jewellery, and crowns, and



all their regalia, their chariots, and their horsemen—if the pomps of ancient monarchies had risen from the tomb—if all the might of Babylon and Tyre and Greece had been concentrated into one great parade, yet not an angel would have stopped in his course to smile at those poor tawdry things; but over you the vilest of the vile, the poorest of the poor, the most obscure and unknown—over you angelic wings were hovering, and concerning you it was said on earth and sung in heaven, "Hallelujah, for a child is born to God to-day."

III. And now I must conclude with this LESSON TO THIS SAINTS. I think beloved, it will not be hard for you to learn. The angels of heaven rejoice over Sinners that repent: saints of God, will not you and I do the same? I do not think the church rejoices enough. We all grumble enough and groan enough: but very few of us rejoice enough. When we take a large number into the church it is spoken of as a great mercy; but is the greatness of that mercy appreciated? I will tell you who they are that can most appreciate the conversion of sinners. They are those that are just converted themselves, or those that have been great sinners themselves. Those who have been saved themselves from bondage, when they see others coming who have so lately worn the chains, are so glad that they can well take the tabret, and the harp, and the pipe, and the psaltery, and praise God that there are other prisoners who have been emancipated by grace. But there are others who can do this better still, and they are the parents and relations of those who are saved. You have thanked God many times when you have seen a sinner saved; but, mother did not you thank him most when you saw your son converted? Oh! those holy tears; they are not tears—they are God's diamonds—the tears of a mother's joy, when her son confesses his faith in Jesus. Oh! that glad countenance of the wife, when she sees her husband, long bestial and drunken at last made into a man and a Christian! Oh, that look of joy which a young Christian gives, when he sees his father converted who had long oppressed and persecuted him. I was preaching this week for a young minister, and being anxious to know his character, I spoke of him with apparent coolness to an estimable lady of his congregation. In a very few moments she began to warm in his favor. She said, "You must not say anything against him, sir; if you do, it is because you do not know him." "Oh," I said, "I knew him long before you did; he is not much, is he?"

"Well,' she said, "I must speak well of him, for he has been a blessing to my servants and family." I went out into the street, and saw some men and women standing about; so I said to them, "I must take your minister away" "If you do," they said, "we will follow you all over the world, if you take away a man who has done so much good to our souls."" After collecting the testimony of fifteen or sixteen witnesses, I said, "If the man gets such witnesses as these let him go on; the Lord has opened his mouth, and the devil will never be able to shut it." These are the witnesses we want—men who can sing with the angels because their own households are converted to God. I hope it may be so with all of you; and if any of you are yourselves brought to Christ to-day—for he is willing to receive you—you will go out of this place singing, and the angels will sing with you. There shall be joy in earth, and joy in heaven; on earth peace, and glory to God in the highest. The Lord bless you one and all, for Jesus' sake.

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## **The Tabernacle Of The Most High**

In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. - Ephesians 2:22

UNDER THE OLD Mosaic dispensation God had a visible dwelling-place among men. The bright shekinah was seen between the wings of the cherubim which overhadowed the mercy-seat; and in the tabernacle while Israel journeyed in the wilderness, and in the temple afterwards, when they were established in their own land, there was a visible manifestation of the presence of Jehovah in the place which was dedicated to his service. Now, everything under the Mosaic dispensation

was but a type, a picture, a symbol of something higher and nobler. That form of worship was, as it were, a series of shadow-pictures, of which the gospel is the substance. It is a sad fact, however, that there is so much Judaism in all our hearts, that we frequently go back to the old beggarly elements of the law, instead of going forward and seeing in them a type of something spiritual and heavenly, to which we ought to aspire. It is disgraceful to the present century to hear some men talk as they do. They had better at once espouse the Jewish creed. I mean it is disgraceful to hear some men speak as they do with regard to religious edifices. I remember to have heard a sermon once upon this text - "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy." And the first part of the sermon was occupied with a childish anathema against all who should dare to perform any unhallowed act in the churchyard, or who should lean the pole of a tent during the fair of the coming week against any part of that edifice, which, it seemed to me, was the god of the man who occupied the pulpit. Is there such a thing as a holy place anywhere? Is there any spot wherein God now particularly dwells? I know not. Hear ye the words of Jesus, "Believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Remember, again, the saying of the apostle at Athens, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands."

When men talk of holy places they seem to be ignorant of the use of language. Can holiness dwell in bricks and mortar? Can there be such a thing as a sanctified steeple? Can it possibly happen that there can be such a thing in the world as a moral window or a godly door post? I am lost in amazement, utterly lost, when I think how addled men's brains must be when they impute moral virtues to bricks and mortar, and stones, and stained glass. Pray how deep doth this consecration go, and how high? Is every crow that flies over the edifice at that time in solemn air? Certainly it is as rational to believe that, as to conceive that every worm that is eating the body of an Episcopalian is a consecrated worm, and therefore there must necessarily be a brick wall, or a wide gravel-path to protect the bodies of the sanctified from any unhallowed worms that

might creep across from the Dissenters' side of the cemetery. I say again, such child's play, such Popery, such Judaism, is a disgrace to the century. And yet, notwithstanding, we all find ourselves at divers times and seasons indulging in it. That at which you have just now smiled is but pushing the matter a little further, an error into which we may very readily descend; it is but an extravaganza of an error into which we all of us are likely to fall. We have a reverence for our plain chapels; we feel a kind of comfort when we are sitting down in the place which somehow or other we have got to think must be holy.

Now let us if we can, and perhaps it takes a great sturdiness and independence of mind to do it - let us drive away once and for ever, all idea of holiness being connected with anything but with a conscious active agent; let us get rid once and for ever of all superstitions with regard to place. Depend upon it, one place is as much consecrated as another, and wherever we meet with true hearts reverently to worship God, that place becomes for the time being God's house. Though it be regarded with the most religious awe, that place which has no devout heart within it, is no house of God; it may be a house of superstition, but a house of God it cannot be. "But, still," says one, "God hath a habitation; doth not your text say so?" Yes, and of that house of God, I am about to speak this morning. There is such a thing as a house of God; but that is not an inanimate structure, but a living and a spiritual temple. "In whom," that is Christ, "ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. The house of God is built with the living stones of converted men and women, and the church of God, which Christ hath purchased with his blood - this is the divine edifice, and the structure wherein God dwelleth even to this day. I would, however, make one remark with regard to places in which we worship. I do think, albeit that there can be no sanctity of superstition connected with them, there is at the same time, a kind of sacredness of association. In any place where God has blessed my soul, I feel that it is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven. It is not because the stones are hallowed, but because there I have met with God, and the recollections that I have of the place consecrate it to me, That place where Jacob laid him down to sleep, what was it but his sleeping chamber for the time being, but his sleeping chamber was none other than the house of God. Ye

have rooms in your houses, I hope, and closets there more sacred in truth than any gorgeous cathedral that ever lifted its spire to heaven. Where we meet with God there is a sacredness, not in the place but in the associations connected with it. Where we hold fellowship with God and where God makes bare his arm, though it be in a barn or a hedgerow, or on a moor, or on a mountain side, there is God's house to us, and the place is consecrated at once, but yet not so consecrated as that we may regard it with superstitious awe, but only consecrated by our own recollections of blessed hours which we have spent there in hallowed fellowship with God. Leaving that out of the question, I come to introduce you to the house which God has builded for his habitation.

We shall regard the church this morning thus - first, as *a building*; secondly, as *a habitation*; and thirdly, as what she is soon to become, namely - *a glorious temple*.

I. First, then, we shall regard the church as A BUILDING. And here let us pause to ask the question first of all what is a church - what is the church of God? One sect claims the title for itself of *the church*, while other denominations hotly contend for it. It belongs to none of us. The church of God consisteth not of any one particular denomination of men; the church of God consisteth of those whose names are written in the book of God's eternal choice; the men who were purchased by Christ upon the tree, the men who are called of God by his Holy Spirit and who being quickened by that same Spirit partake of the life of Christ, and become members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. These are to be found in every denomination among all sorts of Christians; some stray ones where we little dreamed of them; here and there a member of the church of God hidden in the midst of the darkness of accursed Rome; now and then, as if by chance, a member of the church of Christ, connected with no sect whatever, far away from all connection with his brethren, having scarcely heard of their existence yet still knowing Christ, because the life of Christ is in him. Now this church of Christ, the people of God, throughout the world, by whatever name they may be known, are in my text compared to a building in which God dwells.

I must now indulge in a little allegory with regard to this building. The

church is not a heap of stones shot together; she is a building. Of old her architect devised her. Methinks I see him, as I look back into old eternity making the first outline of his church. "Here" saith he in his eternal wisdom, "shall be the corner stone, and there shall be the pinnacle," I see him ordaining her length, and her breadth, appointing her gates and her doors with matchless skill, devising every part of her, and leaving no single portion of the structure unmapped. I see him, that mighty architect, also choosing to himself every stone of the building, ordaining its size and its shape; settling upon his mighty plan the position each stone shall occupy, whether it shall glitter in front, or be hidden in the back, or buried in the very center of the wall. I see him marking not merely the bare outline, but all the fillings up; all being ordained, decreed, and settled, in the eternal covenant, which was the divine plan of the mighty architect upon which the church is to be built. Looking on, I see the architect choosing a corner stone. He looks to heaven, and there are the angels, those glittering stones, he looks at each one of them from Gabriel down; but, saith he, "None of you will suffice. I must have a corner stone that will support all the weight of the building, for on that stone every other one must lean. Gabriel, thou wilt not suffice! Raphael thou must lay by; I cannot build with thee." Yet was it necessary that a stone should be found, and one too that should be taken out of the same quarry as the rest. Where was he to be discovered? Was there a man who would suffice to be the corner stone of this mighty building? Ah no! neither apostles, prophets, nor teachers would. Put them altogether, and they would be as a foundation of quicksand, and the house would totter to its fall. Mark how the divine mind solved the difficulty - "God shall become man, very man, and so he shall be of the same substance as the other stones of the temple, yet shall he be God, and therefore strong enough to bear all the weight of this mighty structure, the top whereof shall reach to heaven." I see that foundation stone laid. Is there singing at the laying of it? No. There is weeping there. The angels gathered round at the laying of this first stone; sad look ye men and wonder, the angels weep; the harps of heaven are clothed in sackcloth, and no song is heard. They sang together and shouted for joy when the world was made, why shout they not now? Look ye here and see the reason. That stone is imbedded in blood, that corner stone must lie nowhere else but in his own gore. The vermilion cement drawn from his own sacred veins must

imbed it. And there he lies, the first stone of the divine edifice. Oh, begin your songs afresh, ye angels, it is over now. The foundation stone is laid; the terrible ceremony is complete, and now, whence shall we gather the stones to build this temple? The first is laid, where are the rest? Shall we go and dig into the sides of Lebanon? Shall we find these precious stones in the marble quarries of kings? No. Whither are ye flying ye laborers of God? Whither are ye going? Where are the quarries? And they reply - "We go to dig in the quarries of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the depths of sinful Jerusalem, and in the midst of erring Samaria." I see them clear away the rubbish. I mark them as they dig deep into the earth, and at last they come to these stones. But how rough, how hard, how unhewn. Yes, but these are the stones ordained of old in the decree, and these must be the stones, and none other. There must be a change effected. These must be brought in and shaped and cut and polished, and put into their places. I see the workmen at their labor. The great saw of the law cuts through the stone, and then comes the polishing chisel of the gospel. I see the stones lying in their places, and the church is rising. The ministers, like wise master-builders, are there running along the wall, putting each spiritual stone in its place; each stone is leaning on that massive corner stone, and every stone depending on the blood, and finding its security and its strength in Jesus Christ, the corner stone, elect, and precious. Do you see the building rise as each one of God's chosen is brought in, called by grace and quickened? Do you mark the living stones as in sacred love and holy brotherhood they are knit together? Have you ever entered the building, and see how these stones lean one upon another bearing each others burden, and so fulfilling the law of Christ? Do you mark how the church loveth Christ, and how the members love each other? How first the church is joined to the corner stone, and then each stone bound to the next, and the next to the next, till the whole building becometh one? Lo! the structure rises, and it is complete, and at last it is built. And now open wide your eyes, and see what a glorious building this is - the church of God. Men talk of the splendor of their architecture - this is architecture indeed; neither after Grecian nor Gothic models, but after the model of the sanctuary which Moses saw in the holy mountain. Do you see it? Was there ever a structure so comely as this - instinct with life in every part? Upon one stone shall be seven eyes, and each stone full of eyes and full of hearts. Was ever a thought so massive as this - a building built of souls - a

structure made of hearts? There is no house like a heart for one to repose in. There a man may find peace in his fellow-man; but here is the house where God delighteth to dwell - built of living hearts, all beating with holy love - built of redeemed souls, chosen of the Father, bought with the blood of Christ. The top of it is in heaven. Part of them are above the clouds. Many of the living stones are now in the pinnacle of paradise. We are here below, the building rises, the sacred masonry is heaving, and, as the corner stone rises, so all of us must rise until at last the entire structure from its foundation to its pinnacle shall be heaved up to heaven, and there shall it stand for ever - the new Jerusalem - the temple of the majesty of God.

With regard to this building I have just a remark or two to make before I come to the next point. Whenever architects devise a building they make mistakes in forming the plan. The most careful will omit something; the most clever find in some things he has been mistaken. But mark the church of God; it is built according to rule, and compass, and square, and it shall be found at last that there has not been one mistake. You, perhaps, my dear brother, are a little stone in the temple, and you are apt to think you ought to have been a great one. There is no mistake about that. You have but one talent; that is enough for you. If you had two you would spoil the building. You are placed perhaps in a position of obscurity, and you are saying, "Oh that I were prominent in the church!" If you were prominent you might be in a wrong place; and but one stone out of its place in architecture so delicate as that of God, would mar the whole. You are where you ought to be; keep there. Depend on it there is no mistake. When at last we shall go round about her, mark her walls, and tell her bulwarks, we shall each of us be compelled to say, "How glorious is this Zion!" When our eyes shall have been enlightened, and our hearts instructed, each part of the building will command our admiration. The topstone is not the foundation, nor does the foundation stand at the top. Every stone is of the right shape; the whole material is as it should be, and the structure is adapted for the great end, the glory of God, the temple of the Most High. Infinite wisdom then may be remarked in this building of God.

Another thing may be noticed, namely, her impregnable strength. This



habitation of God, this house which is not made with hands, but is of God's building, has often been attacked, but it has never been taken. What multitudes of enemies have battered against her old ramparts! but they have battered in vain. "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together," but what happened? They came against her, every one of them with mighty men, each man with his sword drawn, but what became of them? The Almighty scattered kings in Hermon like snow in Salmon. As the snow is driven from the mountain side before the stormy blast, even so didst thou drive them away, O God, and they melted before the breath of thy nostrils.

"Then should our souls in Zion dwell,  
Nor fear the rage of Rome or hell."

The church is not in danger, and she never can be. Let her enemies come on, she can resist. Her passive majesty, her silent rocky strength, bids them defiance now. Let them come on and break themselves in pieces, let them dash themselves against her, and learn the ready road to their own destruction. She is safe, and she must be safe even unto the end. Thus much then we can say of the structure; it is built by infinite wisdom, and it is impregnably secure.

And we may add, it is glorious for beauty. There was never structure like this. One might feast his eyes upon it from dawn to eve, and then begin again. Jesus himself takes delight in it. So pleased is God in the architecture of his church, that he has rejoiced with his church as he never did with the world. When God made the world he heaved the mountains, and digged the seas, and covered its valleys with grass; he made all the fowls of the air, and all the beasts of the field; yea, and he made man in his own image, and when the angels saw it, they sang together and they shouted for joy. God did not sing; there was no sufficient theme of song for him that was "Holy, holy, holy." He might say it was very good; there was a goodness of fitness about it, but not moral goodness of holiness. But when God built his church he did sing; and that is the most extraordinary passage, I sometimes think, in the whole Word of God, where he is represented as singing; - "Thy Redeemer in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save, he will rest in his love, he will rejoice over thee with singing." Think, my brethren, of God himself looking at his

church: and so fair and beautiful is the structure, that he sings over his work, and as each stone is put in its place, Divinity itself sings. Was ever song like that? Oh, come, let us sing, let us exalt the name of God together; praise him who praiseth his church - who hath made her to be his peculiar dwelling-place.

Thus, then, have we in the first place regarded the church as a building.

II. But the true glory of the church of God consists in the fact that she is not only a building, but that she is A HABITATION. There may be great beauty in an uninhabited structure, but there is always a melancholy thought connected with it. In riding through our country, we often come upon a dismantled tower, or castle; it is beautiful, but it is not a thing of joy; there is a sorrowful reflection connected with it. Who loves to see desolate palaces? Who desireth that the land should cast out her sons, and that her houses should fail of tenants? But there is joy in a house lit up and furnished, where there is the sound of men. Beloved the church of God hath this for her peculiar glory, that she is a tenanted house, that she is a habitation of God through the Spirit. How many churches there are that are houses, yet not habitations! I might picture to you a professed church of God; it is built according to square and compass, but its model has been formed in some ancient creed, and not in the Word of God. It is precise in its discipline according to its own standard, and accurate in its observances according to its own model. You enter that church, the ceremony is imposing; the whole service perhaps attracts you for a while; but you go out of that place conscious that you have not met with the life of God there - that it is a house, but a house without a tenant. It may be professedly a church, but it is not a church possessing the indwelling of the Holy One; it is an empty house that must soon be dilapidated and fall. I do fear that this is true of many of our churches, Established and Dissenting, as well as Romanist. There are too many churches that are nothing but a mass of dull, dead formality; there is no life of God there. You might go to worship with such a people, day after day, and your heart would never beat more quickly, your blood would never leap in its veins, your soul would never be refreshed, for it is an empty house. Fair may be the architecture of the structure, but empty is its storehouse, there is no table spread, there is no rejoicing, no killing of the fatted calf, no dancing,

no singing for joy. Beloved, let us take heed, lest our churches become the same, lest we be combinations of men without spiritual life, and consequently houses uninhabited, because God is not there. But a true church, that is visited by the Spirit of God, where conversion, instruction, devotion, and the like, are carried on by the Spirit's own living influences - such a church has God for its inhabitant.

And now we will just turn over this sweet thought. A church built of living souls is God's own house. What is meant by this? I reply, a house is a place where a man solaces and comforts himself. Abroad we do battle with the world: there we strain every nerve and sinew that we may stem a sea of troubles, and may not be carried away by the stream. Abroad, among men, we meet those of strange language to us, who often cut us to the heart and wound us to the quick. We feel that there we must be upon our guard. We could often say, "My soul is among lions. I lie even among those that are set on fire of hell." Going abroad in the world we find but little rest but the day's work done, we go home, and there we solace ourselves. Our weary bodies are refreshed. We throw away the armor that we have been wearing, and we fight no more. We see no longer the strange face, but loving eyes beam upon us. We hear no language now which is discordant in our ears. Love speaks, and we reply. Our home is the place of our solace, our comfort, and our rest. Now, God calls the church his habitation - his *home*. See him abroad; he is hurling the thunderbolt and lifting up his voice upon the waters. Hearken to him; his voice breaks the cedars of Lebanon and makes the hinds to calve. See him when he makes war, riding the chariot of his might, he drives the rebellious angels over the battlements of heaven down to the depth of hell. Behold him as he lifteth himself in the majesty of his strength! Who is this that is glorious? It is God, most high and terrible. But see he lays aside his glittering sword; his spear he bears no longer. He cometh back to his home. His children are about him. He taketh his solace and his rest. Yes, think not I venture too far - he shall rest in his lover and he doth do it. He resteth in his church. He is no longer a consuming fire, a terror, and a flame. Now, is he love and kindness and sweetness, ready to hear the prattle of his children's prayer, and the disjointed notes of his children's song. Oh how beautiful is the picture of the church as God's house, the place in which he takes his solace! "For the Lord hath chosen

Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

Furthermore, a man's home is the place where he shows his inner self. You meet a man at the market, he deals sharply with you. he knows with whom he has to deal, and he acts with you as a man of the world. You see him again at home, talking with his children, and you say, "What a different man! I could not have believed it was the same being." Mark, again, the professor in his chair; he is instructing students in science. Mark his sternness as he speaks upon recondite themes. Would you believe that that same man will in the evening have his little one upon his knee, and will tell it childish tales, and repeat the ballads of the nursery? And yet it is even so. See the king as he rides through the street in his pomp; thousands gather round him acclamation rends the sky. With what majestic port he bears himself! He is all king, every inch a monarch, as he towers in the midst of the multitude. Have you seen the kind at home? He is then just like other men; his little ones are about him; he is on the floor with them in their games. Is this the king? Yes, it is even he. But why did he not do this in his palace? - in the streets? Oh, no, that was not his home. It is in his home that a man unbends himself. Even so with regard to our glorious God: it is in his church that he manifests himself as he does not unto the world. The mere worldling turns his telescope to the sky, and he sees the pomp of God in the stars, and he says, "O God, how infinite art thou?" Devoutly he looks across the sea, and beholds it lashed with tempest, and he says, "Behold the might and majesty of the Deity!" The anatomist dissects an insect, and discovers in every part of it divine wisdom, and he says, "How wise is God!" Ay; but it is only the believer who as he kneels in his chamber can say, "My father made all these," and then can say, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." There are sweet revelations which God makes in his church, which he never makes anywhere else. It is there he takes the children to his bosom; it is there he opens his heart, and lets his people know the fountains of his great soul, and the might of his infinite affection. And is it not a sweet thing to think of God at home with his family, happy in the house of his church?

But yet, furthermore, another thought strikes me now. A man's home is

the center of all he doth. Yonder is a large farm. Well, there are outhouses, and hay ricks, and barns and the like; but just in the middle of these there is the house the center of all husbandry. No matter how much wheat there may be, it is to the house the produce goes. It is for the maintenance of the household that the husband carries on his husbandry. You may hear the cattle lowing yonder, you may mark the sheep upon the hills, but the fleece cometh home, and the full udders must yield the milk for the children of the house, for the house is the center of all. Every river of industry cometh down towards the sweet soft inland lake of home. Now God's church is God's center? He is abroad in the world, he is busy here and there and everywhere, but to what does all his business tend? To his church. Why doth God clothe the hills with plenty? *For the feeding of his people?* Why is providence revolving? Why those wars and tempests, and then again this stillness and calm? *It is for his church.* Not an angel divides the ether who hath not a mission for the church. It may be indirectly, but nevertheless truly so. There is not an archangel that fulfils the behests of the Most High but really carries the church upon his broad wings, and bears up her children lest they dash their feet against a stone. The storehouses of God are for his church. The depths beneath of hidden treasure, of God's unutterable riches - all these are for his people. There is nothing which he hath from his blazing crown to the darkness that is beneath his throne, that is not for his redeemed. All things must minister and work together for good for the chosen church of God which is his *house* - his daily habitation. I think if you will turn that over and over again, when you are away, you will see there is much in the beautiful fact, that as the house is the center, so is the church the center of everything with God.

One other thought and I will have done. We have heard much talk of late about the French invasion. I shall begin to be alarmed about it when I see it, but certainly not till then. However there is one thing we may say pretty safely. We are many of us peace men and would not like to wield the sword; the first sight of blood would sicken us, we are peaceful beings, we are not for fighting and war. But let the most peaceful man imagine that the invader had landed on our shore that our houses be in danger, and our homes about to be sacked by the foe, our conscientiousness I fear would give way; notwithstanding all we might say about the wrongness of

war, I query whether there be a man among us who would not take such weapon as he could find next to hand to repel the enemy. With this for our war cry, "Our hearths and our homes," we would rush upon the invader, be he who he may or what he may. There is no might so tremendous that it could paralyze our arm; until we were frozen in death we would fight for our home; there would be no command so stern that it could quiet us; we should break through every band and bond, and the weakest of us would be a giant, and our women would become heroines in the day of difficulty. Every hand would find its weapon to hurl at the invader. We love our homes, and we must and will defend them. Ay, and now lift up your thoughts - the church is God's home, will he not defend it? will he suffer his own house to be sacked and stormed? shall the hearth of divinity be stained with the blood of his children? Shall it be that the church is overthrown, and her battlements stormed, her peaceful habitations given up to fire and sword? No, never, not while God hath a heart of love, and while he calleth his people his own house and his habitation. Come, let us rejoice in this our security; let earth be all in arms abroad, we dwell in perfect peace, for our Father is in the house and he is God Almighty. Let them come on against us, we need not fear, his arm shall fell them, the breath of his nostrils shall blast them, a word shall destroy them, they shall melt away like the fat of rams, as fat of lambs shall they be consumed, into smoke shall they consume away. All these thoughts seem to me naturally to arise from the fact that the church is God's habitation.

III. I was about to show you in the third place, that the church is, by-and-bye, to be GOD'S GLORIOUS TEMPLE. It doth not yet appear what *she* shall be. I have, however, already mentioned this precious fact. The church is rising to-day, and she shall continue to rise until the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and then, when all nations shall call her blessed, and him blessed too - when they shall all say, "Come and let us go up to the house of our God that we may worship him," then shall the church's glory begin. When this earth shall pass away, when all the monuments of empires shall be dissolved and run down in the common lava of the last burning, then shall the church be caught up in the clouds and afterwards be exalted to heaven itself, to become a temple such as eye hath not seen.

And now, brethren and sisters, in conclusion I make these remarks. If the church of God is God's house, what should you and I do? Why we should earnestly seek as being a part of that temple always to retain the great inhabitant. Let us not grieve his Spirit lest he leave his church for awhile; above all let us not be hypocrites lest he never come into our hearts at all. And if the church be God's temple and God's house, let us not defile it. If you defile yourself you defile the church, for your sin if you be a church member is the church's sin. The defilement of one stone in rebuilding virtually mars its perfection. Take care that thou be holy even as he is holy. Let not thine heart become a house for Belial. Think not that God and the devil can dwell in the same habitation. Give thyself wholly to God. Seek for more of his Spirit, that as a living stone thou mayest be wholly consecrated; and never be contort unless thou feelest in thyself the perpetual presence of the divine inhabitant who dwelleth in his church. May God now bless every living stone of the temple. And as for you that as yet are not hewn out of the quarries of sin, I pray that divine grace may meet with you, that you may be renewed and converted, and at last be partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light.

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## **The Talking Book**

When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee - Proverbs 6:22

It is a very happy circumstance when the commandment of our father and the law of our mother are also the commandment of God and the law of the Lord. Happy are they who have a double force to draw them to the right—the bonds of nature, and the cords of grace. They sin with a vengeance who sin both against a father on earth and the great Father in heaven, and they exhibit a virulence and a violence of sin who do despite to the tender obligations of childhood, as well as to the demands of

conscience and God. Solomon, in the passage before us, evidently speaks of those who find in the parents' law and in God's law the same thing, and he admonishes such to bind the law of God about their heart, and to tie it about their neck; by which he intends inward affection and open avowal. The law of God should be so dear to us, that it should be bound about the most vital organ of our being, braided about our heart. That which a man carries in his hand he may forget and lose, that which he wears upon his person may be torn from him, but that which is bound about his heart will remain there as long as life remains. We are to love the Word of God with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; with the full force of our nature we are to embrace it; all our warmest affections are to be bound up with it. When the wise man tells us, also, to wear it about our necks, he means that we are never to be ashamed of it. No blush is to mantle our cheek when we are called Christians; we are never to speak with bated breath in any company concerning the things of God. Manfully must we take up the cross of Christ; cheerfully must we avow ourselves to belong to those who have respect unto the divine testimonies. Let us count true religion to be our highest ornament; and, as magistrates put upon them their gold chains, and think themselves adorned thereby, so let us tie about our neck the commands and the gospel of the Lord our God.

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



Unguarded moments there may be; times, inevitable to our imperfection, there will be, when, unless some other power protect us, we shall fall into the hands of the foe. Blessed is he who has God's law so written on his heart, and wears it about his neck as armour of proof, that at all times he is invulnerable, kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

But I prefer, this morning, to keep to the third reason for loving God's word. It is this, that is becomes our sweet companion: "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." The inspired law of God, which David in the hundred and nineteenth Psalm calls God's testimonies, precepts, statutes, and the like, is the friend of the righteous. Its essence and marrow is the gospel of Jesus, the law-fulfiller, and this also is the special solace of believers. Of the whole sacred volume it may be said, "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." I gather four or five thoughts from this expression, and upon these we will speak.

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

Whence comes it that the word of God is living? Is it not, first, because it is pure truth? Error is death, truth is life. No matter how well established an error may be by philosophy, or by force of arms, or the current of human thought, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all untruth shall be as stubble before the fire. The tooth of time devours all

lies. Falsehoods are soon cut down, and they wither as the green herb. Truth never dies, it dates its origin from the immortals. Kindled at the source of light, its fame cannot be quenched; if by persecution it be for a time covered, it shall blaze forth anew to take reprisals upon its adversaries. Many a once venerated system of error now rots in the dead past among the tombs of the forgotten; but the truth as it is in Jesus knows no sepulchre, and fears no funeral; it lives on, and must live while the Eternal fills His throne.

The word of God is living, because it is the utterance of an immutable, self-existing God. God doth not speak to-day what He meant not yesterday, neither will He to-morrow blot out what He records to-day. When I read a promise spoken three thousand years ago, it is as fresh as though it fell from the eternal lips to-day. There are, indeed, no dates to the Divine promises; they are not of private interpretation, nor to be monopolised by any generation. I say again, as fresh to-day the eternal word drops from the Almighty's lips as when He uttered it to Moses, or to Elias, or spake it by the tongue of Esaias or Jeremiah. The word is always sure, steadfast, and full of power. It is never out of date. Scripture bubbles up evermore with good matters, it is an eternal Geyser, a spiritual Niagara of grace, for ever falling, flashing, and flowing on; it is never stagnant, never brackish or defiled, but always clear, crystal, fresh, and refreshing; so, therefore, ever living.

The word lives, again, because it enshrines the living heart of Christ. The heart of Christ is the most living of all existences. It was once pierced with a spear, but it lives on, and yearns towards sinners, and is as tender and compassionate as in the days of the Redeemer's flesh. Jesus, the Sinner's Friend, walks in the avenues of Scripture as once He traversed the plains and hills of Palestine: you can see Him still, if you have opened eyes, in the ancient prophecies; you can behold Him more clearly in the devout evangelists; He opens and lays bare His inmost soul to you in the epistles, and makes you hear the footsteps of His approaching advent in the symbols of the Apocalypse. The living Christ is in the book; you behold His face almost in every page; and, consequently, it is a book that can talk. The Christ of the mount of benedictions speaks in it still; the God who said, "Let there be light," gives forth from its pages the same divine

fiat; while the incorruptible truth, which saturated every line and syllable of it when first it was penned, abides therein in full force, and preserves it from the finger of decay. "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

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

And now, dear brethren, if these things be so—and our experience certifies them—let us take care how we trifle with a book which is so instinct with life. Might not many of you remember your faults this day

were we to ask you whether you are habitual students of holy writ? Readers of it I believe you are; but are you searchers; for the promise is not to those who merely read, but to those who delight in the law of the Lord, and meditate therein both day and night. Are you sitting at the feet of Jesus, with His word as your school-book? If not, remember, though you may be saved, you lacked very much of the blessing which otherwise you might enjoy. Have you been backsliding? Refresh your soul by meditating in the divine statutes, and you will say, with David, "Thy word hath quickened me." Are you faint and weary? Go and talk with this living book: it will give you back your energy, and you shall mount again as with the wings of eagles. But are you unconverted altogether? Then I cannot direct you to Bible-reading as being the way of salvation, nor speak of it as though it had any merit in it; but I would, nevertheless, urge upon you unconverted people great reverence for Scripture, an intimate acquaintance with its contents, and a frequent perusal of its pages, for it has occurred ten thousand times over that when men have been studying the word of life, the word has brought life to them. "The entrance of thy word giveth light." Like Elijah and the dead child, the word has stretched itself upon them, and their dead souls have been made to live. One of the likeliest places in which to find Christ is in the garden of the Scriptures, for there He delights to walk. As of old, the blind men were wont to sit by the wayside begging, so that, if Jesus passed by, they might cry to Him, so would I have you sit down by the wayside of the Holy Scriptures. Hear the promises, listen to their gracious words; they are the footsteps of the Saviour; and, as you hear them, may you be led to cry, "Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me!" Attend most those ministries which preach God's Word most. Do not select those that are fullest of fine speaking, and that dazzle you with expressions which are ornamental rather than edifying; but get to a ministry that is full of God's own Word, and, above all, learn God's Word itself. Read it with a desire to know its meaning, and I am persuaded that, thereby, many of you who are now far from God will be brought near to him, and led to a saving faith in Jesus, for "the Word of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

II. If the text says, "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee," then it is clear THE WORD IS PERSONAL. "It shall talk with thee." It is not

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

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

Moreover, this book is so personal, that it speaks to men in all states and conditions before God. How it talks to sinners—talks, I say, for its puts it

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

And, certainly, when we become the children of God the book talks with us wondrously. In the family of heaven it is the child's own book. We no sooner know our Father than this dear book comes at once as a love letter from the far-off country, signed with our own Father's hand, and perfumed with our Father's love. If we grow in grace, or if we backslide, in either case Scripture still talks with us. Whatever our position before the eternal God, the book seems to be written on purpose to meet that position. It talks to you as you are, not only as you should be, or as others have been, but with you, with you personally, about your present condition.

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

mine,' yet I, a poor afflicted one, can do so!" Oh, yes; the book is very personal, for it goes into all the details of our case, let our state be what it may.

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

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

III. From the text we learn that HOLY SCRIPTURE IS VERY FAMILIAR. "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. To talk signifies fellowship, communion, familiarity. It does not say, "It shall preach to thee." Many persons have a high esteem for the book, but they look upon it as though it were some very elevated teacher speaking to them from a lofty tribunal, while they stand far below. I will not altogether condemn that reverence,

but it were far better if they would understand the familiarity of God's word; it does not so much preach to us as talk to us. It is not, "When thou awakest, it shall lecture thee," or, "it shall scold thee;" no, no, "it shall talk with thee." We sit at its feet, or rather at the feet of Jesus, in the Word, and it comes down to us; it is familiar with us, as a man talketh to his friend. And here let me remind you of the delightful familiarity of Scripture in this respect that it speaks the language of men. If God had written us a book in His own language, we could not have comprehended it, or what little we understood would have so alarmed us, that we should have besought that those words should not be spoken to us any more; but the Lord, in His Word, often uses language which, though it be infallibly true in its meaning, is not after the knowledge of God, but according to the manner of man. I mean this, that the word uses similes and analogies of which we may say that they speak humanly, and not according to the absolute truth as God Himself sees it. As men conversing with babes use their broken speech, so doth the condescending word. It is not written in the celestial tongue, but in the patois of this lowland country, condescending to men of low estate. It feeds us on bread broken down to our capacity, "food convenient for us". It speaks of God's arm, His hand, His finger, His wings, and even of His feathers. Now, all this is familiar picturing, to meet our childish capacities; for the Infinite One is not to be conceived of as though such similitudes were literal facts. It is an amazing instance of divine love, that He puts those things so that we may be helped to grasp sublime truths. Let us thank the Lord of the word for this.

How tenderly Scripture comes down to simplicity. Suppose the sacred volume had all been like the book of the prophet Ezekiel, small would have been its service to the generality of mankind. Imagine that the entire volume had been as mysterious as the Book of Revelation: it might have been our duty to study it, but if its benefit depended upon our understanding it, we should have failed to attain it. But how simple are the gospels, how plain these words, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"; how deliciously clear those parables about the lost piece of money, the lost sheep, and the prodigal son. Wherever the word touches upon vital points, it is as bright as a sunbeam. Mysteries there are, and profound doctrines, deeps where Leviathan can swim; but, where it has to do immediately with what concerns us for eternity, it is so



plain that the babe in grace may safely wade in its refreshing streams. In the gospel narrative the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err. It is familiar talk; it is God's great mind brought down to our littleness, that it may lift us up.

How familiar the book is too—I speak now as to my own feelings—as to all that concerns us. It talks about my flesh, and my corruptions, and my sins, as only one that knew me could speak. It talks of my trials in the wisest way; some, I dare not tell, it knows all about. It talks about my difficulties; some would sneer at them and laugh, but this book sympathises with them, knows my tremblings, and my fears, and my doubts, and all the storm that rages within the little world of my nature. The book has been through all my experience; somehow or other it maps it all out, and talks with me as if it were a fellow-pilgrim. It does not speak to me unpractically, and scold me, and look down on me from an awful height of stern perfection, as if it were an angel, and could not sympathise with fallen men; but like the Lord whom it reveals, the book seems as if it were touched with a feeling of my infirmities, and had been tempted in all points like as I am. Have you not often wondered at the human utterances of the divine word: it thunders like God and yet weeps like man. It seems impossible that anything should be too little for the word of God to notice, or too bitter, or even too sinful for that book to overlook. It touches humanity at all points. Everywhere it is a personal, familiar acquaintance, and seems to say to itself, "Shall I hide this thing from Abraham my friend?"

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

The word of God, then, talks with us in the sense of being familiar with us. Do we understand this? I will close this point by another word of application. Who, then, that finds God's word so dear and kind a friend would spurn or neglect it? If any of you have despised it, what shall I say to you? If it were a dreary book, written within and without with curses and lamentations, whose every letter flashed with declarations of vengeance, I might see some reason why we should not read it; but, O precious, priceless companion, dear friend of all my sorrows, making my bed in my sickness, the light of my darkness, and the joy of my soul, how can I forget thee—how can I forsake thee? I have heard of one who said that the dust on some men's Bibles lay there so thick and long that you might write "Damnation" on it. I am afraid that such is that case with some of you. Mr. Rogers, of Dedham, on one occasion, after preaching about the preciousness of the Bible, took it away from the front of the pulpit, and, putting it down behind him, pictured God as saying, "You do not read the book: you do not care about it; I will take it back—you shall not be wearied with it any more." And then he portrayed the grief of wise men's hearts when they found the blessed revelation withdrawn from men; and how they would besiege the throne of grace, day and night, to ask it back. I am sure he spoke the truth. Though we too much neglect it, yet ought we to prize it beyond all price, for, if it were taken from us, we should have lost our kindest comforter in the hour of need. God grant us to love the Scriptures more!

IV. Fourthly, and with brevity, our text evidently shows that **THE WORD IS RESPONSIVE**. "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee," not to thee. Now, talk with a man is not all on one side. To talk with a man needs answering talk from him. You have both of you something to say when you talk together. It is a conversation to which each one contributes his part. Now, Scripture is a marvellously conversational book; it talks, and makes men talk. It is ever ready to respond to us. Suppose you go to the Scriptures in a certain state of spiritual life: you must have noticed, I think, that the word answer to that state. If you are dark and gloomy, it will appear as though it had put itself in mourning, so that it might lament with you. When you are on the dunghill, there sits Scripture, with dust and ashes on its head, weeping side by side with you, and not

upbraiding like Job's miserable comforters. But suppose you come to the book with gleaming eyes of joy, you will hear it laugh; it will sing and play to you as with psaltery and harp, it will bring forth the high-sounding cymbals. Enter its goodly land in a happy state, and you shall go forth with you and be led forth with peace, its mountains and its hills shall break before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. As in water the face is reflected, so in the living stream of revealed truth a man sees his own image.

If you come to Holy Scripture with growth in grace, and with aspirations for yet higher attainments, the book grows with you, grows upon you. It is ever beyond you, and cheerily cries, "Higher yet; Excelsior!" Many books in my library are now behind and beneath me; I read them years ago, with considerable pleasure; I have read them since, with disappointment; I shall never read them again, for they are of no service to me. They were good in their way once, and so were the clothes I wore when I was ten years old; but I have outgrown them I know more than these books know, and know wherein they are faulty. Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the book widens and deepens with our years. It is true, it cannot really grow, for it is perfect; but it does so to our apprehension. The deeper you dig into Scripture, the more you find that it is a great abyss of truth. The beginner learns four or five points of orthodoxy, and says, "I understand the gospel, I have grasped all the Bible." Wait a bit, and when his soul grows and knows more of Christ, he will confess, "Thy commandment is exceeding broad, I have only begun to understand it."

There is one thing about God's word which shows its responsiveness to us, and that is when you reveal your heart to it, it reveals its heart to you. If, as you read the word, you say, "O blessed truth, thou art indeed realised in my experience; come thou still further into my heart. I give up my prejudices, I assign myself, like the wax, to be stamped with thy seal,"—when you do that, and open your heart to Scripture, Scripture will open its heart to you; for it has secrets which it does not tell to the casual reader, it has precious things of the everlasting hills which can only be discovered by miners who know how to dig and open the secret places, and penetrate great veins of everlasting riches. Give thyself up to the Bible, and the Bible will give itself up to thee. Be candid with it, and

honest with thy soul, and the Scripture will take down its golden key, and open one door after another, and show to thy astonished gaze ingots of silver which thou couldst not weigh, and heaps of gold which thou couldst not measure. Happy is that man who, in talking with the Bible, tells it all his heart, and learns the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him.

And how, too, if you love the bible and talk out your love to it, the Bible will love you! Its wisdom says, "I love them that love me." Embrace the word of God, and the word of God embraces you at once. When you prize its every letter, then it smiles upon you graciously, greets you with many welcomes, and treats you as an honoured guest. I am always sorry to be on bad terms with the Bible, for then I must be on bad terms with God. Whenever my creed does not square with God's word, I think it is time to mould my creed into another form. As for God's words, they must not be touched with hammer or axe. Oh, the chiselling, and cutting, and hammering in certain commentaries to make God's Bible orthodox and systematic! How much better to leave it alone! The word is right, and we are wrong, wherein we agree not with it. The teachings of God's word are infallible, and must be revered as such. Now, when you love it so well that you would not touch a single line of it, and prize it so much that you would even die for the defence of one of its truths, then, as it is dear to you, you will be dear to it, and it will grasp you and unfold itself to you as it does not to the world.

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

V. Lastly, SCRIPTURE IS INFLUENTIAL. That I gather from the fact that Solomon says, "When thou wakest, it shall talk with thee"; and follows it up with the remark that it keeps man from the strange woman, and from

other sins which he goes on to mention. When the word of God talks with us, it influences us. All talk influences more or less. I believe there more done in this world for good or bad by talk than there is by preaching; indeed, the preacher preaches best when he talks; there is no oratory in the world that is equal to simple talk; it is the model of eloquence; and all your rhetorician's action and verbiage are so much rubbish. The most efficient way of preaching is simply talking; the man permitting his heart to run over at his lips into other men's hearts. Now, this book, as it talks with us, influences us, and it does so in many ways.

It soothes our sorrows, and encourages us. Many a warrior has been ready to steal away from God's battle, but the word has laid its hand on him, and said, "Stand on thy feet, be not discouraged, be of good cheer, I will strengthen thee, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Brave saints we have read of, but we little know how often they would have been arrant cowards only the good word came and strengthened them, and they went back to be stronger than lions and swifter than eagles.

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

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

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

Then, too, how often it warns and restrains. I had gone to the right or to

the left if the law of the Lord had not said, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee."

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

Lastly, let the Scripture talk with you, and it will confirm and settle you. We hear every now and then of apostates from the gospel. They must have been little taught in the truth as it is in Jesus. A great outcry is made, every now and then, about our all being perverted to Rome. I was assured the other day by a good man with a great deal of alarm, that all England was going over to Popery. I told him I did not know what kind of God he worshipped, but my God was a good deal bigger than the devil, and did not intend to let the devil have his way after all, and that I was not half as much afraid of the Pope at Rome as of the Ritualists at home. But mark it, there is some truth in these fears. There will be a going over to one form of error or another unless there be in the Christian church a more honest, industrious, and general reading of Holy Scripture. What if I were to say most of you church members do not read your Bibles, should I be slandering you? You hear on Sabbath day a chapter read, and you perhaps read a passage at family prayer, but a very large number never read the Bible privately for themselves, they take their religion out of the monthly magazine, or accept it from the minister's lips. Oh, for the Berean spirit back again, to search the Scriptures whether these things be so. I would like to see a huge pile of all the book, good and bad that were ever written, prayer-books, and sermons, and hymn-books, and all,

smoking like Sodom of old, if the reading of those books keeps you away from the reading of the Bible; for a ton weight of human literature is not worth an ounce of Scripture; one single drop of the essential tincture of the word of God is better than a sea full of our commenting and sermonisings, and the like. The word, the simple, pure, infallible word of God, we must live upon if we are to become strong against error, and tenacious of truth. Brethren, may you be established in the faith rooted, grounded, built up; but I know you cannot be except ye search the Scriptures continually.

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

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## **Taking Possession Of Our Inheritance**

Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. - Joshua 1:2-3

Under the leadership of Moses the children of Israel had been journeying

towards the land of promise. Owing to their waywardness, what might have been done in less than a month occupied many years. They wandered up and down in the wilderness, sometimes close on the border of their inheritance, and anon lost in the great desert. Alas! many of God's people are still in this unsatisfactory condition: they have come out of Egypt, the depths have swallowed up their adversaries, and they are on the way to the promised heritage; but they have not yet entered into rest. They will, we trust, ultimately reach the peace of God which passeth all understanding, for they have faith sufficient to prove them to be God's people, and, therefore, the Lord will surely bring them in; but, assuredly, they make a great deal of marching for very small progress. For lack of faith they go about, when, with a step, they might possess the promised Canaan.

To-day my earnest prayer and desire is that, going towards the promised heritage may come to an end with you this day, by your entering into heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus by an immediate act of faith. I want the Lord's people so to persevere in their seeking, by the divine strength, that they may get out of the great and terrible wilderness, and come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem, and enter into their heritage, according to that word, "We which have believed do enter into rest." Our friends have come as far as that first verse of our Lord's invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; and they have a measure of that rest which comes of pardoned sin and confidence in Jesus. The pity is that they have not advanced to his next word of exhortation, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." This is a rest discovered and enjoyed through willing service: "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." Many people are saved in one sense, but in another sense they are seeking salvation. Oh, that we may come to be saved in every sense: may salvation be ours in the broadest, widest, deepest, highest meaning of that blessed word! May we not only be saved from but saved to! Saved from sin; that makes us safe. Saved to holiness, that makes us happy. May we realize our completeness in Christ this day, and cease from the wanderings of fear! It is time that we took possession of that goodly heritage which the Lord has made our own, for in Christ Jesus "we have obtained an inheritance," and have the earnest of it in our possession of the Spirit of God. Hear ye the



watch-word of the morning, ye that have tarried long enough in the wilderness-"Arise, go over this Jordan"! If I read the whole verse it is a command to myself: "Arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses."

For our help in this desirable step, first, let us take a survey of the inheritance; secondly, let us glance at the title deeds; and thirdly, let us make a move towards taking immediate possession. For all this may the Holy Spirit. make us sufficient!

I. First, LET US TAKE A SURVEY OF THE INHERITANCE. I cannot carry you to the top of Pisgah; and if I could, you would probably reckon that you ought to die there. Your time has not yet come for that journey to the sky; but I would invite you to view the purchased possession with the eye of an enlightened understanding, and then to cross over the Jordan of indecision to possess the country.

I would say of this inheritance which God has prepared for his saints, and has given to them by a covenant of salt, that it is exceeding broad. We read here in this Book of Joshua, "From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast." These people did not conquer all the country, but were content with the narrow bounds of Canaan. They began their enterprise bravely, but soon showed a contracted spirit. Moses, in the thirty-fourth of Numbers, which is well worthy of a careful reading, gave them a little map, or ordnance survey, of the inner country, which they were commanded to conquer, and out of which they were to drive the inhabitants with the edge of the sword. The various races of Canaanites had brought upon themselves the curse of a righteous God. Their existence upon the face of God's earth had become a calamity to mankind by reason of their horrible vices. They were doomed to utter extinction by the justice of God, as other races have been whose story profane history records. The Israelites were appointed to be their executioners. They did not accomplish their task; after a little while they began to make treaties

and marriages with the doomed people, and they became thorns in their sides. Outside of these Canaanitish nations were greater territories, which stretched right away from the Lebanon ranges down to the border of Egypt, and as far east as the great river Euphrates, from whose banks their fathers came. This large domain was never altogether conquered by Israel, although David possessed a large portion of it, and Solomon still more. The people of these wide regions were not so far gone in evil as the degraded tribes of Canaan; and so they were to be spared, if they submitted to the sway of Israel. Even the inner kingdom Israel did not wholly subdue, and the wider region it left for centuries untouched. Beloved, this is a sadly correct picture of what happens to numbers of God's people nowadays. The inheritance that God has given us to enjoy in Christ Jesus is exceeding broad; but we limit ourselves. All that we can think or desire is ours in the covenant of grace. There are immeasurable breadths and lengths, but we confine ourselves to close quarters. Truly "there is very much land yet to be possessed"! Some graces you must have, or you are not saved; some sins must at once be driven out of your life at the sword's point, or you are not the Lord's. As for the choicer graces, you are foolish indeed if you think of doing without them; and as for the less violent sins, you err greatly if you spare one of them. The deep knowledge, the spiritual experience, the high joy, the extreme delight, and the heavenly communion, which fall to the lot of certain of the saints, should be enjoyed by us all. There is no reason why one should miss them; for if they have but faith enough to grasp all that God gives, they have full permission to do so. The Lord may truly say to us, "Ye are not straitened in me, but ye are straitened in your own bowels." We are petty princelets when we might have an imperial inheritance.

Just let me show what I mean. When we at first come to Christ by faith, we begin to enter into our inheritance, for we obtain the pardon of sin. Some believers are not even sure that they have a present and perfect remission; but some of us know that we are, once for all, "washed in the blood of the Lamb," and therefore we are whiter than snow. This we know; but beyond that lies "acceptance in the Beloved," which possibly we have not dared to claim. Hosts of professors are satisfied to be washed, but have not yet asked to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Beloved, we are not only absolved, but we are positively delightful

unto God in Christ Jesus. He accepts our offerings, our prayers, our praises, our heart's love. Our name is Hephzibah, for the Lord delighteth in us. Pardon of sin is like the little Canaan that must be conquered; but why not advance to the wider regions of "accepted in the Beloved"? Brethren, let us walk in the light, as God is in the light, and have fellowship with him, while the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Think of another great blessing, namely, that of sonship. Beloved, we could sing heartily that hymn just now,

"Behold what wondrous grace  
The Father hath bestow'd  
On sinners of a mortal race,  
To call them sons of God!"

But sonship is not all-"If children, then heirs, heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ." Adoption you must have, heirship you ought to have, How rich you are, since God himself is yours-"heirs of God"! Yes, God himself is as truly yours as he is Christ's-"joint heirs with Jesus Christ." Why are we naked, and poor, and miserable, when we are heirs of a kingdom by reason of our adoption of the Lord? Let us take the good the Lord provides us.

Consider now the matter of regeneration. When we come to Christ by faith, we are born again, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus: this must be. But, brethren, when we are born again we perceive that the new birth begets a new life, and that new life develops itself in the beauty of holiness. Holiness is the fruit of regeneration; yet some imagine that they cannot be holy, at least not to any great extent. They believe that they can be saved from certain grosser evils, but they cannot ascend to those glorious heights of consecration and sanctification without which the believer can never attain to the stature of a man in Christ Jesus. My message to you is, Arise, go over this Jordan, and take possession of the larger inheritance. Take possession of it all: seek after holiness, follow on to know the Lord. Be not satisfied until you are conformed unto his image, who is "the firstborn among many brethren." Aspire to the utmost God can give. You have not seen the goodly heights of Lebanon; as yet

you are satisfied to stop at Jericho, by the river's brink, as if the conquest of one city had satisfied you. Gird on your harness, and go forth to the fight, for the Lord is with you, and the land is before you.

Again, as soon as a man has believed in Jesus he is safe. If thou believest that Jesus is the Christ thou art born of God; and, being born of God, thou comest under the divine wing, and the Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. Many are satisfied that this is true, but they do not, therefore, enter into peace as they should. That undisturbed serenity which springs from a sense of perfect safety in Christ Jesus is a glorious domain into which they do not enter. Our soul is made by faith to be calm as the lake upon a summer's evening, when the surface is unbroken by a ripple. Alas! we give way at times to doubt and fear, and hardly know whether we are the Lord's people or not. This must not go on. We must have faith; but we may have, and we ought to have, the full assurance of faith. In full assurance lies the spring of perpetual serenity. The Lord can create in us habitual calm: in the midst of trouble he can give us joy; in the hour of struggle he can give us confidence. Oh, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; then shall your times be of the halcyon order, and your days as the days of heaven upon the earth. It may be so, if you have grace enough to claim the whole of the wide territory which the Lord has allotted you. Oh, for grace to cry: "Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; over Edom will I cast out my shoe. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?" God will bring us where unaided nature can never enter.

Once more: when we come to Christ by faith we have communion with God; and this is a land that floweth with milk and honey. Out of communion comes usefulness, and there are certain who fancy that they can never be very useful. The Lord cannot do many mighty works through them because of their unbelief. They have to be fed with a spoon, like invalid children. If they had but faith enough to receive power from on high by fuller communion with God, they might become as David. There is no limit to the possibilities of usefulness in any man or woman when perfectly consecrated. Let us not imagine that we are doomed to small usefulness. That branch of the vine which hitherto has yielded little or no fruit, may yet be made by the heavenly Fine-dresser to bring forth much

fruit. By faith let the divine sap of grace be received. Let living graces bring the living Christ into us, and then we shall bring forth clusters large as those which the spies brought from Eshcol of old. Thus much, then, concerning our survey of the goodly heritage of salvation; the land of promise is exceeding broad.

Next, it is exceedingly desirable. The country into which Israel entered was of a very choice kind. Travellers in Palestine tell us that it is the world condensed. Within that narrow strip of territory, you get plains and hills, frosts of winter and heats of summer, with products both of the semi-tropical and temperate zones. Palestine is the whole earth in miniature, and all the advantages of all lands are gathered into it. It was, in Joshua's days, a place of extreme fertility: "A land that floweth with milk and honey." Nor was this all: while it was fertile on the surface, it was rich underneath. It was a land "whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." The useful metals were near at hand, and every other convenience. Besides being fertile and wealthy, it was prepared for immediate habitation. The tribes had not to build houses, they inhabited what others had builded; they had not to plant vineyards, but to eat the fruit of former labors. All things were waiting for the true heirs of the land. Beloved, when faith gets her heritage in Christ, she is brought into a wealthy place. When sin is driven out, and we come to live in God's own land, then we find precious treasure; we dig, and we are enriched. We have all things in Christ; yea, in him we have all that our utmost want can require. As he has gone in heaven to prepare a place for us, so on earth he has already prepared, in the covenant of grace, everything that is needed for the way home. Why do we not take possession of that which he has prepared for us?

This heritage, upon which we are now looking down from the summit of our faith, is full of variety. In Palestine there were fertile plains and rich valleys, between rising hills and towering mountains. It was a land of brooks and rivers, a land which the Lord God thought upon. It was, in those days, the joy of all the earth: it was as the garden of the Lord for exceeding excellency. Beloved, if you come to Christ, you shall never need to go away from him to find variety of joys. In his teaching you shall find Lebanons of sublime doctrine, and Sharons of pleasant precept. Here are

Hermions of experience, Tabors of communion, Jabboks of prevailing prayer, and Cheriths of divine providence. The revelation of God is a blessed country, full of all manner of delights. They that live in Christ dwell in spiritual realms, which for light and joy are as heaven below. Above all things, it is "thy land, O Immanuel!" That is the dearest name for the Canaan of grace. The saints' inheritance is the choicest form of life, and peace, and joy. We come to live with Christ, in Christ, for Christ, as Christ: we rise in him to fellowship with the Father, and with the church of the Firstborn. One heart sympathizes with all the purposes of God, and we joy in God himself. I cannot properly describe all this, but I live in the enjoyment of it. We live through our Lord, and with our Lord; and this is life eternal. This is "the life which is life indeed." Compared with it all other life is death. Grace is glory in the bud: it will be full-blown by-and-by. This privilege is enjoyed none the less because of daily affliction, bodily pain, opposition, and reproach: it may even be enjoyed all the more because of these, if they are borne for Jesus' sake. Our light afflictions are like the black shadows of a picture, which throw up the bright lights, and set them out more vividly. Christ Jesus becomes more and more precious to us when we have a straitness of earthly things. Yet this promised portion may be enjoyed if we have abundance of earthly things. God may multiply your possessions; and if he give you more of himself at the same time, they will not harm you. As you find all in God when you are poor, you shall find God in all when you are rich. Your life consists not in what you possess, nor in what you lack. You shall find in Christ a fullness, a soul-filling satisfaction; and this shall be a pledge of that something better which the Beloved has laid up in store for a still brighter day. What a word is that where we read of being "filled with all the fullness of God"! I do not think any man can exaggerate the possibilities that lie before believers. If any man shall draw a line, and say he can go no further, I must take leave to blot out that line: where God has set no bound, we will not allow a stop, lest, haply, we be found guilty of limiting the Holy One of Israel.

"All our capacious powers can wish  
In Christ doth richly meet."

All that is in Christ is meant for all believers, and therefore all believers may have all that is in Christ, who is all in all. We should not be content

with pence when he endows us with pounds. No child of God could ever yet say, "I have taken all that God can give me, and still I am wanting more." God all-sufficient is our heritage, and he more than fills our deepest need, our highest aspiration.

Thus have we surveyed our measureless inheritance.

II. I beg you, in the next place, TO GLANCE AT THE TITLE DEEDS OF OUR INHERITANCE. We shall not require a lawyer to assist us in our examination; but if there should be here a legal critic who would like to overhaul our papers, he is welcome to do so. I would not mind exhibiting our title before the whole bench of judges, for it has no flaw in it, and will stand in the highest court-yea, even in the last judgment. I have pleaded this incomparable title in several courts already, and it has been found to convey to me a valid gift. Here is the title deed, "The land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel." It is repeated further on, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." This is an abstract of our title.

First, notice its covenant character. "I have given it to you." The Lord had given it to them from of old when he promised it to their father Abraham. When the deep sleep fell upon him, and he saw the vision of the burning lamp and the smoking furnace, then the Lord gave to him the wide domain, and he mentions in detail all the tribes which then held the inner circle. You will find the full conveyance in the fifteenth of Genesis, beginning at the eighteenth verse: "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." Thus they came into possession by an ancient deed of gift which entailed it upon them from generation to generation. I am glad that our tenure of the kingdom of grace is ancient and well established, and that it is not so much with us, directly, as with One infinitely greater, with whom it stands fast for ever. Had the covenant been made with me individually, I should fear that my unworthiness would vitiate it; but it is made with One whose name forbids all fear of forfeiture. The covenant of grace is not made with you

or with me individually, because of our personal righteousness; but it is made with our Covenant Head and Representative, whose life and death have sealed and ratified it. As the Lord could never run back from his promise to righteous Abraham, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," so will he never return from his promise which he gave to us in our blessed Covenant Head. He has given us an inheritance by an act of sovereign grace, and not because of any goodness in ourselves, and his gift will never be recalled, since the ground of it never alters. Each believer may say, "He hath in Christ Jesus made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: and therefore do I possess all spiritual blessings, and shall possess them world without end."

Observe, next, that this deed of gift is notable for its graciousness. How does it run? Which I do sell to them? Ah, no! It is no sale, but a free gift. Does it say, "Which I do offer to them if they will earn it"? No, no: it is a present unconditional grant of sovereign love. Nothing is freer than a gift: "the gift of God is eternal life." He has given us all things for nothing, that we might behold the exceeding riches of his grace.

Note well the righteousness of our title-"Which I do give to them." The Lord God has a right to give what he pleases, for "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Of his own has he given unto us. In the great sacrifice of his dear Son he has satisfied all claims of justice, and he acts justly when he blesses largely those for whom Jesus died. When a man has the freehold of his land, he has a right to give it away if so it pleases him: the Most High God is possessor of all things, and when he says to his people "I give you this," who shall dispute his right? The blessings of the covenant of grace are a royal gift: they come to us by divine right. Who shall question Jehovah's will? He asks peremptorily, "Shall I not do as I will with my own?" That which grace has given us is ours by a surer title than anything else can ever be.

Do not fail to see its sureness. He not only says, "I have given it," and in some other places, "I will give it," but he declares "I do give it." God gives Christ and his grace to us every day. The blessings of the covenant are



continually fresh gifts of his hand. By two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie, he has made over the covenant possessions to us, and if it were to be done again he would do it without hesitation. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." "I do give," saith he, and thus he stands to his act and deed. O children of God, what do you think of your title deeds? You stand possessed of your kingdom by the gift of him who has a right to give what he pleases. The kingdom is given you because it is your Father's good pleasure to give it to you. Not only was it his good pleasure, but it remains so. What great simpletons we are if we do not take possession of the brave country which is ceded to us! Does God give, and do we decline to accept? Does God give, and do we let the blessing lie untouched? O sheep, ye well deserve to starve if ye will not feed on the pastures into which the good Shepherd leads you. The highest privileges of the covenant of grace are not the monopoly of advanced saints, they are the common property of all believers. A habit is growing up of saying, "Such and such a man is a saint"; and then you set him up in a niche after the fashion of Rome. Are not you also a saint? You will never enter heaven unless you are. If you are a saint, why not take a saint's inheritance? "Oh, but certain chosen ones are the Lord's favourites!" What! Has he not also chosen you, and favored you? Else it will go hard with you. Well, then, being yourselves favored and chosen, why do you not take hold upon the glorious estate which belongs to the chosen family. No part of Scripture is of private interpretation: no bit of the promised country may be hedged in as the peculiar portion of a few; for it all belongs to all the redeemed if they have but faith to make it their own. Do not hedge about the word spoken of the Lord, and say, "Ah! he said that to Jacob." Doth not the Lord tell us by his servant Hosea that "he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us"? ( Hsa 12:4) Although choice words were first of all spoken to this man or that, yet were they spoken for all believing people throughout all time. In the holy heritage all who have Christ have all that Christ brings with him. "If children, then heirs"-not if grown-up children, not if comely children, nor if vigorous children, but "if children, then heirs." If you are not children, what will become of you? but "if children, then heirs." Come, brethren, bestir yourselves, and claim your heirship. Take possession of the whole territory of grace which the Lord has dedicated to your use.

III. Now I have brought you to the third point-LET US MAKE A MOVE TOWARDS OUR POSSESSION. There is your land, but Jordan rolls between.

The first thing to do in this matter is to go over this Jordan. What do we mean? Out in the wilderness as a seeker, whose faith does not enter in, you are like a sheep which wanders from the fold, and you find little rest. You are apt to be numbered with the Bedouin of the desert, and not with the people of the Lord. Come out from the world, and be separate. The land of gracious experience is meant for you to dwell in, so that you may be recognized as the Lord's peculiar people, separated unto the Most High. Are you ready to come right out, to be settled in Immanuel's land, to break every link with "the world which lieth in wickedness"? I have heard a great deal of talk about this separation, but I have seen these very talkers hesitate when the decisive act of separation from false doctrine and unholy living has been expected of them. I pray you hear the divine voice, which crieth, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." It is required of you, in order to your full entrance into the grace state, that you take up a decided stand on the Lord's side. On the other side of Jordan is your portion, and not in the wilderness of Sin. Did I hear you say to yourself, "Suppose I am beaten?" Well, you cannot retreat from the land, for there is no bridge over the Jordan. The river effectually bars all retreat. Are you willing to make a life decision? Will you draw the sword and burn the scabbard? It is death or glory with you. May you have grace to take the one irreversible step, and be the Lord's, wholly and only, for ever! You can never take the kingdom of grace until with deliberate resolve you quit the sand of the desert for the soil of Canaan. A balloon cannot go up into the sky until the last rope is cut. Oh, for that sharp, decisive step, by which, like Abraham, you come out from your father's house that you may be a sojourner with God in the land which his grace will show you.

Having decided for the Lord, you are next to take possession by an act of simple faith. The Lord says to you, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." This is an easy way of

taking land: to put your foot down upon it. I delight in that word of the Lord to Jacob, when he lay asleep, "The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed." If you can, by faith, lie down on a promise, and find rest in it, it is yours. Every place in the grace country upon which the sole of your foot shall tread is yours. You will remember that the Red Indians agreed to sell to William Penn as much land as a man could walk round in a day; and I do not wonder that at the end of the day they complained that the white brother had made a big walk. I think I should have put my best leg foremost, if whatever I could put my foot upon would be mine; would not you? Why, then, do you not hurry up in spiritual matters? Do you value earthly things more than spiritual? Mark, then, that if you put your foot down upon a blessing, and say, "This is mine," it is yours. What a very simple operation is the claim of faith! You do not want to pass through the Universities to learn that: it is grasping with the hand, or appropriating with the foot. Many of the Lord's poor and unlearned ones obtain more from the promise than the more cultured ever do. The learned man lifts his head up, but the simple put their foot down; and this last is the way to the inheritance. By criticism you may put your foot in it, but by faith you put your foot on it. Strangers cavil, children claim. He that can trust his Lord may say, "In the name of the living God this blessing is mine." Come, then, brother, if there be more holiness, put your foot on it; if there be more happiness, put your foot on it; if there be more usefulness, put your foot on it. Lay your claim to all that is put within your reach in Scripture; this is the victory that overcometh the world, and conquereth Canaan, even our faith.

But the Canaanite was there! Yes, I know it; but you see he had no right there: the Lord had outlawed him. The land was Israel's by the Lord's gift, and they had a right to fight for the possession of their own estates. They first put their foot on it, and it was theirs; and then they said to the aboriginal Canaanites, "Clear out"! The old nations had forfeited their lease through breach of covenant, and they were therefore to give up possession to the incoming tenants, whose right was indefeasible. God's people are in conflict with sin, and they carry out this war vigorously when they have first seen their right to the blessings of grace, as given them of the living God. You may not claim a piece of land unless you are sure that it is really yours; you are a thief if you do. But when you are sure

that an estate is rightfully yours, then you commence your action, and strive to win it, In spiritual things, waive no spiritual right. Say to sin, that now mars your peace, "Peace is mine, clear out!" Say to sin, that stops your usefulness, "That usefulness is mine, I claim it: clear out! "Hivite, Jebusite, Girgashite, whatever sort of fellow you are, clear out of my heart and life, for holiness is mine. God, the sovereign possessor of all things, has given us our redeemed nature, to have and to hold for his glory, and we mean to have it!

Each blessing is yours, since you put the foot of faith upon it; but the actual enjoyment of it will need a struggle. War! war! war! with every Canaanite! Break their images, and cut down their groves. They must be driven out at the sword's point. You have God's help with you in this holy battle. Your warfare will be accomplished, for the Lord himself has said, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

I long to encourage you, my friends, to carry on this sacred crusade. I would have you grasp all which the hand of love holds out to you. Need I urge you? If there be such need, you are in a sorry way. I do not believe that if I should read from this pulpit that my friend John Smith, over there, had been left five thousand acres of land, I should require to follow him home to persuade him to go and look at it. If my sister yonder received a notification that a very nice little estate had been left her in the country, I do not believe I need beg her to look after it. She would take an early train to-morrow morning to go and look over her farm. Brethren, here is an inheritance so broad, and wide, and lasting; why do you not hasten to take it? There is holiness, do you not want it? There is serenity, do you not desire it? There is joy unspeakable and full of glory, do you not wish for it? There is usefulness, do you not hunger for it?

This is the reason why some are so indifferent: they are ignorant: they do not even know that these choice blessings are to be had. But all that any child of God was, you may be; all the joy, and bliss, and holiness ever enjoyed on earth, you may enjoy. The land is before you; go in to possess it. Do not be without the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord, for in him

is "joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Some of our dear friends hear a doctrine which is gospel and water; and they really do not know what the undiluted gospel is. The doctrines of grace are the cream which many cautious preachers skim from the milk of the Word lest it should prove too rich for the stomachs of their hearers. A solid portion of Calvinistic doctrine is like a joint of nourishing meat, and the people of this generation are such babes that they cannot digest it. It is too rich for me!" cries one. I know it, I know it. But I pray the Lord to make you grow into men, who can enjoy the fat things full of marrow, and the wines on the lees well refined. There are glorious truths of which beginners know nothing, and through not knowing of them they miss much joy. Full many a child of God goes fretting and worrying when he ought to be singing and rejoicing, and would be so if he knew what God has provided for him.

Many do not possess the land because of unbelief. "Alas! it seems too good to be true."

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all."

Yes, that is quite true; but are you going to sing that one line for ever? Is that your style of singing?-one line for ever? If our leader, just now, when we sang the hymn, had kept on with-"Behold, what wondrous grace!" "Behold, what wondrous grace!" it would have been very sweet: but I should have pulled his coat-tail, and said, "Go on with the whole verse."

So, in this case, you say-

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all."

Why not go on to sing-

But Jesus Christ is my all in all"?

You are empty, but Jesus fills you. You are in prison, but Jesus sets you at liberty. Why not rejoice in that liberty? The Lord deliver us from unbelief, for it is enough to shut any man out of the inheritance.

Many are indolent, Oh, the laziness of some of God's people! I will not enlarge upon this matter, probably you know something about it yourselves.

Lastly, the indecision of a great many is another cause why they do not possess the land. There is a hesitancy to go up and seizer it. They mean to be better Christians before they die. I wonder how many Christians here would like to finish their lives to-day! Would your life, if now ended, be a life worth living? Suppose it were now threatened to be cut short, would you not pray with anguish, "Lord, let me live a little longer, that I may distribute more of my money to thy cause, may bear better testimony to thy truth, and may set my house in order"? Set your house in order at once, my brother. Give away a 'full portion of your substance immediately. Begin to work for Jesus at once. Why should you hesitate? You blame the sinner when he delays; surely the saint is to be blamed, too, when he also lingers.

I have done when I have said to any soul here that is seeking the Lord, if you to-day come in, and accept the blessings of the covenant, you may have them, and welcome. Do not say to yourself, "It will be a presumptuous thing for me to believe in Jesus." It will be a kind of presumption which has no sin in it. If a rich man, in one of the famine-stricken districts of China, were to say to his servant, "Provide a great feast, and set it out in the street"; and he were then to put up a notice to hungry Chinamen, "Whosoever will may come," I do not think that, if I were a hungry Chinaman, I should stop away from the dinner from fear of presumption. I should fall to, and ask no questions, for my stomach's sake, if for nothing else. O poor, doubting sinner, you had better do the same. Feed freely, and fear not. When God's cry is "Come, and welcome," come at once, and ask no question; or if a question does arise, let your hunger answer, and tell you that you must. God gives his grace freely; freely take it. Come, let us sing together that little ditty:

"I do believe, I will believe,  
That Jesus died for me;  
And on the cross he shed his blood  
From sin to set me free."

This will be a blessed morning for you, if you can not only sing it, but carry it out at once, by a simple faith in our living, risen, reigning Savior.

God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **The Teaching Of The Holy Ghost**

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. - John 14:26

There are many choice gifts comprehended in the Covenant of Grace, but the first and richest of them are these twain—the gift of Jesus Christ for us and the gift of the Holy Ghost to us. The first of these I trust we are not likely to undervalue. We delight to hear of that "unspeakable gift"—the Son of God, who bare our sine, and carried our sorrows, and endured our punishment in his own body on the tree. There is something so tangible in the cross, the nails, the vinegar, the spear, that we are not able to forget the Master, especially when so often we enjoy the delightful privilege of assembling round his table, and breaking bread in remembrance of him. But the second great gift, by no means inferior to the first—the gift of the Holy Spirit to us—is so spiritual and we are so carnal, is so mysterious and we are so material, that we are very apt to forget its value, ay, and even to forget the gift altogether. And yet, my brethren, let us ever remember that Christ on the cross is of no value to us apart from the Holy Spirit in us. In vain that blood is flowing, unless the finger of the Spirit applies the blood to our conscience; in vain is that garment of righteousness wrought out, a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout, unless the Holy Spirit wraps it around us, and arrays us in its costly folds. The river of the water of life cannot quench our thirst till the Spirit presents the goblet and lifts it to our lip. All the things that are in the paradise of God itself could never be blissful to us so long as we are dead souls, and dead souls we are until that heavenly wind comes from the four corners of the earth and breathes upon us slain, that we may live. We do not hesitate to say, that we owe as much to God the Holy Ghost as we do to God the Son. Indeed, it were a high sin and misdemeanor to attempt to put one person of the Divine Trinity before another. Thou, O Father, art the source of all grace, all love and mercy towards us. Thou, O Son, art the channel of thy Father's mercy, and without thee thy Father's



love could never flow to us. And thou, O Spirit—thou art he who enables us to receive that divine virtue which flows from the fountainhead, the Father, through Christ the channel, and by thy means enters into our spirit, and there abides and brings forth its glorious fruit. Magnify, then, the Spirit, ye who are partakers of it; "praise, laud, and love his name always, for it is seemly so to do."

My work this morning is to set forth the work of the Holy Spirit, not as a Comforter, or as a Quickener, or as a Sanctifier, but principally as a Teacher, although we shall have to touch upon these other points in passing.

The Holy Ghost is the great Teacher of the Father's children. The Father begets us by his own will through the word of truth. Jesus Christ takes us into union with himself, so that we become in a second sense the children of God. Then God the Holy Spirit breathes into us the "spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Having given us that spirit of adoption, he trains us, becomes our great Educator, cleanses away our ignorance, and reveals one truth after another, until at last we comprehend with all saints what are the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and then the Spirit introduces the educated ones to the general assembly and church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven.

Concerning this Teacher, these three things—first, what he teaches; secondly, his methods of teaching; and thirdly, the nature and characteristics of that teaching.

I. First, then, WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES US. And here indeed we have a wide field spread before us, for he teaches to God's people all that they do that is acceptable to the Father, and all that they know that is profitable to themselves.

1. I say that he teaches them all that they do. Now, there are some things which you and I can do naturally, when we are but children without any teaching. Who ever taught a child to cry? It is natural to it. The first sign of its life is its shrill feeble cry of pain. Ever afterwards you need never

send it to school to teach it to utter the cry of its grief, the well known expression of its little sorrows. Ah, my brethren, but you and I as spiritual infants, had to be taught to cry; for we could not even cry of ourselves, till we had received "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abbe, Father." There are cryings and groanings which cannot be uttered in words and speech, simple as this language of the new nature seems to be. But even these feeblest groanings, sighings, cryings, tears, are marks of education. We must be taught to do this, or else we are not sufficient to do even these little things in and of ourselves. Children, as we know, have to be taught to speak, and it is by degrees that they are able to pronounce first the shorter, and afterwards the longer words. We, too, are taught to speak. We have none of us learned, as yet, the whole vocabulary of Canaan. I trust we are able to say some of the words; but we shall never be able to pronounce them all till we come into that land where we shall see Christ, and "shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." The sayings of the saints, when they are good and true, are the teachings of the Spirit. Marked ye not that passage—"No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost?" He may say as much in dead words, but the spirit's saying, the saying of the soul, he can never attain to, except as he is taught by the Holy Ghost. Those first words which we ever used as Christians—"God be merciful to me a sinner," were taught us by the Holy Spirit; and that song which we shall sing before the throne—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever," shall but be the ripe fruit of that same tree of knowledge of good and evil, which the Holy Spirit hath planted in the soil of our hearts.

Further, as we are taught to cry, and taught to speak by the Holy Spirit, so are all God's people taught to walk and act by Him. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." We may take the best heed to our life, but we shall stumble or go astray unless he who first set us in the path shall guide us in it. "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms." "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." To stray is natural; to keep the path of right is spiritual. To err is human; to be holy is divine. To fall is the natural effect of evil; but to stand is the glorious effect of the Holy Spirit working in us, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. There was never yet a heavenly

thought, never yet a hallowed deed, never yet a consecrated act acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, which was not worked in us by the Holy Ghost. Thou hast worked all our works in us. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Now as it is with the simple deeds of the Christian, his crying, his speaking, his walking, his acting—all these are teachings of the Holy Ghost—so is it with the higher efforts of his nature. The preaching of the gospel, when it be done aright, is only accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit. That sermon which is based upon human genius is worthless, that sermon which has been obtained through human knowledge, and which has no other force in it than the force of logic or of oratory, is spent in vain. God worketh not by such tools as these. He cleanseth not spirits by the water from broken cisterns, neither doth he save souls by thoughts which come from men's brains, apart from the divine influence which goeth with them. We might have all the learning of the sages of Greece, nay, better still, all the knowledge of the twelve apostles put together, and then we might have the tongue of a seraph, and the eyes and heart of a Savior, but apart from the Spirit of the living God, our preaching would yet be vain, and our hearers and ourselves would still abide in our sins. To preach aright can only be accomplished of the Holy Spirit. There may be a thing called preaching that is of human energy, but God's ministers are taught of the Holy One; and when their word is blessed, either to saint or sinner, the blessing cometh not of them, but of the Holy Ghost, and unto Him be all the glory, for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

So is it with sacred song. Whose are the wings with which I mount towards the skies in sacred harmony and joy? They are thy wings, O Holy Dove! Whose is the fire with which my spirit flames at times of hallowed consecration? Thine is the flame, O fiery Spirit! thine. Whose is the tongue of fire which rested on the apostolic lip? Thine was that cleft tongue, thou Holy One of Israel! Whose is that dew which falls upon the withered blade, and makes it smile and fire? Thine are those holy drops thou Dew of God; thou aft that womb of the morning from whence these beauties of holiness proceed. Thou hast worked an in us, and unto thee

would we give well-deserved thanks. So, then, all the doings of the Christian, both the little and the major doings, are all the teachings of the Holy Ghost.

2. But now, farther; all that the believer truly know that is profitable to himself is taught him by the Holy Spirit. We may learn very much from the Word of God morally and mentally, but the Christian philosopher understands that there is a distinction between soul and spirit; that the mere natural soul or intellect of man may instruct itself well enough out of the Word of God, but that spiritual things are only to be spiritually discerned, and that until that third, higher principle—the spirit—is infused into us in regeneration, we have not even the capability or the possibility of knowing spiritual things. Now it is this third, higher principle, of which the apostle speaks when he speaks of "body, soul, and spirit." Mental philosophers declare there is no such thing as the third part—spirit. They can find a body and a soul, but no spirit. They are quite right—there is no such thing in natural men. That third principle—the spirit—is an infusion of the Holy Ghost at regeneration, and is not to be detected by mental philosophy; it is altogether a subtler thing; a thing too rare, too heavenly, to be described by Dugald Stewart, or Reid, or Brown, or any of those mighty men who could dissect the mind, but who could not understand the spirit. Now, the Spirit of God first gives us a spirit, and then afterwards educates that spirit; and all that that spirit knows is taught it by the Holy Ghost. Perhaps the first thing that we learn is sin: he reproves us of sin. No man knows the exceeding sinfulness of sin, but by the Holy Ghost. You may punish a man, you may tell him of the wrath of God, and of hen, but you cannot make him know what an evil and a bitter thing sin is till the Holy Ghost hath taught it to him. 'Tis an awful lesson indeed to learn, and when the Holy Spirit makes us sit down upon the stool of penitence, and begins to drill this great truth into us, that sin is damnation in the bud, that sin is hell in the germ: then when we begin to perceive it, we cry out, "Now I know how vile I am, my soul abhorreth itself in dust and ashes." No man, I repeat it, will ever know the sinfulness of sin by argument, by punishment, by moral discipline, or by any means apart from the education of the Holy Ghost. It is a truth beyond the reach of human intellect to know how base a thing sin is. The spirit alone, engrafted and given by the Holy Spirit,—that spirit alone can learn the

lesson, and only the Holy Ghost can teach it.

The next lesson the Spirit teaches us, is the total ruin, depravity, and helplessness of self. Men pretend to know this by nature, but they do not know it; they can only speak the words of experience as parrots speak like men. But to know myself utterly lost and ruined; to know myself so lost, "that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing," is a knowledge so distasteful, so hateful, so abominable to the carnal intellect, that man would not learn it if he could, and if he hath learnt it, it is a clear proof that God the Holy Spirit has made him willing to see the truth, and willing to receive it. When we sometimes hear great preachers telling us that there is something grand left in man yet, that when Adam fell he might have broken his little finger, but did not ruin himself entirely, that man is a grand being, in fact a noble creature and that we are all wrong in telling men they are depraved, and thundering out the law of God at them—am I astonished that they should speak thus? Nay, my brethren, it is the language of the carnal mind the whole world over, and in every age. No wonder that a man is eloquent upon this point, every man needs to be eloquent when he has to defend a lie. No wonder that glorious sentences have been uttered, and flowery periods poured forth from a cornucopia of eloquence upon this subject. A man need exhaust all logic and all rhetoric to defend a falsehood; and it is not a wonder that he seeks to do it, for man believes himself to be rich, and increased in goods, and to have need of nothing, till the Holy Ghost teaches him that he is naked, and poor, and miserable.

These lessons being learned, the Spirit proceeds to teach us further—the nature and character of God. God is to be heard in every wind, and seen in every cloud, but not all of God. God's goodness, and God's omnipotence, the world clearly manifesteth to us in the works of creation, but where do I read of his grace, where do I read of his mercy, or of his justice? There are lines which I cannot read in creation. Those must have ears indeed who can hear the notes of mercy or of grace whispering in the evening gale. No, brethren, these parts of God's attributes are only revealed to us in this precious Book, and there they are so revealed that we cannot know them until the Spirit opens our eyes to perceive them. To know the inflexibility of Divine justice, and to see how God exacts

punishment for every jot and little of sin, and yet to know that that full-justice does not eclipse his equally full-mercy, but that the two move around each other, without for a single instant coming into contact, or conflict, or casting the slightest shadow on the other; to see how God is just and yet the justifier of the ungodly, and so to know God that my spirit loves his nature, appreciates his attributes, and desires to be like him—this is a knowledge which astronomy cannot teach, which all the researches of the sciences can never give to us. We must be taught God, if we ever learn of him—we must be taught God, by God the Holy Ghost. Oh that we may learn this lesson well, that we may be able to sing of his faithfulness, of his covenant love, of his immutability, of his boundless mercy, of his inflexible justice, that we may be able to talk to one another concerning that incomprehensible One, and may see him even as a man seeth his friend; and may come to walk with him as Enoch did all the days of our life I This, indeed, must be an education given to us by the Holy Ghost.

But not to tarry on these points, though they are prolific of thought, let us observe that the Holy Spirit specially teaches to us Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Ghost who manifests the Savior to us in the glory of his person; the complex character of his manhood and of his deity; it is he who tells us of the love of his heart, of the power of his arm, of the clearness of his eye, the preciousness of his blood, and of the prevalence of his plea. To know that Christ is my Redeemer, is to know more than Plato could have taught me. To know that I am a member of his body, of his flesh and of his bones; that my name is on his breast, and engraver on the palms of his hands, is to know more than the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge could teach to all their scholars, learn they never so well. Not at the feet of Gamaliel did Paul learn to say—"He loved me, and gave himself for me." Not in the midst of the Rabbis, or at the feet of the members of the Sanhedrim, did Paul learn to cry—"Those things which I counted gain, I now count loss for Christ's sake." "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." No, this must have been taught as he himself confesseth—"not of flesh and blood, but of the Holy Ghost."

I need only hint that it is also the Spirit who teaches us our adoption. Indeed, an the privileges of the new covenant, beginning from

regeneration, running through redemption, justification pardon, sanctification, adoption, preservation, continual safety, even unto an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—all is the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and especially that last point, for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." He leads us into the truth of joys to come, carries our spirit upwards, and gives us

"That inward calm within the breast,  
The surest pledge of glorious rest,  
Which for the Church of God remains,  
The end of cares, the end of pains."

II. And now I come to the second point, which was this—**THE METHODS BY WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES GOD'S CHILDREN THESE PRECIOUS THINGS.**

Here we must remark that we know nothing of the precise way of operation, because the Spirit is mysterious; we know not whence he cometh nor whither he goeth. But still let us describe what we can perceive. And first, in teaching God's people, one of the first things the Spirit does is to excite interest in their minds. I frequently find that when men are being educated for the ministry, the hardest thing is to set them going. They are like bats on the ground; if once a bat gets on the earth he cannot fly until he creeps to the top of a stone and gets a little above the earth, and then he gets wing and can fly well enough. So there are many who have not got their energies aroused, they have talent but it is asleep, and we want a kind of railway-whistle to blow in their ears to make them start up and rub away the film from their eyes so that they may see. Now it is just so with men, when the Spirit of God begins to teach them. He excites their interest in the things which he wishes them to learn he shows them that these things have a personal bearing upon their soul's present and eternal welfare. He so brings precious truth home, that what the man thought was utterly indifferent yesterday, he now begins to

esteem inestimably precious "Oh!" said he, "theology I of what use can it be to me?" But now the knowledge of Christ and him crucified has become to him the most desirable and excellent of all the sciences. The Holy Spirit awakens his interest.

That done, he gives to the man a teachable spirit. There be men who will not learn. They profess that they want to know, but you never found the right way of teaching them. Teach them by little and little, and they easy—"Do you think I am a child?" Tell them a great deal at once, and they say—"You have not the power to make me comprehend!" will I have been competed sometimes to say to a man, when I have been trying to make him understand, and he has said "I cannot understand you," "Well, sir, I am thankful it is not my duty to give you an understanding if you have none." Now, the Holy Spirit makes a man willing to learn in any shape. The disciple sits down at the feet of Christ; and let Christ speak as he may, and teach him as he will, whether with the rod, or with a smile, he is quite willing to learn. Distasteful the lessons are, but the regenerated pupil loves to learn best the very things he once hated. Cutting to his pride the doctrines of the gospel each one of them may be, but for this very reason he loves them; for he cries, "Lord, humble me; Lord, bring me down; teach me those things that will make me cover my head with dust and ashes; show me my nothingness; teach me my emptiness; reveal to me my filthiness." So that the Holy Spirit thus proceeds with his work awaking interest, and enkindling a teachable spirit. This done, the Holy Ghost in the next place sets truth in a clear light, How hard it is sometimes to state a fact which you perfectly understand yourself, in such a way that another man may see it. It is like the telescope; there are many persons who are disappointed with a telescope, because whenever they walk into an observatory and put their eye to the glass, expecting to see the rings of Saturn, and the belts of Jupiter, they have said, "I can see nothing at all; a piece of glass, and a grain or two of dust is all I can see!" "But," says the astronomer, when he comes, "I can see Saturn in all her glory." Why cannot you? Because the focus does not suit the stranger's eye. By a little skill, the focus can be altered so that the observer may be able to see what he could not see before. So is it with language; it is a sort of telescope by which I enable another to see my thoughts, but I cannot always give him the right focus. Now the Holy Spirit always gives the



right focus to every truth. He sheds a light so strong and forcible upon the Word, that the spirit says. "Now I see it, now I understand it." For even here, in this precious Book, there are words which I have looked at a hundred times, but I could not understand them, till at some favored hour, the key-word seemed as if it leaped up from the midst of the verse and said to me, "Look at the verse in my light," and at once I perceived—not always from a word in the verse itself, but sometimes in the context—I perceived the meaning which I could not see before. This, too, is a part of the Spirit's training—to steer a light upon truth. But the Spirit not only enlightens the truth, but he enlightens the understanding. 'Tis marvellous, too, how the Holy Ghost does teach men who seemed as if they never could learn. I would not wish to say anything which my brother might be grieved at; but I do know some brethren, I won't say they are here today, but they are not out of the place come brethren whose opinion I would not take in anything worldly on any account. If it were anything to do with pounds, shillings, and pence anything where human judgment was concerned, I should not consult them; but those men have a deeper, truer, and more experimental knowledge of the Word of God, than many who preach it, because the Holy Spirit never tried to teach them grammar, and never meant to teach them business never wanted to teach them astronomy, but he has taught them the Word of God, and they understand it. Other teachers have labored to beat the elements of science into them but without success, for they are as thick and addled in their brains as they can well be; but the Holy Spirit has taught them the Word of God, and they are clear enough there. I come in close contact with some young men. When we are taking our lessons for illustration out of the sciences, they seem to be all profound, and when I ask them a question to see if they have understood; they are lost; but, mark you, when we come to read a chapter out of some old Puritanic book—come to theology—those brethren give me the smartest and sharpest answers of the whole class. When we once come to deal with things experimental and controversial, I find those men are able to double up their opponents, and vanquish them at once, because they are deeply read in the Word of God. The Spirit has taught them the things of Christ, but he has not taught them anything else. I have perceived, also, that when the Spirit of God has enlarged the understanding to receive the Bible truth that understanding becomes more capable receiving other

truth. I heard, some time ago, from a brother minister, when we were comparing notes, the story of a man who had been the dullest creature that was known. He was not more than one grade above an idiot, but when he was converted to God, one of the first things he wanted to do, was to read the Bible. They had a long, long teak to teach him a verse, but he would learn it, he would master it. He stuck at it as hard as ever he could, till he was able to read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That man was by-and-bye asked to engage in prayer. At first he hardly put a sentence together. By-and-bye he arrived at a considerable degree of fluency, because he would do it. He would not stand still, he said, in the prayer-meeting, and not have a word to say for his Master. He began to read his Bible much, and to pray with a great deal of profit and acceptableness to those that heard, and after awhile, he actuary began to speak in the villages, and became sometime after an honored and acceptable pastor of one of our Baptist Churches. Had it not been for the Spirit of God first expanding the understanding to receive religious truth, that understanding might have been cramped, and fettered, and fast bolted to this very day, and the man might have been ever after an idiot, and so have gone down to his grave, while now he stands up to tell to sinners round, in burning language, the story of the cross of Christ. The Spirit teaches us by enlightening the understanding.

Lest I weary you, let me hurry on through the other points. He teaches us also by refreshing the memory. "He shall bring all things to your remembrance." He puts all those old treasures into the ark of our soul, and when the time comes, he opens it, and brings out these precious things in right good order, and shows them to us again and again. He refreshes the memory, and when this is done, he does better, he teaches us the Word, by making us feel its effect, and that, after all, is the best way of learning. You may try to teach a child the meaning of the term "sweetness;" but words will not avail, give him some honey and he will never forget it. You might seek to tell him of the glorious mountains, and the Alps, that pierce the clouds and send their snows peaks, like white-robed ambassadors up to the courts of heaven: take him there, let him see them, and he will never forget them. You might seek to paint to him the grandeur of the American continent, with its hills, and lakes, and rivers,

such as the world saw not before: let him go and view it, and he will know more of the land than he could know by all your teaching, when he sits at home. So the Holy Spirit does not only tell us of Christ's love; he sheds it abroad in the heart. He does not merely tell us of the sweetness of pardon; but he gives us a sense of no condemnation, and then we know all about it, better than we could have done by any teaching of words and thoughts. He takes us into the banqueting house and waves the banner of love over us. He bids us visit the garden of Gethsemane, and makes us lie among the lilies. He gives us that bundle of camphire, even our beloved, and bids us place it all night betwixt our breasts. He takes us to the cross of Christ, and he bids us put our finger into the print of the nails, and our hands into his side, and tells us not come "faithless, but believing," and so in the highest and most effectual manner he teacheth us to profit.

III. But now I shall come to my third point, although I feel so if I wished my subject were somewhat less comprehensive, but indeed it is a fault which does not often happen—to have too much rather than too little to speak of, except when we come upon a topic where God is to be glorified, and here indeed our tongue must be like the pen of a ready writer, when we speak of the things that we have made touching the king.

I am now to speak to you about the CHARACTERISTICS AND NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S TEACHING. And first I would remark that the Holy Ghost teaches sovereignty. He teaches whom he pleases. He takes the fool and makes him know the wonders of the dying love of Christ, to bring aspiring wisdom low and make the pride of man humble and abase itself. And as the Spirit teaches whom he wills, so he teaches when he wills. He has his own hours of instruction, and he will not be limited and bound by us. And then again he teaches as he wills—some by affliction, some by communion; some he teaches by the Word read, some by the Word spoken, some by neither, but directly by his own agency. And so also the Holy Spirit is a sovereign in that he teaches in whatever degree he pleases. He will make one man learn much, while another comprehends but little. Some Christians wear their beards early—they come to a rapid and high degree of maturity, and that on a sudden, while others creep but slowly to the goal, and are very long in reaching it. Some Christians in early years understand more than others whose hairs have

turned grey. The Holy Ghost is a sovereign. He do not have all his pupils in one class, and them all the same lesson by simultaneous instruction; but each man is in a separate class, each man learning a separate lesson. Some beginning at the end of the book, some at the beginning, and some in the middle—some learning one doctrine and some another, some going backwards and some forwards. The Holy Spirit teacheth sovereignly, and giveth to every man according as he wills, but then, wherever he teaches at all, he teaches effectually. He never failed to make us learn yet. No scholar was ever turned out of the Spirit's school incorrigible. He teaches all his children, not some of them—"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children,"—the last sentence being a proof that they have been effectually taught. Never once did the Spirit bring home the truth to the heart and yet that heart fail to receive it. He hath modes of touching the secret springs of life, and putting the truth into the very core of the being. He casts his healing mixtures into the fountain itself, and not into the streams. We instruct the ear, and the ear is far removed from the heart; he teaches the heart itself, and therefore his every word falleth upon good soil, and bringeth forth good and abundant fruit—he teaches effectually. Dear brother, do you feel yourself to be a great fool sometimes? Your great Schoolmaster will make a good scholar of you yet. He will so teach you, that you shall be able to enter the kingdom of heaven knowing as much as the brightest saints. Teaching thus sovereignly and effectually, I may add, he teaches infallibly. We teach you errors through want of caution, sometimes through over zeal, and again through the weakness of our own mind. In the greatest preacher or teacher that ever lived there was some degree of error, and hence our hearers should always bring what we say to the law and the testimony; but the Holy Ghost never teaches error, if thou hast learned anything by the Spirit of God, it is pure, unadulterated, undiluted truth. Put thyself daily under his teaching, and thou shalt never learn a word amiss, nor a thought awry, but become infallibly taught, well taught in the whole truth as it is in Jesus.

Further, where the Spirit thus teaches infallibly he teaches continually. Whom once he teaches, he never leaves till he has completed their education. On, and on, and on, however dull the scholar, however frail the memory, however vitiated the mind, he still continues with his

gracious work, till he has trained us up and made us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Nor does he leave us till he has taught us completely; for as our text says, "He shall teach you all things." There is not a truth so high that it shall not yet be mastered, nor a doctrine so hard that it shall not yet be received. High up, high up, tower the heights of the hill of knowledge, but there, when there, thy feet shall stand. Weary may be the way and weak thy knees, but up thither thou shalt climb, and one day with thy forehead bathed in the sunlight of heaven, thy soul shall stand and look down on tempests, mists, and all earth's clouds and smoke, and see the Master face to face, and be like him, and know him as he is. This is the joy of the Christian, that he shall be completely taught, and that the Holy Spirit will never give him up till; he has taught him all truth.

I fear, however, that this morning I weary you. Such a theme as this will not be likely to be suitable to all minds. As I have already said, the spiritual mind alone receiveth spiritual things, and the doctrine of the Spirit's agency will never be very interesting to those who are entire strangers to it. I could not make another man understand the force of an electric shock unless he has felt it. It would not be likely at all that he would believe in those secret energies which move the world, unless he had some means of testing for himself. And those of you that never felt the Spirit's energy, are as much strangers to it as a stone would be. You are out of your element when you hear of the Spirit. You know nothing of his divine power; you have never been taught of him, and therefore how should you be careful to know what truths he teaches?

I close, therefore, with this sorrowful reflection. Alas, alas, a thousand times alas, that there should be so many who know not their danger, who feel not their load, and in whose heart the light of the Holy Ghost hath never shone! Is it your case my dear hearer, this morning? I do not ask you whether you have been ever educated in the school of learning; that you may be, and you may have taken your degree and been first-class in honors, but you may still be as the wild ass's colt that knows nothing about these things. Religion, and the truth of it, is not to be learnt by the head. Years of reading, hours of assiduous study, will never make a man a Christian. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."

Oh! art thou destitute of the Spirit of the living God? For oh! I charge thee to remember this my hearer: if in thy soul mysterious and supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit has never been shed abroad, thou art an utter stranger to all the things of God. The promises are not thine; heaven is not thine, thou art on thy road to the land of the dead, to the region of the corpse, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Oh that the Spirit of God may rest upon you now! Bethink you, you are absolutely dependent upon his influence. You are in God's hand today to be saved or to be lost—not in your own hands, but in his. You are dead in sins; unless he quickens you, you must remain so. The moth beneath your finger is not more absolutely at your mercy than you are now at the mercy of God. Let him but will to leave you as you are, and you are lost; but oh! if mercy speaks and says, "Let that man live," you are saved. I would that you could feel the weight of this tremendous doctrine of sovereignty. It is like the hammer of Thor, it may shake your heart however stout it be, and make your rocky soul tremble to its base.

"Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown,  
Hang on his firm decree."

Your destiny hangs there now; and will you rebel against the God in whose hand your sours eternal fate now rests? Will you lift the puny hand of your rebellion against him who alone can quicken you—without whose gracious energy you are dead, and must be destroyed? Will you go this day and sin against light and against knowledge? Will you go to day and reject mercy which is proclaimed to you in Christ Jesus? If so, no fool was ever so mad as you are, to reject him without whom you are dead, and lost, and ruined. O that instead thereof there may be the sweet whisper of the Spirit saying, "Obey the divine command, believe on Christ and live!" Hear thou the voice of Jehovah, who cries, "This is the commandment, that ye believe in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent?" Thus obedient, God saith within himself, "I have set my love upon him, therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high because he hath known my name;" and you shall yet live to sing in heaven of that sovereignty which, when your soul trembled in the balances, decided for your salvation, and gave you light and joy unspeakable. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on Calvary's cross, "and whosoever believeth on him shall be saved." "Unto you

therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." Believe that record truer cast down your weapons; yield to the sovereignty of the Holy Ghost; and he shall assuredly prove to you that, in that very yielding, there was a proof that he had loved you; for he made you yield; he made you willing to bow before him in the day of his power. May the Holy Spirit now rest on the word I have spoken, for Jesu's sake!

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## **The Tender Mercy Of Our God**

To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace. - Luke 1:77-79

Observe how Zacharias, in this his joyful song, extolled the remission of sins, as one of the most extraordinary proofs of the tender mercy of our God. He had been dumb for a season, as a chastisement for his unbelief; and therefore he used his recovered speech to sing of pardoning mercy. No salvation is possible without forgiveness, and so Zacharias says, "To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins." The Lord could not forgive them on the ground of justice, and therefore he did so because of his tender mercy—the tender mercy of our God, who has made himself "our God" by the covenant of grace. He passes by the transgression of his people because he delighteth in mercy. At the very outset, I want any soul here that is burdened with sin to believe in the forgiveness of sins, and to believe in it because God is love, and has a great tenderness towards the work of his hands. He is so pitiful that he loves not to condemn the guilty, but looks with anxious care upon them to see how he can turn away his wrath and restore them to favor.

For this reason alone there is remission of sins. Forgiveness comes not to us through any merit of ours, present or foreseen; but only through the tender mercy of our God, and the marvellous visit of love which came of it. If he be gracious enough to forgive our sins, it can be done; for every arrangement is already made to accomplish it. The Lord is gracious enough for this—for anything. Behold him in Christ Jesus, and there we see him as full of compassion. We sang just now, and sang most truly -

"His heart is made of tenderness,  
His bowels melt with love."

The main point of this morning's sermon will be to bring out into prominence those few words, "*the tender mercy of our God.*" To me they gleam with kindly light: I see in them a soft radiance, as of those matchless pearls whereof the gates of heaven are made. There is an exceeding melody to my ear as well as to my heart in that word "tender." "Mercy" is music, and "tender mercy" is the most exquisite form of it, especially to a broken heart. To one who is despondent and despairing, this word is life from the dead. A great sinner, much bruised by the lashes of conscience, will bend his ear this way, and cry, "Let me hear again the dulcet sound of these words, *tender mercy.*" If you think of this tenderness in connection with God, it will strike you with wonder, for an instant, that one so great should be so tender; for we are apt to impute to Omnipotence a crushing energy, which can scarcely take account of little, and feeble, and suffering things. Yet if we think again, the surprise will disappear, and we shall see, with a new wonder of admiration, that it must be so. He that is truly great among men is tender because he is great in heart as well as in brain and hand. The truly great spirit is always gentle; and because God is so infinitely great, he is, therefore, tender. We read of his gentleness and of his tenderness towards the children of men; and we see them displayed to their full in the gospel of our salvation. Very conspicuous is this "tender mercy of our God."

Now, the original word is, "The mercy of the heart of our God." The evangelists, though they wrote in Greek, carried with them into that language the idioms of the Hebrew tongue; so that they do not use an adjective, as it would seem from our translation—"tender mercy;" but



they say, mercy of the bowels, or of the inwards, or of the heart of God. "The mercy of the heart of God" is to be seen in the remission of sin, and in the visitation of his love when he comes to us as "the dayspring from on high." Great is the tenderness of divine mercy.

But I call your attention to the original reading because it seems to me not only to mean tenderness, but much more. The mercy of the heart of God is, of course, the mercy of his great tenderness, the mercy of his infinite gentleness and consideration; but other thoughts also come forth from the expression, like bees from a hive. It means the mercy of God's very soul. The heart is the seat and center of life, and mercy is to God as his own life. "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God." God is love: not only is he loving, but he is love itself. Mercy is of the divine essence: there is no God apart from his heart, and mercy lies in the heart of God. He has bound up his mercy with his existence: as surely as God lives, he will grant remission of sins to those who turn unto him.

Nor is this all—the mercy of God's heart means his hearty mercy, his cordial delight in mercy. Remission of sins is a business into which the Lord throws his heart. He forgives with an intensity of will, and readiness of soul. God made heaven and earth with his fingers, but he gave his Son with his heart in order that he might save sinners. The Eternal God has thrown his whole soul into the business of redeeming men. If you desire to see God most Godlike, it is in the pardon of sin, and the saving of men. If you desire to read the character of God written out in capital letters, you must study the visitation of his love in the person of his dear Son, and all the wonderful works of infinite grace which spring therefrom. It is a grand sight to behold God in earnest when he says, "Now will I arise." With awe we watch him as he lays bare his arm: but this full energy of power is best seen when his work is grace. When he stirs up his strength to come and save us, and brings the essence of his being into intense action to bless us, we are favored indeed. It is this watching to do us good, this eagerness to bless us, which is meant by the mercy of his heart. It is not only tenderness, but intensity, heartiness, eagerness, delight, and concentration of power. All this is to be seen in the dealing of God with guilty men when he visits them to grant them the remission of their sins.

Just as the leader of our psalmody sometimes sounds his tuning-fork at the commencement of our song, so have I done in these opening remarks. "Tender mercy" is the key-note of my discourse, I want you to keep it still in your ears. Whatever else of melody there may come from the text, yet this is to be the chief note: the tender, hearty, intense mercy of God, which he has shown to us.

I. In the first place, I invite you to observe that he shows this tender mercy in that HE DEIGNS TO VISIT US. "Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high *hath visited us.*"

Observe that God has not merely pitied us from a distance, and sent us relief by way of the ladder which Jacob saw, but he hath himself *visited us*. It needs no studied language to preach from this text, the expressions themselves are full of holy thought. A *visit* from God, what must it be! "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" A visit from the Queen would be remembered by most of you all your lives: you would feel yourselves half ennobled. But a visit from God, what shall I say of it?—that he should stoop to leave his high abode, and the majesty wherein he reigns, to visit insignificant beings like ourselves? This Bible is a letter from him, and we prize it beyond the finest gold; but an actual visit from God himself, what shall we say of such a favor?

In what ways has the Lord shown his tender mercy in deigning to visit us?

I answer, first, God's great visit to us is *the incarnation of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. Many visits of God to men had been paid before that—read your Bibles, and see; but the most wonderful visit of all was when he came to tarry here, some thirty years and more, to work out our salvation. What but "tender mercy," hearty mercy, intense mercy, could bring the great God to visit us so closely that he actually assumed our nature? Kings may visit their subjects, but they do not think of taking upon themselves their poverty, sickness, or sorrow: they could not if they would, and would not if they could; this were more than we could expect from them. But our divine Lord, when he came hither, came into our

flesh. He veiled his Godhead in a robe of our inferior clay. O children! the Lord so visited you as to become a babe, and then a child, who dwelt with his parents, and was subject unto them, and grew in stature, as you must do. O working men! the Lord so visited you as to become the carpenter's son, and to know all about your toil, and your weariness, ay, even to hunger and faintness. O sons of men! Jesus Christ has visited you so as to be tempted in all points like as you are, though without sin. He really assumed our nature, and thus paid to us a very close visit. He took our sickness, and bare our infirmities. This was a kind of visit such as none could have thought of granting save the infinitely tender and merciful God. The man is our next kinsman, a brother born for adversity; in all our affliction he is afflicted; he is tenderness itself.

Remember that he not only took our nature, but he dwelt among us in this world of sin and sorrow. This great Prince entered our abode—what if I call it this hut and hovel?—wherein our poor humanity finds its home for a season. This little planet of ours was made to burn with a superior light among its sister stars while the Creator sojourned here in human form. He trod the acres of Samaria, and traversed the hills of Judea. "He went about doing good." He mingled among men with scarcely any reservation; being through his purity separate from sinners as to his character, yet he was the visitor of all men. He was found eating bread with a Pharisee, which perhaps is a more wonderful thing than when he received sinners, and ate with them. A fallen woman was not too far gone for him to sit on the kerb of the well, and talk to her; nor were any of the poor and ignorant too mean for him to care for them. He was bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and his visit to us was therefore of the most intimate kind. He disdained no man's lowliness; he turned aside from no man's sin.

But remember that he visited us not merely to look upon us, and to talk with us, and to teach us, and set us a high and divine example, which, as I have said, were incomparably gracious, if it went no further; but he so visited us that he went down into our condemnation, that he might deliver us from it. He was made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." He took our debts upon him that he might pay them, minting his own heart to create the coinage. He gave

himself for us, which is more than if I said, "he gave his blood and his life;" his own self he gave. So did he visit us that he took away with him our ill, and left all good behind. He did not come into our nature, and yet keep himself reserved from all the consequences of our sin; nor come into our world, and yet maintain a status superior to the usual denizens of it; but he came to be a man among men, and to bear all that train of woes which had fallen upon human nature through its departure from the ways of God. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, because the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. Our Lord so visited us as to become our surety and our ransom. This was a wonderful piece of tender mercy indeed. I feel at this moment as if I could not talk about it, for it excels all conception and speech. Even if I were not full of pain, the subject would master me. If for the first time you had heard of the visit of the Incarnate God to this world, you would be struck with a wonder which would last throughout all eternity, that God himself should really condescend to such a deed as this. This is the heart of the gospel—the incomparable fact of the incarnation of the Son of God, his dwelling upon the earth, and his presentation of himself as a sacrifice unto God. You need no flourish of words; do but hear the bare statement of the fact, and leap for joy because of it. Since God has visited us, not in form of vengeance, nor as a cherub with a flaming sword, but in the gentle person of that lowliest of the lowly, who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me," we are herein made to see the tender mercy of our God. Nothing could be more tender than the divine appearance of the Man of Sorrows.

But I do not think we ought to insist upon this as the only visit of God's tender mercy, since the text is in the Revised Version rendered in the future: "The tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us." To this day we are visited of God in other respects, but with equal mercy. *The proclamation of the gospel* in a nation, or to any individual, is a visit of God's mercy. Whenever you come and hear the gospel, be you sure of this, whether you receive it or not, the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you. Even if you stop your ears, and will have none of it, yet God has visited you in tender mercy, in that by the gospel he tells you that there is a way of salvation, that there is a plan for the remission of sin. It is a monstrosity—what if I say a miracle?—of iniquity, that men having sinned, and God having done so much to work out a way

of remission of those sins, men should refuse to accept God's pardoning love. Oh, my hearers, Why are you so besotted? Wherefore do you hate your own souls? Surely, the devils themselves would at the first have scarce believed it, that there could exist a race of creatures so hardened as to refuse the love which visits them in grace. This is what devils never did. Men sin not only against God, but against their own interest, when they turn aside from the wooings of disinterested goodness, and refuse salvation through him who loved us even to the death. That which God has so tenderly and heartily wrought out in the gift of his dear Son to die for us ought to be received with eagerness. Will not *you* receive it? My dear hearers, you shall not go out of this place this morning without knowing that God in great tender mercy hath visited you by the blessed fact of your having heard the good tidings of free grace. Jesus seeks you, will you not seek him?

But, blessed be his name, he has visited some of us in a more remarkable manner still, for *by the Holy Spirit he has entered into our hearts*, and changed the current of our lives. He has turned our affections towards that which is right by enlightening our judgments. He has led us to the confession of sin, he has brought us to the acceptance of his mercy through the atoning blood; and so he has truly saved us. What a visit is this! This visit of the Holy Ghost, when he comes to dwell in us, is surpassingly condescending. I have often said that I never know which to admire most, the incarnation of the Son of God, or the indwelling of the Spirit of God. This last is a wonderful condescension, for the Holy Ghost does not take a pure body of his own, but he makes our bodies to be his temples; he dwells not only in one of these, but in tens of thousands; and that not only by the space of thirty years, but throughout the whole life of the believer. He dwelleth in us notwithstanding all our provocations and rebellions. Mark the word, not only with us, but *in* us, and that evermore. Oh, this tender mercy! Who can describe it? Sweet Spirit, gentle Spirit, how canst thou abide with me? O heavenly Dove, how canst thou find rest in such a soul as mine? Yet without thee we are undone, and therefore we adore the tender mercy which makes thee bear with us so long, and work in us so graciously till thou hast conformed us to the image of the Firstborn. We are melted by the love of the Spirit—the communion of the Holy Spirit, by which the Lord hath visited us.

Often and often, since our first visitation by the Lord, I trust *we have had special visits from him*, bringing with them rapturous joys, singular deliverances, and countless blessings. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." The Lord has visited us in the night: he has drawn nigh unto our spirit, and so he has preserved us. We have enjoyed near and dear communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Have we not? This hath often happened when we have been in great trouble. When we were depressed in spirit, when we were burdened with unusual cares, or weeping over heart-breaking bereavements, the mercy of our God has made the dayspring from on high to visit us at just such times; and therein we have seen his tenderness. Our life is bright with these visits as the sky with stars. I cannot enlarge upon this charming theme, but I leave it to your thoughts, O you whose experience will be the best sermon on the text! The visits of God to his own children are proofs of the heartiness, the intensity, the tenderness of his mercy. Talk of it, ye who have had most enjoyment of such visits!

II. I call your attention now to a second point. There is so much sea-room here that one scarce knows which way to steer. Secondly, he shows his tender mercy in that HE VISITS US AS THE DAYSPRING FROM ON HIGH. This means the dawning in the east, the rising of the sun at break of day. He does not come to us in Christ, or by his Spirit, as a tempest, as when he came from Paran, with ten thousand of his holy ones, in all the pomp of his fiery law; but he has visited us as smiling morn, which in gentle glory floods the world with joy.

While this gospel visitation is thus apparently less in splendor than that of the law, yet it is not deficient in efficacy or in true glory. God has not visited us as a candle, which might suffice to cheer our darkness but could not change it into day. David rejoiced, saying, "The Lord will light my candle;" but in this we go far beyond him: we need no candle, for the Lord has visited us with the day-dawn.

He has come, moreover, not as a blaze which will soon die down, but as a light which will last our day, yea, last for ever. After the long dark and

cold night of our misery, the Lord cometh in the fittest and most effectual manner; neither as lightning, nor candle, nor flaming meteor, but as the sun which begins the day.

The visitation of the Lord to us is as the dayspring, because *it suits our eye*. Observe how the eye is suited to the light, and the light to the eye, in the economy of nature; and it is even so in the realm of grace. Day, when it first breaks in the east, has not the blaze of burning noon about it; but it peeps forth as a grey light, which gradually increases to the perfect day. So did the Lord Jesus Christ come: dimly as it were, at first, at Bethlehem, but by-and-by he will appear in all the glory of the Father. So doth the Spirit of God come to us in gradual progress. There is sweet suitableness in the grace of God to the heart, and in the renewed heart to the grace of God. He hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. The revelation of God to each individual is made in form and manner tenderly agreeable to the condition and capacity of the favored one. I sometimes think the gospel was made exactly to meet my case. Do you not think the same of it yourselves? The morning light suits your eye as exactly as if there were no other creature to behold it; and so in divine tenderness the Lord has made his visits suitable to our sorrow, and even to our weakness. He shows us just so much of himself as to delight us without utterly overwhelming us with the excess of brightness. He might have come in the majesty of his grace to us at the first, as he does to us afterwards; but then we were not able to bear it, and so he forbore. We are now more ready to sup with him upon strong meat, and so he puts us upon men's fare; whereas before he gave us milk, which is more convenient for babes. All the visits of God to us are merciful, but in those of the dawn of grace we see tenderness as well as mercy.

The visits of God are like the dayspring, because they *end our darkness*. The dayspring banishes the night. Without noise or effort, it removes the ebon blackness, and sows the earth with orient pearl. Night stretches her bat's wings, and is gone: she flies before the arrows of the advancing sun; and the coming of Jesus to us, when he does really come into our hearts, takes away the darkness of ignorance, sorrow, carelessness, fear, and despair. Our night is ended once for all when we behold God visiting us in Christ Jesus. Our day may cloud over, but night will not return. O, you

that are in the blackest midnight, if you can but get a view of Christ, morning will have come to you! There is no light for you elsewhere, believe us in this; but if Jesus be seen by faith, you shall need no candles of human confidence, nor sparks of feelings and impressions: the beholding of Christ shall be the ending of all night for you. "They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed."

I like to think of Christ as coming into the world as the morning light, because he comes *with such a largeness of present blessing*—blessing immeasurable, unlimited. Some are always for measuring out Christ: they can never do without estimates of how much, and how far. Truly our Lord comes to save his elect, that I do verily believe; but hence certain friends would allot so many beams of light to so many eyes, and limit the light by the number of those who rejoice in it. Not so, beloved, Jesus is the light of the world; he comes from on high to shed light over the whole universe, even as the sun goeth forth from one end of heaven to the other, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. He appears as the light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world: there is no other light. Whosoever is willing to receive that light is free to do so: yea, he shines on blind eyes. This light comes even to those who hate it, and thus they are left without excuse: "the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not," and "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." When the Lord comes to men, his blessings are infinite. You might as well take your three feet rule, and begin to measure the length and breadth of the sunlight as measure the length and breadth of the tender mercy of our God in the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When the Lord visits us, it is as the dayspring, because *he brings us hope of greater glory yet to come*. The first coming of Christ has not at once manifested everything; the dayspring is not the noon; but it is the sure guarantee of it; and so is the First Advent the pledge of the glory to be revealed. The sun never rises in error to set upon a sudden: he rises to complete his course, as the strong man cometh out of his chamber to fulfill his race. When we receive a visit from the Lord, it may be in the way of rebuke, or of feeble hope; but let us be patient, for the dawn shall grow with constant increase of light, and there is no fear of its dying down



into the old sinful darkness. "Sacred, high, eternal noon" is the destiny of all those whose eyes have beheld the Christ, so as to rejoice in his light.

Now all this seems to me to be a wonderful instance of the tenderness of divine mercy. Think you not so? This coming of the Lord, and of his light, so gradually, and yet so lavishly; so fittingly, and yet so effectually; does it not fill you with gratitude? Every little bird rejoices in the rising of the sun: God has made that great orb to rise so graciously that not even a sparrow trembles at it, but chirps with confidence its happy praises. Not even a little flower trembles because the great sun is about to flood the heavens, but God hath so made the sun to rise that every tiny cup of every flower that blooms opens to drink in the golden light, and is refreshed thereby. The coming of Christ is just such to us, even to the least and feeblest of us. It is not a stupendous blessing, crushing us by its enormous weight; it is not a mysterious revelation, confounding us by its profundity; but it is simplicity itself, gentleness itself; none the less, but all the more grand and sublime because it is so simple and so tender. Let us bless God this morning, then, that he visits us, and that when he visits us, it is as the dayspring from on high.

III. Thirdly, there is another instance of great tenderness in this, in that THE LORD VISITS US IN OUR VERY LOWEST ESTATE. Permit me to read the text to you—"To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins," from which it appears that *God comes to visit us when we are in our sins*. If the plan of salvation were that we were to get out of our sins, and then God would come to us, it might be full of mercy, but it would not be tender mercy. Let it never be forgotten that "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I feel always at home when I get upon this blessed topic of the visits of God to undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinners. His saving visits spring from grace, pure grace, altogether unmixed with any merit or claim on our part. God comes to us as the morning, which does not wait for man, nor tarry for the sons of men. I cannot bear the spirit which I see spreading among us in reference to almsgiving. It should not be indiscriminate, but it should be bounteous. Many cry, "We shall give help only to the deserving." If God

were to adopt that rule, where would you and I be? It has even been muttered in an undertone that, with regard to hospitals, no doubt they are used by persons who ought to provide for themselves, and so help to support struggling medical men. It may be so; but I like not the hard and niggardly spirit which suggests such criticisms. Talk not so; this is fit chatter for barbarians. Those who know the tender mercy of God will recollect that, when we ourselves had no good about us whatsoever, his tender mercy visited us, even as the sun ariseth upon the just and upon the unjust. He giveth with gladness to those who have no deservings of any kind. He will not mar the magnificence of his goodness by asking our pitiful pence of merit as a payment for it; but he giveth freely, according to the riches of his grace. As he makes his rain to water the fields of the miser and of the churl, as well as those of the kind and the generous, so doth he give his bounty to the worst of men. Let us learn this, and imitate it, for thus we shall know the tender mercy of God. To copy the divine example will be the surest method of coming to an understanding of it.

Furthermore, *our God visits us when we are in darkness*; when we are in such darkness as to know nothing, see nothing, believe nothing, hope nothing; even then the Lord's mercy comes to us. Is not this tenderness? "Educate a man up to a certain point," says one, "and then we may hope that God's grace will visit him." Educate him by all means, but have hope that God may visit even those who have no education of any sort. "Follow the advance of civilization," cries one, "and do not risk your missionaries among barbarians." Not so; our marching orders are, "Preach the gospel to every creature." The gospel is to precede and produce civilization. To them that sit in darkness, the Lord is pleased to send the dayspring from on high. To send light where there is light is superfluous. Have we not a proverb about sending coals to Newcastle? God sendeth not grace to us because we have already something which may be viewed as prevenient and preparatory; but the prevenient and the preparatory are of his grace, and he comes in love to bring these with him, to those who as yet know nothing of his light and life. They are in the dark, and he creates their day.

Did you notice that it is said "to those that *sit* in darkness?" This is more than being in the dark. The man who *sits* in darkness does so because he

feels that his case is hopeless, and therefore he forbears all further action. A poor benighted traveler has wandered this way and that to find a track, but it is so dark that he cannot perceive his road; and so at last he embraces the rock for want of a shelter, crouching to the earth in despair. It is a part of the tender mercy of our God that he visits those who despond and are motionless in a dread inactivity. Those who have lost hope are lost indeed, and such the Savior has come to save.

Then it is added, "*and in the shadow of death.*" Did you ever feel that shadow? It has a horrible influence. Chill and cold, it freezes the marrow of the bones, and stops the genial current of life in the veins. Death stands over the man, and if his hand does not smite, yet his shadow darkens joy, and chills hope, benumbing the heart, and making life itself a mode of death. The shadow of death is confusion of mind, depression of spirit, dread of the unknown, horror at the past, and terror of the future. Are any of you at this time bowing down under the shadow of death? Has hell gaped wide, and opened her jaws for you? Have you in your despair made a league with death, and a covenant with hell? Thus saith the Lord, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand;" for the Lord has come forth, and visited you in the person of his dear Son to deliver the captive, and save those who are appointed unto death. Knowing your guilt, the Lord visits you this morning, and bids you look up. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Look and live; look, and be delivered at once, even from the horrible deathshadow which now broods over you. I do delight to think of this tender mercy of God to those who are lost. There are lost that shall be found, and last that shall be first. You seem forgotten of God, left out of the register of hope, but yet to you has Jesus come—"to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." Is not this *tender* mercy? If he had not come to shine on such I should never have been saved. A gospel for the cheerful would never have met my case; I wanted a gospel for the despairing. I know some here who must have perished if the gospel had only been suitable to those who are of good character, and have the beginnings of natural religion within them. Only a sinner's Savior would have suited some of you, or, indeed, any of us. As the good Samaritan did to the wounded man, "he came where he was," so did Jesus come to us in our ruin. The benefactor of the wounded did not

stand and say to him, "Come here, and get on my beast, and he shall carry you to the inn." But he went to him when he was lying half dead, and therefore helpless; and he poured the oil and wine into his wounds while the poor wretch could not move an inch, nor stir hand or foot. He bound up his wounds, and then set him on his own beast, and took him to the inn. This is tender mercy; and in this fashion Jesus deals with us. He does everything for us from the very beginning. He is Alpha, even as he must be Omega. Does not this show the tender mercy of our God, that he does come to us in the darkness, and under the grim shadow of death, and there and then reveals his love to us?

IV. Both time and strength fail me, so now I must finish with a fourth reflection from the text—Our God shows his tender mercy in that HE VISITS US WITH SUCH WONDERFUL AND JOYFUL RESULTS—"to give light to them that sit in darkness, to guide our feet into the way of peace." One sketch must suffice. Help me as I make an outline. Imagine a caravan in the desert, which has long lost its way, and is famishing. The sun has long gone down, and the darkness has caused every one's heart to droop. All around them is a waste of sand, and an Egyptian darkness. There they must remain and die unless they can find the track. They feel themselves to be in a fearful case, for, hungry and thirsty, their soul fainteth in them. They cannot even sleep for fear. Heavier and heavier the night comes down, and the damps are on the tents chilling the souls of the travelers. What is to be done? How they watch! Alas, no star comforts them! At last the watchmen cry, "The morning cometh." It breaks over the sea of sand, and, what is better, it reveals a heap which had been set up as a way-mark, and the travelers have found the track. The dayspring has saved them from swift destruction by discovering the way of peace.

Our point is this, that when the Lord Jesus Christ visits us, he actually brings light to our darkness; really leads into the way, and makes that way a way of peace to us. Put all together, and remember what the Lord has done for you. You did not know the way once, and all the preaching in the world would not have made you know it, if Jesus had not by his Spirit visited you as the dayspring. When you did know the way, you could not reach it of yourself: you saw it as from a distance, and could not enter upon it, but when Jesus came near, he actually guided your feet into that

way. He put your feet upon a rock, and established your goings. That way, good as it was, would have been to you a way of doubt, and fear, and hesitation, if the Lord had not so sweetly shone upon you that your road became a way of perfect peace. Peace in our text means prosperity, plenty, rest, joy. I ask you, friends, whether you have not found it so. Since the Lord has visited you, have you not gone forth with joy, and been led forth with peace?

Well, now, the conclusion of all this is a practical matter. If the tender mercy of God has visited us, and done so much more for us than I can tell, or than you can hear, let us ourselves exhibit tender mercy in our dealings with our fellow-men. It is a wretched business for a man to call himself a Christian, and have a soul which never peeps out from between his own ribs. It is horrible to be living to be saved, living to get to heaven, living to enjoy religion, and yet never to live to bless others, and ease the misery of a moaning world. Do you not know that it is all nonsense to regard religion as a selfish spiritual trade by which we save our own souls? It is useless to hope for peace till you know how to love. Whence come wars and fightings but from a want of love? Unless your religion tears you away from yourself, and makes you live for something nobler than even your own spiritual good, you have not passed out of the darkness into the light of God. Only the way of unselfishness is the way of peace. I ask you, therefore, today to think very tenderly of all poor people. These are hard times; let those who have more than they actually want be ready always to relieve distress, which is very urgent just now.

The call this morning is for liberal help to our hospitals. These are called in France "houses of God;" truly they are Godlike in their design. There is not a man here but may be in a hospital to-morrow. Do you reply that you are a wealthy man? Yet you may be run over in the street, or fall in a fit, and the hospital's door is open to you. It is not merely for the beggar, but for the noble, that this is a refuge. Many a time men of immense wealth have had to be carried to the hospital from injury inflicted by fire or water, accident, or sudden sickness. I appeal to your selfishness, and to your honor: pay your proportion towards a common protection.

But I appeal to you on higher grounds. I forget just now how many

thousands of cases of accident have gone into the hospital during the past year, but it is very surprising. They never ask who they are, or where they come from, but receive all the wounded. Every great accident involves a huge expense upon the hospital which is near the spot. This is not sufficiently thought of, or there would be special contributions on each sad occasion. Few consider how these noble institutions are supported. "Oh, the rich people give to them!" Alas, the rich people often forget them! "Oh, but these general collections will do the work!" No such thing! It is such a pitiful contribution which usually makes up a collection that the hospitals are little aided thereby. These institutions are left to run into debt, or spend their capital, or keep their beds empty. I could not too strongly put the case of hospitals just now. I have half wished that the Government would undertake them, only I am not sure that they would be so well conducted in that case as when they are left to private management by hearts that feel for men. Something must be done. We must give a great deal more; the collections ought to be at least twice as much in all our churches and chapels as they have ever been. If you were present when a man was run over, and you heard his bone break, you would put your hand into your pocket, or do anything else in your power to help him. I wish I could make you feel in the presence of such a calamity for a minute, so as to touch your hearts and your hands. Diseases are always abroad, and driving thousands to seek hospital help. I would like to take you down a ward, and cause you to listen to the stories told from half-a-dozen beds. What sickness! What poverty caused by sickness! What pains poor bodies are capable of enduring! Oh, come, let us help them! Let us give to the support of those who nurse them, and for the help of those who exercise their best skill for their relief. Who can withhold? By the tender mercy of our God, I charge you to give freely to this excellent cause. As the box goes round, remember that this is not the time for threepenny-pieces. You who are wealthy must write cheques or give notes, and you may send them to our treasurer if you prefer it. All must be generous for the sake of that tender mercy which is the dayspring of our hope and life.

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## The Tenses

Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us. - 2 Corinthians 1:10

When children are learning their grammar, they have to pay particular attention to the tenses of the verbs; and it is important for Christians also to remember their tenses,—to recollect the past, the present, and the future. Our text brings all three very vividly before us, and reminds us that God hath delivered, doth deliver, and will yet deliver.

First, let us think for a little while concerning the past. How old art thou, my friend? How many of thy years hast thou employed profitably, and how many hast thou allowed to run to waste? For how many years hast thou wrought the will of the flesh, and been a servant of sin and Satan? How long hast thou been born again? What is thine age spiritually? Take down the record of thy life, and examine it, from the days of thy childhood, through youth and early manhood, up till now. It is a book which should do us good to read; in some respects, all its pages may make us weep; and yet, viewed in another light, many of them may give us cause to sing. This is the one book in the library that many people do not like to take down and read, for there are so many blots in it, and so many humbling records; yet "God requireth that which is past," and it is a token of wisdom for a man to talk with his past years, and to learn from them the many lessons they are able to teach. All the days we have lived will go before us to the judgment seat, and each one will bear its record, and leave it there; so let us not be oblivious of that which God remembers, but let us recollect it that we may be penitent for all that has been wrong in it, and that we may be grateful for all that has been right.

Next, think about the second part of life, namely, the time present; and here let me urge upon you, dear friends, the importance of valuing the present. In fact, time present is the only time that you have. The past has gone, and you cannot recall it; the future will never really be yours, for, when it comes, it will be present, too. It is only in the present that we live; so that, if we waste these precious hours that are with us now, we waste

all that we have. If we serve not God to-day, when will we serve him? To-morrow? Nay, for when that opportunity comes, "to-morrow" will have been changed into "to-day." Let us endeavor, as God shall help us, even to watch our moments so as not to waste one of them. It is a good thing to have our life divided up into short periods. The other day, I saw John Wesley's diary, or rather, horary, for it had in it not merely an entry for every day, but for every distinct occupation for every twenty minutes. The good man made his days to have many hours in them, and his hours seemed to have more minutes in them than most men's hours have, because he did not waste any of them, but diligently used them all in his Master's service. God help us all to do the same by paying great attention to the present portion of our life!

As for the future, there is an idle curiosity which prompts men to try to live in it; that we must renounce. But there is a gracious expectation which enables us to live in it, a holy anxiety which prompts us to prepare for it. It is greatly wise for us to talk with those years that are to come if we talk with them in view of their end. I would have you familiar with your graves, for you will soon be in them; and more familiar still with your resurrection dwelling-place, remembering that God "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Let us often project ourselves beyond the present into the future; to gather strength from the future, is frequently the best way to deal with the present. You will be able more easily to bear your present burdens when you think how short is the time in which you will have to carry them. Your "light affliction, which is but for a moment," will seem scarcely like a feather's weight to you when you anticipate the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which God hath prepared for you.

I recommend to you, therefore, this rule of three, and advise you always to consider the past, the present, and the future; and just now I invite you to do so in connection with the delivering mercy of God. He hath delivered us; he doth deliver us; he will deliver us. And, first, I am going to point out to you three trains of thought; next, three lines of argument; and, thirdly, three inferences.

I. First, THE TEXT SUGGESTS THREE TRAINS OF THOUGHT.



The first is this, memory, which tells us of the deliverances in the past: "who delivered us from so great a death." Take the words exactly as Paul wrote them, and recall how God has delivered some of us from death. A few here, perhaps, have been very near to death in sickness. Some of us have several times in our lives looked into eternity; our illness has been no child's play, and we have realized the possibility, or even the probability of our soon passing away from all the engagements of this mortal life, and standing before our God. But we have been raised up again; we have come forth from our chamber, tottering on our staff, perhaps, through weakness, yet we are still preserved, the living, the living, to praise the Lord, as we do this day. I have no doubt that almost all of you have had, at one time or another, some very special proof that "unto God the Lord belong the issues from death."

Our past deliverances, however, have not only been from physical death; we have had greater deliverances than that. There was, first of all, our deliverance from spiritual death. Do you not remember the time, dear brother, dear sister, when you were brought out of nature's darkness into God's marvellous light? You say that you do not know the day when this great change took place; never mind if you do not, it is not at all essential if you can now say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Some of us do remember the very day when we came to Christ, and rested in him; and we do, with our whole heart and soul, bless him that we were delivered from that terrible death which had so long held us in captivity. God rescued us by his grace, and enabled us to come forth from our grave of sin, looking unto Jesus, and longing to be made like him.

Further, some of you remember when you were delivered from despair. It is an awful thing to be driven away from all hope of salvation, and to be at your wits' end. You were not all brought to Christ in a terrible tempest, as some of us were; many of you came to him under happier circumstances. Be very thankful that it was so; but some of us were hard put to it when we tried to touch the hem of his garment, we were pressed and crushed in the crowd, and seemed to lose our very breath. I remember how, when I was under conviction of sin, my soul rolled to and fro, and staggered like a drunken man; yet the Lord delivered me, and taught me to rest upon

him, and thus even full assurance became possible although I had thought, aforetime, that mercy could never reach me. Beloved, if I am describing your experience as well as my own, let us together bless the Lord for his mercy in deliverance from so great a death. The remembrance of our deliverance from sin and despair must take the first rank amongst our grateful reminiscences.

But since then, have you not been many times delivered out of temptation? You said, with the psalmist, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped;" yet the Lord graciously preserved you. If you look back with careful eye, you will see many occasions where, if it had not been for interposing mercy, you would either have fallen into the bog on your right hand, or into the quagmire on your left. If the Lord had not piloted your vessel, it would have been wrecked on the rocks of Scylla or engulfed in the whirlpool of Charybdis. Do you not wonder, sometimes, how you ever got through that peculiar temptation, which was so suitable to your circumstances, and so fascinating to your flesh? Yet you did not know, at the time, that it was a temptation; and you had not the wisdom necessary to meet the craft of Satan; yet you were not taken captive in the Satanic net, cunningly as it was spread; and for that deliverance you must bless the name of the Lord. There are some of you who ought to praise him for deliverances over which you wept at the time. He would not let you have what you desired; you were disappointed, and you talked about your heart being broken. Ah! but the Lord's dealings with you saved you from having a broken heart. You said, "Alas! alas! I have lost something which I fondly cherished." It was well that you did lose it, for that which you thought was a bracelet sparkling with jewels was a viper, which, had you grasped it, would have stung you to death. Blessed be God for not hearing some of our prayers! Blessed be the Lord for not gratifying many of our desires!

We ought to praise him, too, for our deliverances in the time of trouble. You are not all tried alike. I am very thankful that some of you are not troubled as others are; but I know that I am addressing some whose trials have been very many and very heavy. Your road has been a very rough one. John Bunyan truly says, "A Christian man is seldom long at ease; when one trouble's gone, another doth seize;" and that has been true in

the lives of many of us. We can say, with the psalmist, "We went through fire and through water." Some of God's children have been brought very low in their circumstances, so that they have had to live "from hand to mouth,"—though I do not know that many of us live very differently from that;—but there are some godly people who never have any reserve store even if they do not actually come to want. I do not know that there is anything very grievous in that, for the sparrows and the ravens live in that style, yet God cares for them. But some of you find it to be a trial to have scantiness in the home, or sickness in your own person, or one who is dear to you as your own life constantly afflicted. There are all sorts of losses and crosses, trials and troubles, for the godly to endure. Yes; but none of these things have crushed us yet, for the Lord hath delivered us. Here is a poor widow, and she wonders how she ever brought up that large family of little children. She scarcely knew how to provide for them all when she had a husband, and yet, when the head of the house was gone, they were provided for; it is very wonderful, yet it was done; and you, who seemed to see all your prospects suddenly dissolve, like the mirage of the desert, were helped. You said, at one time, "If such-and-such a thing should happen, it would kill me." It did happen, yet it did not kill you, for you are here to testify to the Lord's delivering mercy. One Job's messenger after another came to bring you evil tidings, yet the Lord delivered you from the trials which threatened to crush you. I cannot stay to mention all those past deliverances; and, probably, most of them are not even known to us. Glory be to God for unknown mercies,—favours which came in the night when we most needed them, favours which helped us to sleep and to awake refreshed, favours that stole, with silent footfall, into our home and our heart, and went away leaving traces of the sacred oil of divine mercy behind them.

That is the first train of thought,—memory, which tells of deliverances in the past.

The second is observation, which calls attention to present deliverance: "and doth deliver." Open your eyes, my brethren and sisters, and see how God is delivering you at this moment. I do not say that, with the most widely opened eye, you will perceive all your deliverances; for, many times, you have been saved from trouble, while, on other occasions, you

have been delivered out of it. I have often told you the story of the good old Puritan who met his son at a half-way house. When the young man came in, he said, "Father, I had a very special providence as I rode here to-day." "What was that, my son?" "My horse stumbled three times very badly, yet I was not thrown." "And I have had an equally special providence in riding here." "What was that?" "My horse never stumbled all the way, so I was not thrown." You know that, if we are in a railway accident, and escape from any hurt, we say, "What a providence!" Yes, but what a providence it was when you were preserved from a railway accident by stopping at home! Oftentimes, we do not see the very thing that has the most of mercy in it. What evidences of divine deliverance there are in the fact that you are here this moment! A comparatively trifling incident might have resulted in your death. You may be, tomorrow morning, in doubt as to which of two ways you should take; but there will be the providence of God directing you which to choose, and your choice of that one may affect the whole of the rest of your life.

If you are not just now being assailed by any temptation, it is because God is delivering you from it. Yet it may be that Satan is planning some fresh temptation with which to assail you; but, though he desires to have you that he may sift you as wheat, Christ is praying for you, that your faith fail not. We might have fallen into doctrinal error had it not been for God's restraining mercy. How apt thoughtful people are to be carried away by the particular novelty of the hour! It seems as if they could not resist the cogency of the argument by which the new teaching is supported, but we have been kept from yielding to it by having our hearts established in the faith, so that we have not believed every novel doctrine, but have judged it by the Word of God, and so have been kept from wandering into devious ways.

How graciously God is preserving many of us from the tongue of slander! It is a wonderful thing for any man to live much in public without being accused of some vile crime; and the woman who lives in the most retired position, the housewife who does nothing but look after her own children, will find somebody or other slandering her. You cannot always escape from the envenomed tongue of slander, be you what you will and where you will; and for God to keep the reputation of any Christian man

unstained year after year, is a subject for the greatest thankfulness.

We do not know where or what we might have been if God's gracious protection had not been like a wall of fire round about us, as it is even now, for still doth the Lord deliver all those who put their trust in him. I want you, dear brothers and sisters, to believe with unquestioning confidence that God is delivering you just now. You know that he has delivered you, be quite as sure that he is delivering you at this moment. "Oh!" says one, "I am shut up in the dungeon of despair." Yes; but your Lord has a key that can open the door, and so let you out. "Ay; but I am in great want." But he knows all about it, and he has his basket in his hand full of good things with which he is going to supply all your needs. "Oh!" says another, "but I am sinking in the flood." But he is throwing the life-belt over you. "Oh, but I am fainting!" But he is putting a bottle of sweet perfume to your nose to refresh your spirit. God is near thee, to revive and cheer thy fainting soul. Perhaps someone says, "I find faith concerning the past and concerning the ultimate future tolerably easy; but it is faith for the next hour or two I cannot so readily exercise." At certain times, it is found that trial is peculiarly present, but one cannot always realize that God is "a very present help in trouble;" yet it is true. He hath delivered, and he doth deliver.

The third train of thought in this,—expectation looks out of the window upon the future: "in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." Yes, dear friends, there may be many trials before you yet; but there is a mass of mercy laid up in store to meet those trials. Troubles such as you have never yet known, as well as repetitions of those you have experienced, will surely come upon you; but as your days are, so shall your strength be, for your Lord will continue to deliver you. As the eyes gradually fail, and the limbs grow weak, and the infirmities of age creep over us, we are apt to be distressed; yet our Lord will not forsake us. When severe sickness invades our mortal frame, and our pains are multiplied and intensified, we wonder how we shall hold out to the end; and especially as we look forward to the time of death,—not always viewing it in the true light, we say, "What shall we do in the swellings of Jordan? How shall we be able to bear the stern realities of our last hours?" Be of good comfort, my brother, my sister; he who hath delivered, and doth deliver, will yet

deliver. As surely as the trial comes, the way of escape shall be opened up for you by your Lord. Will you try to realize all this of which I have been speaking? He hath delivered you; then, give him your gratitude: he is delivering you; then, give him your confidence: he will deliver you; then give him a full and joyful expectation, and begin even now to praise him for mercies which are yet to come, and for grace which you have not tasted yet, but which you shall taste in his good time.

II. Now, in the second place, THE TEXT SUPPLIES THREE LINES OF ARGUMENT, all running to the same point.

The point to be proved is that the Lord will deliver his people; and I argue that he will deliver us in the future because he has already begun to deliver us. There is a chain of continuity here; he hath delivered, he doth deliver, and he will deliver. He began to work for our deliverance long before we sought him. The first movement was not from us to God, but from God to us. We were lying dead in trespasses and sins, and he came and quickened us. He gave his Son to die for us many centuries before we were born; he provided the gospel for us long before you and I had ever sinned; in all things he had the start, and was beforehand with us. Yet he need not have done all this, except that it was by his own choice and free will that he acted. I do rejoice in the free will of God which moved him to deliver us.

Surely, then, since the motive that impelled him to save us must have been in himself alone, that motive is still there. If he had begun to deliver us because he saw some goodness in us, or because we first applied to him, then he might leave us after all; but as the commencement was with himself, out of his own heart, spontaneously, depend upon it that, as he began the work, he will carry it on. God has no more knowledge of any one of us than he had at the first. When he began with us, he knew what we should be; foresaw all our sins and all our follies, all our ingratitude and all our backsliding. He did not enter, blindfold, upon a task which, after second thoughts, he would have to relinquish; but, even from eternity, he saw us just as we have turned out to be. Yet he began with us; and having begun with the deliberation of eternal love, let us be quite sure that he will prosecute his gracious purpose with the perseverance of

eternal love. If there had been, at the first, some reason in us why God should begin to deliver us, then, that reason being removed from us, God might cease to deliver us; but as the reason was not in us, but in himself, since he can never change, the reason for our deliverance abides the same, and the argument is good and clear,—God hath delivered us, then he will deliver us.

The next argument comes from the fact that, as he is now delivering us, therefore he will continue to do so. Here is the continuity of his grace. Now look, beloved; he has, up to this hour, continued to deliver you and me who have trusted him. How many times has he delivered me? Out of how many troubles have I been delivered? From how many sins have I been delivered? Well, then, if the Lord has kept on delivering me so long, I argue that, if he had ever meant to stop, he would have stopped before now; and, therefore,—

"His love in time past forbids me to think  
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink;  
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,  
Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through."

When a man begins to build, we reckon that he will finish the building if he can. We know that our God can complete what he has commenced, so we conclude that he will do so. I feel that he has gone so far with me that he cannot give me up now.

"Can he have taught me to trust in his name,  
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"

No, that can never be; and many of you must feel just as I do about this matter. Some of you are, as it were, sitting on the very doorstep of heaven; you are over eighty years of age, so you cannot be here long; cannot you trust the Lord for the few months or years you have yet to live? He has been helping you, my aged sister, ever since you were a girl; and he has delivered you out of all sorts of troubles, do you think that he will leave you now? And my dear venerable brother, you knew the Lord when you were but a boy, and he has never left you yet; will he forsake

you now? No; blessed be his name, he will not! All those years of his favour go to confirm us in the conviction that he will keep on delivering us till he brings us safely home.

The Lord has not only delivered us so often, but he has also done it in such a wonderful way, that he must go on working in a similar fashion. What marvellous wisdom has he sometimes displayed in delivering us from the consequences of our own folly! Often hath he seemed to lavish his mercy upon us that he might help us in our time of need, and not once has he failed us. There is not one broken promise of his, nor one covenant blessing that he has ever withheld from us. If any of you, who have known him the longest, have aught to say against your God, say it; but you have not. You have never had any reason for doubting him, nor have you ever had any suspicion of his faithfulness raised in your mind by anything that he has done which might lead you to mistrust him in the future. He hath delivered, he is delivering, and he will yet deliver. There are two arguments drawn from the past and the present.

The best argument, however, comes from God himself: "in whom we trust." He is always the same, and everything is ever present to his unchanging mind. What was the nature of God when he first determined to deliver me? Was it love? Then, it is love now. What was the motive which impelled the Son of God when he came from above, and snatched me from the deep waters? It was love, surprising love; and it is surprising love which still moves him to deliver me. Did I sing about his faithfulness, the other day? That faithfulness is just the same to-day. Have I adored his wisdom? That wisdom is not exhausted.

There is not only the same nature in God as there always was, but there is also the same unchanging purpose. You and I shift and change; and we are obliged to do so, because we make rash promises and faulty plans; but God, who is infinitely wise, always keeps to his purpose. Now, if it was his original purpose to save us,—and it must have been, or he would never have delivered us as he has done,—that purpose still stands, and shall for ever stand. Though earth's old columns bow, though heaven and earth shall pass away, as the morning rime dissolves in the beams of the rising sun, yet the decree of the immutable Jehovah shall never be changed.



"For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"

III. Time fails me, so I can only very briefly show you that THE TEXT IS OPEN TO THREE INFERENCES.

The first inference I draw from it is, that we shall always be in danger so long as we are here. The Lord hath delivered, doth deliver, and he will deliver, so we shall always need divine deliverance while we are in this world. We must not expect here to be ever out of gun-shot of the enemy. You may depend upon it, brethren and sisters in Christ, that you will always have tribulation as long as you are in the world, you will have trials in the flesh, you will have trials in the spirit, you will have trials from God, and trials from Satan; and if, at any time, you are a long while without any trouble, keep a good look-out for it, for it is probably on the way to you. We should always suspect some danger nigh when we perceive too much delight. When God has given us a long stretch of smooth sailing, it well behoves us to steer our vessel cautiously, and to be ready to furl our sails at any moment, for a cyclone may be upon us before we know where we are. We need not ask the Lord to send us trouble, but when it comes, let us have the grace to accept it, and to glorify God in it. While we are in this world, we shall always know that it is the world, so let us not make any mistake about the matter; the devil is the devil, the world is the world, and the flesh is the flesh. None of these things have changed, and the mercy is that God has not changed, he is still the same as ever he was. If I found that the world was not the world, I might be afraid that God was not God; but that can never be the case, So, as trials are always arising, I may fairly suspect that they always will come while this time-state lasts; but I also fully believe that God will always be the same, and that he will deliver all who trust in him.

The second inference from the text is, that we may constantly expect a display of God's delivering grace. The past says, "He has delivered;" the present says, "He doth deliver;" and the future says, "He will yet deliver." Yesterday, God was very gracious to me; to-morrow he will be very gracious to me; and the same will be true the next day, and the next day, and the next day, until there shall be no more days, and time shall be

swallowed up in eternity. Between here and heaven, every minute that the Christian lives will be a minute of grace. From here to the throne of the Highest, you will have to be continually supplied with new grace from the Lord who sits on high. Dear brother, you never live a truly holy, happy, blessed day, except by divine grace. You never think a right thought, never do a right act, you never make any advance heavenward except by grace. I like to think that it is so, that every day I am a monument of mercy; that every day a fresh display of sovereign grace is made to me; every day my Father feeds me, my Saviour cleanses me, the Comforter sustains me. Every day, new manifestations of the lovingkindness of the Lord break forth upon my wondering soul, and give me fresh visions of his miraculous love. I could not find another word to express what I wanted to say, that one seemed to leap into my mouth just then,—his miraculous love! And so it is, miracle-working love, making the Christian's life to be a series of miracles, at which angels shall gaze for ever in astonished adoration of the amazing love of God to guilty men. So I reckon that we may go onward with great confidence; for, although every day will bring dangers, every day will also witness divine deliverances.

Thirdly, the last inference I draw from the text is, that our whole life should be filled with praise of God our Deliverer. How doth it run? He delivered us, and now we deliver ourselves? No, no, no! He delivered us; he doth deliver us;—but what about the future? We must deliver ourselves? No, no, no! He hath delivered; he doth deliver; and he will yet deliver;—the same Person, working in the beginning, in the centre, and at the close. It is all of God from first to last; there is not one deliverance which you have ever had which you can ascribe to anyone but the Lord alone. Inside heaven's gate, all the praise is given to the Triune Jehovah: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be;" and outside heaven's gate, let us sing the same song, to the same tune; let it always be to the praise of grace, grace, GRACE; to the God of grace, the Father of grace, the Christ of grace, the Holy Ghost and his grace; and to God be all the glory, for ever and for ever! Amen.

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## **Terrible Convictions And Gentle Drawings**

When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day, and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. - Psalm 32:3-4

David here describes a very common experience amongst convinced sinners. He was subjected to extreme terrors and pangs of conscience. These terrors were continual; they scared him at night with visions, they terrified him all day with dark and gloomy forebodings. "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me." His pain was so extreme, that when he resorted to prayer he could scarcely utter an articulate word. There were groanings that could not be uttered within his spirit; and hence he calls his prayer roaring—a "roaring all the day long." Wherever he was, his spirit seemed to be always sighing, sending a full torrent of melancholy groans upwards towards God; a "roaring all the day long." So far did this groaning proceed, that at last his bodily frame began to show evidences of it. He grew old, and that not merely in the lines of the countenance and the falling in of the cheeks, but his very bones seemed as if they partook of the suffering. He became like an old man before his time. We have heard of some who through severe trouble have had their hair blanched in a single night. But here was a man who did not show merely externally, but even internally, the heavy pressure of grief, on account of sin. His bones grew old, and the sap of his life, the animal spirits, were all dried up; his "moisture was turned into the drought of summer." So intimate is the connection between the body and the soul, that when the soul suffers extremely, the body must be called to endure its part of grief. Verily in this case it was but simple justice, for David had sinned with his body and with his soul too. By fornication he had defiled his members; he had looked out from his eyes with lustful desires, and had committed iniquity with his body, and now the frame which had become the instrument of

unrighteousness, becomes a vehicle of punishment, and his body bears its share of misery,—“my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” We gather from what David says in this Psalm, and indeed in all these seven penitential Psalms that his convictions on account of his sin with Bathsheba, and his subsequent murder of Uriah, were of the deepest and most poignant character, and that the terrors he experienced were indescribable, filling his soul with horror and dismay.

Now, this morning, I propose to deal with this case, so common among those who are under conviction of sin. There are many, who, when the Lord is bringing them to himself, are alarmed by reason of the hardness of the stroke with which he smites them, and the sternness of the sentence which he pronounces against them. After having dealt very solemnly with that character, I shall then turn and spend a few moments in trying to comfort another class of persons, who, strange to say, are without comfort, because they do not have these terrors, and are unhappy because they have never experienced this unhappiness. Strange perversity of human nature, that when God sends the terrors we doubt, and when he withholds them we doubt none the less. May God the Spirit bless my discourse doubly to these two different conditions of men.

I. First, then, let me address myself with lovingkindness to those who are now **THE SUBJECTS OF GOD'S REBUKE AND THE TERRORS OF GOD'S LAW.**

To you would speak on this wise; first, detect the causes of your terror. In the second place tell you God's design in subjecting you thereto, and then point you to the great remedy.

1. As for the causes of your terror they are many, and perhaps in your case the cause may be so peculiar that the wit of man may not be able to discover it. Nevertheless, the remedy which I have to propound at the end, will most assuredly be adapted to your case, for it is a remedy which reaches all diseases, and is a panacea for all ills. You tell me you are sore troubled by reason of conviction, and that your convictions of sin are attended by the most terrible and gloomy thoughts, I am not at a loss to tell you why it is. I shall this morning borrow my divisions from quaint

old Thomas Fuller, whose book happened to be thrown in my way this week by Providence, and as I cannot say better things than he said, I shall borrow much of his description of the causes of the terrors of conviction.

First, those wounds must be deep which are given by so strong a hand as that of God. Remember, sinner, it is God that is dealing with you; when you lay dead in your sins he looked on you, and now he has begun not only to look, but to smite; he is now wounding you with the design of afterwards making you whole; he is killing you that he may afterwards make you spiritually alive. You have now entered the lists with no other than the Almighty God; do you wonder, then, that when he smites, his blows fell you to the ground? Are you astonished that when he wounds, his wounds are deep and hard to heal? Besides, remember it is an angry God that you have to deal with; one who has had patience with you in your sins these thirty, forty, or fifty years, and now he has come forth himself to compel you to throw down the weapons of your rebellion, and to take you captive by his justice, that he may afterwards set you free by his grace. Is it any marvel, then, that when an angry God—a God who has restrained his anger these many years—comes out in battle against you, you find it hard to resist him, and that his blows bruise you and break your bones, and make your spirit feel as if it must verily die, crushed beneath the mighty hand of a cruel one? Be not astonished at all your terrors; God on Sinai, when he came to give the law, was terrible; but God on Sinai, when he comes to bring the law into the conscience, and to strike it home, must be more terrible far. When God did but stretch out his hand with the two tables of stone, Moses did exceedingly fear and quake; but when he throws those tables of stone upon you, and makes you feel the weight of that law which you have broken, it is but little marvel that your spirit is bruised and mangled, and dashed into a thousand shivers.

Again, it is no wonder that you are sore troubled when you remember the place where God has wounded you. He has not wounded you in your hand, or in your head, or in your foot; he is striking at your conscience—the eye of your soul; he wounds you in your heart—in your inmost soul. Every wound that God gives to the convicted man is a wound in the very heart—in the very vitals; he cuts into the core of the liver, and makes his

darts cut through the gall, and parches your inward parts with agony. It is not now a disease that has laid hold merely on your skin or flesh, but it is a something which makes the life-floods boil with hot anguish. He has now shot his arrows into your inmost spirit, thrust his fingers into your eyes and put out their light. Oh! ye need not wonder that your pains are fearful, when God thus smites you on the tenderest part of a conscience which he has made tender by his grace. He may well smart that has salt rubbed into his wounds. You have been lashed with the ten-thonged whip of the law till your heart is all bare and bleeding, and now God is scattering, as it were, the salt, and making all those wounds to tingle and smart. Oh! ye might wonder, if ye did not feel, when God is thus casting bitterness into the fountain of your life.

Besides these, there is a third cause for this your pain, namely, that Satan is now busy upon you. He sees that God is wounding you and he does not wish that those wounds shall heal; he therefore trusteth in his fangs, and teareth open the flesh, and trieth if he cannot pour his poison into that very flesh which God has been wounding with the sword. "Now," saith he, "that God is against him will I be against him too. God is driving him to sadness; I will drive him farther still, and urge him to despair. God has brought him to the precipice, to the edge of his self-righteousness, and bidden him look down and see the yawning gulf. Now," says Satan, "one push more, and over he will go." He has come forth, therefore, with all his strength, hoping that the hour of your conviction shall be also the hour of your condemnation. He will tempt you, perhaps, as he did Job, till you say, "My soul chooseth strangling rather than life." He will seek to bring you low, like Jeremiah, until you are ready to wish you had never been born, rather than that you should suffer like this. You can well understand, if a man had been wounded, that it were hard work for the most skillful surgeon to heal him if some vile wretch should tear away the liniments and rend open the wounds as fast as they began to close. Oh! pray against Satan! Cry aloud to your God to deliver you from this fiend, for he is the cause of much of your distress; and if you were rid of him, it may be that your wound would soon heal, and you would find peace. But, remember, the remedy that I shall have to propound to you is a remedy against devils. It is the fiend's confusion as well as sin's destruction. Let them come against you as they may. The remedy I shall have to propound

can heal the wounds of Satan, and the tearings of his tangs, as well as those sorrows of soul which God has brought upon you.

You may discover a yet further reason why you are so sore wounded, when you consider the terrible nature of that weapon with which God has wounded you. He had not made a little gash with some slender instrument, but if I understand your case aright, he has brought against you the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Its Word condemns you; its threatenings strike you like barbed arrows. You turn to the law as it is here revealed, and it is altogether on a smoke against you. You turn to the promises, and even they wound you, because you feel you have no right to them. You look at the most precious passages, but they do not assuage your grief, but the rather increase it, because you cannot realize them and lay hold upon them for yourself. Now, this is God using his Word against you, and you know what a weapon that is,—"the sword of the Spirit, which is quick and powerful, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." They are cut deep that are wounded by the Word of God. If it were my words which had brought you into this fear, you might soon get rid of it; but these are God's words. Were it a father's curse, it might be hard to give you comfort; but it is God's curse that hath gone out against you—the curse of the God who made you. He himself hath told you that the sinner shall not stand in his sight, and that he hateth the workers of iniquity. He has himself brought home to your conscience some of those awful passages:—"God is angry with the wicked every day;" "He will by no means clear the guilty;" "Our God is a consuming fire;" "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." With such weapons as these; with red-hot shot fired against you with all the power of the Spirit, it remains no longer a wonder that your soul should be sharply racked, and your very bones should wax old through your roaring all the day long.

Furthermore, there is another cause for this deep disease of conviction, namely, the foolishness of the patient. Physicians will tell you that they can heal one man vastly more quickly than another, even though the disease be precisely the same, and the same remedies be used; for there are some men who help the physician by the quietude of their spirits by

the ease and resignation of their minds, their heart is and this gives "health to the navel, and marrow to the bones." But other men are fretful, disturbed, vexed, anxious, questioning this and questioning that; and then the remedies themselves cease to have their proper effect. It is even so with you; you are a foolish patient; you will not do that which would cure you, but you do that which aggravates your woe; you know that if you would cast yourselves upon Christ Jesus you would have peace of conscience at once; but instead of that, you are meddling with doctrines too high for you, trying to pry into mysteries which the angels have not known, and so you turn your dizzy brain, and thus help to make your heart yet more singularly sad. You know that you are trying still to work out a righteousness of your own, and this is making your wounds stinking and corrupt. You know, too, that you are looking more to your faith than you are to the object of your faith; you are looking more to what you feel than to what Christ felt; you spend more time in looking at your convictions than you do at Christ's vicarious sacrifice upon the cross. You are a foolish patient; you are doing that which aggravates your complaint. Oh that you were but wiser, and these terrors and these pangs might the sooner be over; you would not tarry so long in the prison if you would but use the means of escape, instead of seeking to dash your head against its strong walls,—walls that will not move with all your ravings, but which will only break, and bruise, and wound you the more. You seek to file your fetters, and you rivet them; you seek to unbind them yourself, and you thrust them the deeper into your flesh; you grasp the hammer, and here is the fetter about your wrist; you think to snap it, but you send the iron through the flesh, and make it bleed; you make yourself worse by all your attempts to make yourself better, so that much of your sorrowful conviction is due to your own absurdity, your own ignorance and folly.

And, once more, I must give you another reason. There is no wonder that you are under great and terrible pain when under conviction, for it is a disease in which nothing can ever help you but that one remedy. All the joys of nature will never give you relief. I have heard of some vain man who once wore the gown of a clergyman, who was "visited by a poor creature under distress of mind, in the days of Whitfield;" he said to the penitent, "You have been among the Methodists." "I know I have," said he. "Then don't go among those fellows; they have made you mad." "But



what am I to do to get rid of the distress of mind I now feel?" "Attend the theater," said he; "go off to balls; take to gaming and the like; and in that way you will soon dissipate your woe." But as he that poureth vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a sad heart; it is taking away a man's garment to make him warm; it is heaping snow upon his head to dissolve the frostbite, sending him back to draff and dung that he may stay his hunger therewith, thrusting him into the kennel that he may get rid of the stench that offends his nostrils. Nay, but if these be the true woundings of God, sinful pleasures will make you worse instead of better; and even the usual comforts of life will lose all power to console you. The words of the tenderest wife, the most loving husband, the mercies of Providence, the blessings of home,—all these will be of no avail to you to cure this disease. There is one remedy for it; but none of these will so much as touch it. Quaint old Fuller uses language to this effect, when Adam had sinned, he became suddenly plunged in misery; the birds sang as sweetly, the flowers bloomed as brightly, and the air was as balmy, and Eden quite as blissful; but Adam was in misery; he had unparadised paradise. God had not said a word against him, and yet he went and hid himself under the trees of the garden to find a shelter there. There was nothing in the whole garden that could give Adam a moment's delight, because he was under a sense of sin. And so will it be with you. If you could be put in paradise, you would not be the happier. Now that God has convinced you of sin, there is only one cure for you, and that one cure you must have; for you may ramble the world round and you will never find another. You may try your best with all the pleasures and mercies of this life, but you would be in torment, even though you could be taken to heaven, unless this one remedy should appease your aching heart.

2. I have thus, I think, given you sufficient reasons for the great poignancy of your grief; but now, secondly, what are God's designs in thus plunging you deeply in the mire? He does not deal so with all his people; some he brings in a very gentle way to himself. Why, then, does he deal thus hardly with you? The answers to this question are these: there are some questions best unanswered; there are some dealings of God about which we have no right to ask a question. If he draws you to heaven, though it were through hell itself, you ought to be content. So long as you are but saved, however fearful the process, you ought not to

murmur. But I may give you some reasons after all.

In the first place, it is because you were such a stony-hearted sinner,—so dead, so careless,—that nothing else ever would have awakened you but this trumpet. It would have been of no use to bring out the gospel with its dulcet notes; it would have been of little service for David to play on his harp before you. You needed to be aroused, and therefore it is that God has hurled his thunderbolts at you one after another, and has been pleased to make heaven and earth shake before you that you might be made to tremble. You were so desperately set on mischief, so stolid, so indifferent, that if saved, God must save you in such a way, or else not at all.

And then again, the Lord knows that there is that in your heart which would take you back to your old sins, and so he is making them bitter to you; he is burning you, that you may be like the burnt child that dreads the fire; he is letting you see the disease in its full climax, that you may from henceforth avoid the company in which that disease was found; he has taught you the full evil of your heart, the full obnoxiousness of sin, in order that from this day forth you may become a more careful walker, and may the more zealously hate every false way.

Besides, it may possibly happen that he designs this out of love to your soul, to make you the more happy afterwards. He is filling your mouth with wormwood, and breaking your teeth with gravel-stone, that you may have a richer appreciation of the luscious flavour of the will of pardon when he pours it into your heart. It is making you feed on ashes—the serpent's meat—that when you come to eat children's meat—the bread of heaven—your joy may be multiplied sevenfold. I am one of those poor souls who for five years led a life of misery, and was almost driven to distraction; but I can heartily say, that one day of pardoned sin was a sufficient recompense for the whole five years of conviction. I have to bless God for every terror that ever seared me by night, and for every foreboding that alarmed me by day. It has made me happier ever since; for now, if there be a trouble weighing upon my soul, I thank God it is not such a trouble as that which bowed me to the very earth, and made me creep like a very beast upon the ground by reason of heavy distress and

affliction. I know I never can again suffer what I have suffered; I never can, except I be sent to hell, know more of agony than I have known; and now, that ease, that joy and peace in believing, that "no condemnation" which belongs to me as a child of God, is made doubly sweet and inexpressibly precious, by the recollection of my past days of sorrow and grief. Blessed be thou, O God, for ever, who by those black days, like a dreary wind hath made these summer days all the fairer and the sweeter! The shore is never so welcome as when you mount it with the foot of a shipwrecked mariner just escaped from the sea; food never so sweet as when you sit at the table after days of hunger; water never so refreshing as when you arrive at the end of a parched desert, and have known what it is to thirst.

And yet one other reason let me give you, and I need not keep you longer on this point. Possibly, God is bringing you thus, my dear friends, because he means to make great use of you. We are all God's weapons against the enemy. All his saints are used as instruments in the Holy War; but there are some whom God uses in the thickest part of the battle. They are his swords whom he wields in his hand, and strikes innumerable blows with them. These he anneals again, and again, and again. He is annealing you. He is making you meet to be a mighty one in his Israel by-and-bye. Oh! how sweetly you will be able to talk to others like yourself, when you once get comfort; and oh! how much you will love him when he once puts away your sin! Will you not? Oh! I think I see you the first day after your sins are forgiven. Why you will be wanting to preach: I should not wonder if you will be going out into the streets, or hurrying to your old companions, and saying to them, "My sins are washed away." Why there will be nothing too hard for you. The Lord gets his best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction. These are Highlanders that carry everything before them. They know the rivers of sin, they know the glens of grief, and now their sins are all washed away, they know the heights of self-consecration, and of pure devotion; they can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth them, the Christ who has forgiven them.

Do you not think I have just driven the nail home here? Do you not feel in your spirit, that if Jesus would forgive you, you would do everything for him? Oh! I know if I should give out that hymn—

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,  
While heaven's resounding mansions ring  
With shouts of sovereign grace."

you would say, "Ah, that I will; if ever he forgives such a wretch as I am, and takes such a poor worm as me to his bosom, nothing shall be too hard for me. I will give him all in this life, and I will give and eternity of praise in the life to come."

3. But now I am impatient to come to the word of comfort which I have for you upon the great remedy. Sinners distressed on account of sin, and bowed with terror down, there is a way of salvation for thee, a way open and accessible,—accessible now. Thou mayest now have all thy griefs assuaged, and all thy sorrows may flee away. Hear thou then the remedy, and hear it as from the lip of God, and take care that thou availlest thyself of it now, for the longer thou tarriest, the harder will it be to avail thyself of it. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Dost understand me? Trust Christ and you are saved; trust him now and all your sins are gone; there is not one left. Past, present, and to come, all gone. "Am I to feel nothing?" No, not as a preparation for Christ; trust Jesus and thou art saved. "Are there no good works required of me?" None, none; good works shall follow afterwards. The remedy is a simple one; not a compound mixture of thy things and Christ; it is just this—the blood of Jesus Christ. There is Jesus on his cross. His hands are bleeding; his heart is bursting; his limbs are tortured; the powers of his soul are full of agony. Those sufferings were offered to God in the place of our sufferings, and "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Believe on him now. "But I may not," says one. Thou mayest, nay, not only thou mayest, but thou art condemned if thou dost not believe him now. "I cannot," saith one. Canst not believe thy Lord? Is he a liar? Canst thou not believe his power to save? The Son of God in agony, and yet no power to save!! "I cannot think he shed his blood for me," saith such an one. Thou art commanded to trust him. Thou shalt read thy title clear in him afterwards. Thy business now is simply with him, not with thine interest in him. That shall be known afterwards. Trust him now and thou art saved. Faith is not believing that Christ died for

me. If Christ died for every man, then every Arminian, saved or unsaved, hath the true faith: for he believes Christ died for every man. We as Calvinists, do not believe this, but we believe faith consists in trusting Christ, and whosoever trusts Christ shall know as the effect of that trust, that Jesus died for him, and he is saved. Trust Jesus now; just as thou art, fall flat on thy face before him. Away with that last dirty rag of thine—that last good work; away with that last filthiness—that last good thought; thy good thought, and thy good works are rags and filthiness. Come just as thou art; naked, lost, ruined, helpless, poor. If thou art so bad that I cannot describe thee, and thou canst not describe thyself, yet come. Mercy's free, mercy's free. I am never afraid of preaching grace too free, or a Christ too willing to save. You do want a Mediator to come to God with, but you want none to come to Christ with. You do need some preparation if you are going to the Father; you want none if you are coming to the Son. Come as you are; and God himself must be untrue, his throne must have foundations apart from righteousness, Christ must be false, and this Bible a lie, before one soul that trusts Jesus can ever perish. There is the remedy, by the power of the Holy Spirit; avail thyself of it. Now God help thee and thou art fully saved.

II. I shall now want your patient attention for another five or ten minutes, while I take upon myself what was a double duty, because I was afraid to shout the last part of the sermon the first part might do hurt. In the last part of the sermon I have to deal with some WHO HAVE NEVER FELT THESE TERRORS AT ALL, AND WHO STRANGE TO SAY IT, WISH THEY HAD FELT THEM.

I suppose I may have conversed now with somewhere verging upon two thousand souls who have been brought to know the Lord under my instrumentality, and I have very often noticed that a considerable proportion of these, and of the best members of our Church too, were brought to know the Lord not by legal terrors, but by gentler means. Sitting one day last week, I saw some twenty-three, and I should think that there might be as many as twelve out of the twenty-three whose convictions of sin were not distinctly marked with the terrors of the law. An excellent young woman comes before me—"What was the first thought that set you really seeking the Savior?" "Sir, it was Christ's lovely

character that first made me long to be his disciple. I saw how kind, how good, how disinterested, how self-sacrificing he was, and that made me feel how different I was to what he was. I thought Oh! I am not like Jesus!' and that sent me up to my chamber, and I began to pray! I often have cases like this—I preach a terrible sermon upon the law, and I find sinners get comfort under it; I preach another sermon upon Election, and I find poor sinners get awakened under it. God blesses the Word in the very opposite manner to which I thought it would be blessed, and he brings very, very many, to know their state by nature by things which we should have thought would rather have comforted than alarmed them. "The first religious impression I ever had," said another, "that set me seeking the Savior, was this; a young companion of mine fell into sin, and I knew that I was likely to do the same if I was not kept by some one stronger than myself; I therefore sought the Lord, not on account of past sin at first, but because I was afraid of some great future sin. God visited me, and I then felt conviction of sin and was brought to Christ." Singularly enough too I have met with at least a score of persons who found Christ and then mourned their sins more afterwards than they did before. Their convictions have been more terrible after they have known their interest in Christ than they were at first. They have seen the evil after they have escaped from it; they had been-plucked out of the miry clay, and their feet set on a rock, and then afterwards they have seen more fully the depth of that horrible pit out of which they have been snatched, So that it is not true that all who are saved suffer these convictions and terrors. There are a considerable number who are drawn by the cords of love and the bands of a man. There are some who, like Lydia, have their hearts opened not by the crowbar of conviction, but by the pick-lock of divine grace. Sweetly drawn, almost silently enchanted by the loveliness of Jesus, they say, "Draw me, and I will run after thee."

And now you ask me the question—"Why has God brought me to himself in this gentle manner? "Again I say—there are some questions better unanswered than answered. God knows best the reason why he does not give you these terrors; leave that question with him. But I may tell you an anecdote. There was a man once who had never felt these terrors and he thought within himself—"I never can believe I am a Christian unless I do." so he prayed to God that he might feel them, and he did feel them,

and what do you think is his testimony? He says, "Never, never do that, for the result was fearful in the extreme." If he had but known what he was asking for, he would not have asked for anything so foolish. I knew a Christian man once who prayed for trouble. He was afraid he was not a Christian, because he had no trouble; but when the trouble came, he soon discovered how foolish he was to be asking for a thing which God in mercy had kept back from him. O be not foolish enough to sigh for misery. Thank God that you go to heaven along the walls of salvation; bless the Master that he does not call you in the cloudy and dark day, but brings you gently to himself; and be content, I pray you, to be called by the music of the voice of love.

May it not happen that Jesus Christ has thus brought you for another reason? He knew that you were very weak, and your mind was very frail, and if you had felt these terrors you might have gone mad; and you might have been in a lunatic asylum now instead, if you had passed through them. It is true his grace could have kept you, but God always tempers the willed to the shorn lamb, and he will not treat the weak ones as he does the strong ones.

And I think again, it may be that if God had given you these feelings you would have grown self-righteous. You would have trusted in them, so he has not given you them. You have not got them to build on, thank God for that, for now you must build on Christ. You say—"If I had felt these things, I think I should have been saved." Yes, then you would have trusted in your feelings; the Lord knew that, and therefore he has not given you them. He has given you nothing at all, therefore you must now rest on Christ and nowhere else but there. Oh! do so now.

It may be, again, that he has kept you there because he means to make you needful—useful to some who like yourself have come gradually to him, for you can say to them when you find them in distress, "Why Jesus Christ brought me gently, and therefore be of good cheer, he is bringing you too." I always like to see in my church some of all sorts. Now there is a brother I could point out this morning who has never known in his life, and I think never will know, about the plague of his own heart, to such an extent as some of us have learnt. He has never gone through fire and

through water, but on the contrary is a loving-hearted spirit; a man who spends and is spent in his Master's service, he knows more of the heights of communion than some of us. For my part—though I do not want to change places with anybody—I think I could trust my Master if I had his experience, as well as I can trust him with my own. For what has experience to do with it after all? We do not rest on experiences, and frames, and doings;

"Our hopes are fixed on nothing less  
Than Jesus blood and righteousness."

Now to you then, in conclusion, I preach the same remedy. Poor soul, thou longest to be troubled; ay! but I'd rather have thee long to get relief. Jesus Christ hangs on the cross, and if thou wilt trust him, thou shalt be saved. Just as thou art, as I said to my other friend just now—Just as thou art, take Christ as he is. Now, never think about getting ready for Christ; he does not want anything of yours. You need not trim and dress yourselves to come to Christ. Even your frames and feelings are not the wedding garment. Come naked. "But sir, I am so careless."—come careless, then. "But I am so hardhearted."—come hard-hearted, then. "But I am so thoughtless."—come thoughtless, then, and trust Christ now. If you trust him, you will not trust a deceiver. You will not have put your soul into the hand of one who will let it fall and perish. ' Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,' whether convicted by terror or by love, for "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not" feel what he may, and be in terror though he may, "shall be damned."

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## **Things That Accompany Salvation**



## Things that accompany Salvation. - Hebrews 6:9

I am not quite certain that my text will warrant all I shall say upon it this day if read and understood in its connection. But I have taken the words rather by accommodation than otherwise, and shall make use of them as a kind of heading to the discourse which I hope to be enabled to deliver. I sat myself down, and I meditated on this subject - "Things that accompany Salvation." And after some period of rumination, my thoughts assumed the form of an allegory; in which I hope to present them to you this morning. I compared Salvation to a rich and costly treasure, which God in his infinite love and mercy had determined to send into the world, and I remembered that our Lord Jesus was so much interested in the bringing of this Salvation to this earth, that he did send all that he had, and came himself to attend and to accompany this Salvation. I then pictured to myself a great march of bright ones through this land, carrying in their midst the sacred jewel of Salvation. I looked forward, and I saw a mighty van-guard, who already had attained the shores of Eternity. I looked around Salvation, and I saw it always in every case attended with divers graces and virtues which seemed to be like troops and soldiers to guard it in the ran, about its flanks, and in the rear.

Before we begin, however, let us just make this caution. When the Apostle speaks of virtues and of graces, he calls them "things that accompany Salvation," not things which cause it. Our faith does not cause Salvation, nor our hope, nor our love, nor our good works; they are things which attend it as its guard of honor. The origin of Salvation lies alone in the sovereign will of God the Father; in the infinite efficacy of the blood of Jesus - God the Son, and in the divine influence of God the Holy Spirit. There are, however, "things that accompany Salvation." Picture then to yourselves the march of some ancient monarch through his territory. We read stories of eastern monarchs in the olden time, that seem more like romance than reality; when they marched with thousands of flying banners and with all kinds of riches borne with them. Now you are to take that as the basis of my figure and suppose Salvation to be the sacred treasure which is being carried through the world, with guards before and guards behind, to accompany it on its journey.

We will begin, then, with *the advance-guard that has accompanied Salvation or rather gone before it*. We shall then come to *those who immediately precede it*, and then we shall notice *those who accompany it by its side*, and conclude by noticing *the rear guard attending upon this Salvation of our God*.

I. First, then, IN THE MARCHES OF TROOPS AND ARMIES, THERE ARE SOME THAT ARE OUTFRONT, AND GO FAR AHEAD OF THE OTHER TROOPS. So in the march of Salvation," which have far preceded it to clear the way. I will tell you the names of these stupendous Titans who have gone before. The first is *Election*, the second is *Predestination*, the third is *Redemption* and the *Covenant* is the captain of them all. Before Salvation came into this world, Election marched in the very forefront, and it had for its work the billeting of Salvation. Election went through the world and marked the houses to which Salvation should come and the hearts in which the treasure should be deposited. Election looked through all the race man, from Adam down to the last, and marked with sacred stamp those for whom Salvation was designed. "He must needs go through Samaria," said Election; and Salvation must go there. Then came Predestination. Predestination did not merely mark the house, but it mapped the road in which Salvation should travel to that house, Predestination ordained every step of the great army of Salvation, it ordained the time when the sinner should be brought to Christ, the manner how he should be saved, the means that should be employed; it marked the exact hour and moment, when God the Spirit should quicken the dead in sin, and when peace and pardon should be spoken through the blood of Jesus. Predestination marked the way so completely, that Salvation doth never overstep the bounds, and it is never at a loss for the road. In the everlasting decree of the Sovereign God, the footsteps of Mercy were every one of them ordained. As nothing in this world revolves by chance - as even the foreknown station of a rush by the river is as fixed as the station of a king - it was not meet that Salvation should be left to chance; and therefore God has mapped the place where it should pitch its tent, the manner of its footsteps to that tent, and the time when it should arrive there. Then came Redemption. The way was rough; and though Election had marked the house, and Predestination had mapped the road, the way was so impeded that Salvation could not travel it until it had been

cleared. Forth came Redemption, it had but one weapon; that weapon was the all-victorious cross of Christ. There stood the mountains of our sins; Redemption smote them, and they split in halves and left a valley for the Lord's redeemed to march through. There was the great gulph of God's offended wrath; Redemption bridged it with the cross, and so left an everlasting passage by which the armies of the Lord may cross. Redemption has tunnelled every mountain; it has dried up every sea, cut down every forest; it has levelled every high hill, and filled up the valleys, so that the road of Salvation is now plain and simple. God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly.

Now, this sacred advance-guard carry for their banner the Eternal Covenant. Election, Predestination, and Redemption - the things that have gone before, beyond the sight, are all rallied to the battle by this standard - the Covenant, the Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure. We know and believe that before the morning star startled the shades of darkness, God had covenanted with his Son that he should die and pay a ransom price, and that, on God the Father's part, he would give to Jesus "a number whom no man could number," who should be purchased by his blood, and through that blood should be most securely saved. Now, when Election marches forward, it carries the Covenant. These are chosen in the Covenant of grace. When Predestination marcheth, and when it marketh out the way of Salvation, it proclaims the Covenant. "He marked out the places of the people according to the tribes of Israel." And Redemption also, pointing to the precious blood of Christ, claims Salvation for the blood-bought ones, because the Covenant hath decreed it to be theirs.

Now, my dear hearers, this advance-guard is so far ahead that you and I cannot see them. These are true doctrines, but very mysterious; they are beyond our sight, and if we wish to see Salvation, we must not stop until we see the van-guard, because they are so far off that only the eye of faith can reach them. We must have that sacred glass, that divine telescope of faith, or else we shall never have the evidence of things not seen. Let us rest certain, however, that if we have Salvation we have Election. He that believeth is elected whoever casts himself on Christ as a guilty sinner, is certainly God's chosen child. As sure as ever you believe on the Saviour,

and go to him, you were predestinated to do so from all eternity, and your faith is the great mark and evidence that you are chosen of God, and precious in his esteem. Dost thou believe? Then Election is thine. Dost thou believe? Then Predestination is as surely thine as thou art alive. Dost thou trust alone in Jesus? Then fear not, Redemption was meant for thee. So then, we will not be struck with terror at that grand advance-guard that hath already gained the celestial hill, and have prepared the place where the elect shall for ever repose upon the bosom of their God.

II. But mark, we are about to review THE ARMY THAT IMMEDIATELY PRECEDES SALVATION; and first, in the forefront of these, there marches one whose name we must pronounce with sacred awe. It is God, the Holy Spirit. Before anything can be done in our salvation, there must come that Third Person of the Sacred Trinity. Without him, faith, repentance, humility, love, are things quite impossible. Even the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot save until it has been applied to the heart by God the Holy Spirit. Before we notice the grand army, then, that immediately precedes Salvation, let us be cautious that we do not forget Him who is the leader of them all. The great King, Immortal, invisible, the Divine person, called the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit: it is he that quickens the soul, or else it would lie dead for ever; it is he that makes it tender, or else it would never feel, it is he that imparts efficacy to the Word preached, or else it could never reach further than the ear; it is he who breaks the heart, it is he who makes it whole: he, from first to last, is the great worker of Salvation in us just as Jesus Christ was the author of Salvation for us. O soul, by this mayest thou know whether Salvation has come to thine house - art thou a partaker of the Holy Spirit? Come now, answer thou this question - hath he ever breathed on thee? Hath he ever breathed into thee? Canst thou say that thou hast been the subject of his supernatural influence? For, if not, remember except a man be born of the Spirit from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Thy best exertions will be all unavailing unless the Holy Ghost shall work in thee, to will and to do of God's good pleasure. The highest efforts of the flesh can never reach higher than the flesh, just as water of itself will never run higher than its source. You may be moral, you may be strictly upright, you may be much that is commendable, but unless you be

partakers of the Holy Spirit, salvation is as impossible to you as it is even to the lost. We must be born again, and born again by that divine influence, or else it is all in vain. Remember, then, that the Spirit of God always accompanies Salvation.

And now, close in the rear of the adorable Spirit follow the Thundering Legion. No sooner does God the Holy Ghost come into the soul, than he brings with him what I have called the Thundering Legion; and those of you that have been saved will not be at a loss to understand what I mean. This Thundering Legion are clad in mail, their helmets wave with horror; their speech is rough like men that come from a far country; their faces are terrible to look upon, for they are like unto lions, and do terribly affright the timid. Some of the men in this Thundering Legion bear with them swords; with these swords they are to slay the sinner. For before he can be made whole, he must be spiritually killed, the sword must pierce him, and must slay all his selfishness before he can be brought to the Lord Jesus. Then another body of them carry with them axes, with which they cut down the thick trees of our pride and abase the goodly cedars of our righteousness. There are with them those that fill up the wells with stones, and break up all the cisterns of our carnal sufficiency, until we are driven to despair, having all our hopes despoiled. Then come those who, with brazen trumpets, or with trumps of ram's horns - like those who once razed Jericho level with the ground - do blow a blast, so shrill and dread, that the sinner thinks that even the yells of hell itself could not be more terrible. Then come those who with lances pierce the spirit through and through; and in the rear are the ten great guns, the artillery of the law, which, perpetually fire upon the wounded spirit till it knows not what it is, nor what it does. My friend, has this Thundering Legion ever come to your house? Have they ever taken up their quarters in your heart? For, rest assured, these are some of the "things that accompany Salvation." What I have said is no allegory to those who have been converted, but it may be a mystery to those who know not the Lord. Understand, then, that the first work of God the Spirit in the soul is a terrible work. Before a man can be truly converted, he must suffer great agony of spirit; all our self-righteousness must be laid level with the ground, and trampled like the miry streets. Our carnal hopes must, every one of them, be cut in pieces, and our refuges of lies must be swept away

with the hail of God's anger. The law of God will appear terrible to the sinner when he is first convinced of sin. "What have I done?" he will say. Or rather, "What have I undone? I have undone myself." See him when God the Spirit has first convinced him of sin; you would think him mad; he is thought to be mad by his worldly companions. He weeps lay and night, tears become his meat and his drink; he can scarcely sleep for the dreams of hell, and when he wakes he thinks he feels it already." Oh, the wrath to come, the wrath to come, the wrath to come!" that seems to be ever pressing on his heart. He is like John Bunyan's pilgrim, he has a heavy burden on his back, and he knows not how to get rid of it, he wrings his hands and cries "What shall I do? I am undone. I have rebelled against God, and God is angry with me." Ah, I tell you this Thundering Legion is a terrible thing indeed. God be praised, when once they go out of the heart there is some joy; but whilst they are billited in the conscience of man, I defy him to eat or drink with any mirth or joy. The poor town of Mansoul is hung with black all the time these rough soldiers are there. Hideous threatenings and doleful forebodings are the sinner's only company in such a case. He seeks to find a little hope and comfort in his own doings; down comes the hammer of the Law, and breaks all his doings to pieces. He thinks, well he will rest on the couch of Indifference and Sloth; forth comes the Law, ties him to the halberts, takes its tenthonged whip and begins to lay on to him with all his might till his heart bleeds again. Then comes Conscience with its brine, and washes him all over; and he is exceedingly tormented, for even his bed is become a bed of spikes and thorns. This Thundering Legion always precedes Salvation. More or less of terrors every man must feel before he is converted. Some have less, some have more; but there must be some measure of this terrible law work in the soul, or else Salvation is not come to a man's house.

Oh, Thundering Legion, ye are gone; we hear their trumpets and the dying echoes still appal us. We can remember, brethren, those terrible days when they were in our house and in our heart. They are gone. What see we in the rear of them? Close in the rear there follows a broken heart. Look at it; do not despise it, God never despises it, do not thou. "A broken and a contrite heart O God thou wilt not despise." I see how this poor broken heart is broken; it is rent to its very eye and center; it is bathed in

tears; it is overwhelmed with suffering. See its humility; it never talks about boasting now. Mark its repentance, the sins it loved before it hates now; it speaks not about self-salvation. Hear it, as the broken heart speaks out its broken language. Hear it - "Lord have mercy upon me a sinner!" Do not fear to come and look at this broken heart; how sweetly is it perfumed! The sacred smell of a sacrifice which God approves rises from it. Hear it, as again it speaks - "Lord, save, or I perish." See this poor broken heart when it is in the world and at its business; it interrupts its business with ejaculations like these - "Oh that - Ah, ah - would that!" And when it can get alone, it pours out its heart before God, and cries,

Unclean, unclean, and full of sin  
From first to last, O Lord I've been;  
Deceitful is my heart.'

Oh wash my soul in Jesus' blood; forgive me all my guilt, and I will be thy servant for ever and ever.

Dear hearers, has this broken heart ever come to your house? Rest assured I am speaking God's own truth, that admits of no dispute - unless this broken heart has come within your bosom you cannot be made partakers of Christ. The heart must first be pounded in the mortar of conviction, and beaten in pieces with the pestle of the law, or else it never can receive the grace of the Comforter in all its plenitude. Are you broken-hearted to-day? Are you sorrowful at this very hour? Be of good cheer, Salvation is not far behind. When there is once a broken heart there is mercy very near. The broken heart is the prelude of healing. He that kills will make whole; he that woundeth will bind up; he that smote will cure. God is looking on thee with love, and will have mercy upon thee.

But who are those that follow in the rear? Another troop, another legion, but these are far different from the rest. The silken legion follow, these are not clad in steel; they have no helmets of war upon their head; they have smiling looks and countenances that are full of joy. No weapons of war in their hands; no thunders do they utter, but they speak kind words of pity, and their hands are full of benedictions. Shall I tell you who this

silken legion are? There is a troop of them who take the poor wounded heart, and wash it first in blood; they sprinkle on it the sacred blood of the Atonement; and it is amazing how the poor broken heart, though faint and sick, revives at the first drop of the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and when well washed in blood, another of this legion steps forward and takes it and washes it in water - for both water and blood flowed from the Saviour's heart.

"Let the water and the blood,  
From thy wounded side which flow'd  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power"

And oh, what a washing it is! The heart that was once black as the coals of hell, seems white as the snow of Lebanon. When it has once been bathed in the bath of the Saviour's blood and water, oh, how pure it becomes! He who was black as the tents of Kedar becomes fair as the curtains of Solomon. Then follow those who pour oil and wine into the wounds of this poor broken heart, so that where it smarted before, the wounds begin to sing. The sacred oil and wine of the precious promise is poured into every wound; and then follow those who with downy fingers bind up the heart with the sacred liniment of Promise till it seems no longer broken, but the broken heart rejoices. The whole heart sings for gladness; for God hath restored its strength and bound up all its wounds, according to his promise: "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." And then, since the work is not quite done, there come those who carry the King's ward-robe; and with the things out of this rich storehouse they array the soul from head to foot; they clothe it with everything that for lustre and for glory could adorn it, and make it bright as the spirits before the throne. And then the King's jewellers come in and complete the whole: they array the soul with ornaments, and bedeck it with precious stones. As the Father said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet," even so do this Silken Legion wash and heal and cleanse and glorify the once poor broken heart. Have these ever come to your house? It is an allegory, but it is all plain to him that understandeth it. Sinner, hast thou ever had the blood of Christ applied to thee?



"Couldst thou look and see the flowing  
Of his soul's redeeming blood,  
With divine assurance knowing  
He hath made thy peace with God?"

Dost thou this hour lay thine hand on the dear head of Christ; confess thy sin, and believe that he was punished for thee? Thou canst? Then, verily salvation is thine. And has thine heart been ever washed with water? Say, dost thou hate sin? Is thy guilt all cleansed, and is the power of guilt cut away, so that thou dost not love the ways of iniquity, nor seek to run in the paths of transgressors. Then thou art an heir of heaven. And say, poor sinner, hast thou ever been arrayed in the robe of Jesus' righteousness? Couldst thou ever fondly hope that thou wast accepted in the Beloved? Methinks I see thee with the tear in thine eye, and hear thee saying, I have sometimes sung with all my heart -

Jesus, thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds, in these array'd,  
With joy shall I lift my head.

Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who aught to my charge shall lay?  
Fully absolved through Christ I am  
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

And now we have not yet come to a full conviction of Salvation. The Silken Legion are gone; their banners are still flying in the gale, and their trumpets of promise are still making the air glad with melody. What cometh next? Now come those that are the actual attendants upon Salvation - or rather, that march in the rank immediately before it. There are four of these, called *Repentance*, *Humility*, *Prayer* and a *tender Conscience*. Just before the full assurance of Salvation there marches *Humility*. She is of a downcast look; she is not sad, but she hath no high looks; she scarcely dares to lift her eye to the place where God's honor dwelleth. She is often looking downwards, remembering her past estate

thinking of all the bitterness and the guilt of her previous life. She never boast; of what God has done for her, she looks to the hole of the pit and the miry clay from whence she was digged. She knows she has been washed in the blood of the Saviour, but she remembers how black she was before she was washed, and oh, she laments the past although she rejoices in the present. She feels her own weakness, she dares not stand alone she leans on the arm of her Beloved, for she knows that she should fall to the ground unless he should constantly maintain her. Side by side with her, is her sister called *Repentance*, watering the ground with tears to lay the dust before the King. Wherever she goes she weeps and if you ask her why, she will tell you she does not weep because of a fear of hell - that is all gone. The Silken Legion yonder, she tells you, have wiped all her fears away; but she weeps because she smote the Lord that loved her so well she beats her breast, and cries -

"'Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,  
His chief tormentors were;  
Each of my crimes became a nail,  
And unbelief the spear."

The more you tell her of her Salvation, the more she weeps to think she could have rebelled against such a Saviour. She is confident that her sins are blotted out; she knows her Master has forgiven her; but she never will forgive herself. Then side by side with *Repentance* is one called *Prayer*. He is a priest, and he waves in his hand a censer full of odoriferous incense, that the way for the King may be prepared, that wherever he marches there may be a sweet perfume. *Prayer* riseth by midnight to call upon God, its waking eyes salute the rising sun, that it may lift up its heart to Jehovah, and when the sun is setting, *Prayer* will not let his wheel be hidden beneath the horizon, until in his chariot he hath carried supplication. Then in this company is the fourth of those immediately attending upon Salvation, *a tender Conscience*. This tender Conscience is afraid to put one foot before the other, lest it should put its foot in the wrong place. Poor tender Conscience; some despise him; but he is dear to the King's heart. I would to God, my brethren, you and I knew more about him. I used to know a conscience so tender, that I would wish to feel it again. Then we questioned the lawfulness of every act before we

committed it, and then, though it was lawful we would stop to see if it were expedient and if we thought it expedient, even then we would not do it, except we felt it would be abundantly honorable to the Lord our God. Every doctrine we used to scruple at, lest we should believe a lie; every ordinance we examined, lest we should commit idolatry; happy were the days when tender Conscience went with us. And now, my hearers, do you know anything about these four? Has *Humility* ever come to you? Has she ever abased your pride and taught you to lie in the dust before God? Has *Repentance* ever watered the floor of your hearts with tears? Have you ever been led to weep in secret for your sins, and to bewail your iniquities? Has *Prayer* ever entered your spirit? Remember, a prayerless soul is a Christless soul. Have you learned to pray, not with the parrot's cry, but with the heart's ever fresh expression. Have you ever learned to pray? And lastly are you *tender of Conscience*, for unless your conscience is made tender, salvation has not met you, for these are the immediate attendants upon it.

III. And now comes SALVATION IN ALL ITS FULNESS. The "things that accompany Salvation" make a glorious march in the forefront of it - from Election down to these precious opening buds of virtue in the sinner's heart. What a goodly array! Sure the angels do sometimes fly along in admiration, and see this long array that heralds Salvation to the heart. And now comes the precious casket set with gems and jewels. It is of God-like workmanship; no hammer was ever lifted on it, it was smitten out and fashioned upon the anvil of Eternal blight, and cast in the mould of Everlasting Wisdom; but no human hand hath ever defiled it, and it is set with jewels so unutterably precious, that if heaven and earth were sold they could never buy another Salvation! And who are those that are close around it? There are three sweet sisters that always have the custody of the treasure - you know them, their names are common in Scripture - Faith, Hope, and Love, the three divine sisters; these have Salvation in their bowels and do carry it about with them in their loins. *Faith*, who layeth hold on Christ, and trusteth all in him; that ventureth everything upon his blood and sacrifice, and hath no other trust. *Hope*, that with beaming eye looks up to Jesus Christ in glory, and expects him soon to come: looks downward, and when she sees grim Death in her way, expecting that she shall pass through with victory. And thou sweet *Love*,

the sweetest of the three, she whose words are music and whose eyes are stars; Love, also looks to Christ and is enamoured of him; loves him in all his offices, adores his presence, reverences his words, and is prepared to bind her body to the stake and die for him, who bound his body to the cross to die for her. Sweet Love, God hath well chosen to commit to thee the custody of the sacred work. Faith, Hope, and Love - say sinner, hast thou these three? Dost thou believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Dost thou hope that through the efficacy of his merits thou shalt see thy Maker's face with joy? Dost thou love him? Say, couldst thou repeat after me,

"Jesus! I love thy charming name,  
'Tis music to my ear;  
Fain would I sound it out so loud  
That earth and heaven might hear.

Yes, thou art precious to my soul,  
My transport and my trust;  
Jewels to thee are gaudy toys,  
And gold is sordid dust."

Have you these three graces? If so, you have Salvation. Having that, you are rich to all intents of bliss; for God in the Covenant is yours. Cast your eye forward; remember Election is yours, Predestination and Sovereign Decree are both yours; remember, the terrors of the law are past; the broken heart is mourning; the comforts of religion you have already received; the spiritual graces are already in the bud, you are an heir of immortality, and for you there is a glorious future. These are the "things that accompany Salvation."

IV. Now you must have patience with me for just a few more minutes; I **MUST BRING UP THE REAR GUARD**. It is impossible that with such a van guard, grace should be unattended from behind. Now see those that follow Salvation. As there were fair bright cherubs that walked in front of it - you remember still their names - Humility, Repentance, Prayer, and a tender Conscience - there are four that follow it, and march in solemn pomp into the sinner's heart. The first of these is Gratitude - always

singing, "Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." And then Gratitude lays hold upon its son's hand; the name of that son is Obedience. "O my master, "saith the hears, "thou hast done so much for me; I will obey thee" -

"Help me to run in thy commands,  
'Tis a delightful road;  
Nor let my heart, nor hands, nor feet,  
Offend against my God."

In company with this fair grace is one called Consecration - a pure white spirit that hath no earthliness; from its head to its foot it is all God's, and all gold. Hear it speak -

"All that I am and all I have  
Shall be for ever thine;  
What e'er my duty bids me give,  
My cheerful hands resign.

And if I might make some reserve,  
And duty did not call,  
I love my God with zeal so great,  
That I would give him all."

Linked to this bright one, is one with a face Serene and solemn, called Knowledge, "Then shall ye know when ye follow on to know the Lord." whose that are saved understand mysteries, they know the love of Christ; they "know him, whom to know is life eternal."

Now, have you these four? They are rather the successors of Salvation than the heralds of it. "Oh yes," the believer can say, "I trust I have Gratitude. Obedience, Consecration, and Knowledge." I will not weary you, but there are three shining ones that follow after these four, and I must not forget them, for they are the flower of them all. There is Zeal with eyes of fire, and heart of flame a tongue that burneth, a hand that never wearies and limbs that never tire. Zeal, that flies round the world with wings swifter than the lightning's flash, and finds even then he-

wings too tardy for her wish. Zeal, ever ready to obey, resigning up itself for Christ, jealously affected always in a good thing. This Zeal always dwells near one that is called Communion. This, sure, is the goodliest of all the train; an angel spiritualised, an angel purified and made yet more angelic, is Communion. Communion calls in secret on its God; its God in secret sees. It is conformed to the image of Jesus; walks according to his footsteps, and lays its head perpetually on his bosom. And as a necessary consequence, on the other side of Communion - which with one hand lays hold of Zeal, is Joy - joy in the Spirit. Joy, that hath an eye more flashing than the world's merriment ever gave to mortal beauty, with light foot trips over hills of sorrow, singing in the roughest ways, of faithfulness and love. Joy, like the nightingale, sings in the dark, and can praise God in the tempest and shout his high praises in the storm. This is indeed a fitting cherub to be in the rear of Salvation. Do not forget these other three; they are after works of the Spirit, they are high attainments - Zeal, Communion, and Joy.

Now I have almost done. Just in the rear is Perseverance, final, certain and sure. Then there follows complete Sanctification, whereby the soul is purged from every sin, and made as white and pure as God himself. Now we have come to the very rear of the army; but remember as there was an advance guard so far ahead that we could not see them, so there is a rear guard so far behind that we cannot behold them now. Let us just try to see them with the eye of faith. We have seen the army; we have traced it from the Thundering Legion, guided by the Holy Spirit, till we have finished it by complete Sanctification. Hark, I hear the silver trumpet sound; there is a glorious array behind. A guard, far, far back are coming following the steps of the conquering heroes, that have already swept our Sills away. Do you not see in the fore part there is one, whom men paint a skeleton. Look at him, he is not the King's terrors. I know thee, Death, I know thee. Miserably men have belied thee. Thou art no spectre, thine hand bears no dart; thou art not gaunt and frightful. I know thee, thou bright cherub: thou hast not in thy hand a dart, but a golden key that unlocks the gates of Paradise. Thou art fair to look upon, thy wings are like the wings of doves, covered with silver and like yellow gold. Behold this angel Death, and his successor Resurrection. I see three bright things coming; one is called Confidence, see it! it looks at Death; no fear is in its

eye, no palor on its brow. See holy Confidence marches with steady steps, the cold chill stream of Death doth not freeze its blood. See behind it its brother Victory; hear him, as he cries, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave where is thy victory?" The last word, "victory," is drowned amidst the *shouts of angels*. These bring up the rear. Angels bear the spirits of the redeemed into the bosom of the Saviour -

"Far from a world of grief and sin,  
With God eternally shut in,  
They are for ever blest."

And now follow everlasting songs - "Praise him, praise him, King of kings and Lord of lords; he hath gotten him the victory. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, world without end! Hallelujah, yet again!" Let the echoes of eternity perpetually cry, "Hallelujah! for"

"THINGS THAT ACCOMPANY YOUR SALVATION."

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## **Things Working Together For Good**

"We know that all things *work*." Look around, above, beneath, and all things *work*. They work, *in opposition to idleness*. The idle man that folds his arms or lies upon the bed of sloth is an exception to God's rule for except himself all things work. There is not a star, though it seemeth to sleep in the deep blue firmament, which doth not travel its myriads of miles and work; there is not an ocean, or a river, which is not ever working, either clapping its thousand hands with storms, or bearing on its bosom the freight of nations. There is not a silent nook within the deepest forest glade where work is not going on. Nothing is idle. The

world is a great machine, but it is never standing still: silently all through the watches of the night, and through the hours of day, the earth revolveth on its axis, and works out its predestinated course. Silently the forest groweth, anon it is felled; but all the while between its growing and felling it is at work. Everywhere the earth works; mountains work; nature in its inmost bowels is at work; even the centre of the great heart of the world is ever beating; sometimes we discover its working in the volcano and the earthquake, but even when most still all things are ever working.

They are ever working, too, *in opposition to the word play*. Not only are they ceaselessly active, but they are active for a purpose. We are apt to think that the motion of the world and the different evolutions of the stars are but like the turning round of a child's windmill; they produce nothing. That old preacher Solomon once said as much as that. He said: "The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits." But Solomon did not add, that things are not what they seem. The world is not at play; it hath an object in its wildest movement. Avalanche, hurricane, earthquake, are but order in an unusual form ; destruction and death are but progress in veiled attire. Everything that is and is done, worketh out some great end and purpose. The great machine of this world is not only in motion, but there is something weaving in it, which as yet mortal eye hath not fully seen, which our text hinteth at when it says, It is working out for God's people.

And once again, all things work *in opposition to Sabbath*. We morally speak of work, especially on this day, as being the opposite of sacred rest and worship. Now, at the present moment all things work. Since the day when Adam fell all things have had to toil and labour. Before Adam's fall the world kept high and perpetual holiday; but now the world has come to its work-days, now it hath to toil. When Adam was in the garden the world had its Sabbath; and it shall never have another Sabbath till the Millennium shall dawn, and then when all things have ceased to work, and the kingdoms shall be given up to God, even the Father, then shall the world have her Sabbath, and shall rest; but at present all things do work.



Let us not wonder if we have to work, too. If we have to toil, let us remember, this is the world's week of toil. The 6,000 years of continual labour, and toil, and travail, have happened not to us alone, but to the whole of God's great universe; the whole world is groaning, and travailing. Let us not be backward in doing our work. If all things are working, let us work, too—"work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh when no man can work." And let the idle and slothful remember that they are a great anomaly; they are blots in the great work-writing of God; they mean nothing; in all the book of letters with which God has written out the great word "work," they are nothing at all. But let the man that worketh, though it be with the sweat of his brow and with aching hands, remember that he, if he is seeking to bless the Lord's people, is in sympathy with all things—not only in sympathy with their work, but in sympathy with their aim.

"All things work *together*." That is *in opposition to their apparent confliction*. Looking upon the world with the mere eye of sense and reason, we say, "Yes, all things work, but they work contrary to one another. There are opposite currents; the wind bloweth to the north, and to the south. The world's barque, it is true, is always tossed with waves, but these waves toss her first to the right and then to the left; they do not steadily bear her onward to her desired haven. It is true the world is always active, but it is with the activity of the battle-field, wherein hosts encounter hosts and the weaker are overcome." Be not deceived; it is not so; things are not what they seem; "all things work *together*." There is no opposition in God's providence; the raven wing of war is co-worker with the dove of peace. The tempest strives not with the peaceful calm—they are linked together and work together, although they seem to be in opposition. Look at our history. How many an event has seemed to be conflicting in its day, that has worked out good for us! The strifes of barons and kings for mastery might have been thought to be likely to tread out the last spark of British liberty; but they did rather kindle the pile. The various rebellions of nations, the heavings of society, the strife of anarchy, the tumults of war—all, all these things, overruled by God, have but made the chariot of the church progress more mightily; they have not failed of their predestinated purpose—"good for the people of God."

I know it is very hard to believe this. "What?" say you, "I have been sick for many a day, and wife and children, dependent on my daily labour, are crying for food: will this work together for my good?" So saith the Word, and so shalt thou find it ere long. "I have been in trade," says another, "and this commercial pressure has brought me exceedingly low, and distressed me: is it for my good?"

Thou art a Christian. I know thou dost not seriously ask the question, for thou knowest the answer of it. He who said, "All things work together," will soon prove to you that there is a harmony in the most discordant parts of your life. You shall find, when your biography is written, that the black page did but harmonize with the bright one—that the dark and cloudy day was but a glorious foil to set forth the brighter noon-tide of your joy. "All things work together." There is never a clash in the world: men think so, but it never is so. The charioteers of the Roman circus might with much cleverness and art, with glowing wheels, avoid each other; but God, with skill infinitely consummate, guides the fiery coursers of man's passion, yokes the storm, bits the tempest, and keeping each clear of the other, from seeming evil still enduceth good, and better still; and better still in infinite progression.

We must understand the word "together," also in another sense. "All things work *together* for good: "that is to say, *none of them work separately*. I remember an old divine using a very pithy and homely metaphor:—"All things work *together* for good; but perhaps, any one of those 'all things' might destroy us if taken alone. The physician, prescribes medicine; you go to the chemist, and he makes it up; there is something taken from this drawer, something from that phial, something from that shelf: any one of those ingredients, it is very possible, would be a deadly poison, and kill you outright, if you should take it separately; but he puts one into the mortar, and then another, and then another, and when he has worked them all up with his pestle, and has made a compound, he gives them all to you as a whole, and together they work for your good, but any one of the ingredients might either have operated fatally, or in a manner detrimental to your health." Learn, then, that it is wrong to ask, concerning any particular act of providence, Is this for my

good? Remember, it is not the one thing alone that is for your good; it is the one thing put with another thing, and that with a third, and that with a fourth, and all these mixed together, that work for your good. Your being sick very probably might not be for your good, only God has something to follow your sickness, some blessed deliverance to follow your poverty, and He knows that when He has mixed the different experiences of your life together, they shall produce good for your soul and eternal good for your spirit. We know right well that there are many things that happen to us in our lives that would be the ruin of us if we were always to continue in the same condition. Too much joy would intoxicate us, too much misery would drive us to despair: but the joy and the misery, the battle and the victory, the storm and the calm, all these compounded make that sacred elixir whereby God maketh all His people perfect through suffering, and leadeth them to ultimate happiness. "All things work *together* for good."

There are different senses to the word "good." There is *the worldling's sense*: "Who will show us any good?"—by which he means *transient good*, the good of the moment. "Who will put honey into my mouth? Who will feed my belly with hid treasures? Who will garnish my back with purple, and make my table groan with plenty?" That is "good,"—the vat bursting with wine, the barn full of corn! Now God has never promised that "all things shall work together" for such good as that to His people. Very likely all things will work together in a clean contrary way to that. Expect not, O Christian, that all things will work together to make thee rich; it is just possible they may all work to make thee poor. It may be that all the different providences that shall happen to thee will come wave upon wave, washing thy fortune upon the rocks, till it shall be wrecked, and then waves shall break o'er thee, till in that poor boat, the humble remnant of thy fortune, thou shalt be out on the wide sea, with none to help thee but God the Omnipotent. Expect not, then, that all things shall work together as for thy good.

*The Christian* understands the word "good" in another sense. By "good," he understands *spiritual good*. "Ah!" saith he, "I do not call gold good, but I call faith good! I do not think it always for my good to increase in treasure, but I know it is good to grow in grace. I do not know that it is for

my good that I should be respectable and walk in good society; but I know that it is for my good that I should walk humbly with my God. I do not know that it is for my good that my children should be about me, like olive branches round my table, but I know that it is for my good that I should flourish in the courts of my God, and that I should be the means of winning souls from going down into the pit. I am not certain that it is altogether for my good to have kind and generous friends, with whom I may hold fellowship: but I know that it is for my good that I should hold fellowship with Christ, that I should have communion with him, even though it should be in his sufferings. I know it is good for me that my faith, my love, my every grace should grow and increase, and that I should be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ my blessed Lord and Master." To the Christian, however, the highest good he can receive on earth is to grow in grace. "There!" he says, "I had rather be a bankrupt in business than I would be a bankrupt in grace; let my fortune be decreased—better that, than that I should backslide; there! let thy waves and thy billows roll over me—better an ocean of trouble than a drop of sin; I would rather have thy rod a thousand times upon my shoulders, O my God, than I would once put out my hand to touch that which is forbidden, or allow my foot to run in the way of gainsayers." The highest good a Christian has here, is good spiritual.

All things work together for a Christian's lasting good. They all work to bring him to the Saviour's feet. "So He bringeth them to their desired haven," said the Psalmist—by storm and tempest, flood and hurricane. All the troubles of a Christian do but wash him nearer heaven; the rough winds do but hurry his passage across the straits of this life to the port of eternal peace. All things work together for the Christian's eternal and spiritual good.

And yet sometimes all things work together for the Christian's *temporal good*. You know the story of old Jacob. "Joseph is not, Simeon is not, and now ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me," said the old Patriarch. But if he could have read God's secrets, he might have found that Simeon was not lost, for he was retained as a hostage—that Joseph was not lost, but gone before to smooth the passage of his grey hairs into the grave, and that even Benjamin was to be taken away by

Joseph in love to his brother. So that what seemed to be against him, even in temporal matters, was for him.

You may have heard also the story of that eminent martyr who was wont always to say, "All things work together for good." When he was seized by the officers of Queen Mary, to be taken to the stake to be burned, he was treated so roughly on the road that he broke his leg, and they jeeringly said, "All things work together for good, do they? How will your broken leg work for your good? I don't know," said he, "how it will, but for my good I know it will work, and you shall see it so." Strange to say, it proved true that it was for his good; for being delayed a day or so on the road through his lameness, he just arrived in London in time enough to hear that Elizabeth was proclaimed queen, and so he escaped the stake by his broken leg. He turned round upon the men who carried him, as they thought, to his death, and said to them, "Now will you believe that all things work together for good?"

Though the drift of the text was spiritual good, yet sometimes in the main current there may be carried some rich and rare temporal benefits for God's children, as well as the richer spiritual blessings.

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## **Things Unknown**

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. - Jeremiah 33:3

God's people will never thrive on anything less substantial than bread from heaven. Israel in Egypt might live on garlic and onions, but Israel in the wilderness must be fed with the manna that came down from heaven, and with the water that gushed out of the rock, when it was smitten by the rod of God. The child of God, while he is yet in his sins, may, like other men, revel in them, and the pleasures and follies of this world may

be his delight; but when he is once brought out of Egypt, by the high hand of God's purpose, and the almighty hand of God's strength, he will never live on anything less than God's promise and God's truth. It is in vain for men to try to remove his doubts and strengthen his self-confidence, it is in vain for men to endeavour to feed him with man-made doctrine or with rationalistic ideas, he must have something that is divine, that has the stamp of revelation upon it; in fact, unless we can come forth every Sabbath with a "Thus, saith the Lord," we are no capable ministers of the New Covenant, and it is not in our power to comfort the Lord's children.

In this chapter we find the prophet Jeremiah in prison; he was shut up in the court of the prison, and in order to comfort him, the Word of the Lord came to him saying, "Thus saith the Lord." Something less than it may suffice, in the time of our prosperity, to make our hopes buoyant; for, alas! there is enough of the natural man in the Christian to make him rejoice even in carnal things when he is far from being thoroughly sanctified; but when we are in trouble, when affliction and adversity, sickness and suffering, are trying us, there, is no man-made raft upon which our soul can float through floods of tribulation and waves of deep distress, but we must have the divine life-buoy of a "Thus saith the Lord." That is what the Christian wants in every time and in every place, but this is what he more especially needs when he does business in deep waters, and is sorely exercised by affliction, "Thus saith the Lord." My text is a "Thus saith the Lord." "Thus saith the Lord, call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

Here is, first, a large promise; here is, secondly, an implied imperfection; and here is, thirdly, a particular application of the promise, making up for that imperfection.

I. Here is, first A LARGE PROMISE: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee."

Now, if any friend should write us a letter containing such words as those, "Call unto me, and I will answer you," we would naturally understand by them, that whatever we might ask of our friend, he would most assuredly

give us; and if he were a person in whose ability and kindness we had confidence, we should not be very slow in availing ourselves of his permission to seek his aid. If we were in debt, we should apply to him for financial help, so that we might be able to meet our liabilities; if we were tried by sickness, we should apply to him that he might give us medicines to relieve our pains; if our friends had been ungrateful to us, we should most likely call upon him for sympathy; and if our spirits were distressed from some unknown cause, if we believed him to have immense wisdom, we should ask him for some cordial to raise us from our distress.

But how different is the case when we read these words as coming from the lips of God! Then, my brethren, how strange it is that, instead of making use of them, we just read them as a matter of course, but we seldom think of making use of them. "Yes," we say, "it is a very comforting doctrine, that God answers prayer; it is truly consolatory to hear our minister inform us that, whatever we ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive." But there the matter ends; and, except with a few choice spirits, it remains a matter of doctrine, and not a matter of practice to us. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe," our Master might well say to us; and if he should come into our heart, he would administer a thousand rebukes to us for our slackness in proving the truth of his promise. For God means what he says; and inasmuch as he has said, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee," he intends that his words should stand good; and he wishes us to believe them to be true, and therefore to prove our faith by acting upon them. Alas! the truth is too plain to be disputed, that the most of us, while, in a sense, we receive this doctrine because it is in the Bible, do not so receive it as to put it into practice. In introducing, to your notice, the great general truth, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee," I shall probably have to answer a host of objections and questions.

"Well," says one person, "would you wish us to believe, sir, that whatever we ask in prayer we shall receive?" I must, reply to you with discretion. In the first place, who are you who now ask that question? Are you a child of God, or are you a worldling! Have you been born again, or are you still what you were by nature, without any renewal from the Holy Spirit! For, upon your answer to that question, mine must depend. If you are still without the Spirit of God, and are unrenewed, I would remind you of that

passage which says, concerning the wicked, "Even his prayer shall be abomination;" and if your prayer be an abomination, of course you cannot expect God to accept an abomination, and answer it. You must, therefore, know that, you yourself are a partaker of the grace of God, or else this promise does not belong to you.

You grant me that, and then you ask me this question, "Sir, I hope I am a child of God; am I, therefore, to understand that, whatever I shall ask for in prayer, I shall receive of God?" To you also I must answer with discretion; lest, in endeavoring to state a truth, I should utter a falsehood. I must first ask you in what state of heart you are as a child of God. Have you been lately communing with Christ. Have you been constant in the study of his Word? What are your wishes? What are your wants? What are your desires? For, upon your answers to these questions, my reply your enquiry must depend, it may be that you are a Christian; but, nevertheless, though an Israelite, you, like Israel in the wilderness, are asking for meat that you may satisfy your own lust, even as they did; but when they craved for flesh and the Lord sent them quails, while the meat was yet in their mouths, the curse the Lord came upon them.

We are sure to have our prayers answered, if it is right that they should be answered. Sometimes, even the Lord's people ask for things which it would not be for God's glory to give, nor for their profit to receive, if you should tell your child you would give him anything he liked ask for, you would not for a moment suppose that you included in the promise any absurd request he might make. Suppose he should ask you for a dose of arsenic, suppose he should request you to kill him, would you fulfill your promise? Certainly not. You would say, "My child, I love you too well to listen to the ravings of your madness; I desire your good too much to grant your absurd request, and I cannot hearken to you. God says the same: "'Call upon me, and I will answer you,' but I will not always answer you as you wish to be answered. If you ask for a thing which is not fit for you to receive, I will give you something better. I will not give you that very thing; I will hear your prayers, but I will not give you exactly what you ask for, but I will grant you something infinitely superior to the thing itself."



It would be a sad thing if God always heard our prayers, and gave us just what we asked of him. If he always gave us the exact thing we asked for, we should ruin ourselves. You may have heard the story of a woman who had a child who was very ill; and when her pastor called, to see her, she asked him to pray for the child's life, and in the prayer he very properly said, "O Lord, spare this child's life, if it be thy will." The mother interrupted him, and said, "No, I cannot have it so; this child must live. I want you to pray to God that the child may live whether God wills it or no." The minister said, "Woman, you will have cause to tremble on account of this petition. If you ask such a thing as this of God, there will be a curse upon it." Nevertheless, the prayer was prayed; and, twenty years afterwards, that woman, with an aching heart, saw her son riding in a cart to Tyburn, where he was going to be hanged. Better would it have been for him and also for her that he had perished at the breast, and be carried to an untimely grave, than that he should send her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. God, therefore, makes this very kind reservation that, if we ask for absurd things, things which would not be for our profit, he will not grant them.

But the question is put to me again, "Sir, if I ask for a thing which is obviously a good thing, which is most assuredly for my profit, may I be certain, after I have asked in prayer for that thing, that I shall have it?" Once more, I must ask another question. Have you yet learned the heavenly art of believing God? Because, you may be a Christian, you may believe in Christ enough for your soul's salvation; but you may be so small a Christian that you have never yet attained the mountain height of belief in all your Lord has uttered. And, mark you, the promise of an answer to our prayers is only given to our faith. The Lord Jesus Christ put it thus to his disciples: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Now, if you go on your knees in prayer, and ask God for anything, and do not believe that he will give it to you, it may come in God's extraordinary bounty, but it will not come in answer to your prayer. Your prayers shall be answered in proportion to your faith; so, if you believe, and ask for a thing that is for your good and God's glory, you will have it as surely as the promise is a promise and God is God. I have talked with many Christians, and some of my aged friends have talked with far more than I have, but both they and

myself can bear witness that we have never yet met with any Christian that could charge God with breaking his promise. We have met with many who have been far from having the faith they ought to have, but we have never discovered one so faithless to God as to charge him with not answering the prayer that was stamped with believing. Whenever there is faith, there will be the answer to the prayer of faith; you will never hear a Christian deny that truth.

It was my privilege, some two years ago, where at Bristol, to visit the Orphan house of Mr. Muller, and I never saw a more striking or startling exhibition of the power of faith than I did there. Mr. Muller supports three hundred orphan children on no resources but his own faith and prayer. When he needs anything, he calls them together, offers supplication to God, and asks that necessaries may be supplied; and, although there are three hundred to be fed, to be clothed, and to be housed, and though they have often been brought so low that there has not been a farthing in their coffers, nor a handful of meal in their barrel, when mealtime has come, there has always been abundance of bread in the house in answer to prayer. I shall never forget my interview with that holy man of God. Some gentleman said to me, "I wish you would ask Mr. Muller a question or two, if you see him, as to the foundation of a new Orphan House which he proposes to build to hold seven hundred more children. Now, I feel that three hundred is quite enough for one man to care for; I think it is very absurd for him to have seven hundred more; he will never be able to support a thousand. As to the present Institution, I believe that generous persons hear about it, and send him subscriptions for its maintenance; but as to his supporting seven hundred more orphans, that is impossible." I replied, "I think there is something in what you say. I will ask him when I see him." But when I saw him, I could not, and dare not, ask him any such questions; and when I saw what a great work he had done by his faith, and began to remark upon it, he said, "Oh! it is only a little thing that I have done; faith could do far more thou that. If it were God's will that I should feed the universe on prayer and faith, I could do it. If I had more faith, it could be accomplished." I was just going to say that, possibly, a thousand orphans would be more than he could support, when he said, "When I got three hundred children, I began to pray God to send me money to build an Orphan House to hold seven

hundred more; and I have already £17,000 sent in for it, although I have never solicited a contribution from anybody but the Lord. I believe God has made me to be here, to be to the world, a proof that he hears and answers prayer." I thought so, too, when I saw that huge building, and the many dear children rising up to praise their God, and singing so sweetly in honor of the good Shepherd, who had gathered them like lambs to his bosom, and had gently folded them there.

Brethren, we do not speak without solid facts to confirm our assertion, when we affirm that, whatever a saint asks in prayer, if he asks in faith, and it is for his own profit, and for God's glory, he will be sure to have it. I daresay you have read Huntington's "Bank of Faith." He certainly gives us too many of those instances for most people to believe, but I fancy there are plenty of persons alive who have had as many answers to their prayers as ever William Huntington had, and who, if they were to write the minutiae of their lives, could bear most solemn testimony to the truth that never could they remember God being unfaithful to his promises, or their prayers unanswered. This, however, must always depend upon the person himself, for if we ask waveringly, or without faith, we must not expect to be answered. We must not forget that what God implies, when he does not grant unbelieving requests, is just this, "Inasmuch as you have no faith, I have nothing to give you." We must do as the people did at Christmas time in the olden days. It used to be the custom for the poor inhabitants in a village to go round with basins to the rich people in the parish, and beg bread and other victuals of them; and the rule was, that every gentleman was to fill the bowl that was brought to his door. Of course, the wisest amongst the poor folk brought a very large bowl for the Christmas gathering, but those who had little faith in the generosity of their wealthy neighbours took a small bowl, and that was filled; but those who took a big bowl had theirs filled too. So, dear friends, you must always try, in your prayers, to bring a big bowl to God. Bring great faith, and rest assured that, according to thy faith, it shall be done unto thee. If thou has little faith thou shalt have little answer; if thou hast tolerable faith, thou shalt have a tolerable answer; and if thou hast a mighty faith, thou shalt have such a mighty answer that thou shalt wonder at it, yet thou shall feel that it is according to the promise of our text, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee."

II. Now we come to the second part of our subject, and we notice AN IMPLIED IMPERFECTION: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." It is implied that God's people do not know everything.

Did you ever meet with a man who knew everything? I have happened to meet with half-a-dozen such. I once met with a minister who knew all things,—according to his own account, I mean, not according to mine. He told me when I saw him, that, in the parish where he lived, there were not more than a dozen people who knew the Lord Jesus Christ in truth. I was interested in that man, for I knew a little about him, so I said to him, "Well, who are they?" So he began, "Well, there is myself, and my wife, and my two deacons," and so on, "Oh!" I answered, "the only person I should dispute out of that number would be yourself, because I think you know too much by a great deal; you seem to have climbed up, and to have looked into the secret roll of God's decrees. No child of God would do that. Children do not look into their father's secrets; it is only thieves who do that. I should doubt your claim to be a child of God."

Each of us, at times, meets with an interesting individual who knows far too much, in whose company one always feels uncomfortable. We never introduce any subject, we leave him to do that, because he is the Pope of our circle. He hates Popery, of course; two Popes cannot agree; so, naturally, he has a very strong objection to the Pope of Rome. He himself knows all things. You utter a sentiment; he tells you directly that it is not sound; he knows, of course. You talk about a matter of experience; but he says, "That is not the experience of the living child of God." He is umpire, of course; he knows all about it; he is the judge who ends all strife; he settles everything. Bring him in, his vote is the casting vote, which it were almost profane to controvert. He is King, Lords, and Commons, all rolled into one; he makes the laws, and he fulfils them. He is, in his own sphere, the Autocrat of all Christians. Now, God's children belong to a very different order of beings from this very respectable and very venerable individual; they do not know everything, and they do not pretend to be full of all knowledge. One of the best of them, whose name was Paul, said, "Not as though I have already attained, either were already perfect: but I

follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

An old man once met a young one who had been to College about six months; and he said to him, "Do you know much?" Yes," the young man answered, "I am getting on very fast." The old man said, "You will not say that in a year's time, or else I shall have no hope for you." In a year's time, he asked him whether he knew much more than he did six months before, He replied, "Sometimes, I think I know a great deal more, but, at other times, I think I know a great deal less. I have discovered my own ignorance more than ever this last year." Then the old man said, "By the time you have been in college four years, you will confess yourself to be a very great fool;" and when he met him, during the fourth year, he said, "What do you know now?" The student replied, "I think perhaps I know more than when I entered College; but, in my own opinion, I know much less. When I first came, I thought myself competent to give a decisive opinion upon every subject; now, I am obliged to weigh everything before I am able to state anything positively. My own ignorance has been discovered."

Now, depend upon it, dear friends, it will be the same with each of you. We may think, when we first join the church, "We know almost everything." Some people suppose that all the truth is found in to Baptist denomination; others imagine it is all in the Episcopalian, Independent, or Wesleyan denomination, or in whatever sect they belong to; but when we have been members of the Baptist denomination for one considerable time, we discover that there are several faults amongst us; and we think, perhaps, that if we were fashioned according to the Presbyterian model, we might be improved. By-and-by, we find a friend who attends an Episcopal church, where he hears the gospel very plainly preached by a very earnest clergyman, and we say we think there is something good in the Episcopalians; and the longer we live, the more we find that there is something good in all; and that, after all, we do not know so much as we thought we did, and that our church, though it seemed to be the very

model of perfection, is found to be full of infirmities, as well as any other church, and it is not exactly the Church after all.

I repeat, then, the assertion that is implied in the text, that we have, all of us, a certain amount of ignorance and imperfection; for if we knew all things, we should have no necessity for this promise, that God would show us great and mighty things, which we do not know. That, as we are still imperfect, and growing in our knowledge, this promise is exceedingly precious to us. I can scarcely think that I have any person here of that particular clique, who fancy they know everything. If I have, I would say a word to him. There is a certain body of excellent men, who call themselves "God's dear people!" That is just what they are; they are dear to anybody, nobody would think of buying them. If they were to be given away, they would be scarcely worth having. They are God's dear people. They hear their minister preach a sermon, made up of the extract of gall and bitterness, and that just pleases them. His people rejoice in that kind of talk, and say that he is a faithful minister. If he were to leave off being bitter, he would not be faithful,—faithfulness, according to their meaning, consists in finding fault with all the world besides. They tell you to go to "Little Bethel," "Rehoboth," or "Bethesda," because there is no truth anywhere else. It is only there that the truth is to be had, and all other congregations are schismatics, whom it is their duty to denounce and persecute with the utmost rigour of the gospel, and you are aware that the utmost rigour of the gospel is worse than the utmost rigour of the law. The rigour of the gospel is more intolerable than even the rule of Draco himself; for those pensions exclude, denounce, and condemn every man who is not to the very turn of a hair's breadth in conformity with their views. To every such person we say, "Dear brother, you are very wise! All hail to you! We will put you in the chair as the marvellous Doctor of Divinity. You are the man, wisdom will die with you; and, while we humbly bow at your feet, we are obliged to say that you do not know everything yet; there are a few things that need to be revealed even to you; and while we keep ourselves at a respectful distance from anything like your superior knowledge, we are compelled to think that you have not yet attained unto perfection, and we cannot admit that you are the only man in all the world who understands and knows the gospel." Well, though our brother will not join with us in saying, "We do not know

all things," I think that all who are here present will bow their heads, and each one will say, "Lord, teach me what I do not know; for the little that I know is nothing to be compared with the volumes of thy wisdom which I have not read, and do not yet understand."

III. Now we come to the third head of our subject, which is the best of all. We have here THE PARTICULAR APPLICATION OF THE PROMISE: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

First, we understand this promise to relate to gospel doctrines. I confess that when I first preached in a country village as its pastor, I read all Dr. Gill's "Body of Divinity" and Calvin's "Institutes"; and when I had done that, I thought, "Now! have got hold of the truth, I am certain I have; and I can meet all opponents, and if they are not conformed to the views of that most learned man, Dr. Gill, and that excellent confessor, John Calvin, I will soon cut them up root and branch." Well, I began to preach what I had learned from these great and good men, and I have never been ashamed of having done so, for, as a successor of Dr. Gill, I am not ashamed to endorse his views even now, and to subscribe to the doctrinal statements that John Calvin uttered. However, I soon began to find out that there was a good deal to be said, after all, concerning some matters that Dr. Gill and John Calvin did not mention, and I found that I was obliged somewhat to stretch my charity, and to take to my heart some brethren who did not quite see all things which those enlightened men saw. And, moreover, I found out that I did not know everything, and that I had a good deal still to learn, and I find the same thing every day. I hope at all times to hold firmly all the truth I have received. I intend to grasp tightly with one hand the truths I have already learned, and to keep the other hand wide open to take in the things I do not yet know.

Perhaps I have some young man here who has a notion that some minister has got all the truth, or that he himself has embraced all the truth. Now, young man, there are a great many things that you do not know; there are some doctrines you do not understand. If you will wait a little while, and study your Bible more, you will go down on your knees, and say, "Lord, I never knew my own ignorance much as I do now; wilt

thou teach me thy truth?" Do we desire to understand the faith of God? Let us not be discouraged. In answer to our prayer, God will show us "great and mighty things" which we do not know now. You are a Christian, yet you do not comprehend the doctrine of election, or the doctrine of effectual calling puzzles you. You are a Churchman, perhaps, yet you do not know anything about these things. You are like a man I met once in a railway carriage. He said he was a High Churchman, and I said I was a High Churchman too. "How can that be?" he enquired, "you are a Dissenter." "But," I replied, "I believe many of the doctrines of your Church." He said, "I think not." "Well," I said "I believe in the doctrine of election, predestination, and so on." "Oh!" he said, "I do not." "But," I said, "they are in your Articles." He said, "I believe the Catechism, but I have not read the Articles." "Then," I rejoined, "I am the better Churchman of the two; you are the Dissenter, and I am the High Churchman. You ought to be turned out of the Church if you do not believe the Articles. They ought to take me, and give me a first-rate living, then make me one of their bishops; for I have read the Articles, and studied them."

A great many people do not know what they believe. No person has a right to say he is a Churchman, till he has read the Prayer-book. You have no right to say you are Wesleyan till you have read Wesley's sermons; and you have no right to say you are a Calvinist till you have read what Calvin believed; and you have no right to say you are a Christian till you have read your Bible, for the Bible is the standard of Christian faith and practice; and when you come to read your Bibles, you will find this one thing out, that your own little views were not quite so wide as the Bible, after all; and you will have to say, "Lord, show me great and mighty things, which I know not of." I am persuaded that neither the Church of England, nor the Wesleyans, nor the Independents, nor the Baptists, have got all the truth. I would not belong to any one of these denominations, for all the land that is beneath the sky, if I had to endorse all that is held by them. I believe that the Church ought to be governed by an Episcopal Presbyterian Baptist Independency. I believe we are all right in a great many of our doctrines, but that we all have something yet to learn. The doctrine of "man's responsibility" is not to be denied, nor the doctrine of "God's sovereignty" to be disputed. I hope that, some day, we



shall all bring our views to the test of the Sacred Scriptures. Then shall we have one Church, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Then shall we know great and mighty things which we know not now. I would persuade you, my Baptist friends, that your system is not perfect, and you members of the Episcopalian Church, that your polity is not altogether without imperfection; and I would entreat you, my friend, though you are a member of an excellent body of believers, however excellent that church may be, not to think it is infallible. Go down on your knees, and ask God to teach you what you do not know, and to make you better than your creed; or else, in nine cases out of ten, you will not be worth much.

But, next, "great, and mighty things, which thou knowest not," God will show thee in providence. A poor man is in trouble; he has not wherewithal to buy daily bread. Let him call upon God, and ask for it; and though he has never seen the Lord thrust out his hand from heaven, or feed him by the ravens, or quench his thirst with water out of the rock, let him go down on his knees, and he will find that there are more wonders in providence than you and I have seen yet. In answer to prayer, we shall see how God's providence, though it is far beyond our ideas, is according to our prayers. There are many Christians who have been in great trouble, and have experienced a most marvellous deliverance in providence. If we have great trouble, let us bring them to our great God; let us cry unto him, and in providence we shall see "great and mighty things" which we know not as yet.

In the next place, very briefly passing over these points, "great and mighty things, which thou knowest not," God will show thee in matters of Christian experience. Let us search God's Word, and give ourselves unto prayer, and then, in matters of experience, we shall see "great and mighty things" which we know not yet. A Christian is immeasurably beyond the worldling, and there is a possibility of a Christian becoming as much beyond himself as he now is beyond a sinner dead in sins. There is no telling how great he may become even on earth. I do not think we can ever on earth become perfect, but we know not how near to perfection we may come. We may not, whilst on earth, dwell in heaven; but; who can tell how much of heaven may dwell in us whilst we are here? Did you ever sit down and read the Life Of Herbert, or Whitefield, or Haliburton? After

we have read such books, we say within ourselves, "What poor worms we are!" We feel like Robert Hall, who, when a certain minister came to see him, said, "I am so glad to see you! Mr. So-and-so has been here; he is so far above me, that I felt myself to be nothing in his presence, but now I begin to feel myself a man again." Have you never felt, when in the company of some great and mighty man, as if you were nothing at all? When I first read Henry Martyn's Life, I could not refrain from weeping for some hours afterwards, to think how much below such a life as his I was living. Yet you know not but that you may climb where these men did; the steps of the mountain of piety may be steep to look upon, but they are accessible to the feet of diligence. Go on, and you shall yet stand where Moses stood, and behold Canaan from the top of Nebo. Remember that you are as yet upon the lowlands; be not ashamed to acknowledge that you are desirous to climb upwards. Bend your knees, and God will show you in experience "great and mighty things" that you know not yet.

If any man is content with his own experience, it is entirely through ignorance. I will defy anyone to take Rutherford's Letters, and sit down, and after he has read them, to help saying, "Rutherford seems to have been like an angel of God; I am only a man, I never can stand where Rutherford stood." Frequently, when I return home from chapel on the Sabbath evening, I get down George Herbert's book of songs; and when I see how much he loved the Lord, it seems to me as if he had struck upon his harp the very notes that he had heard in Paradise, and sung them all again. Let us not be discouraged, we may yet become Herberts, and Rutherfords, and Whitfields; nay, there is no reason why we should not become as great as the Old or New Testament saints. There is no reason why we should not be, as great as Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; for why should not every child of God, in these days, become a mighty man of faith as was Abraham of old? Let us lead the promise of the text: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

And, to conclude, the same truth holds good with regard to the universal Church of God. I do not know whether you may have noticed that the devil, in his wisdom, has just tried to pervert all our services. My heart has been made glad by the opening of Exeter Hall for the preaching of the

gospel! Never did my heart so leap for joy as when I heard that our brethren of the Church of England had to begun to preach in Exeter Hall, though I felt sad when those doors were shut against them. Now our joys are blasted, and our happiness is clouded. It appears that, because some have lately endeavoured to turn to good account the earnestness of the people to hear the Word in their own churches and chapels, next Sunday we shall see the lamentable spectacle, in this great metropolis, of a place, not open simply for the preaching of the Word, but actually for a Sabbath Concert.\* We shall read of multitudes assembled in a building, the property of one connected with a theatre; we shall hear of people being gathered together, and there will be a person found who will profess to preach the gospel to them, and the "Messiah" will be performed as the great inducement for attracting them. Perhaps there is no person who feels more sorrow than I do that this fearful cloud has fallen upon us. The devil may one day open the Crystal Palace, the Museum, and every other place on Sunday; but the Lord reigneth; and if this nation shall be given up to Sabbath breaking, let us not despair. God sits as the ruler in heaven and, as surely as he is God, he will get the victory. The devil will outwit himself, as he has always done; Satan will fall into his own pit. I hope, however, that the Christians of Great Britain will be very earnest in calling upon God. Pray continually to the Most High, that he will prosper the preaching of the gospel to the multitude; but that he will never allow our entering into unconsecrated places to be twisted and turned to unhallowed uses, and that God will bring forth greater good out of the great evil, and so glorify himself, and thus show us great and mighty things that we know not.

I can only now beseech the Lord to pour his blessing upon each of you. May you be earnest in prayer, and constant in supplication; and if you have never known Christ yet, may he soon be made known to you by the Holy Spirit, and may your prayers be lifted up to heaven that he may show you his salvation, which is one of the "great and mighty things" which you know not now!

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## **This Thing Is From Me**

Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me. - 1 Kings 12:24

It is very delightful to read a history in which God is made prominent. How sadly deficient we are of such histories of our own English nation! Yet surely there is no story that is more full of God than the record of the doings of our British race. Cowper, in one of his poems, shows the parallel between us and the house of Israel, and he dwells upon various special incidents in our history, and draws valuable lessons therefrom. God's wisdom and power have been conspicuous from the time when this now full-grown nation was but like a puling chit. He has nursed and watched over it, protecting it against gigantic foes, and making it to be the defender of his truth, the favored abode of his people. Oh, for a historian who could dip his pen in thoughts of God, and who, from beginning to end of his history, would not be showing us the crafty policy of kings and cabinets, but the finger of God! We want, nowadays, to have history written in some such style as appears in these Books of Samuel, and Kings, and Chronicles; then might history become almost like a new Bible to us. We should find that, as the book of revelation agrees with the book of creation, so does the book of divine providence in human history agree with both of them, for the same God is the Author of all these works. If we cannot get anybody to write such histories, yet let us continually amend the errata, and add appendices to such records as we have, for God is God, and God is everywhere, and blessed is the man who learns to spy him out.

Notice, next, what I pointed out to you in our reading, what power was possessed by God's prophets under the Old Testament. Here is one Shemaiah,—some of you never heard of him before, perhaps you will never hear of him again; he appears once in this history, and then he vanishes; he comes, and he goes,—only fancy this one man constraining

to peace a hundred and eighty thousand chosen men, warriors ready to fight against the house of Israel, by giving to them in very plain, unpolished words, the simple command of God: "Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel: return every man to his house;" and it is added, "they hearkened therefore to the Word of the Lord, and returned to depart, according to the Word of the Lord." Why have we not such power? Peradventure, brethren, we do not always speak in the name of the Lord, or speak God's Word as God's Word. If we are simply tellers out of our own thoughts, why should men mind us? If we speak the word which we ourselves have fashioned, what is there in our anvil that it should command respect for what we make upon it? But if we can rise to the height of this great argument, and speak the truth as messengers of God, and there leave it, believing in it ourselves, and expecting great results from it, I wot that there will come more from our ministries than we have ever seen as yet. When the apostle Peter spoke to the lame man at the temple gate, he said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk;" and he did rise up and walk because the name of Jesus Christ was relied upon; and we have need to preach the gospel, not as though our suasion, much less our oratory, were to prevail with men, but believing that there is an intrinsic power in the gospel, and that God the Holy Ghost will go with it to work the divine purpose, and accomplish the decrees of the Most High. We have need to stand near to God, and to be more completely overshadowed by his presence, and to be ourselves more fully believers in the Divine Majesty, and then shall we see greater things than these. Surely, God must have meant that, under the New Testament, there should be a power in his Word even greater than that which rested on it under the Old Testament.

Note one more lesson conveyed by this incident. It would be a grand thing to preach only one sermon, and to be as successful as Shemaiah was; it would be far better than to preach ten thousand, and to accomplish nothing by them all I hope the net result of our ministry will not be like that of the famous leader who with his troops marched up a hill and then marched down again. A man may take many years to say nothing, and he may very elaborately and very eloquently discharge himself of that which it was totally unnecessary for him to have said; but

it would be better far to be surcharged with one message, and to deliver that one in the power of Almighty God, even if the speaker's voice is never heard again. I pray that those of us who do preach the gospel may preach each sermon as if that one discourse were worth a lifetime, worth the putting forth of every faculty that we possess, so that, if we never preached again, we might nevertheless have done a life-work in a single sermon. What an opportunity is mine to-night! What an opportunity you also will have, my brother, when you confront your congregation next Lord's-day, an opportunity which angels might envy you! Though you do not gather together a hundred and eighty thousand men, yet you may reach as many as that through the one sermon you are going to preach next Sabbath, for one person converted by the Holy Ghost, through you, may be the means of bringing in many others, and eventually there may come out of your one effort a harvest that cannot be counted. A forest once slept within a single acorn-cup. The beginning of the great lies in the little. Let us therefore earnestly pray God that we may preach as dying men to dying men, and deliver each discourse as if that one message was quite enough to serve for our whole life-work. We need not wish to preach another sermon provided we are enabled so to deliver that one that the purpose of God shall be accomplished by us, and the power of his Word shall be seen upon our hearers.

With these remarks by way of preliminary observations, I want to prove to you from our text that, first, some events are very specially from God; secondly, when they are seen to be from God, they are not to be fought against; and, thirdly, this general principle has many special applications, some of which we shall try to make.

I. First, SOME EVENTS ARE SPECIALLY FROM GOD: "This thing is from me."

I do not know what some people believe, for they seem to try to do without God altogether; but I believe that God is in all things,—that there is neither power, nor life, nor motion, nor thought, nor existence apart from him. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." By him all things exist and consist. Like foam upon the wave, all things would dissolve away did not God continue them, did not God uphold them. I see

God in everything, from the creeping of an aphid upon a rose-bud to the fall of a dynasty. I believe that God is in the earthquake and the whirlwind; but I believe him to be equally in the gentlest zephyr, and in the fall of the sere leaf from the oak of the forest. Blessed is that man to whom there exists nothing in which he cannot see the presence of God. It makes this world a grand sphere when God is seen everywhere in it from the deepest mine to the remotest star. This earth is a wretched dark dungeon if once the light of the presence and the working of God be taken away from it.

Notice also, dear friends, that God is in events which are produced by the sin and the stupidity of men. This breaking up of the kingdom of Solomon into two parts was the result of Solomon's sin and Rehoboam's folly; yet God was in it: "This thing is from me, saith the Lord." God had nothing to do with the sin or the folly, but in some way which we can never explain, in a mysterious way in which we are to believe without hesitation, God was in it all. The most notable instance of this truth is the death of our Lord Jesus Christ; that was the greatest of human crimes, yet it was foreordained and predetermined of the Most High, to whom there can be no such thing as crime, nor any sort of compact with sin. We know not how it is, but it is an undoubted fact that a thing may be from God, and yet it may be wrought, as we see in this case, by the folly and the wickedness of men; neither does this in the least degree interfere with human agency in its utmost freedom. Some who have held that man is a free agent have attempted to vindicate free agency as if predestination were the contradiction of it, which it is not; we who believe in predestination also believe in free agency as much as they do who reject the other truth. Others hold predestination, and straightway they begin to rail at all who believe in the responsibility and free agency of men. My brothers, there is nothing to rail at in either doctrine, the two things are equally true. "How, then," asks someone, "do you reconcile them?" These two truths have never fallen out, as far as I know, and it is poor work to try to reconcile those who are true friends. "But," says the objector, "how do you make them seem to be true friends?" I do not make them seem to be true friends. I bless God that there are some things in the Bible which I never expect to understand while I live here. A religion which I could perfectly understand would be no religion to me; when I had mastered it,

it would never master me. But to my mind it is a most delightful thing for the believer to bow before inscrutable mysteries, and to say, "My God, I never thought that I was infinite, I never dreamt that I could take thy place, and understand all things; I believe, and I am content." So I believe in the free agency of men, in their responsibility and wickedness, and that everything evil cometh of them; but I also believe in God, that "this thing" which, on the one side of it, was purely and alone from men, on another side of it was still from God, who rules both evil and good, and not only walks the garden of Eden in the cool of a summer's eve, but walks the billows of the tempestuous sea, and ruleth everywhere by his sovereign might.

How, then, was "this thing" from God? Well, clearly, it was from God in two ways. First, it was so as a matter of prophecy. The prophet Ahijah had prophesied that the ten parts of the rent garment which were given to Jeroboam should be symbolic of the ten tribes that would be given to him when they had been torn away from the house of David. The prophecy was literally fulfilled, as God's words always are.

And, secondly, "this thing" was from God as a matter of punishment. He sent it as a punishment for the sins of the house of David of which Solomon had been guilty when he set up other gods before the Most High, and divided the allegiance of his kingdom from Jehovah by bringing in the gods of Moab, and Ammon, and Egypt. God ordained this evil that he might chastise the greater evil of want of loyalty to himself on the part of his servant Solomon. Yea, my brethren, God setteth evil against evil that he may destroy evil, and he uses that which cometh of human folly that he may manifest his own wisdom.

So there are some events which are specially from the Lord, although it seemeth not so; and this is to us often a great source of consolation. We have said to ourselves, "However did things get into this tangle and snarl?" Look at the professing church at this present moment, what is there about it that can at all cheer the child of God? All things appear dark and complicated; they seem to be built on a quicksand; and that which is superficial, and unsubstantial, and dreamy, and deceptive is everywhere. Still, the Lord liveth, and the rock of our salvation faileth not.



As he makes the wrath of man to praise him, so doth he also with the folly and the wickedness of man, and the remainder of both he doth restrain. "The Lord sitteth upon the floods; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever." Hallelujah!

II. The second thing evidently taught by our text is that, WHEN EVENTS ARE SEEN TO BE FROM THE LORD, THEY ARE NOT TO BE FOUGHT AGAINST.

Rehoboam had summoned his soldiers to go to war against the house of Israel; but, inasmuch as it was from God that the ten tribes had revolted from him, he must not march into the territories of Israel, nor even shoot an arrow against them.

The thing that is happening to you is of the Lord, therefore resist it not, for it would be wicked to do so. If it be the Lord's will, so may it be. To put our will against his will, is sheer rebellion against him. Trace an event as distinctly from God, and then the proper course of action is that which the psalmist took, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." Absolute submission is not enough, we must go on to joyful acquiescence in the will of God. If the cup be bitter, our acquiescence must take it as cheerfully as if it were sweet. "Hard lines," say you. "To hard hearts," say I; but when our hearts are right with God, so well do we love him that, if it ever came to a conflict anywhere, whether it should be our will or his will that should prevail, we should at once end the conflict by saying, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." It is nothing but wickedness, whatever form it assumes, when we attempt to resist the will of God.

But, next, while it is wicked, it is also vain, for what can we do against the will of God? Shall the rush by the river resist the north wind? Shall the dust rise up in conflict with the tempest? God is almighty; if that were all, it were enough, for who can stand against his power? But he is also all-wise; and if we were as wise as he is, we should do as he does. Moreover, he is all goodness, and he is ever full of love. Judged of according to the divine understanding, everything that he willeth must be right. Why, then, shall I dare contend against his strength, his wisdom, and his love?

It must be useless so to do. Who hath resisted his will? Who could succeed if he did?

Next, it would be mischievous, and would be sure to bring a greater evil upon us if we did resist. Had this king Rehoboam gone out to fight with the far greater tribes which had revolted, it might have resulted in the desolation of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem. He was much wiser in putting up his sword into its sheath, for it would have been disastrous to the last degree for him to break the command of God, and go to war against Israel. And depend upon it, brothers, there is no way of bringing afflictions upon ourselves like refusing to bear afflictions. If we will not bear the yoke that is laid upon us, and heed the gentle tugging of the rein, then the goad and the whip will be used upon us. Nothing involves us in so much sorrow as our refusal to submit to sorrow. If we will not take up the cross, the cross, mayhap, will take us up; and that is a far worse lot than the other. Endure, submit, acquiesce, it is the easiest way, after all; for if thou art a child of God, and thou rebellest against him, thou wilt have to smart for it. But if thou art not his child, and thou rebellest, like proud Pharaoh, God will set thee up to be a monument for men to wonder at as they see how sternly Jehovah dealeth with stubborn sinners who say, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Whenever, therefore, a thing is distinctly from the Lord, it is not to be resisted.

III. Now I come to what may be more interesting to you, that is, to make a practical application of this subject, for **THIS GENERAL PRINCIPLE HAS MANY SPECIAL APPLICATIONS**. I believe it often happens that events are most distinctly from the Lord, and when it is so, our right and proper way is to yield to them.

I could narrate many very singular things that have happened to me, but I will not; only I am reminded just now of one that I will tell you. There sat, one Sabbath day, in that left-hand gallery, a young Hindoo gentleman wearing a scarlet sash. I preached that morning from this text, "What if thy father answer thee roughly?"\* and I had hardly reached the vestry at the back before this young Hindoo gentleman was there with an aged man, who is now with God,—a well-known Christian man,—and all in a hurry the young man said, "Sir, has Mr. E\_\_\_\_\_ told you about me?"

"No," I said, "I have not seen him for months; what could he have told me about you?" "Are you sure that you never heard of me before?" "To my knowledge, I never heard of you, and never saw you before." "Well then, sir," he said, "there is a God, and that God is in this place." "How so?" I asked. "Last night, I told this gentleman here," he answered, "that I was almost persuaded to be a Christian; but that, when I went home to India, I should be disinherited by my father, and I felt sure that I should not have the courage to stand out as a Christian; and then my friend said, 'Come and hear Mr. Spurgeon to-morrow morning,' and I came in here, and you preached from those words, 'What if thy father answer thee roughly?' Verily," he said, "the God of the Christians is God, and he has spoken to me this day." That was another illustration of our text, "This thing is from me." Has it not often happened so? The providential working of the Holy Ghost is a very wonderful subject. They who are the Holy Ghost's servants learn to depend upon him for every word they are to utter; they sometimes feel their flesh creep, and almost every hair on their head stand on end at the way in which they have unconsciously spoken so as to depict to the very life the character of their hearers,—casual hearers, perhaps,—as if they had photographed them though they knew them not. Oh, you who are the Lord's workers, commit yourselves to God's guidance; the more you can do it, the better, for often and often you will have to say of an event that happens to you, "This thing is from the Lord."

Again, dear friends, another case in which this principle applies is when severe afflictions arise. I think that, of all afflictions to which we should bow most readily, those take the first place that are distinctly from the Lord; for instance, the deaths of dear friends, or when we cannot accuse ourselves of having done anything that can have contributed to the affliction that has come upon us, or when we have suffered losses in business though we have been engaged honestly and industriously in doing all we can to provide things honest in the sight of all men. There are some afflictions which remind me of a term which I have seen in the charters of ships,—"the act of God." Certain calamities at sea are called "the act of God." So there are certain events in life which may be very terrible and very sorrowful, but if they are the act of God, they come to us thus distinguished, "This is from God." Will you not accept it from the

Lord?" Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Will we not say, with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"? "This thing is from me." O thou who art his child, accept the chastisement from thy Father's hand, and kiss the rod with which he smites thee!

Sometimes, also, we are troubled by certain disquieting plans proposed by our friends or our children. We do not like their schemes, and we say, "No, do not act so; it seems to me to be quite wrong;" yet, sometimes, a boy will do this and that; or a friend has made up his mind to take a certain course, and, at last, when you have pleaded, and persuaded, and urged, and done your best to turn them from their purpose, if the thought should creep into your mind, "Peradventure, this thing is from God," then stay your persuasions, as Paul's friends when he would not be persuaded, ceased to argue with him. Sometimes, that which seems to be a great mistake may, nevertheless, in the hand of God, prove to be the right course; our judgment is but fallible, but the judgment of the Most High is always correct. Struggle not too long, lest thou bring thyself into another sorrow; but be willing to yield at the right time, saying, "Peradventure, this thing is from the Lord."

A very pleasant phase of this same truth is when some singular mercy comes. Have not many of you experienced some very remarkable deliverances? Has not God been pleased to open for you rivers in the desert, and waters in high places, where waters are not usually found? Well, whenever singular and startling mercy comes to you, say, "This is from God." It is a delightful thing when you get a present from a very choice friend who says, "This is from me." You value it all the more because of the person from whom it comes. If thou hast nothing but a crust of bread, take thy knife and cut it, and say, "This is from the Lord." But if he has given thee a downy bed on which to rest thy weary limbs, and if he has indulged thee with many luxuries, say thou, "This is from the Lord," and everything shall be the brighter and the better to thee because he gave it. It is the best part of the gift. Often, a little thing, which we might despise in itself, becomes invaluable because of the giver; and all thy life shall be full of rich treasure, ay, with very "curios" worthy to be stored away, and looked at with admiration throughout the rest of thy

days, because "This is from me," is so clearly written upon them all.

Still applying the principle of our text, let me remind you that, when a man receives a very striking warning, he ought to hear a voice at the back of it, saying, "This thing is from me." When near to die, wrecked, almost aground, or delivered out of an awful accident, if such has been thy case, hear thou, man, out of all the hurry-burly from which thou hast escaped, "This is from me." A soldier, who has heard the bullets whistle by his ear, or who comes out of a battle lopped of a limb but still alive, should hear this voice, "This is from me." Oh, that men would hear the voice of God, and turn from their sins! If the Lord has been so gracious as to spare thy life, count that his long-suffering means to thee repentance, and that his sparing thee is a call to thee to give up thy sins, and turn to him.

The same principle applies when it is not a striking warning, but when it happens that men have some tender emotions stealing over them. Some of you to whom I am speaking are unconverted, but there have been times when, in the house of God, you have felt very strangely. You may not have actually prayed, but you have almost prayed that you might pray. "Please God I once get home," you have said, "I will go to my room, and fall upon my knees before him." Have not even the most thoughtless of you, when alone, felt as if you must think? In the watches of the night, have you not been made to consider? A policeman, who came to join the church this week, said to me, "Often, when I tread my solitary beat, I feel as if I must think of God. He seems so very near me when there is not a sound to be heard except the tread of my own feet." Well, if ever you feel that, yield to it. O dear hearts, if ever you find an unusual softness stealing over you, do not resist it! It may be that it is the blessed Spirit come to emancipate you from your obstinacy and hardness, and to bring you into the new life,—the life of tenderness and love. When he draws thee, run after him. Let tender impulse and gentle drawing suffice thee, for all is for thy good. Yield yourselves to the Spirit's influence even now. While he bids thee, believe in Jesus, and live. While he whispers to thee, "Repent," repent, and be converted. God grant it, of his infinite mercy! Our time has gone; but may what has been spoken be remembered throughout eternity because it can truly be said, "This thing is from me, saith the Lord."

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## **Thou Art Now The Blessed Of The Lord**

Thou art now the blessed of the Lord. - Genesis 26:29

These words truly describe the position of many whom I address at this time. There are hundreds here upon whom my eye can rest, and to any one of whom I might point with this finger, or rather, to whom I might extend this hand, to give a hearty shake, and say, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." I need not say it in the same spirit, nor for the same reason, that the Philistines did. They had behaved basely towards Isaac, and now that he had prospered, they urged him to forget the past. They meant, "This is why we trust that you will deal kindly with us, and overlook our hard usage; for, in spite of all, God has so blessed you that you need not be fretful and pettish, and remember what we have done." I am glad that I am under no necessity to strive to make up a quarrel in this way. These many years we have dwelt in peace, and have enjoyed sweet fellowship together. You have borne with my weaknesses often, and bestowed upon me a wealth of affection which I am sure I do not deserve. So, though I use the language of Abimelech and his friends, my motive is a very different one. Yet the truth is the same concerning many a one here: "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

There is, however, much force in the argument which these Philistines used. If God has richly blessed us, notwithstanding all our faults and failures, surely we should learn to forgive many injuries done to ourselves. If the Lord forgives us our debt of ten thousand talents, we must be willing to forgive our fellow-servant his debt of a hundred pence. Child of God, if you are now the blessed of the Lord, you will often turn a

blind eye towards the offenses of your fellow-men. You will say, "God has so blessed me, that I can well overlook any wrongs that you have inflicted, any hard words that you have said. I am now blessed of the Lord; so let bygones be bygones." May you have grace given to you to do that now, if any of you have had a little squabble with any other! If there have been any difficulties between any of you, I would hope that, before I really get into my subject, while with my finger I point you out and say to each one of you, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord," you will immediately say, "As surely as that is true, I do from my very heart forgive all who have offended me, whether Philistine, or Israelites, or Gentiles. How can I do otherwise who myself have received such grace while so unworthy?"

Remember, that this was spoken by the Philistine king as a reason why he wished to have Isaac for a friend. In your choice of friends, choose those who are the friends of God. If you would have a blessing upon your friendship, select a man whom God has blessed. Look out for one who is a disciple of Christ and say, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord; therefore I seek thine acquaintance. Come under my roof; you will bring a blessing with you." Speak to me in the street; your morning word will be a benediction to me." It was the old custom with apostolic men to say, as they entered a house, "Peace be unto this house." We have given up all idea of blessing our fellow-men in that way. But why have you done so? Is it from a want of love, or want of faith in our own prayer that God would make it even so? For my part, I value a good man's blessing. As I drove up a hill, in the country, some time ago, a poor man and his wife were walking down the hill. I had never seen them before; but the woman pulled the husband by his coat; they both stood and looked at me, and at last she said, quite loudly, "It's him, God bless him!" and although her greeting was not quite grammatical, it evidently came from her heart, and I felt happier for it, as I went on my way. I saw her afterwards, and asked her the reason of her words, "Why," she said, "I have read your sermons for many a year, and I could not help saying, 'God bless him!' when I saw you, for you have been a blessing to me." Thus that humble woman, being blessed of the Lord, became a blessing to me; and we all of us, even the most obscure, who know the grace of God, might daily be like a great benediction in the midst of the people. When you think of your minister, say sometimes, "God bless him!" it will do him good to hear it. Say to

your friend, "God bless you!" Say to your children, "God bless you, my dear boy! The Lord bless you, my dear girl!" They will be the better for it, if you yourself are the blessed of the Lord. You, grandsires, lay your hands on the children's heads, and bless them; they will not forget it when they grow up. It may be that you have done much more for them than you have thought. Concerning his flock the Lord says, "I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." God's people are blessed that they may bless; therefore, for the sake of others, as well as for your own, seek that my text may be abundantly true of you. May this be your prayer—

"Lord, I hear of showers of blessing,  
Thou art scattering full and free;  
Showers, the thirsty land refreshing;  
Let some droppings fall on me,  
Even me."

It was for this reason that the Philistines sought the friendship of Isaac, because they could truly say to him, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

I want not so much to preach from this text as to ask every believer in Christ to feel that it is personally true. Once you were condemned; but, being in Christ Jesus, "there is therefore now no condemnation." "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Once you were at enmity against God; but now, being reconciled to God by the death of his Son, you are his friend: "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." "Ye were sometimes in darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." How great the change for the man or woman to whom we can say "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord"!

There was a day when I was cursed, and there was a day when I loved sin, and opposed God's will; but now I love sin no longer, and I find my highest delight in doing the will of my Father in heaven. My soul, if this be true, "thou art now the blessed of the Lord"; thou art a miracle of mercy; thou art a prodigy of grace; and truly, where sin abounded, grace



did much more abound." Sit still in your pews, ye people of God, and roll this sweet morsel under your tongue! Once, because you believed not, the wrath of God was resting upon you, but now you can say, "O Lord! I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." Surely then "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Thou art poor, perhaps, in this world's goods; but being an heir of the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," why, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Or, perchance, you are weak and ill, and scarcely able to be in your place; but though thy flesh and strength fail, "thou art now the blessed of the Lord," for by his grace, you will triumph over all. With many a fear and many a care oppressed, still "thou art now the blessed of the Lord," and on him thou canst cast thy care, and from him receive deliverance from all thy fears. Whatever thy distresses, this overwhelms them all as with a flood of joy. You can join with one who, though in a very humble station of life, says,—

"O joy! 'tis mine, this life divine,  
Life hid with Christ in God;  
Once sin-defiled, now reconciled,  
And washed in Jesus' blood.

"Oft far astray from Christ the Way,  
I went with wilful feet;  
From hopeless track, love brought me back,  
With words of welcome sweet."

If thou canst truly sing this sweet song, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Thou art not yet perfect; thou art not yet taken out of the body to be with thy Lord in bliss; thou art not yet risen from the dead to stand before the throne of God in thy body of resurrection glory; but yet thou art now, even now, the blessed of the Lord. Will you let the flavour of this sweet truth be in your mouth, and in your heart, while I seek to open this subject to you?

I. I would remark upon it, first, that in the case of Isaac, **THIS WAS THE TESTIMONY OF ENEMIES**. It was the Philistines who said, "Thou art

now the blessed of the Lord." There are some of God's people who are so evidently favoured of heaven that even those who despise and oppose them cannot help saying of them, "They are the blessed of the Lord." I wish that we were all such, so distinguished by piety, so marked out by strength of faith and prevalence of prayer, that even our Abimelechs might be forced to say to each of us, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." What caused this heathen king and his companions to use such an expression about Isaac? In seeking the reasons which led them to see the bounty of the Lord in the case of Abraham's son, we may find some signs of the blessing of God upon ourselves and upon our children.

I think, first, that they saw it in his wonderful prosperity. We read in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth verses, "Then Isaac sowed in the land, and received in the same year a hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: for he had possession of flocks and possession of herds, and great store of servants." Prosperity is not always a token of blessing. It may be proof of the lord's favour, and it may not be. God sometimes gives most to those on earth who will have nothing in heaven; as if, seeing that he cannot bless them in eternity, he would let them enjoy the poor sweets of time. I have heard it said, that prosperity was the blessing of the old covenant and adversity the blessing of the new. Nevertheless, it is true that worldly prosperity may be sent, and has been sent, to the children of God, as a token of divine favour. It is not always when we eat the quails that they make us ill; God can send them in such a way that we may enjoy them, and be strengthened by them. He can give riches as well as poverty. That was the Philistines' reason, and it is a Philistine's reason. It is not a very satisfactory one, but it has some force, for the Lord Jesus himself gave the sign of blessing upon the meek, saying, "They shall inherit the earth;" and in the same memorable discourse upon the mount, he uttered the exhortation and promise, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things"—the things which the gentiles seek after—"shall be added unto you." So we may fairly construe the "mercies of God" as a sign of his blessing.

These Philistines had a further reason for thinking that Isaac was blessed of God; they felt it by divine impression. A secret spirit whispered to the

king, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." God always has a way of making men feel "how awful goodness is." They may jest and jeer against a Christian, but his life vanquishes them. They cannot help it. They must do homage to the supremacy of grace. The promise is still true, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." God will impress upon the minds even of unbelievers this fact, that such a man, such a woman, is one whom God has blessed. Do you not know some believers who have such an air of other-worldliness about them, that though they mix freely with the people amongst whom they dwell, men instinctively acknowledge that "they have been with Jesus," and have been blessed by him? I do not care to see pictures of the saints of old with a nimbus of light round their heads, even though they have been painted by the old masters, yet there is something about one who lives a saintly life, a brightness encircling him, like the symbol of God's presence, which separates him from those around him, and leads us to say to him, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Further, before the Philistines bore this testimony to Isaac, no doubt they remarked his gentleness. I do believe that there is nothing that has such power over ungodly men as meekness of spirit, quietness of behavior, patience of character, and the continual conquest over an evil temper. If you grow angry when people are angry with you, you will have lost your position; but if you can be patient under persecution, if you can smile when they ridicule you, if you can yield your rights, if you can bear and continue to bear, you are greater than the man who has taken a city. Remember the blessing promised to the disciples of Christ who are peacemakers. They are not only the children of God, but "they shall be called the children of God." People will say, "If any man is a true Christian, he is one;" they will have no doubt about it. When longsuffering, gentleness, and meekness are in the life, men begin to say to such a one, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." As the gentleness of the Lord makes us great, the gentleness of the saints brings to God great glory. Anger hath a temporary sovereignty, that melts in the heat of the sun. Quietness of spirit is king over all the land. If thou canst rule thyself, thou canst rule the world. Isaac conquered by his meekness; for when Abimelech saw that he yielded well after well rather than keep up a

quarrel, he said to him, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Some of you do not understand this. "What!" you say, "are we not to stick up for ourselves?" That depends upon whose you are; if you are your own, take care of yourselves; but if you are Christ's, let him take care of you. "But," you say, "if you tread on a worm, it will turn." But surely you will not make a worm your pattern? Nay, but let the meek and lowly Christ be your example, and seek to be a partaker of his Spirit. He prayed even for his murderers, "Father, forgive them," and he ever sought to return good for evil. I pray you to do the same, cultivate a gentle spirit, and even worldlings will say to you, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Now, while these Philistines saw that God blessed Isaac, they nevertheless envied him, as we read in the fourteenth verse. How strange it is that men, who do not care to be blessed of God themselves, envy them who are blessed of him! I heard one say, "It is not just that God should have a chosen people." Sir, do you want to be one of God's people? These blessings which God gives to them, do you want to have them? You may have them, if you will. If you will not have them, I pray you do not quarrel with God because he chooses to give them where he wills. There are two great truths, which from this platform, I have proclaimed for many years. The first is, that salvation is free to every man who will have it; the second is, that God gives salvation to a people whom he has chosen; and these truths are not in conflict with one another in the least degree. If you want the blessing of the Lord, have it even now, for my commission as an ambassador of Christ is to beseech men to be reconciled to God; if you do not want it, do not quarrel with God for giving it to his own chosen. It was so with those Philistines—they wanted not Jehovah's blessing, and yet they envied Isaac, who had it.

But while they envied him, they feared him, and courted his favour. Do I speak to some young believer who has gone into a house of business, or some Christian woman who has been placed in a family where her religion exposes her to opposition? Let me counsel you to go straight on, taking no notice of the hindrances thrown in your way. You will first be envied; after that you will be feared; and after that you will be sought after, and your company will be desired. If you can only keep as firm as Isaac did, never losing your temper, but always being gentle, and meek,

and kind, you will conquer; and you who are to-day despised, will yet come to be honoured, even as Isaac was by the very Abimelech who had, just a little while before, asked him to go away.

A man of God, who was bearing testimony for the faith, on one occasion was pushed into a kennel by a person passing by, who said, as he thrust him in, "There, take that, John Bunyan." He took off his hat, and said, "I will take anything if you give me the name of John Bunyan. I count it such an honour to have that title, that you may do anything that you like with me." To be identified with those who have been blessed of the Lord is worth more than all the favours of the world. We are in good company. If men despise you, it matters little when God has blessed you. If they push you into the gutter for being a Christian, take your hat off, and thank the, for it is worth while to bear any scorn, that you may have the honour to be numbered with the followers of Christ. Rest assured that if you will count it a privilege even to be mocked for your faith, those who persecute you to-day, will acknowledge your high position to-morrow. It is a grand thing when any one of us thus gets the testimony of our enemies, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

II. Now, secondly, not only did his enemies thus bear witness to Isaac, saying, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord;" but **THIS WAS ALSO THE TESTIMONY OF THE LORD.** It was because he had the witness of God that he was able so to behave as to secure the favourable verdict of the Philistines. Like Enoch before his translation, Isaac "had this testimony, that he pleased God." And was thus meekly able to bear the displeasure of the world. When they hunted him from one well, he digged another, yet all the time he with joy drew "water out of the wells of salvation." He might almost have sat for the picture which Jeremiah drew of the blessed man, centuries afterwards, when he said, "Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when the heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

Let us see, then, how Isaac had the testimony of God as to his

blessedness.

First, this was the Lord's testimony to him in promises founded upon the covenant which he had made with Abraham his father. God said to Isaac, "I will be with thee, and will bless thee." In the third verse of this chapter, the promise is made doubly sure to Isaac when God says, "I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father." And in the twenty-fourth verse of the chapter, where the promise is renewed, it is still on the ground of the covenant: "I am with thee, and I will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake." Now, do you know anything of the covenant relationship between God and his people? The bulk of Christians nowadays are wholly ignorant on this subject. The preachers have forgotten it; yet the covenant is the top and bottom of all theology. He that is the master of the knowledge of the covenants has the key of true divinity. But the doctrine has gone out of date except with a few old-fashioned people, who are supposed to know no better, but who, in spite of all the taunts of their opponents, cling to the doctrines of grace, and find in them the very marrow and fatness of the truth of God. I love the promises of God because they are covenant promises God has engaged to keep his word with his people in the person of his dear Son. He has bound himself, by covenant with Christ, and will not, cannot go back from his word; and Christ has fulfilled the conditions of the covenant, and he who hath "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant," will certainly, "make you perfect to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ." The promise is a double promise when it is confirmed in Jesus. Though we are poor and worthless creatures, yet can we say with David, "Although my house not be so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." Twice God says by Isaiah, "I have given him for a covenant to the people" thrice happy are they who receive what God hath given, and who, in Christ, enter into that blessed bond. Beloved, if God has laid the promise home to you by the Spirit, and let you see it as a covenant promise, the God has borne this testimony to you: "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Thou art blessed now; thou shalt be blessed all thy life long on earth;

"And when through Jordan's flood,  
Thy God shall bid thee go,  
His arm shall thee defend,  
And vanquish every foe;  
And in this covenant thou shalt view  
Sufficient strength to bear thee through."

Further, the Lord bore testimony to Isaac in secret manifestation. He came to him in the watches of the night, and spake with him face to face. None but those who are the blessed of the Lord have such communion with him. "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" asked Judas, not Iscariot, at the supper-table, before the Lord's betrayal. Ah, Judas! It is simply because thou art not Iscariot, but a true disciple; else hadst thou never known intimately the presence of Christ. If he manifests himself to us in this choice manner, it is because he has blessed us in a way in which he would not bless the ungodly world. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." Do you ever get manifestations of Christ? Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto you? Then thou hast a divine attestation that "thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Isaac also found this testimony, I think, in divine acceptance of his worship. We find that "he builded an altar," and then he, "pitched his tent." Keep up the altar of God in your home, and keep to the right order—the altar first, and the tent second. When God accepts you there, and makes your family altar to be a place of refreshment and delight to you, you will feel that in thus doing he is giving you the sweet assurance that you are now the blessed of the Lord. It is a pity that there are so many houses nowadays without roofs—I mean, houses of Christian people without family prayer. What are some of you at? If your children turn out ungodly, do you wonder at it, seeing that there is no morning and evening prayer, no reading of the Word of God in your home? In every home where the grace of God is known, there should be an altar, from which should rise the incense of praise, and at which the one sacrifice for sin should be pleaded before God day by day. In the midst of such family piety, which I fear is almost dying out in many quarters, you will get the

witness, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Isaac had another proof that he was blessed of God in swift chastisement for sin. He told a lie; he said that Rebekah was his sister, whereas she was his wife. Although that might seem to prove that he was not blessed of the Lord, the proof of his blessedness was that he was found out, and became ashamed of it. Worldly people may do wrong, and very likely get off scot-free; but if a Christian man goes off the straight line, he will have an accident in his roguery, and be found out; while other men may do ten times as badly, and never be suspected. Rascals who know not God, and who despise the ordinary morality of honest men, may speculate on the Stock Exchange with other peoples' money and never be found out; but if you who really love God only do it once, and say, "Well, I feel driven to it," you will be caught as surely as you live. It is one mark of a child of God, that when he does wrong, he gets a whipping. If I were in the street, and saw strange boys breaking windows, I would say, "Go home, or I will find a policeman for you." But if it were my own boy, I would chastise him myself. I would not meddle with the other boys; but with my own I would. So it is with God; who saith, by the mouth of Amos, to his people, "You only have I known for all of the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." It is a mark of God's blessing a man, that if the man does wrong, he cannot do it with impunity. Whenever your sins make you smart, thank God; for it is better to smart than it is to sin, and better that the smart should wean you from sin than that something sweet should come in to make you the slave of that sin forever.

Well, I will not dwell further on this. God testified to Isaac's heart, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." May he testify that to each one of you who know his name, and have received his covenant promises! May the words come to you like a benediction from the throne of God, and send you out to testify of his goodness, and to bless him who hath blessed us, saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"!

III. Now, in the third place, I must draw your attention to the fact that, though Isaac was the blessed of the Lord, **THIS DID NOT SECURE HIM FROM TRIAL.** Already I have approached this part of my subject by



speaking of the speedy discovery of his sin; but in addition to this, there were other sorrows not directly resulting from his own conduct, but permitted by God in order that he, who was now blessed, should be still further enriched in character and conduct.

Even before Abimelech saw the source of Isaac's grace, he was "the blessed of the Lord"; yet he still had to move about. He was a pilgrim and a stranger, as was his father, and he lived as an alien in the land. He was without any inheritance in the country, and though his flocks and herds increased, he dwelt but in tents, while others reared for themselves stately houses and palaces. But God had prepared some better thing for him, and "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Thus, this trial became a means of blessing to him, as trials always do when sanctified by the Spirit of God. If these words reach any child of God whose nest on earth has been disturbed, whose house has been broken up, I would seek to cheer you by the thought of the "continuing city" which shall soon be your portion. If you have, through Christ, an assurance of an abundance entrance there, though you never have a house of your own on earth, and roam from place to place a stranger, seeming to be very often in the way of other people, yet remember that "thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Daily he doth load thee with benefits, and thou canst even now have thy home in his love.

"He loves, he knows, he cares,  
Nothing that truth can dim;  
He gives the very best to those  
Who leave the choice to him."

In spite of the position of blessedness in which Isaac was placed, he had enemies to meet. It is true that, at length, his foes became his friends; but the blessing of the Lord did not begin with their friendship; they then discovered and confessed the fact; but Isaac had been "the blessed of the Lord" all along. When Abimelech sent him away, and when "the herdsmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdsmen," he was not shut out from God's favour. Jehovah never bade him depart, nor took from him his good Spirit. So, tried heart, when foes press around thee, and one thing after another seems to go wrong, do not begin to write bitter things

against thyself, as though God had forsaken thee. Remember that it is of the Lord that thou art blessed, and not of men. He will never forsake thee, and his deliverance shall soon make thy heart glad. Even in the midst of the trial, "thou art now the blessed of the Lord," and, like Isaac, after you have drunk of the waters of "contention" and "hatred", you will be brought to Rehoboth, where you shall have "room", yea, even to Beer-sheba, "the well of the oath", or "the seventh well", "the well of satiety", where your enemies shall seek your favour, and glorify your Lord.

Isaac had especially one trial that ate into his very soul; he had domestic sorrow. Esau's double marriage with Hittite women was a grief to his father and to his mother; and I mention this because there may be some of God's people who are suffering in the like way. I saw one, some days ago, who said, "I am like the Spartan who carried a fox in his bosom, that ate even to his heart, for I have a thankless, ungrateful child;" and, as he spoke to me, I saw the heart-break of the man. Ah! It may be that some of you are in that condition. If any young man or young woman here is causing that grief to a parent, I pray him or pray her to think of it. You are not heartless, I hope: you have not forgotten your mother's prayers or your father's care of you. Do not kill those who gave you being, or insult and vex those to whom you owe so much. But oh, dear brother or sister, if you have come here broken-hearted about your Esau, and all that he is doing, I want to take you by the hand and say, "But still thou art blessed of the Lord. Let this console thee." What if Abraham has his Ishmael? Yet God blessed him. Bear bravely this trial. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Give God no rest, day or night, till he save thy boy, and bring back thy girl. But still, be not despairing; be not cast down; for it is true of thee—and drink in, I pray thee, this cup of consolation—that "thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Let me speak two or three earnest words in closing. "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." "Now." Beloved, do labour to get a hold of a present blessing. If you are indeed saved, do not be always thinking of what you are to enjoy in heaven; but seek to be the blessed of the Lord now. Why not have two heavens, a heaven here and a heaven there? What is the difference between a believer's life here and a believer's life there? Only this: here Christ is with us, and there we are with Christ. If we live up to

our privileges this is the only difference we need to know. Try to be "now the blessed of the Lord." I have heard of a traveller who was followed by a beggar, in Ireland, who very importunately asked for alms. As long as there seemed a chance of getting anything, the old woman kept saying, "May the blessing of God follow your honour all through your life!" but when all hope of a gift was vanished, she bitterly added, "and never overtake you." But the blessings which God has for his chosen are not of that slow-footed kind which never catch us up. It is written, "All these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God." I beseech you, then, to lay hold of this overtaking blessing. Let it not pass unheeded. "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Next, be very grateful that you are in this position of grace. You might have been in the drink-shop, you might have been speaking infidelity, you might have been in prison, you might have been in hell. But "thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Wherefore, praise the Lord, whose mercy endureth for ever. If you do not lift up your voice, yet lift up your heart, and bless him for the grace which hath made you to differ from other people.

Again, tell others about it. If "thou art now the blessed of the Lord," communicate to others the sacred secret that has been the means of bringing such joy to thee. Are we earnest enough about the souls of others? Christian men and women, do you love your fellow-creatures, or do you not? How few there are of us who make it our business to be constantly telling out the sweet story of Jesus and his love! I read, the other day, of a chaplain in the Northern army in the lamentable war in the United States, who, while he lay wounded on the battle-field, heard a man, not far off, utter an oath. Though he himself was so badly wounded that he could not stand, yet he wished to reach the swearer to speak a gospel message to him, and he thought, "I can get to him if I roll over." So, though bleeding profusely himself, he kept rolling over and over till he got to the side of the poor blasphemer, and on the lone battle-field he preached to him Jesus. Some of the other men came along, and he said to them, "Can you carry me? I fear that I am dying, but I do not want to be taken off the field. I should like you, if you would, to carry me from one

dying man to another, all the night long, that I might tell them of a Saviour." What a splendid deed was this! A bleeding man talking to those who were full of sin about a Saviour's bleeding wounds! Oh, you who have no wound, who can walk, and possess all the faculties to fit you for the service, how often you miss opportunities and refuse to speak of Jesus! "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord," and at this moment I would have you think that the blessed Lord lays his pierced hand on thee saying, "Go and tell others what I have done for thee." Never cease to tell the divine tale, as opportunity is given, until thy voice is lost in death; then thy spirit shall begin to utter the story in the loftier sphere.

You are coming to the Lord's table, and I invite you, beloved, to come here with much love. Do not come with doubts and fears, with a cold or lukewarm heart. Remember "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Come, eat his flesh, and drink his blood. There, on the table, thou wilt see nothing but the embers of his flesh and blood; but if thou believest, Christ will feed thee spiritually upon himself, and as thou dost eat that bread of heaven, and drink that wine of life, thou mayest well hear a voice saying, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Well do I remember the time when I would have given away my eyes to be as a dog under the table, to have eaten only the crumbs which fell, as others feasted, and now for forty-and-one years to-day I have sat as a child at the table, blessed be his name!

As I told our friends this morning, this day is an anniversary of peculiar interest to me. Forty-and-one years ago I went down into the river, and was baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

"Yet have been upheld till now:  
Who could hold me up but thou?"

May you, each of you, as you come to the table, hear a voice saying in your heart, "Now a believer; now justified; now quickened; now regenerate; now in Christ; now dear to the heart of God. 'Thou art now the blessed of the Lord.'"

Oh, that some who came in here without the blessing would get it before they go! He that believeth in Jesus hath all the blessing which Jesus can give to him; forgiveness for the past; grace for the present; and glory for the future. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," is the word of the Lord to thee, thou doubter. He was made a curse for thee, that he might redeem thee from the curse of the broken law, for it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." He hung on a tree for guilty man. Believe thou in him, and as thou believest, eternal joys shall come streaming down into thy dry and desolate heart, and it shall be said to thee, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." You shall be blessed now, and blessed for evermore! God grant it, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **Though He Were Dead**

Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?  
- John 11:24-26

Martha is a very accurate type of a class of anxious believers. They do believe truly, but not with such confidence as to lay aside their care. They do not distrust the Lord, or question the truth of what He says, yet they puzzle their brain about "How shall this thing be?" and so they miss the major part of the present comfort which the word of the Lord would minister to their hearts if they received it more simply. How? and why? belong unto the Lord. It is His business to arrange matters so as to fulfil

His own promises. If we would sit at our Lord's feet with Mary, and consider what He has promised, we should choose a better part than if we ran about with Martha, crying, "How can these things be?"

Martha, you see, in this case, when the Lord Jesus Christ told her that her brother would rise again, replied, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." She was a type, I say, of certain anxious believers, for she set a practical bound to the Saviour's words. "Of course there will be a resurrection, and then my brother will rise with the rest." She concluded that the Saviour could not mean anything beyond that. The first meaning and the commonest meaning that suggests itself to her must be what Jesus means. Is not that the way with many of us? We had a statesman once, and a good man too, who loved reform; but whenever he had accomplished a little progress, he considered that all was done. We called him at last "Finality John," for he was always coming to an ultimatum, and taking for his motto "Rest, and be thankful." Into that style Christian people too frequently drop with regard to the promises of God. We limit the Holy one of Israel as to the meaning of His words. Of course they mean so much, but we cannot allow that they intend more. It were well if the spirit of progress would enter into our faith, so that we felt within our souls that we had never beheld the innermost glory of the Lord's words of grace. We often wonder that the disciples put such poor meanings upon our Lord's words, but I fear we are almost as far off as they were from fully comprehending all His gracious teachings. Are we not still as little children, making little out of great words? Have we grasped as yet a tithe of our Lord's full meaning, in many of His sayings of love? When He is talking of bright and sparkling gems of benediction, we are thinking of common pebble-stones in the brook of mercy; when He speaketh of stars and heavenly crowns, we think of sparks and childish coronals of fading flowers. Oh that we could but have our intellect cleared; better still, could have our understanding expanded, or, best of all, our faith increased, so as to reach to the height of our Lord's great arguments of love!

Martha also had another fault in which she was very like ourselves: she laid the words of Jesus on the shelf, as things so trite and sure that they were of small practical importance. "Thy brother shall rise again." Now, if

she had possessed faith enough, she might truthfully have said, "Lord, I thank Thee for that word! I expect within a short space to see him sitting at the table with Thee. I put the best meaning possible upon Thy words, for I know that Thou art always better than I can think Thee to be; and therefore I expect to see my beloved Lazarus walk home from the sepulchre before the sun sets again." But no, she lays the truth aside as a matter past all dispute, and says, "I know that my brother shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." A great many precious truths are laid up by us like the old hulks in the Medway, never to see service any more, or like aged pensioners at Chelsea, as relics of the past. We say "Yes, quite true, we fully believe that doctrine." Somehow it is almost as bad to lay up a doctrine in lavender as it is to throw it out of the window. When you so believe a truth as to put it to bed and smother it with the bolster of neglect, it is much the same as if you did not believe it at all. An official belief is very much akin to infidelity. Some persons never question a doctrine: that is not their line of temptation; they accept the gospel as true, but then they never expect to see its promises practically carried out; it is a proper thing to believe, but by no means a prominent, practical factor in actual life. It is true but it is mysterious, misty, mythical, far removed from the realm of practical common sense. We do with the promises often as a poor old couple did with a precious document, which might have cheered their old age had they used it according to its real value. A gentleman stepping into a poor woman's house saw framed and glazed upon the wall a French note for a thousand francs. He said to the old folks, "How came you by this?" They informed him that a poor French soldier had been taken in by them and nursed until he died, and he had given them that little picture when he was dying as a memorial of him. They thought it such a pretty souvenir that they had framed it, and there it was adorning the cottage wall. They were greatly surprised when they were told that it was worth a sum which would be quite a little fortune for them if they would but turn it into money. Are we not equally unpractical with far more precious things? Have you not certain of the words of your great Lord framed and glazed in your hearts, and do you not say to yourselves, "They are so sweet and precious"? and yet you have never turned them into actual blessing—never used them in the hour of need. You have done as Martha did when she took the words, "Thy brother shall rise again," and put round about them this handsome frame, "in the

resurrection at the last day." Oh that we had grace to turn God's bullion of gospel into current coin, and use them as our present spending money.

Moreover, Martha made another blunder, and that was setting the promise in the remote distance. This is a common folly, this distancing the promises of the Most High. "In the resurrection at the last day"—no doubt she thought it a very long way off, and therefore she did not get much comfort out of it. Telescopes are meant to bring objects near to the eye, but I have known people use the mental telescope in the wrong way: they always put the big end of it to their eye, and then the glass sends the object further away. Her brother was to be raised that very day: she might so have understood the Saviour, but instead of it she looked at His words through the wrong end of the glass, and said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Brethren, do not refuse the present blessing. Death and heaven, or the advent and the glory, are at your doors. A little while and He that will come shall come, and will not tarry. Think not that the Lord is slack concerning His promise. Do not say in your heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming"; or dream that His words of love are only for the dim future. In the ages to come marvels shall be revealed, but even the present hour is bejewelled with loving-kindness. To-day the Lord has rest, and peace, and joy to give to you. Lose not these treasures by unbelief.

Martha also appears to me to have made the promise unreal and impersonal. "Thy brother shall rise again"; to have realized that would have been a great comfort to her, but she mixes Lazarus up with all the rest of the dead. "Yes, he will rise in the resurrection at the last day; when thousands of millions shall be rising from their graves, no doubt Lazarus will rise with the rest." That is the way with us; we take the promise and say, "This is true to all the children of God." If so it is true to us; but we miss that point. What a blessing God has bestowed upon the covenanted people! Yes, and you are one of them; but you shake your head, as if the word was not for you. It is a fine feast, and yet you are hungry; it is a full and flowing stream, but you remain thirsty. Why is this? Somehow the generality of your apprehension misses the sweetness which comes of personal appropriation. There is such a thing as speaking of the promises in a magnificent style, and yet being in deep spiritual poverty; as if a man



should boast of the wealth of old England, and the vast amount of treasure in the Bank, while he does not possess a penny wherewith to bless himself. In your case you know it is your own fault that you are poor and miserable, for if you would but exercise an appropriating faith you might possess a boundless heritage. If you are a child of God all things are yours, and you may help yourself. If you are hungry at this banquet it is for want of faith: if you are thirsty by the brink of this river it is because you do not stoop down and drink. Behold, God is your portion: the Father is your shepherd, the Son of God is your food, and the Spirit of God is your comforter. Rejoice and be glad, and grasp with the firm hand of a personal faith that royal boon which Jesus sets before you in His promises.

I beg you to observe how the Lord Jesus Christ in great wisdom dealt with Martha. In the first place, He did not grow angry with her. There is not a trace of petulance in His speech. He did not say to her, "Martha, I am ashamed of you that you should have such low thoughts of me." She thought that she was honouring Jesus when she said,— "I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." Her idea of Jesus was that He was a great prophet Who would ask of God and obtain answers to His prayers; she has not grasped the truth of His own personal power to give and sustain life. But the Saviour did not say, "Martha, these are low and grovelling ideas of your Lord and Saviour." He did not chide her, though she lacked wisdom,—wisdom which she ought to have possessed. I do not think God's people learn much by being scolded; it is not the habit of the great Lord to scold His disciples, and therefore they do not take it well when His servants take upon themselves to rate them. If ever you meet with one of the Lord's own who falls far short of the true ideal of the gospel, do not bluster and upbraid. Who taught you what you know? He that has taught you did it of His infinite love and grace and pity, and He was very tender with you, for you were doltish enough; therefore be tender with others, and give them line upon line, even as your Lord was gentle towards you. It ill becomes a servant to lose patience where his Master shows so much.

The Lord Jesus, with gentle spirit, proceeded to teach her more of the things concerning Himself. More of Jesus! More of Jesus! That is the

sovereign cure for our faults. He revealed Himself to her, that in Him she might behold reasons for a clearer hope and a more substantial faith. How sweetly fell those words upon her ear: "I am the resurrection and the life"! Not "I can get resurrection by my prayers," but "I am, myself, the resurrection." God's people need to know more of what Jesus is, more of the fullness which it has pleased the Father to place in Him. Some of them know quite enough of what they are themselves, and they will break their hearts if they go on reading much longer in that black-letter book: they need, I say, to rest their eyes upon the person of their Lord, and to spy out all the riches of grace which lie hidden in Him; then they will pluck up courage, and look forward with surer expectancy. When our Lord said, "I am the resurrection and the life," He indicated to Martha that resurrection and life were not gifts which He must seek, nor even boons which He must create; but that He Himself was the resurrection and the life: these things were wherever He was. He was the author, and giver, and maintainer of life, and that life was Himself. He would have her to know that He was Himself precisely what she wanted for her brother. She did know a little of the Lord's power, for she said, "If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," which being very kindly interpreted might mean, "Lord, Thou art the life." "Ah, but," saith Jesus, "you must also learn that I am the resurrection! You already admit that if I had been here Lazarus would not have died; I would have you further learn that I being here your brother shall live though he has died; and that when I am with my people none of them shall die for ever, for I am to them the resurrection and the life." Poor Martha was looking up into the sky for life, or gazing down into the deeps for resurrection, when the Resurrection and the Life stood before her, smiling upon her, and cheering her heavy heart. She had thought of what Jesus might have done if He had been there before; now let her know what He is at the present moment.

Thus I have introduced the text to you, and I pray God the Holy Spirit to bless these prefatory observations; for if we learn only these first lessons we shall not have been here in vain. Let us construe promises in their largest sense, let us regard them as real, and set them down as facts. Let us look to the Promisor, even to Jesus the Lord, and not so much to the difficulties which surround the accomplishment of the promise. In

beginning the divine life let us look to Jesus, and in afterwards running the heavenly race let us still be looking unto Jesus, till we see in Him our all in all. When both eyes look on Jesus we are in the light; but when we have one eye for Him, and one eye for self, all is darkness. Oh, to see Him with all our soul's eyes!

Now, I am going to speak as I am helped of the Spirit; and I shall proceed thus—first, by asking you to view the text as a stream of comfort to Martha and other bereaved persons; and, secondly, to view it as a great deep of comfort to all believers.

I. First, I long for you to VIEW THE TEXT AS A STREAM OF COMFORT TO MARTHA AND OTHER BEREAVED PERSONS.

Observe, in the beginning, that the presence of Jesus Christ means life and resurrection. It meant that to Lazarus. If Jesus comes to Lazarus, Lazarus must live. Had Martha taken the Saviour's words literally, as she should have done, as I have already told you, she would have had immediate comfort from them; and the Saviour intended her to understand them in that sense. He virtually says, "I am to Lazarus the Power that can make him live again; and I am the Power that can keep him in life. Yea, I am the resurrection and the life." A statement so understood would have been very comfortable to her. Nothing could have been more so. It would there and then have abolished death so far as her brother was concerned. Somebody says, "But I do not see that this is any comfort to us, for if Jesus be here, yet it is only a spiritual presence, and we cannot expect to see our dear mother, or child, or husband raised from the dead thereby." I answer that our Lord Jesus is able at this moment to give us back our departed ones, for He is still the resurrection and the life. But let me ask you whether you really wish that Jesus would raise your departed ones from the dead. You say at first, "Of course I do wish it"; but I would ask you to reconsider that decision; for I believe that upon further thought you will say, "No, I could not wish it." Do you really desire to see your glorified husband sent back again to this world of care and pain? Would you have your father or mother deprived of the glories which they are now enjoying in order that they might help you in the struggles of this mortal life? Would you discrown the saints? You are not

so cruel. That dear child, would you have it back from among the angels, and from the inner glory, to come here and suffer again? You would not have it so. And to my mind it is a comfort to you, or should be, that it is not within your power to have it so; because you might be tempted in some selfish moment to accept the doubtful boon. Lazarus could return, and fit into his place again, but scarcely one in ten thousand could do so. There would be serious drawbacks in the return of those whom we have loved best. Do you cry, "Give back my father! Give me back my friend"? You know not what you ask. It might be a cause of regret to you as long as they lingered here, for you would each morning think to yourself, "Beloved one, I have brought you out of heaven by my wish. I have robbed you of infinite felicity to gratify myself." For my own part, I had rather that the Lord Jesus should keep the keys of death than that He should lend them to me. It would be too dreadful a privilege to be empowered to rob heaven of the perfected merely to give pleasure to imperfect ones below. Jesus would raise them now if He knew it to be right; I do not wish to take the government from His shoulder. It is more comfortable to me to think that Jesus Christ could give them back to me, and would if it were for His glory and my good. My dear ones that lie asleep could be awakened in an instant if the Master thought it best; but it would not be best, and therefore even I would hold His skirt, and say, "Tread softly, Master! Do not arouse them! I shall go to them, but they shall not return to me. It is not my wish they should return: it is better that they should be with Thee where Thou art, to behold Thy glory." It does not seem to me, then, dear friend, that you are one whit behind Martha: and you ought to be comforted while Jesus says to you, "I am even now the resurrection and the life."

Furthermore, here is comfort which we may each one safely take, namely, that when Jesus comes the dead shall live. The Revised Version has it, "He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live." We do not know when our Lord will descend from heaven, but we do know the message of the angel, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." The Lord will come; we may not question the certainty of His appearing. When He cometh, all His redeemed shall live with Him. The trump of the archangel shall startle the happy sleepers, and they shall

wake to put on their beauteous array; the body transformed and made like unto Christ's glorious body shall be once more wrapt about them as the vesture of their perfected and emancipated spirits. Then our brother shall rise again, and all our dear ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus the Lord will bring with Him. This is the glorious hope of the church, wherein we see the death of death, and the destruction of the grave. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Then we are also told that when Jesus comes, living believers shall not die. After the coming of Christ there shall be no more death for His people. What does Paul say? "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed." Did I see a little school-girl put up her finger? Did I hear her say, "Please, sir, you made a mistake." So I did; I made it on purpose. Paul did not say, "We shall not all die," for the Lord had already said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"; Paul would not say that any of us should die, but he used his Master's own term, and said, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." When the Lord comes there will be no more death; we who are alive and remain (as some of us may be—we cannot tell) will undergo a sudden transformation—for flesh and blood, as they are, cannot inherit the kingdom of God—and by that transformation our bodies shall be made meet to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." There shall be no more death then. Here, then, we have two sacred handkerchiefs with which to wipe the eyes of mourners: when Christ cometh the dead shall live; when Christ cometh those that live shall never die. Like Enoch, or Elias, we shall pass into the glory state without wading through the black stream, while those who have already forded it shall prove to have been no losers thereby. All this is in connection with Jesus. Resurrection with Jesus is resurrection indeed. Life in Jesus is life indeed. It endears to us resurrection, glory, eternal life, and ultimate perfection, when we see them all coming to us in Jesus. He is the golden pot which hath this manna, the rod which beareth these almonds, the life whereby we live.

But further, I have not made you drink deep enough of this stream yet,—I think our Saviour meant that even now His dead are alive. "He that believeth on me, though he die, but yet they live. They are not in the grave, they are for ever with the Lord. They are not unconscious, they are

with their Lord in Paradise. Death cannot kill a believer, it can only usher him into a freer form of life. Because Jesus lives, His people live. God is not the God of the dead but of the living: those who have departed have not perished. We laid the precious body in the cemetery, and we set up stones at the head and foot; but we might engrave on them the Lord's words, "She is not dead, but sleepeth." True, and unbelieving generation may laugh us to scorn, but we scorn their laughing.

Again, even now His living do not die. There is an essential difference between the decease of the godly and the death of the ungodly. Death comes to the ungodly man as a penal infliction, but to the righteous as a summons to his Father's palace: to the sinner it is an execution, to the saint an undressing. Death to the wicked is the King of terrors: death to the saint is the end of terrors, the commencement of glory. To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing. Death is ours; it is set down in the list of our possessions among the "all things", and it follows life in the list as if it were an equal favour. No longer is it death to die. The name remains, but the thing itself is changed. Wherefore, then, are we in bondage through fear of death? Why do we dread the process which gives us liberty? I am told that persons who in the cruel ages had lain in prison for years suffered much more in the moment of the knocking off of their fetters than they had endured for months in wearing the hard iron; and yet I suppose that no man languishing in a dungeon would have been unwilling to stretch out his arm or leg, that the heavy chains might be beaten off by the smith. We should all be content to endure that little inconvenience to obtain lasting liberty. Now, such is death—the knocking off of the fetters; yet the iron may never seem to be so truly iron as when that last liberating blow of grace is about to fall. Let us not mind the harsh grating of the key as it turns in the lock; if we understand it aright it will be as music to our ears. Imagine that your last hour is come! The key turns with pain for a moment; but, lo, the bolt is shot! The iron gate is open! The spirit is free! Glory be unto the Lord for ever and ever!

II. I leave the text now as a stream of comfort for the bereaved, for I wish you to VIEW IT AS A GREAT DEEP OF COMFORT FOR ALL BELIEVERS. I cannot fathom it, any more than I could measure the abyss, but I can invite you to survey it by the help of the Holy Ghost.

Methinks, first, this text plainly teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ is the life of His people. We are dead by nature, and you can never produce life out of death: the essential elements are wanting. Should a spark be lingering among the ashes, you may yet fan it to a flame; but from human nature the last spark of heavenly life is gone, and it is vain to seek for life among the dead. The life of every Christian is Christ. He is the beginning of life, being the Resurrection: when He comes to us we live. Regeneration is the result of contact with Christ: we are begotten again unto living hope by His resurrection from the dead. The life of the Christian in its commencement is in Christ alone; not a fragment of it is from himself, and the continuance of that life is equally the same; Jesus is not only the resurrection to begin with, but the life to go on with. "I have life in myself," saith one. I answer—not otherwise than as you are one with Christ: your spiritual life in every breath it draws is in Christ. If you are regarded for a moment as separated from Christ, you are cast forth as a branch and are withered. A member severed from the head is dead flesh and no more. In union to Christ is your life. Oh that our hearers would understand this! I see a poor sinner look into himself, and look again, and then cry, "I cannot see any life within!" Of course you cannot; you have no life of your own. "Alas," cries a Christian, "I cannot find anything within to feed my soul with!" Do you expect to feed upon yourself? Must not Israel look up for the manna? Did one of all the tribes find it in his own bosom? To look to self is to turn to a broken cistern which can hold no water. I tell you you must learn that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Harken to that great "I"—that infinite EGO! This must cover over and swallow up your little ego. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." What are you? Less than nothing, and vanity; but over all springs up that divine, all-sufficient personality, "I am the resurrection and the life." Take the two first words together, and they seem to me to have a wondrous majesty about them—"I AM!" Here is Self-Existence. Life in Himself! Even as the Mediator, the Lord Jesus tells us that it is given Him to have life in Himself, even as the Father hath life in Himself (John 5:26). I am fills the yawning mouth of the sepulchre. He that liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, declares, "I am the resurrection and the life." If, then, I want to live unto God, I must have Christ; and if I desire to continue to live unto God

I must continue to have Christ; and if I aspire to have that life developed to the utmost fullness of which it is capable, I must find it all in Christ. He has come not only that we may have life, but that we may have it more abundantly. Anything that is beyond the circle of Christ is death. If I conjure up an experience over which I foolishly dote, which puffs me up as so perfect that I need not come to Christ now as a poor empty-handed sinner, I have entered into the realm of death, I have introduced into my soul a damning leaven. Away with it! Away with it! Everything of life is put into this golden casket of Christ Jesus: all else is death. We have not a breath of life anywhere but in Jesus, Who ever liveth to give life. He saith, "Because I live, ye shall live also," and this is true. We live not for any other reason—not because of anything in us or connected with us, but only because of Jesus. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Now, further, in this great deep to which we would conduct you, faith is the only channel by which we can draw from Jesus our life. "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me": that is it. He does not say, "He that loves me," though love is a bright grace, and very sweet to God: He does not say, "He that serves me," though every one that believes in Christ will endeavour to serve Him: but it is not put so: He does not even say, "He that imitates me," though every one that believes in Christ must and will imitate Him; but it is put, "He that believeth in me." Why is that? Why doth the Lord so continually make faith to be the only link between Himself and the soul? I take it, because faith is a grace which arrogates nothing to itself, and has not operation apart from Jesus, to Whom it unites us. You want to conduct the electric fluid, and, in order to this, you find a metal which will not create any action of its own; if it did so, it would disturb the current which you wish to send along it. If it set up an action of its own, how would you know the difference between what came of the metal and what came of the battery? Now, faith is an empty-handed receiver and communicator; it is nothing apart from that upon which it relies, and therefore it is suitable to be a conductor for grace. When an auditorium has to be erected for a speaker in which he may be plainly heard, the essential thing is to get rid of all echo. When you have no echo, then you have a perfect building: faith makes no noise of its own, it allows the Word to speak. Faith cries, "Non nobis Domine! Not unto us!



Not unto us! Christ puts His crown on faith's head, exclaiming, "Thy faith hath saved thee;" but faith hastens to ascribe all the glory of salvation to Jesus only. So you see why the Lord selects faith rather than any other grace, because it is a self-forgetting thing. It is best adapted to be the tubing through which the water of life runs, because it will not communicate a flavour of its own, but will just convey the stream purely and simply from Christ to the soul. "He that believeth in me."

Now notice, to the reception of Christ by faith there is no limit. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever"—I am deeply in love with that word "whosoever." It is a splendid word. A person who kept many animals had some great dogs and some little ones, and in his eagerness to let them enter his house freely he had two holes cut in the door, one for the big dogs and another for the little dogs. You may well laugh, for the little dogs could surely have come in wherever there was room for the larger ones. This "whosoever" is the great opening, suitable for sinners of every size. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Has any man a right to believe in Christ? The gospel gives every creature the right to believe in Christ, for we are bidden to preach it to every creature, with this command, "Hear, and your soul shall live." Every man has a right to believe in Christ, because he will be damned if he does not, and he must have a right to do that which will bring him into condemnation if he does it not. It is written, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," and that makes it clear that I, whoever I may be, as I have a right to endeavour to escape from damnation, have a right to avail myself of the blessed command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and live." Oh that "whosoever," that hole in the door for the big dog! Do not forget it! Come along with you, and put your trust in Christ. If you can only get linked with Christ you are a living man; if but a finger touches His garment's hem you are made whole. Only the touch of faith, and the virtue flows from Him to you, and He is to you the resurrection and the life.

I desire you to notice that there is no limit to this power. Before I was ill this time, and even since, I have had to deal with such a swarm of despairing sinners, that if I have not pulled them up they have pulled me

down. I have been trying to speak very large words for Christ when I have met with those disconsolate ones. I hear one say, "How far can Christ be life to a sinner? I feel myself to be utterly wrong, I am altogether wrong; there is nothing right about me: though I have eyes I cannot see, though I have ears I do not hear; if I have a hand I cannot use it, if I have a foot I cannot run with it—I seem altogether wrong." Yes, but if you believe in Christ, though you were still more wrong—that is to say, though you were dead, which is the wrongest state in which a man's body can be,—though you were dead yet shall you live. You look at the spiritual thermometer, and you say, "How low will the grace of God go? will it descend to summer heat? will it touch the freezing point? will it go to zero?" Yes, it will go below the lowest conceivable point,—lower than any instrument can indicate: it will go below the zero of death. If you believe in Jesus, though you are not only wrong, but dead, yet shall you live.

But, says another, "I feel so weak. I cannot understand, I cannot lay hold of things; I cannot pray. I cannot do anything. All I can do is feebly to trust in Jesus." All right! Though you had gone further than that, and were so weak as to be dead, yet should you live. Though the weakness had turned to a dire paralysis, that left you altogether without strength, yet it is written, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "Oh, Sir," says one, "I am so unfeeling." Mark you, these generally are the most feeling people in the world. "I am sorry every day because I cannot be sorry for my sin"—that is the way they talk; it is very absurd, but still very real to them. "Oh," cries one, "the earth shook, the sun was darkened, the rocks rent, the very dead came out of their graves at the death of Christ.

"Of feeling all things show some sign  
But this unfeeling heart of mine."

Yet if thou believest, unfeeling as thou art, thou livest; for if thou wert gone further than numb-ness to deadness, yet if thou believest in Him thou shalt live.

But the poor creature fetches a sigh, and cries, "Sir, it is not only that I have no feeling, but I am become objectionable and obnoxious to

everybody. I am a weariness to myself and to others. I am sure when I come to tell you my troubles you must wish me at Jericho, or somewhere else far away." Now, I admit that such a thought has occurred to us sometimes when we have been very busy, and some poor soul has grown prosy with rehearsing his seven-times-repeated miseries; but if you were to get more wearisome still, if you were to become so bad that people would as soon see a corpse as see you, yet remember Jesus says, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

"Oh, sir, I have no hope; my case is quite hopeless!" Very well; but if you had got beyond that, so that you were dead, and could not even know you had no hope, yet if you believed in Him you should live. "Oh, but I have tried everything, and there is nothing more for me to attempt. I have read books, I have spoken to Christians, and I am nothing bettered." No doubt it is quite so; but if you had even passed beyond that stage, so that you could not try anything more, yet if you did believe in Jesus you should live. Oh, the blessed power of faith! Nay, rather say the matchless power of Him Who is the resurrection and the life; for though the poor believer were dead, yet shall he live! Glory be to the Lord Who works so wonderfully.

To conclude, if you once do believe in Christ, and come to live, there is this sweet reflection for you, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Our Arminian friends say that you may be a child of God today and a child of the devil to-morrow. Write out that statement, and place at the bottom of it the name "Arminius," and then put the scrap of paper into the fire: it is the best thing you can do with it, for there is no truth in it. Jesus says, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Here is a very literal translation—"And every one who lives and believes on me, in no wise shall die forever." This is from "The Englishman's Greek New Testament," and nothing can be better. The believer may pass through the natural change called death, as far as his body is concerned; but as for his soul it cannot die, for it is written, "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "He that believeth in me hath everlasting life." "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." "He that believeth and is

baptized shall be saved." These are not "ifs" and "buts," and faint hopes; but they are dead certainties, nay, living certainties, out of the mouth of the living Lord Himself. You get the life of God in your soul, and you shall never die. "Do you mean that I may do as I like, and live in sin?" No, man, I mean nothing of the sort; what right have you to impute such teaching as that to me? I mean that you shall not love sin and live in it, for that is death; but you shall live unto God. Your likes shall be so radically changed that you shall abhor evil all your days, and long to be holy as God is holy; and you shall be kept from transgression, and shall not go back to wallow in sin. If in some evil hour you back-slide, yet shall you be restored; and the main current of your life shall be from the hour of your regeneration towards God, and holiness, and heaven. The angels that rejoiced over you when you repented made no mistake; they shall go on to rejoice till they welcome you amidst the everlasting songs and Hallelujahs of the blessed at the right hand of God. Believest thou this? Come, poor soul, believest thou this? Who are you? That does not matter, you can get into the "whosoever." That ark will hold all God's Noahs. What is any man that he should have the filth of another man's drains poured into his ear? No, no: confess to God, but not to man unless you have wronged him, and confession of the wrong is due to him.

"Ah," saith one, "you don't know what I am." No, and I don't want to know what you are; but if you are so far gone that there seems to be not even a ghost of a shade of a shadow of a hope anywhere about you, yet if you believe in Jesus you shall live. Trust the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is worthy to be trusted. Throw yourself upon Him, and He will carry you in His bosom. Cast your whole weight upon His atonement; it will bear the strain. Hang on Him as the vessel hangs on the nail, and seek no other support. Depend upon Christ with all your might just as you now are, and as the Lord liveth you shall live, and as Christ reigneth you shall reign over sin, and as Christ cometh to glory you shall partake of that glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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## Thoughts On The Last Battle

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But, thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. - 1 Corinthians 15:56-57

While the Bible is one of the most poetical of books, though its language is unutterably sublime, yet we must remark how constantly it is true to nature. There is no straining of a fact, no glossing over a truth. However dark may be the subject, while it lights it up with brilliance, yet it does not deny the gloom connected with it. If you will read this chapter of Paul's epistle, so justly celebrated as a master-piece of language, you will find him speaking of that which is to come after death with such exultation and glory that you feel, "If this be to die, then it were well to depart at once." Who has not rejoiced, and whose heart has not been lifted up or filled with a holy fire, while he has read such sentences as these: "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Yet, with all that majestic language, with all that bold flight of eloquence, he does not deny that death is a gloomy thing. Even his very figures imply it. He does not laugh at it; he does not say, "Oh, it is nothing to die;" he describes death as a monster; he speaks of it as having a sting; he tells us wherein the strength of that sting lies; and even in the exclamation of triumph, he imputes that victory not to unaided flesh, but he says, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

When I select such a text as this, I feel that I cannot preach from it. The thought o'ermasters me; my words do stagger; there are no utterances

that are great enough to convey the mighty meaning of this wondrous text. If I had the eloquence of all men united in one, if I could speak as never man spake (with the exception of that one godlike man of Nazareth), I could not compass so vast a subject as this. I will not therefore pretend to do so, but offer you such thoughts as my mind is capable of producing.

To-night we shall speak of three things: first, *the sting of death*; secondly, *the strength of sin*; and thirdly, *the victory of faith*.

I. First, THE STING OF DEATH. The apostle pictures death as a terrible dragon, or monster, which, coming upon all men, must be fought with by each one for himself. He gives us no hopes whatever that any of us can avoid it. He tells us of no bridge across the river Death; he does not give us the faintest hope that it is possible to emerge from this state of existence into another without dying; he describes the monster as being exactly in our path, and with it we must fight, each man personally, separately, and alone; each man must die; we all must cross the black stream; each one of us must go through the iron gate. There is no passage from this world into another without death. Having told us, then, that there is no hope of our escape, he braces up our nerves for the combat; but he gives us no hope that we shall be able to slay the monster; he does not tell us that we can strike our sword into his heart, and so overturn and overwhelm death; but, pointing to the dragon, he seems to say, "Thou canst not slay it, man; there is no hope that thou shouldst ever put thy foot upon its neck and crush its head; but one thing can be done - it has a sting which thou mayest extract; thou canst not crush death under foot, but thou mayest pull out the sting which is deadly; and then thou need not fear the monster, for monster it shall be no longer, but rather it shall be a swift-winged angel to waft thee aloft to heaven. Where, then, is the sting of this dragon? Where must I strike? What is the sting? The apostle tells us, "that the sting of death is sin." Once let me cut off that, and then, though death may be dreary and solemn, I shall not dread it; but, holding up the monster's sting, I shall exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Let us now dwell upon the fact, that "the sting of death is sin."

1. First, sin puts a sting into death, from the fact that *sin brought death into the world*. Men could be more content to die if they did not know it was a punishment. I suppose if we had never sinned, there would have been some means for us to go from this world to another. It cannot be supposed that so huge a population would have existed, that all the myriads who have lived from Adam down till now could ever have inhabited so small a globe as this; there would not have been space enough for them. But there might have been provided some means for taking us off when the proper time should come, and bearing us safely to heaven. God might have furnished horses and chariots of fire for each of his Elijahs; or, as it was said of Enoch, so it might have been declared of each of us, "He is not, for God hath taken him." Thus to die, if we may call it death to depart from this body and to be with God, would have been no disgrace; in fact, it would have been the highest honor; fitting the loftiest aspiration of the soul, to live quickly its little time in this world, then to mount and be with its God; and in the prayers of the most pious and devout man, one of his sublimest petitions would be, "O God, hasten the time of my departure, when I shall be with thee." When such sinless beings thought of their departure, they would not tremble, for the gate would be one of ivory and pearl - not as now, of iron - the stream would be as nectar, far different from the present "bitterness of death." But alas! how different! Death is now the punishment of sin. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "*In Adam* all die." By his sin every one of us become subject to the penalty of death, and thus, being a punishment, death has its sting. To the best man, the holiest Christian, the most sanctified intellect, the soul that has the nearest and dearest intercourse with God, death must appear to have a sting, because sin was its mother. O fatal offspring of sin, I only dread thee because of thy parentage! If thou didst come to me as an honor, I could wade through Jordan even now, and, when its chilling billows were around me, I would smile amidst its surges; and in the swellings of Jordan my song should swell too, and the liquid music of my voice should join with the liquid swellings of the floods, "Hallelujah! It is blessed to cross to the land of the glorified." This is one reason why the sting of sin is death.

2. But I must take it in another sense. "The sting of death is sin:" - that is to say, *that which shall make death most terrible to man will be sin, if it*

*is not forgiven.* If that be not the exact meaning of the apostle, still it is a great truth, and I may find it here. If sin lay heavy on me and were not forgiven - if my transgressions were unpardoned - if such were the fact (though I rejoice to know it is not so) it would be the very sting of death to me. Let us consider a man dying, and looking back on his past life: he will find in death a sting, and that sting will be his past sin. Imagine a conqueror's deathbed. He has been a man of blood from his youth up. Bred in the camp, his lips were early set to the bugle, and his hand, even in infancy, struck the drum. He had a martial spirit; he delighted in the fame and applause of men; he loved the dust of battle and the garment rolled in blood. He has lived a life of what men call glory. He has stormed cities, conquered countries, ravaged continents, overrun the world. See his banners hanging in the hall, and the marks of glory on his escutcheon. He is one of earth's proudest warriors. But now he comes to die, and when he lies down to expire, what shall invest his death with horror? It shall be his sin. Methinks I see the monarch dying; he lies in state; around him are his nobles and his councillors; but there is somewhat else there. Hard by his side there stands a spirit from Hades; it is a soul of a departed woman. She looks on him and says, "Monster! my husband was slain in battle through thy ambition: I was made a widow, and my helpless orphans and myself were starved." And she passes by. Her husband comes, and opening wide his bloody wounds, he cries, "Once I called thee monarch; but, by thy vile covetousness thou didst provoke an unjust war. See here these wounds - I gained them in the siege. For thy sake I mounted first the scaling ladder; this foot stood upon the top of the wall, and I waved my sword in triumph, but in hell I lifted up my eyes in torment. Base wretch, thine ambition hurried me thither!" Turning his horrid eyes upon him, he passes by. Then up comes another, and another, and another yet; waking from their tombs, they stalk around his bed and haunt him; the dreary procession still marches on, looking at the dying tyrant. He shuts his eyes, but he feels the cold and bony hand upon his forehead; he quivers, for the sitting of death is in his heart. "O Death!" says he; "to leave this large estate, this mighty realm, this pomp and power - this were somewhat; but to meet those men, those women, and those orphan children, face to face; to hear them saying, 'Art thou become like one of us?' while kings whom I have dethroned, and monarchs whom I have cast down shall rattle their chains in my ears, and say, 'Thou wast



our destroyer, but how art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou brought down as in a moment from thy glory and thy pride!" There, you see, the sting of death would be the man's sin. It would not sting him that he had to die, but that he had sinned, that he had been a bloody man, that his hands were red with wholesale murder - this would plague him indeed, for "the sting of death is sin."

Or, suppose another character - a minister. He has stood before the world, proclaiming something which he called the gospel. He has been a noted preacher; the multitude have been hanging on his lips; they have listened to his words; before his eloquence a nation stood amazed, and thousands trembled at his voice. But his preaching is over; the time when he can mount the pulpit is gone; another standing-place awaits him, another congregation, and he must hear another and a better preacher than himself. There he lies. He has been unfaithful to his charge. He preached philosophy to charm his people, instead of preaching truth and aiming at their hearts. And, as he pants upon his bed, that worst and most accursed of men - for surely none can be worse than he - there comes up one, a soul from the pit, and looking him in the face, says, "I came to thee once, trembling on account of sin; "I asked thee the road to heaven, and thou didst say, 'Do such and such good works,' and I did them, and am damned. Thou didst tell me an untruth; thou didst not declare plainly the word of God." He vanishes only to be followed by another; he has been an irreligious character, and as he sees the minister upon his deathbed, he says, "Ah! and art thou here? Once I strolled into thy house of prayer, but thou hadst such a sermon that I could not understand. I listened; I wanted to hear something from thy lips, some truth that might burn my soul and make me repent; but I knew not what thou saidst; and here I am." The ghost stamps his foot, and the man quivers like an aspen leaf, because he knows it is all true. Then the whole congregation arise before him as he lies upon his bed; he looks upon the motley group; he beholds the snowy heads of the old, and glittering eyes of the young; and lying there upon his pillow, he pictures all the sins of his past life, and he hears it said, "Go thou! unfaithful to thy charge; thou didst not divest thyself of thy love of pomp and dignity; thou didst not speak

'As though thou ne'er might'st speak again,  
A dying man to dying men.'"

Oh! it may be something for that minister to leave his charge, somewhat for him to die; but worst of all, the sting of death will be his sin: to hear his parish come howling after him to hell; to see his congregation following behind him in one mingled herd, he having led them astray, having been a false prophet instead of a true one, speaking peace, peace, where there was no peace, deluding them with lies, charming them with music, when he ought rather to have told them in rough and rugged accents the Word of God. Verily, it is true, it is true, the sting of death to such a man shall be his great, his enormous, his heinous sin of having deluded others.

Thus, then having painted two full-length pictures, I might give each one of you miniatures of yourselves. I might picture thee, O drunkard, when thy cups are drained, and when thy liquor shall no longer be sweet to thy taste, when worse than gall shall be the dainties that thou drinkest, when, within an hour, the worms shall make a carnival upon thy flesh; I might picture thee as thou lookest back upon they misspent life. And thou, O swearer, methinks I see thee there, with thine oaths echoed back by memory to thine own dismay. And thou, man of lust and wickedness, thou who hast debauched and seduced others, I see thee there; and the sting of death to thee, how horrible, how dreadful! It shall not be that thou art groaning with pain, it shall not be that thou art racked with agony, it shall not be that thy heart and flesh faileth, but the sting, the sting, shall be thy sin. How many in this place can spell the word "remorse?" I pray you may never know its awful meaning. Remorse, remorse! You know its derivation; it signifies to bite. Ah! now we dance with our sins - it is a merry life with us - we take their hands, and, sporting in the noontide sun, we dance, we dance, and live in joy. But then those sins shall bite us. The young lions we have stroked and played with shall bite; the young adder, the serpent, whose azure hues have well delighted us, shall bite, shall sting, when remorse shall occupy our souls. I might, but I will not, tell you a few stories of the awful power of remorse; it is the first pang of hell; it is the ante-chamber of the pit. To have remorse is to feel the sparks that blaze upwards from the fire of the

bottomless Gehenna; to feel remorse is to have eternal torment commenced within the soul. The sting of death shall be unforgiven, unrepented sin.

3. But if sin in the retrospect be the sting of death, what must *sin in the prospect be*? My friends, we do not often enough look at what sin is to be. We see what it is; first the seed, then the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. It is the wish, the imagination, the desire, the sight, the taste, the deed; but what is sin in its next development? We have observed sin as it grows; we have seen it, at first, a very little thing, but expanding itself until it has swelled into a mountain. We have seen it like "a little cloud, the size of a man's hand," but we have beheld it gather until it covered the skies with blackness, and sent down drops of bitter rain. But what is sin to be in the next state? We have gone so far, but sin is a thing that cannot stop. We have seen whereunto it *has* grown, but whereunto *will* it grow? for it is not ripe when we die; it has to go on still; it is set going, but it has to unfold itself forever. The moment we die, the voice of justice cries, "Seal up the fountain of blood; stop the stream of forgiveness; he that is holy, let him be holy still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." And after that, the man goes on growing filthier and filthier still; his lust develops itself, his vice increases; all those evil passions blaze with tenfold more fury, and, amidst the companionship of others like himself, without the restraints of grace, without the preached word, the man becomes worse and worse; and who can tell whereunto his sin may grow? I have sometimes likened the hour of our death to that celebrated picture, which I think you have seen in the National Gallery, of Perseus holding up the head of Medusa. That head turned all persons into stone who looked upon it. There is a warrior there with a dart in his hand; he stands stiffened, turned into stone, with the javelin even in his fist. There is another, with a poniard beneath his robe, about to stab; he is now the statue of an assassin, motionless and cold. Another is creeping along stealthily, like a man in ambuscade, and there he stands a consolidated rock; he has looked only upon that head, and he is frozen into stone. Well, such is death. What I am when death is held before me, that I must be forever. When my spirit goes, if God finds me hymning his praise, I shall hymn it in heaven; doth he find me breathing out oaths, I shall follow up those oaths in hell. Where death leaves me, judgment

finds me. As I die, so shall I live eternally.

"There are no acts of pardon passed  
In the cold grave to which we haste."

It is forever, forever, forever! Ah! there are a set of heretics in these days who talk of short punishment, and preach about God's transporting souls for a term of years, and then letting them die. Where did such men learn their doctrine, I wonder? I read in God's word that the angel shall plant one foot upon the earth, and the other upon the sea, and shall swear by him that liveth and was dead, that *time* shall be no longer. But, if a soul could die in a thousand years, it would die in *time*; if a million of years could elapse, and then the soul could be extinguished, there would be such a thing as *time*; for, talk to me of years, and there is *time*. But, sirs, when that angel has spoken the word, "*Time* shall be no longer," things will then be eternal; the spirit shall proceed in its ceaseless revolution of weal or woe, never to be stayed, for there is no time to stop it; the fact of its stopping would imply time; but everything shall be eternal, for time shall cease to be. It well becomes you, then, to consider where ye are and what ye are. Oh! stand and tremble on the narrow neck of land 'twixt the two unbounded seas, for God in heaven alone can tell how soon thou mayest be launched upon the eternal future. May God grant that, when that last hour may come, we may be prepared for it! Like the thief, unheard, unseen, it steals through night's dark shade. Perhaps, as here I stand, and rudely speak of these dark, hidden things, soon may the hand be stretched, and dumb the mouth that lisps the faltering strain. Oh! thou that dwellest in heaven, thou power supreme, thou everlasting King, let not that hour intrude upon me in an illspent season; but may it find me rapt in meditation high, hymning my great Creator. So, in the last moment of my life, I will hasten beyond the azure, to bathe the wings of this my spirit in their native element, and then to dwell with thee for ever

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

II. "THE STRENGTH OF SIN is the law."

I have attempted to show how to fight this monster - it is by extracting and destroying its sting. I prepare myself for the battle. It is true I have sinned, and therefore I have put a sting into death, but I will endeavor to take it away. I attempt it, but the monster laughs me in the face, and cries, "The strength of sin is the law. Before thou canst destroy sin thou must in some way satisfy the law. Sin cannot be removed by thy tears or by thy deeds, for the law is its strength; and until thou hast satisfied the vengeance of the law, until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing of its demands, my sting cannot be taken away, for the very strength of sin is the law." Now, I must try and explain this doctrine that the strength of sin is the law. Most men think that sin has no strength at all. "Oh," say many, "we may have sinned very much, but we will repent, and we will be better for the rest of our lives; no doubt God is merciful, and he will forgive us." And we hear many divines often speak of sin as if it were a very venial thing. Inquire of them what is a man to do? There is no deep repentance required, no real inward workings of divine grace, no casting himself upon the blood of Christ. They never tell us about a complete atonement having been made. They have, indeed, some shadowy idea of an atonement, that Christ died just as a matter of form to satisfy justice; but as to any literal taking away of our sins, and suffering the actual penalty for us, they do not consider that God's law requires any such thing. I suppose they do not, for I never hear them assert the positive satisfaction and substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ. But without that, how can we take away the strength of sin?

1. The strength of sin is in the law, first, in this respect, that *the law being spiritual, it is quite impossible for us to live without sin*. If the law were merely carnal, and referred to the flesh; if it simply related to open and overt actions, I question, even then, whether we could live without sin; but when I turn over the ten commandments and read, "Thou shalt not covet," I know it refers even to the wish of my heart. It is said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" but it is said, also that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath already committed that sin. So that it is not merely the act, it is the thought; it is not the deed simply, it is the very imagination, that is a sin. Oh now, sinner, how canst thou get rid of sin? Thy very thoughts, the inward workings of thy mind, these are crimes -

this is guilt and desperate wickedness. Is there not, now, strength in sin? Hath not the law put a potency in it? Has it not nerved sin with such a power that all thy strength cannot hope to wipe away the black enormity of thy transgression?

2. Then, again, the law puts strength into sin in this respect - that *it will not abate one tittle of its stern demands*. It says to every man who breaks it, "I will not forgive you." You hear persons talk about God's mercy. Now, if they do not believe in the gospel, they must be under the law; but where in the law do we read of mercy? If you will read the commandments through, there is a curse after them, but there is no provision made for pardon. The law itself speaks not of that; it thunders out without the slightest mitigation, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." If any of you desire to be saved by works, remember one sin will spoil your righteousness; one dust of this earth's dross will spoil the beauty of that perfect righteousness which God requires at your hands. If ye would be saved by works, men and brethren, ye must be as holy as the angels, ye must be as pure and as immaculate as Jesus; for the law requires perfection, and nothing short of it; and God, with unflinching vengeance, will smite every man low who cannot bring him a perfect obedience. If I cannot, when I come before his throne, plead a perfect righteousness as being mine, God will say, "you have not fulfilled the demands of my law; depart, accursed one! You have sinned, and you must die." "Ah," says one, "can we ever have a perfect righteousness, then? Yes, I will tell you of that in the third point; thanks be unto Christ, who giveth us the victory through his blood and through his righteousness, who adorns us as a bride in her jewels as a husband arrays his wife with ornaments.

3. Yet again; the law gives strength to sin from the fact that, *for every transgression it will exact a punishment*. The law never remits a farthing of debt: it says, "Sin - punishment." They are linked together with adamant chains; they are tied, and cannot be severed. The law speaks not of sin and mercy; mercy comes in the gospel. The law says, "Sin - die; transgress - be chastised; sin - hell." Thus are they linked together. Once let me sin, and I may go to the foot of stern Justice, and as, with blind eyes, she holds the scales, I may say, "O Justice, remember, I was holy once; remember that on such and such an occasion I did keep the law."

"Yes," saith Justice, "all I owe thee thou shalt have; I will not punish thee for what thou hast not done; but remember you *this* crime, O sinner?" and she puts in the heavy weight. The sinner trembles, and he cries, "But canst thou not forget that? Wilt thou not cast it away?" "Nay," saith Justice, and she puts in another weight. "Sinner, dost thou recollect *this* crime?" "Oh!" says the sinner, "wilt thou not for mercy's sake-?" "I will not have mercy," says Justice; "Mercy has its own palace, but I have naught to do with forgiveness here; mercy belongs to Christ. If you will be saved by Justice, you shall have your full of it. If you come to me for salvation, I will not have mercy brought in to help me; she is not my vicegerent; I stand here alone without her." And again, as she holds the scales, she puts in another iniquity, another crime, another enormous transgression; and each time the man begs and prays that he may have that passed by. Says Justice, "Nay, I must exact the penalty; I have sworn I will, and I will. Canst thou find a substitute for thyself? If thou canst, there is the only room I have for mercy. I will exact it of that substitute, but even at his hands I will have the utmost jot and tittle; I will abate nothing; I am God's Justice, stern and unflinching, I will not alter, I will not mitigate the penalty." She still holds the scales. The plea is in vain. "Never will I change!" she cries; "bring me the blood, bring me the price to its utmost; count it down, or else, sinner, thou shalt die.

Now, my friends, I ask you, if ye consider the spirituality of the law, the perfection it requires, and its unflinching severity, are you prepared to take away the sting of death in your own persons? Can you hope to overcome sin yourselves? Can you trust that, by some righteous works, you may yet cancel your guilt? If you think so, go, O foolish one, go! O madman, go! work out thine own salvation with fear and trembling, without the God that worketh in thee; go, twist thy rope of sand; go, build a pyramid of air; go, prepare a house with bubbles, and think it is to last forever; but know it will be a dream with an awful awakening, for as a dream when one awaketh will he despise alike your image and your righteousness. "The strength of sin is the law."

III. But now, in the last place, we have before us THE VICTORY OF FAITH. The Christian is the only champion who can smite the dragon of death, and even *he* cannot do it of himself; but when he has done it, he

shall cry, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." One moment, and I will show you how the Christian can look upon death with complacency, through the merits of Jesus Christ.

First, Christ has taken away the strength of sin in this respect, *that he has removed the law*. We are not under bondage, but under grace. Law is not our directing principle, grace is. Do not misunderstand me. The principle that I *must* do a thing - that is to say, the principle of law, "do, or be punished; do, or be rewarded," is not the motive of the Christian's life; his principle is grace: "God has done so much for me, what ought I to do for him?" We are not under the law in that sense, but under grace.

Then Christ has removed the law in this sense, that *he has completely satisfied it*. The law demands a perfect righteousness; Christ says, "Law, thou hast it; find fault with me; I am the sinner's substitute; have I not kept thy commandments? Wherein have I violated thy statutes?" "Come here, my beloved," he says, and then he cries to Justice, "Find a fault in this man; I have put my robe upon him; I have washed him in my blood; I have cleansed him from his sin. All the past is gone; as for the future, I have secured it by sanctification; as for the penalty, I have borne it myself; at one tremendous draught of love I have drunk that man's destruction dry; I have borne what he should have suffered; I have endured the agonies he ought to have endured. Justice, have I not satisfied thee? Did I not say upon the tree, and didst thou not coincide with it, 'It is finished; it is finished?' Have I not made so complete an atonement that there is now no need for that man to die and expiate his guilt? Do I not complete the perfect righteousness of this poor, once condemned, but now justified spirit?" "Yes" saith Justice, "I am well satisfied, and even more content, if possible, than if the sinner had brought a spotless righteousness of his own." And now, what saith the Christian after this? Boldly he comes to the realms of death, and entering the gates there, he cries, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" And when he had said it, the dragon drops his sting. He descends into the grave; he passes by the place where fiends lie down in fetters of iron; he sees their chains, and looks into the dungeon where they dwell, and as he passes by the prison door, he shouts, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" They growl and bite their iron bonds, and hiss



in secret, but they cannot lay aught to his charge. Now see him mount aloft. He approaches God's heaven, he come against the gates, and Faith still triumphantly shouts, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" And a voice comes from within: "Not Christ, for he hath died; not God, for he hath justified." Received by Jesus, Faith enters heaven, and again she cries, "Who even here amongst the spotless and ransomed, shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Now the law is satisfied, sin is gone; and now surely we need not fear the sting of the dragon, but we may say, as Paul did, when he rose into the majesty of poetry - such beautiful poetry that Pope himself borrowed his words, only transposing the sentences, "O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"

If it were necessary to-night, I might speak to you concerning the *resurrection*, and I might tell you how much that takes away the sting of death, but I will confine myself to the simple fact, that the sting of death is sin, that the strength of sin is the law, and that Christ gives us the victory by taking the sting away, and removing the strength of sin by his perfect obedience.

And now, sirs, how many are there here who have any hope that for them Christ Jesus died? Am I coming too close home, when most solemnly I put the question to each one of you, as I stand in God's presence this night, to free my head of your blood; as I stand and appeal with all the earnestness this heart is capable of? Are you prepared to die? I sin pardoned? Is the law satisfied? Can you view the flowing

"Of Christ's soul-redeeming blood,  
With divine assurance knowing,  
That he hath made your peace with God?"

O! can ye now put one hand upon your heart, and the other upon the Bible, and say, "God's word and I agree; the witness of the Spirit here and the witness there are one. I have renounced my sins, I have given up my evil practices; I have abhorred my own righteousness; I trust in naught but Jesus' doings; simply do I depend on him.

'Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling.'

If so, should you die where you are - sudden death were sudden glory.

But, my hearers, shall I be faithful with you? or shall I belie my soul? Which shall it be? Are there not many here who, each time the bell tolls the departure of a soul, might well ask the question, "Am I prepared?" and they must say, "No." I shall not turn prophet to-night; but were it right for me to say so, I fear not one-half of you are prepared to die. Is that true? Yea, let the speaker ask himself the question, "Am I prepared to meet my Maker face to face?" Oh, sit in your seat and catechise your souls with that solemn question. Let each one ask himself, "Am I prepared, should I be called, to die?" Methinks I hear one say with confidence, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." I hear another say with trembling accents -

"Ah! guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Christ's kind arms I fall;  
He is my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus and my all."

Yes, sweet words! I would rather have written that one verse than Milton's "Paradise Lost." It is such a matchless picture of the true condition of the believing soul. But I hear another say, "I shall not answer such a question as that. I am not going to be dull to-day. It may be gloomy weather outside to-day, but I do not want to be made melancholy." Young man, young man, go thy way. Let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; but for all this the Lord shall bring thee to judgment. What wilt thou do, careless spirit, when thy friends have forsaken thee, when thou art alone with God? Thou dost not like to be alone, young man, now, dost thou? A falling leaf will startle thee. To be alone an hour will bring on an insufferable feeling of melancholy. But thou wilt be alone - and a dreary alone it will be - with God an enemy! How wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan? What wilt thou do when he taketh thee by the hand at eventide, and asketh thee for an account; when he says, "What didst thou do in the beginning of thy days? how didst thou

spend thy life?" When he asks thee, "Where are the years of thy manhood?" When he questions thee about thy wasted Sabbaths, and inquires how thy latter years were spent, what wilt thou say then? Speechless, without an answer, thou wilt stand. Oh, I beseech you, as ye love yourselves, take care! Even now, begin to weigh the solemn matters of eternal life. Oh! say not, "Why so earnest? why in such haste?" Sirs, if I saw you lying in your bed, and your house was on fire, the fire might be at the bottom of the house, and you might slumber safely for the next five minutes; but with all my might I would pull you from your bed, or I would shout, "Awake! awake! the flame is under thee." So with some of you who are sleeping over hell's mouth, slumbering over the pit of perdition, may I not awake you? may I not depart a little from clerical rules, and speak to you as one speaketh to his fellow whom he loves? Ah! if I loved you not, I need not be here. It is because I wish to win your souls, and, if it be possible, to win for my Master some honor, that I would thus pour out my heart before you. As the Lord liveth, sinner, thou standest on a single plank over the mouth of hell, and that plank is rotten. Thou hangest over the pit by a solitary rope, and the strands of that rope are breaking. Thou art like that man of old, whom Dionysius placed at the head of the table; before him was a dainty feast, but the man ate not, for directly over his head was a sword suspended by a hair. So art thou, sinner. Let thy cup be full, let thy pleasures be high, let thy soul be elevated, seest thou that sword? The next time thou sittest in the theatre, look up and see that sword: when next in thy business thou scornest the rules of God's gospel, look at that sword. Though thou seest it not, it is there. Even now, ye may hear God saying to Gabriel, "Gabriel, that man is sitting in his seat in the hall; he is hearing, but is as though he heard not; unsheathe thy blade; let the glittering sword cut through that hair; let the weapon fall upon him and divide his soul and body." *Stop, thou Gabriel, stop!* Save the man a little while. Give him yet an hour, that he may repent. Oh, let him not die. True, he has been here these ten or dozen nights, and he has listened without a tear; but stop, and peradventure he may repent yet. Jesus backs up my entreaty, and he cries, "Spare him yet another year, till I dig about him and dung him, and though he now cumpers the ground, he may yet bring forth fruit, that he may not be hewn down and cast into the fire." I thank thee, O god; thou wilt not cut him down to-night; but to-morrow may be his last day. Ye may never see

the sun rise, though you have seen it set. Take heed. Hear the word of God's gospel, and depart with God's blessing. "Whosoever believeth on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto him." "Whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out." Let every one that heareth say, "Come; whosoever is athirst, let him come and take of the water of life, freely."

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## **Three Decisive Steps**

And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only. And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord. - 1 Samuel 7:2-5

Two enemies held Israel in subjection. The Philistines had fought against them, and defeated them, even though they sent to Shiloh, and brought the ark of the covenant, the symbol of Jehovah's presence, into their camp. The Lord was not with them, so they were smitten with a great slaughter. The crowning disaster of the day was "the ark of God was taken." The Philistines carried it away to Ashdod, and set it in the house of Dagon, their idol. You remember how God, jealous for his honor and glory, there worked mighty wonders, causing Dagon to fall, and inflicting punishment on every city whither the ark came, until at length the Philistines, wearied with their trials, sent the ark back to the people on whose behalf Jehovah had shown himself so strong. Twenty years the ark abode at Kirjath-jearim, and during all that time Israel was under the

hand of the Philistines. But a worse enemy than the Philistines held sway over the land. Though the ark had returned, the people had gone away from their God, and had set up the abominable worship of Baal and Astarte, the idols of the Phoenicians and other heathen nations by whom they were surrounded. I will not stay to explain to you about these gods. Suffice it to say, that the Baalim were the male gods, and the Ashtaroth the female, and that the worship of these idols was attended with the greatest lewdness and filthiness; in fact, the holy things of Baal and Astarte we should call obscene and degrading. The people were thus in double bondage; the heavy yoke of the Philistines was upon them, because the heavier burden of a false worship crushed out the life of their hearts.

It may very naturally be asked, "Where was Samuel all that time?" "I know not what he was doing during those twenty years; but I have a suspicion, I may say, I have a firm persuasion, that he was going from place to place, preaching in quiet spots wherever he could gather an audience; warning the people of their sin, and stirring them up to seek Jehovah, thus endeavoring to infuse some spirituality into their national life. But "the time was long." He ploughed, and seemed to plough a rock. For twenty years the good man spoke. For twenty years he acted like a battering-ram upon a wall that did not seem to tremble beneath his strokes. For twenty years he went up and down, fleeing for his life from the Philistines, but venturing out, whenever he had an opportunity, to warn a household or a village group, or, perhaps, a township, that they could only be delivered from the Philistines by seeking God; that they had come into their present evil case by forsaking Jehovah; and that, unless they came back to the worship of the only true God, they would never have their liberties again. "The time was long," very long, for him to keep on speaking, warning a people who did not seem to care for his message. But constant dripping wears away stones; and at last the inert mass, against which he had battered, began to move, and there arose a general feeling of enquiry all over the country: "all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." Then was Samuel's time to strike, while the iron was hot: he had spent twenty years in getting it hot, and he did not miss the opportunity when at last it came; but he pleaded with the people, and showed them plainly the only way in which they could expect help, namely, by putting away

their false gods, and returning with prepared hearts to the service of Jehovah.

That the continual prayers and efforts of Samuel were crowned with success, should encourage all those who, in days of unfaithfulness and apostasy, still lift up their voices for the truth. Keep pegging away, my brethren: though the people may seem to be indifferent to your message, or stiffen their necks against it; though in the service of the base idols they seem wholly to forget God, yet will the Lord arise in his own good time, and his cause shall triumph. Prepare a way for him, of whom it is written, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. "Now, I believe that my case, with regard to some to whom I am speaking, is something like that of Samuel. I have, at least, the same message to deliver.

I hope to be able to make this plain by showing you, first, that these people were in a very hopeful condition; that, secondly, they were called upon to take very decided steps; and, thirdly, that they were helped to do so by faith. True, it was faith in Samuel; but you get much more help if you have faith in a greater than Samuel, who is here among us still, even our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I. First, then, THESE PEOPLE WERE IN A VERY HOPEFUL CONDITION. "All the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." What does it mean?

It means, first, that they were greatly oppressed. Their goods were taken from them. They were beaten. They saw their children slain. They were the slaves of the Philistines, and hence they began to say, "Why should we not return unto our God? When we were true to Jehovah, there were no Philistines to trouble us. They were put to rout when we served God. It was better with us then than now. Samson, when the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, slew a thousand of them with the jawbone of an ass. Oh, for a day of Samson back again! Oh, for a day of God back again! "Their oppressions made them think of God. Do I not address some whose many troubles are compelling them to think of God? All went well with you once, and then you were an atheist. Troubles are multiplying

now, and atheism does not suit you. You have buried those you loved. Ah! the grass has not yet grown on that newly-formed grave, and your heart is aching after something, you scarcely know what. There were days with you, perhaps, in your youth, when you knelt at your mother's knee; and in your early manhood, when you went to the house of God, and seemed to be one of God's people. You sigh as you think of happier days; but all goes wrong with you now, and a voice seems to say to you, especially in the still of night, "Return, return, return." You have wandered, like a sheep, from the pasture to the desert, from the shepherd's care into danger from the wolf. May God grant that you may, in this way, begin to lament after the Lord!

I think that, by the house of Israel lamenting after the Lord, is meant, next, that they began to be inwardly convinced that nobody could help them but the Lord. "Ah!" said one, "would God these Philistines were driven away!" "Ah!" said his companion, "nobody can do it but Jehovah." And then the first one answered, "Then, would that Jehovah were here! Oh, for his mighty hand, and his terrible power, to drive away our enemies!" "Israel lamented after the Lord." Samuel had taught them to some purpose, seeing that, when they saw their need, they did not look for help to him, but to his Master. Some teachers attract attention to themselves, and are like the moon; when it shines everybody says, "What a beautiful moon!" The true prophet of God shines like the sun, and people do not say, "What a beautiful sun!" but "How lovely is the landscape!" Let it be your ambition so to declare the Word of God, that people will not say, "What a splendid preacher!" but, "How glorious is his Christ"! "No man must come between the seeker and God, for the best of men are but men at their best. Not even the ordinances of religion can meet the need of the people, though they be God-appointed; they were meant to lead us to God, and not to be a substitute for him. When the Philistines triumphed, as we read in the fourth chapter, the elders of Israel said, "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." And lo! when it came, it did not save them. When people trust in the religious symbol instead of the spiritual power, they are idolaters in heart, and court disaster. But the house of Israel did not lament after the ark, they lamented after the Lord, without whose glory,

shining between the cherubim, even the ark was void and valueless. Am I speaking to one who has come to this conviction—"Nobody can help me but God. I am so down at the heel, so broken in spirit, I am brought into such a condition, that unless the heavens are rent, and the right hand of God appears, there is no rescue for me." I am right glad you are brought into that condition. There is much gained when you look away from all others, and from all else, to God. Say now, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." And if your soul still sighs, "Oh, that he would help me! Oh, that it were true that he did hear me, and would come to my rescue!" remember his word, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

In some such case were the people of Israel; and when it says that they "lamented after the Lord", it seems to me that, while they desired him, they were afraid that he would not deliver them. They prayed after a fashion, but there was a dash of doubt about it. So have I known many go up to their closet to pray, and they have said, "O God, if so vile a sinner can be forgiven, if there be such a thing as salvation for a backslider, if sins like mine can be washed away, oh, that I might be saved!" They have prayed with an "if" and a "peradventure" and a "may be", lamenting after the Lord with many a moan, and sigh, and cry of despair, and then just a little drop or two of hope. Lamenting after the Lord—I do not quite know how to describe it, but I know the distressing condition very well; that state in which the soul feels it wants God, and would give anything to be saved; is willing to submit to him, and is anxious to be forgiven; but always is haunted with the dark thought—"It is not for you. He will never stretch his arm of mercy so far as to reach you. You are outside the covenant. You are past hope." Still, even though this is a very dark state of mind to be in, it is a hopeful state of mind. It is much better than presumption, or carelessness.

Moreover, these people had very little hope, but they had very much desire. "They lamented after the Lord." I suppose their lamentation after the Lord was in this fashion: "Oh, that God would be our God! but then he never will be. Oh, that he would deliver us from the Philistines! but then he never will." Their prayer was damp for want of faith; their tinder



would not burn. They did not rejoice to believe in the Lord, but they "lamented" after him: they kept sorrowing and sighing, moaning and crying; wanting him, but never coming at him. I know that I address some now who have regularly attended the preaching of the gospel for years. You are not without a sense of sin; you are not without anxious desires; you are not without very anxious feelings at times. Sometimes you would give your eyes that you might know Christ; and you feel as if you could die willingly if you could but know that you were saved. But, still, you cannot believe it possible; and that doubt still hangs over you. But it is possible; it is more than possible; it is absolutely certain, that he that believeth in Christ hath everlasting life, and him that cometh to him he will in no wise cast out. He is ready to forgive. He delighteth in mercy. He overflows with compassion. "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." Thy lamentations after the Lord may be sweetened with a good hope that, coming to him, he will accept thee.

If you read the third verse, you will see that, all this while, they had not parted with their idols. They lamented after the Lord, but they did not get the Lord, because they wanted to have the Lord and to have their idols, too. There are men in the world who want to go to heaven; but they want to keep on the road to hell, and yet get to heaven. They would get to the north by travelling to the south. There are some who would go home to their Father; but they would like to take the swine, and the swine-troughs, and the husks with them. A pretty sight that prodigal would have been, would he not, driving the hogs, and carrying the hog-troughs on his back, to his father's house? Such a picture is not to be imagined. It never existed in fact, and never can. John Bunyan tells us that, when he was playing at the game of "cat" one Sunday, on Elstow Green, as he was going to strike the cat with his stick, he thought he heard a voice, crying, "Wilt thou keep thy sins, and go to hell; or wilt thou give up thy sins, and go to heaven?" That question, without an angel's voice, you may hear at this moment. I put it now to some of you who would like to keep your sins, and yet go to heaven. You lament after the Lord. You would be a saint; but then you want to be a sinner, too. You would be a child of God; but then you would not like to turn out of the devil's family. You would not like to be ridiculed by the world. No, you want the crown without the cross. You want the end without the way. You want heaven without

holiness, and forgiveness without repentance; and this can never be. It is useless lamenting after the Lord, if it does not lead you to give up your idols.

One thing, however, was meant by this lamenting after the Lord. It meant that they could never rest till God returned. Some of you have tried many ways to get rest. Some years ago you got harpooned at a meeting; and though, like a big whale, you have dragged out miles of line, and gone to the bottom of the sea of sin, the harpoon sticks in you still. I know what you have been doing to get rest. You have tried the world, and now there is nothing there that pleases you. You have tried sticking to business; but you are unsatisfied. You have made money; but you are a poorer man than you were when you began business; poorer, really, than when you had not a penny to bless yourself with. In fact, you have not a penny that does bless you; all your pennies seem curses as they come in. And then you have tried philosophy. Oh, you are a wonderfully wise man, especially when you have just read a book full of infidelity! Then you are wiser than two Solomons rolled into one; and yet you are a fool, and you know you are; for you cannot get any peace by that means. You try sometimes to talk big blasphemies, and that is because you are afraid; as boys will whistle when they go through the churchyard, and are afraid of ghosts. They whistle to keep their courage up; and some people talk very big things just to keep up their confidence, a confidence which they really do not possess; for they are dreadful cowards when they come to die. I wonder what you will try next. Will you try dissipation? Will you try drunkenness? Will you try the use of drugs? Well, well; if God means to save you, you will never rest till you are anchored in the port of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Until you come to God by Jesus Christ you shall never rest. You shall be weary of foot; you shall be weary of brain; you shall be sick at heart; you shall feel that life is not worth living; you shall feel darkness over all your brightness, and you shall taste bitterness in all your sweets. If God means to save you, he will make you lament after him. He has lamented after you: you cost your Savior many a tear. You cost your Savior nailed hands and feet. You cost your Savior bloody sweat. You cost him his death, and he will not have you trifle where he is so in earnest; and if you will not come without strong measures, he will make you come. You shall be like Noah's dove. The raven rested on the

corpses; but the dove could not. For her there was no resting-place; she must drop into the water and drown; but her weary wing at last bears her back to the ark, and Noah opens the window, puts out his hand, takes her in his grasp, and pulls her in unto him into the ark. Then was she peaceful and quiet. She had found her Noah; she had found her rest. And it is to be so with some of you now. You may stand out against my Master; but he means to have you. I sometimes hear of persons getting very angry after a gospel sermon, and I say to myself, "I am not sorry for it." Sometimes when we are fishing, the fish gets the hook into his mouth. He pulls hard at the line: if he were dead, he would not; but he is a live fish, worth the getting; and though he runs away for a while, with the hook in his jaws, he cannot escape. His very wriggling and his anger show that he has got the hook, and the hook has got him. Have the landing-net ready; we shall land him by-and-by. Give him more line; let him spend his strength, and then we will land him, and he shall belong to Christ for ever.

Some of you know well what all this means, so I need say no more upon this point.

II. Let us notice, next, that THESE PEOPLE WERE CALLED UPON TO TAKE THREE VERY DECIDED STEPS. See how plainly and decidedly Samuel puts the matter: "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only."

The first thing that they were to do was to "put away the strange gods." They were to go home, and break the images of Baal, tear down the vile statues of Astarte, and smash them to pieces, whether they were private images, or public ones. They were to clear out the whole tribe of idols. Now, if we would come back to God, we must get rid of all our false confidences.

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

Every man seems to have a different idol. One has pride: he is so wonderfully good, so self-righteous; he has never done anything wrong. He is quite as good as a Christian, and rather better. An excellent character he gives himself; he could not have a better. If it were not for the name at the bottom, which is his own, he could get any situation with such a character as he has. But then, you see, he has given it to himself. You will have to give up that nonsense, for you have not a good character after all; and when you stand in the light of God, you will see yourself to be defiled from head to foot.

Another man's god is his self-confidence. Hear him talk. He understands everything; he does not need to be taught anything; and if there is anything in the Bible that he does not understand, why then he does not believe it. He knows better than God Almighty and the Holy Spirit. He can judge of the Scriptures, and tell you what they ought to be; and he could have written a better book himself. So he says, sometimes, in his talk; or so he thinks. Ah, poor soul! you will have to break that image of pride; or it will be your ruin. Self-confidence, in all its shapes and shades, must be hurled down, if God is to be set up in the heart.

Alas! there are some that have the images of Baal and Ashtaroth in the form of lust. Ah, you cannot keep your sin and go to heaven! Unchastity, fornication, adultery, uncleanness of body—these must be given up. God is ready to forgive the harlot and the fornicator; but they must quit their sins, once for all, and for ever. You cannot lie in the sty, and yet go home to your Father. This abominable thing must be totally given up, and never thought of again, if you would be forgiven and saved.

Others, who are more respectable, have the god of covetousness. To make money, to save money, to grab, to grasp; for this they will grind the workman in his wages; for this they will cheat in the quantity or the quality of their goods. All sorts of tricks in trade will be performed that they may get rich. Now, covetousness is idolatry. If you worship a god of gold, you will perish as much as if you worshipped a god of mud. Oh, that we might have this god driven out of us, and have a living, generous spirit implanted instead!

How many do I know, too, who have for an idol the god of drink! Old Bacchus sits astride not only of the wine-cask, but of many a man's heart. The man when sober, and "all right", is what everybody calls "a good fellow"; but he must drink, and when once he is drunk, then he is by no means a good fellow; but foul and vile in language, and one knows not what he may do. Sir, you must quit strong drink if you would be saved. No drunkard has any inheritance in the kingdom of God, and drunkenness must be given up, and chambering, and wantonness, and gluttony, and all the sins of the flesh. These gods must be broken. "Put away the strange gods from among you."

There are others I know whose strange god is malice. They cannot forgive. Perhaps even while sitting in the house of God they are saying, "Well, I can forgive everybody except my brother. He served me a very bad turn; I never can forgive him." Or, possibly, some are like the man who, when dying, told the priest that he forgave So-and-so for all the wrong he had done him: "that is," said he, "if I die; but if I get up again, I'll make him rue it." Are there not many whose forgiveness of injuries is of that kind? It is a mere sham. But there is no going to heaven unless, frankly and unreservedly, you can forgive others their offenses. Why, you cannot even pray the Lord's Prayer unless you do so. "Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us." You cannot get through that prayer, much less get through the narrow gate, so long as malice is in your heart.

But I must not stay to enlarge here. Every man must look out his own idol, whatever it may be. And now let me most solemnly put it to each one of you: "If thou wilt return unto the Lord with all thy heart, then put away the strange gods that have ruled over you, and turn unto the Lord." That is the first decided step.

Are you saying, "Well, I will put away these evil things; I will give up these sins"? I am glad you have come to that; but when? Can you put them away now, just now, think you? "I was thinking," says one, "I have an engagement to-morrow that will be rather bad." Cannot you put the thing away to-night?" Well, I should like to have one indulgence of the flesh." Ah, sir, you will never put these sins away till you go and do it straight

away! That prodigal son got back to his father because he went off directly. He ran away. I do not know upon what terms his master had engaged him, whether it was by the quarter, or by the week; but this I know—he no sooner came to his senses than off he started, and never stopped: he ran off instantly. You must run away from your old master without giving him any notice; for if you give him any warning, you will never get away at all. God help us to break the images here and now! Down with them, whatever they may be, and turn at once to the Lord!

Now, notice the next step of decision: "Put away the strange gods, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord." The mere outward reformation was not enough. They might have torn down every idol in the land, and have been no nearer God for that. See, in France to-day, how the people, who have for long bent the knee in superstition and idolatry, have, many of them, flung away their vain worship, only to sink into infidelity. What better are they, when they exalt the "Goddess of Reason" where before stood the altars of the Papacy, when the heart is untouched, and God is not in all their thoughts? Still, there are many in that land, as, I trust, there are many here, who are lamenting after God, and only await the preparation of the heart, which comes from him, to bow in allegiance before his throne. What, then, is the way to prepare the heart?

The first thing is, confession of sin. The people said, "We have sinned against the Lord." Go and confess your sin unto God. The more particular you can be in that confession, the better. Go and acknowledge your iniquity with many sighs and tears, and with deep regret that you should have sinned as you have done. Lay every secret bare, and let the light of God explore every hidden corner. The surgeon who means to cure must first expose the wound, and probe it to the bottom; and ere we can be forgiven, we must make a clean breast of our guilt, calling a spade a spade, and not trying to excuse ourselves, or cover up the evil.

Then resolve in your soul that you will quit these sins. No half measures will do: chronic diseases require thorough cures. You remember when Augustine, after a life of sin, heard what seemed to him a voice bidding him "Take, read," he went to his New Testament, and his eye lighted on the passage, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for

the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Then and there he determined to leave all his former lusts, and, in the strength of Christ, to live a new life. It was the hour of his conversion; the axe was laid to the root of the tree, and the old profligate life was utterly renounced. The sinner became a saint, who led others in the way of holiness; and when he died, he left behind him a rich legacy of experience and instruction for the people of God. Whatever the sin is, it must go.

"Repentance is to leave  
The sins we loved before,  
And show that we in earnest grieve,  
By doing so no more."

Then there must be much prayer; for so it was with these people. Cry mightily unto God: "Lord, save me!" Cry again and again unto him, and make this to be your one cry; "Give me Christ, or else I die!" Nothing so prepares the heart for God as crying out after him. The water-brooks are sweeter to the hart that has panted after them; the blessing is twice valued that has been won by intercession. I have heard it said that a man who wins his wife too easily treats her too lightly; whether it is true, I cannot say; but I am sure that the richest blessings of God come to those who urge their suit again and again, and who will not be denied the grace they seek. May the Holy Ghost give you this preparation of heart by a full confession, a strong resolve, and a mighty prayer!

Remember, too, that there must be trust, or else the heart is not rightly prepared. We must get beyond the stage of "lamenting", and begin the act of "consenting." Not only wish and pray for the blessing, but rely on the Lord to send it. He who smote Egypt in his firstborn, and with a strong hand and mighty arm brought their fathers out of the house of bondage, could easily deliver them. He who gave them at first the land for a possession, could still scatter their enemies. Why should they not expect him to work a work in their day? By the memory of what God did for your forefathers, I exhort you to trust in my Savior. "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old." Therefore, O thou great Jehovah, will we trust in thee in this our day!

Then, break away from the world. These people of Israel went home, and smashed their idols, and then they gathered at Mizpeh, once more a separated people. It was like a declaration of war. Declare war at once with evil of every shape. Now, come, and enlist beneath the blood-stained banner of the cross, and say, "I am a follower of the Lamb, and I will not parley with iniquity. Let the Philistines come, if they will; I will not submit to them again. I will break loose from the world, God helping me." Perhaps you say, this is not the preparation of the heart, but the beginning of the battle. I know it; but any old soldier who has been in the wars will tell you that the best preparation for the strife is the first encounter with the enemy: after the first shot or two, the coward heart becomes brave, and the trembling nerves are strung for action. Many a timid soul is kept from the joy of God's salvation simply for the want of a bold separation from the world. A little moral courage is all that is lacking in the case of some of you. Come out boldly, and declare your desire and decision. Difficulties will vanish in the act. The first confession of Christ is the best possible preparation for the next one.

This matter of heart-preparation is most important. It is God's work; and yet, as his Spirit is ever present to help our infirmities, it is also ours. You remember how Solomon, in the Proverbs, says to his son: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." If the heart be divided, the life can never be true. You will notice how Samuel put before the people the necessity of being thorough in their decision: "Return unto the Lord with all your hearts," was his clarion call. If we expect God to be wholly for us, we must be wholly for him, and keep back nothing from his control. The Thessalonians "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God," and in like manner this preparation of heart, on the part of Israel, came between the two acts of turning from idols, and serving God, and was the spring of both.

That is the next step, the service of God: "Serve him only," said Samuel. "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only." It is not enough to give up serving evil; you must come and serve the Lord. That is to say, from this time forth your great aim must be to glorify God. If you would be saved, you must give up every



object in life, as a guiding star to you, except serving God. Whatever he bids you do, you are to do. His will must be your law. Christ will save you, but he will have you take upon you his yoke, and wear it; and as he is meek and lowly in heart, he would have you learn to be so, too; and then you shall find rest unto your soul. This is Christ's way; that where he comes to save, he comes to sanctify, and make us obey his will, and live to his praise. His smile is reward great enough for the poor service we can render him; his "Well done" at last will be heaven to the heart that loves him. Oh, that many here would say, "Yes, I wish to serve the Lord, and serve the Lord only. Too long have I drawn near to him with my lip, while my heart was far from him. 'O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.'"

III. Now, I think that I hear one say, "But these three steps are pretty stiff ones: give up the idols, prepare the heart, serve the Lord only." Yes, they are; and I do not believe that these people could ever have taken these three steps if it had not been for my third point, namely, that **THEY WERE HELPED TO DO ALL THIS BY HAVING FAITH**. It was faith in Samuel, as we have already noticed. You can be much more helped, yea, graciously enabled, if you have faith in Christ.

They believed Samuel's word. He had spoken to them, and they said to one another, "Samuel says that God will deliver us from the Philistines if we trust him. Samuel speaks the truth." Well, now, God has sent a greater than Samuel—his Only-begotten Son; and he says to you that, "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." You need have no doubt about it; the word he has spoken shall never be broken. He means what he promises and not one jot or tittle of his word shall pass away till all be fulfilled. Believe what Christ says, that there is salvation for everyone who puts his trust in him. Believe that, and take hope; and, getting that hope, be bold to strike the decisive blow to-night, and give up the idols, and turn to God.

These people believed chiefly in Samuel's prayers. He was a mighty man in prayer; and when the Philistines came, the children of Israel cried to him, saying, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us." How much

greater faith should we put in the Lord Jesus, who died, and rose again, and ever lives to plead for us! "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Sinners, Christ is praying for you. If you trust him, his prayers will help you to break the fetters of sin.

"The Lion of Judah shall break every chain,  
And give us the victory again and again."

The people had faith in Samuel's sacrifice; for Samuel took a lamb, and burnt it whole upon the altar; and our glorious Christ has made himself the Lamb of God, and he has been wholly consumed as an offering unto God. Trust in his word. Trust in his prayers. Trust in his sacrifice. Believe that the precious blood can make you white. Believe that there is virtue enough in the death of Christ to make atonement for all the sin that is confessed and laid before him. If thou believest, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son has cleansed thee. If thou wilt trust him, thy sin is put away. This is the very errand on which he came, "To put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Hear what the Lord hath said by the prophet: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." Believe this, and, believing it, thou shalt be helped to break the idols, helped to prepare the heart, helped to come and serve the Lord only. Let the prayer go up from your heart to him who poured out his soul on Calvary, but who is now alive, and attentive to the voice of our cry: "O Lord, I trust in thy sacrifice, I rely on thy blood, save me for thy name's sake, and cleanse me from my sin."

"Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole,  
I want thee for ever to live in my soul;  
Break down every idol, cast out every foe—  
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Israel also accepted Samuel's rule: "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places." You see, salvation

means being delivered from the power of sin. Salvation means being made a new man—an honest man, a holy man, a gracious man; it means that Christ, who saves the soul, begins to govern the life; and this salvation is to be gained through faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord help you to believe in God incarnate, in God making sacrifice for sin, in Jesus dead, buried, risen, ascended, sitting at the right hand of God, and soon to come in glory! Let him enter your life, and dwelling in your heart, judge your every action, and rule over your entire life.

I trust that none of you will say, "We will keep our idols." Ah, if you do so, you will not keep them long! If your idols are not taken away from you, you will be taken away from your idols. What will some of you do in the next world, when there is no gold to hoard, and no revelry in which to indulge, when you will have no occupation but to gnash your teeth upon yourself, because you committed everlasting suicide, and refused and rejected Christ for a few days' pleasure, or a few years' gain? Will any of you be mad enough to let eternity go, and let heaven go, and let God go for the paltry lusts of the flesh, for the fleeting gains of the hour? As I shall confront you at the bar of God, I charge you, seek him! Put away your idols, prepare your hearts, trust in Jesus, and serve the Lord only. God grant that it may be so, for his name's sake! Amen.

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## **Three Names High On The Muster Roll**

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. - Daniel 3:16-18

If you read the second chapter of the Book of Daniel, you will think that Nebuchadnezzar was not far from the kingdom. His dream had troubled

him; but Daniel had explained it. Then the king made this confession to Daniel, "Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret." He acknowledged that Jehovah, the God of the Jews, was the greatest of gods, and was a great interpreter of secrets; and yet in a short time we find this man setting up an idol, and persecuting to the death those who would not worship it. He seems, indeed, to have turned the blessing into a curse, and made the image of his dream the pattern of the idol he set up for the nation to worship; thus making that through which God had graciously revealed his power and wisdom, the very instrument of his folly and vain glory. Man's proud heart is the same in all generations, and the same thing happens even to-day. Have you not seen in your time men seriously impressed? They could not hold their own; they seemed stricken down by the force of truth, and you felt almost sure that they would become, like Saul of Tarsus, true converts, and even apostles of the faith. But after a while they forgot it, forgot it all, and became at length the most bitter and determined opponents of the truth before which they seemed once to bow. Every minister, who has a congregation of any considerable size, must have met with such people. I remember one who, being at a prayer-meeting where there was much wrestling power with God, was so overcome that he prayed aloud, and seemed to cry with all his heart for mercy, and ere he left he said that he had found it; but the next day he declared that he would never go to such a meeting again; that he had been almost caught, but he would not trust himself in such society any more. And I fear that he never did; for he could always speak with great severity against the people who met for prayer, and were earnest in the faith. We know, then, what to expect; that some who seem like fish almost landed, will, nevertheless, slip back into the stream; that it will happen unto them according to the true proverb, "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." They will go out from us because they are not of us, and the last state of such men will be worse than the first.

This great king of Babylon was an absolute monarch His will was law; no man ever dared to dispute with him. Who would differ from a gentleman who could back up his arguments with a fiery furnace, or with a threat to cut you in pieces, and to make your house a dunghill? And now, when it

comes to this, that he sets up a god of his own, a huge colossal statue, and gathers all the princes and potentates of his world-wide dominion together, to bow down before this image, it seems a strange thing to him that there should be anybody found who would not do so. And yet there were three Jews who mastered him. Once before, they had broken the laws of his court, and refused to eat unclean meat; and though they ate nothing but pulse, "At the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." Having stood firm for the right before, they were the bolder to face the more terrible ordeal. The king himself had exalted them in the land, and he expected them, of course, to do his bidding, and set an example to others; but these three of the despised race of the Jews were unconquerable even by the master of the whole world. They stood out before Nebuchadnezzar, and carried their point for God and for conscience.

As we dwell upon this deed of noble heroism, may we become sharers in the courage and faith of these men, whose names stand high on the roll of worthies in the kingdom of God! Thirteen times their names recur in this chapter, like a refrain to the song which speaks of their deed of valor.

Notice, first, the excuses they might have made; secondly, the confidence they possessed; and thirdly, the determination at which they had arrived.

I. First of all, as we think of these three brave Jews, let us consider **THE EXCUSES THEY MIGHT HAVE MADE**. They were accused by the Chaldeans, who had so recently been saved from death by Daniel and his three friends. The surest way to be hated by some people is to place them under an obligation. "What favor have I ever done him, that he should hate me so?" said one. But in this case the wrath of man was to praise God. The incensed monarch called the offenders before him, and, scarcely believing that in his realm any could have defied his authority, he put the alternative plainly before them. "Here is the golden image; you three Jews are to bow down before it. If you do not, there is the burning fiery furnace, and into that you shall be cast at once. What is your answer?"

They might have said to themselves, "It is perfectly useless to resist. We

cannot contend against this man. If we submit, we do it unwillingly; and surely, being coerced into it, we shall be but little blamed. A man cannot be expected to knock his head against a brick wall, nor throw his life away; and therefore we will bow our heads, as the rest of the multitude have done, and worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up." It is a bad excuse, but it is one that I have often heard made. "Oh," says a man, "we must live, you know; we must live." I really do not see any necessity for it. We must die; but whether we must live or not, depends upon a great many things, and it is infinitely better to die than to sink your manhood, and to violate your conscience, at a tyrant's bidding.

Again, they might have said, "We are in a strange land, and is it not written by one of our wise men, 'When you are in Babylon, you must do as Babylon does'? Of course, if we were at home, in Judaea, we would not think of such a thing. We would remember how God has said, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.' If we were at home, we would obey that law; but we are many hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem, and surely we may be permitted to yield in this point." Thus have I known many who say they are Christians at home act when they are abroad; they have not regarded the Sabbath, neither have they even regarded the decency or the indecency of the amusements to which they have betaken themselves, because, forsooth, they were not at home! "We would not do this in England; but we are in Paris, you see, and the case is altered," they say. Is the case altered? Is God the God of this island, and not the God of the Continent? Has he ever given us permission to do abroad what we may not do at home? It is a vile excuse, but commonly enough made.

They might also have said, "We are in office"; and seeing they were set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, they might have found some difficulty in detaching their private religion from their public duty. They were high officials; and what an excuse this is for a great deal of roguery and trickery everywhere! A man gets elected to a parish vestry, or a council, or a board, and when he once gets to sit on that board, he seems to have left his honesty at home. I say not that it is so always, but I am

sorry to say that it has often been so. The official has no sooner put on his robes of office than his conscience has vanished. But these men were not so foolish as to think that because they were made rulers in Babylon, they might therefore sin against the Most High God. It is true that they were bound to obey the lawful orders of their sovereign; but whether it be right to obey men rather than God, their conscience could easily enough judge; so they never made that excuse.

But, then, they were prosperous men. They were getting on in the world, and I believe that God sent this trial to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, because they were prospering. They might have said, "We must not throw away our chances." Among the dangers to Christian men, the greatest, perhaps, is accumulating wealth—the danger of prosperity. Wesley used sometimes to fear that Christianity was self-destructive; for when a man becomes a Christian, the blessings of this life are his, too: he begins to rise in the world; he leaves his old position behind him; and, alas! too often, with increasing riches, forgets the God who gave him all. There is much truth in this idea; and unless the Spirit of God abides with his people, we might indeed see our faith thus commit suicide. It is a danger to be guarded against, both by liberal giving and by frequent intercession. We often pray for Christians in adversity, and it is right that we should do so; but it is even more necessary to pray for Christians in prosperity, for they run the risk of gradually becoming soft, like Hannibal's soldiers destroyed by Capuan holidays, who lost their valor in their luxury. Many a man who was an out-and-out Christian when he was lower down in life has, when prosperous, become much too great a gentleman to associate with those who were his honored brethren before. I have seen it scores of times; but it is a shocking thing. May God grant that we may never turn his mercies into an excuse for sinning against him! You who are rich have no more liberty to sin than if you were poor. You who rise in the world have no more right to do wrong than you had when you were down in the world; and his lordship is no more honorable at a prize-fight than the bullet-headed pugilist. We must do right. We must never do wrong, or plead our position in society, or our prosperity in worldly things, as a reason why we may do what others might not do.

Again, further, they might have excused themselves thus. The putting up

of this image was not altogether a religious act. It was symbolical. The image was intended to represent the power of Nebuchadnezzar, and bowing before it was therefore doing political homage to the great king. Might they not safely do this? They might have said, "We are politically bound." Oh, how often we hear this brought up! You are told to regard the difference between right and wrong everywhere, except when you get into politics; then stick to your party through thick and thin. Right and wrong vanish at once. Loyalty to your leader—that is the point. Never mind where he leads you, follow him blindly. You are even told that you may do wrong because it is politically right. I hate such an argument! These men never for a moment entertained the evil thought. It is true that politics were mixed up with this image; but whatever might be mixed up with it, they would not worship it, for God had said, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them," and these sturdy believers would do nothing of the kind under any presence whatever.

A very soothing salve for their conscience might have been found in the absence of any command to renounce their own religion. They might have encouraged each other to submit, by saying, "We are not called upon to abjure our God." They need not believe the idol to be divine, nor confess the least faith in it; in their hearts they might make a mental reservation as they bowed, and they might have whispered to one another, and said that it was a devil, and no God. They might have excused themselves to their own conscience by saying that they prostrated themselves to the music, and not to the idol, or that they made obeisance to the king rather than to his image. In fact, if their consciences had been as elastic as some modern ones, though that was hardly possible, as the virtues of indiarubber were scarcely known then, they might have said that, in bowing down before the image, they were praying to Jehovah, since he might be worshipped anywhere, and under any circumstances. They might have said that, although they looked at the image, they did not worship it; but beyond the glitter of its gold, their thoughts rose to the God of glory. Anything, in fact, will serve for an excuse, when the heart is bent on compromise; and, especially in these half-hearted days, it is very easy to find a specious reason for a false action, if some temporal benefit is attached to it. Modern charity manufactures a multitude of excuses to cover sins withal.



A stronger argument, however, might have been secured from the fact of the universal submission to the decree. "Everybody else is doing it," they might have said. That morning, when the rising sun was saluted by the strains from those varied instruments of music from Persia, and Greece, and Babylon, when all the music of the world seemed gathered together, everybody bowed. There were Jews there, thousands of them; and they all bowed. There were fire-worshippers there, men who hated the worship of graven images; but they all bowed. There were men there who had gods of their own which they revered; but they all bowed before Nebuchadnezzar's god. "What a singular being you must be to stand out against the fashion of the time!" the tempter might have said; "your own countrymen have bowed, and you will not; better men than you, let me tell you, have bowed, but you will not." No, they will not, these three singularities, these strange eccentricities! It is folly to be singular, except when to be singular is to be right; and to be eccentric is not commendable, except the eccentricity consists in not being concentric with any kind of evil way. In spite of all the apostate crowds, these brave men would not yield—not they! Though millions bowed, what had that to do with them? My dear hearers, I ask you to cultivate a brave personality. In the service of God, things cannot go by the counting of heads. You must follow the Lord's will wherever it leads you, whether you go alone or not.

"Dare to be a Daniel,  
Dare to stand alone."

They might have said, "It is only for once, and not for long. Ten minutes or so, once in a lifetime, to please the king; such a trivial act cannot make any difference; at any rate, it is not enough to brave the fiery furnace for. Let us treat the whole thing as a huge jest. It would be ridiculous to throw away our lives for such a trifle." Have you never heard such arguments in these days? This indulgent nineteenth century has plenty of easy maxims of a very similar sort. In the supreme hour many fail, because the trial is seemingly so small. They mean to stand for God; but this is scarcely the right time; they will wait, and choose a more worthy occasion, when something really heroic can be attempted. Were they to stand for such a

little thing, the world would laugh with derision at such a straining out of a gnat. So Adam eats the apple; Esau the pottage; and the one temptation, unresisted, issues in life-long loss. Not even for a few minutes in a lifetime would these three brave men deny their God. May their stubborn faith be ours!

Another excuse that they might have made was, "We can do more good by living than we can by being cast into that furnace. It is true, if we are burnt alive, we bear a rapid testimony to the faith of God; but if we live, how much more we might accomplish! You see we three are Jews, and we are put in high office, and there are many poor Jews who are captives. We can help them. We have already done so. We have always seen justice done to God's people, our fellow-countrymen, and we feel that we are raised to our high office on purpose to do good. Now, you see, if you make us bigots, and will not let us yield, you cut short our opportunities of usefulness." Ah, my dear brethren! there are many that are deceived by this method of reasoning. They remain where their conscience tells them they ought not to be, because, they say, they are more useful than they would be if they went "without the camp." This is doing evil that good may come, and can never be tolerated by an enlightened conscience. If an act of sin would increase my usefulness tenfold, I have no right to do it; and if an act of righteousness would appear likely to destroy all my apparent usefulness, I am yet to do it. It is yours and mine to do the right though the heavens fall, and follow the command of Christ whatever the consequences may be. "That is strong meat," do you say? Be strong men, then, and feed thereon.

But they might also have said, "Really, this is more than can be expected of us. If we had been asked to contribute our tithe to the support of the religion of Jehovah, we would cheerfully do so; but to yield our lives in this horrible way, to be cast into a burning fiery furnace, is more than flesh and blood can bear." Yes, and some of us could not answer that argument, for, peradventure, it is pressing upon ourselves. Remember what Jesus said to the multitudes who went with him, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my

disciple." We must stand to a full surrender, and say, "Let it cost what it may, I make no exception. I take all risks. I will follow Christ, the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth, even should I die while I am following him." He that does not come to that has not taken the position which Christ demands of us, and which his Holy Spirit must work in us, before we are fully converted to the faith. "Strong language again", says one. God make you strong enough to apply it to yourself!

Thus, I have set before you the excuses that these three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, might have made.

II. In the second place, let us assure our own hearts by admiring THE CONFIDENCE WHICH THEY POSSESSED. They expressed it very emphatically and clearly. They had a very definite, solid, foursquare faith.

First, they said, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter." The word "careful" there, does not give you the meaning. Read it, "We are not full of care as to how to answer thee." They did answer very carefully; but they were not anxious about the answer. It was not a thing that troubled them in the least. They knew what they were going to say. They did not deliberate. They did not hesitate. They said, "Nebuchadnezzar, we can answer you at once on that point." They were so calm, so self-collected, that they could talk to him, not as a king, but as Nebuchadnezzar. When it came to life-work, it was man to man, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to Nebuchadnezzar; and they told him that they had no difficulty in answering him.

In the second place, they did not judge it theirs to answer at all. I find that it may be read, as in the Revised Version, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter," meaning, "We will not answer you. It is not for us to answer you. You have brought another Person into the quarrel." Let me read the words that precede my text. Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" In effect, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego replied, "It is not for us to answer you. There is Another that will do that. You have challenged God, and God shall make his own reply." It was bravely spoken. They threw the onus of this matter upon God himself. So may

you. If you will do right, it is God's affair to see you through. With the consequences you have nothing to do, except patiently to bear them; the consequences must be with God. Only you do the right. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and obey him, and keep the command of the Most High, and then whatever comes of it, it is no blame of yours. That must be left with God.

Then notice what they say. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace." They avowed their faith in the Omnipotent God, knowing that, if he chose, no mighty man of Babylon could ever throw them into that furnace. The furnace itself must die down, and become cool as ice, if God so wills it. They tell the tyrant to his face, enveloped as he was in the flame of his wrath, that God can save them out of the fire. Their God was almighty, and they put their trust in him.

What is more, they add, "And he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." Whether they burned in the fire or not, they were sure they would be delivered. "If we die, we shall be out of your reach; but we may not die; we may live beyond your reach. You have asked the question, 'Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?' and we answer you, 'Our God will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.'"

Now; beloved friends, if any of you are in great difficulty and trouble, tempted to do wrong, nay, pressed to do it, and if you do what is right, it looks as if you will be great losers and great sufferers; believe this: God can deliver you. He can prevent your having to suffer what you suppose you may; and if he does not prevent that, he can help you to bear it, and, in a short time, he can turn all your losses into gains, all your sufferings into happiness. He can make the worst thing that can happen to you to be the very best thing that ever did happen to you. If you are serving God, you are serving an Omnipotent Being; and that Omnipotent Being will not leave you in the time of difficulty, but he will come to your rescue. Many of us can say with Paul, "We trust not in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." The Lord has helped us in the past, he is helping us in the present, and we believe that he will

help us all the way through. He will help you, too if you just follow his word, and by a simple faith do the right thing. I believe that we have reason to expect interpositions of providence to help us when we are called to suffer for Christ's sake.

III. But here is the point that I want to make most prominent—the third one—THE DETERMINATION AT WHICH THEY ARRIVED. "If not", if God does not deliver us at all, "be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Grand language! Noble resolve! "If not, if we have to go into the fire, into the fire we will go; but we will never bow the knee to an idol." So these gracious Jews were enabled to say.

They did not pivot their loyalty to God upon their deliverance. They did not say, as some do, "I will serve God if it pays me to do so. I will serve God if he helps me at such and such a time." No, they would serve him for nothing; theirs was not cupboard love. "If not, if he does not deliver us, if it is his will that we should be burnt alive, we surrender ourselves to his will; but we will not break his divine command, or make idolaters of ourselves by bowing before an image which has no life in it, which could not even set itself up, but which Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up."

They resolved that they would, obey God at all costs. Now, I knew a young man once, to whom a certain ordinance of Christ was made known as being Scriptural; but as far as he could see, if he followed that ordinance, every door would be shut against him. If he was bold to do as he thought he ought to do, according to his Master's command and example, it would be the ruin of everything. Well, he did it, and it was not the ruin of anything; and if he had to do such a thing again a hundred times over, he thanks God that he would do it. There is such sweetness in having to make some sacrifice for God; there is such a heavenly recompense, that one almost envies the martyrs. Rather than pity their sufferings, one feels an intense longing that such honor had been ours, and that we had had the moral courage and holy stamina to suffer for God even as they suffered. Who among the bright ones are the brightest in the land of light? They that wear the ruby crown of martyrdom most certainly lead the van; for they suffered, even to the death, for their Lord. O friends, it is

a glorious thing when we make no calculation of costs, but with our whole heart and soul follow the Lamb whithersoever he leadeth us!

Let us walk in this heroic path. But some will say, "It is too hard. You cannot expect men to love God well enough to die for him." No, but there was One who loved us well enough to die for us, and to die a thousand deaths in one, that he might save us. If Christ so loved us, we ought so to love him. "Well," says one, "I think it is impossible. I could not bear pain." It is possible, for many have endured it. I remember that one of the martyrs, who was to be burned on the following morning, thought that he would try himself; and there being a large fire in the cell, he put his foot into it to see whether he could bear to have it burnt, and soon shrank back. Therein he was foolish; for when he went out the next morning to stand on the faggots and burn, he stood like a man, and burnt bravely to the death for his Master. The fact was, his Lord did not call him to burn his foot in the stove, and so he did not help him to bear it; but when he called him to give his whole body to the flames, then grace was given. There is a story of a martyred woman, who had a child born to her a few days before she was burnt, and being in great pain, she cried aloud. One said to her, "If you cannot bear this, what will you do when you come to burn?" She said, "Now you see the pains of nature which befall a woman, and I have not patience enough to bear them; but by-and-by you shall see Christ in his members suffering, and you shall see what patience he will have, and what patience he will give to me." It is recorded of her that she seemed as if she had no pain at all when she yielded herself up to Christ. Do not judge, by what you are to-day, what you would be if you were called into trouble. Grace would be given you. I have no doubt that many of the most timid of those who truly love the Lord, would be the very bravest; while some who think they would be brave, would be the very first to start back. You may never be called to such a trial as that; but still, if you cannot bear the small trials, how would you bear the great ones? "I cannot bear to be laughed at," says one. But though there is something cruel about mocking, it does not break anybody's bones. And being laughed at—well, really, I have sometimes thought, when I have seen a good joke cracked over my poor head, that there is so much misery in the world, that if I might be the cause of making a little more mirth, I should be glad; and even if it told against me, if it made somebody feel a little

merrier, it was not a matter for great sorrow. And then you go into the workshop, and they point at you and say, "There comes a canting Methodist!" remember, that is the way in which the world pays homage to Christianity! If there is anything genuine in the Christian religion, the world pays its respect by cavilling at it, and caricaturing it. Accept their compliments, not as they intend them, but as you choose to read them, and you will not be grieved. You, Shadrach, not afraid of a burning fiery furnace, are surely not going to be frightened by the laughter of a silly boy or girl in the workshop? Alas, this unworthy fear enters into all relationships! I have known men afraid of their wives! I have known fewer wives, however, afraid of their husbands; for they are generally bold for Christ, and can suffer for his name's sake. I have known children afraid of their parents, and some poor parents, six feet high, afraid of their children! Oh, what poor worms it makes of us when we begin to be afraid of our fellow-creatures! Do right, and fear nothing, and God will help you.

To enable us to get the spirit of these three holy men, we must get, first, a clear sense of the divine presence. If a man feels that God is seeing him, he will not bow his knee to an idol; neither will he do evil, for God's eye is upon him. He will endure, "as seeing him who is invisible;" and though the floods of ungodly men lift themselves up, he will remember the Lord who sitteth upon the waterfloods, and is higher than they. The man who realizes God's presence is by that invisible companionship rendered invincible. Greater is he that is for him, than all that can be against him.

"For right is right, since God is God,  
And right the day must win;  
To doubt would be disloyalty,  
To falter would be sin."

We must, next, have a deep sense of the divine law. I have already reminded you of the law." Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." No Virgin Mary, no cross, no crucifix, no picture, no image, no

visible object is to be regarded with reverence, or worshipped instead of God. All this must be put away. That is clear enough; and therefore Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, feeling that God was near, and knowing what God's law was, dared not violate that law, but would sooner die.

Above all, to keep us right, we must have a mighty sense of the divine love. We shall never obey God till by his grace we have new hearts, and those hearts are full of love to him through Jesus Christ. Then, if you love him, you will say, "What! put an image of gold in his place? Never! Join the multitude in worshipping a colossal statue instead of the invisible Jehovah? Never!" With holy indignation you will choose the furnace of fire, rather than have that purer flame which glows in your heart quenched, or made to burn dimly.

To some of you this must seem very trifling, because you say, "I do not care about religious forms and ceremonies. Let me enjoy myself while I am here; it is all that I ask." Well, you have made your bargain, and a sorry one it is. If this life be all, how ought a man to live? I am sure I cannot tell you. Perhaps the wisest thing of all is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But there is another world, and a life beyond, and it is sometimes incomparably wise to fling this life away that we may win the life eternal. Our Lord often reminded his hearers of this great truth, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

"But what did these three men do?" says one: "they simply did not bow their heads, and they were cast into the fiery furnace. What did they do?" They influenced their age, their people, and, all time. These three men influenced the city of Babylon, and the whole Babylonian empire. They certainly influenced king Nebuchadnezzar. They influenced the next age, and to this hour the influence of their brave stand for God in his eternal unity, and for the non-worship of any visible thing, has held the Hebrew race firmly to this one point. It was principally through these three men that the whole Jewish people were taught their deep hatred of everything like idol-worship; and they were, by such men as these, and some who followed after; weaned from their tendency to wander after idols, and



tethered fast to the worship of Jehovah, the one living and true God. Would God that the Jews as a nation went further, and knew our Lord Jesus Christ! Still, it is something that they are yet alive upon the earth bearing witness that there is but one God, Creator of heaven and earth, who only is to be worshipped. More than that, the influence of these three men lives in this audience, and will live in thousands of audiences in days to come. Does it not make your pulse beat? Does it not make your heart leap within you? Have you not said to yourselves, "This is a noble example"? Oh, that we may rise to it! In an age like ours, when everything is sold, when you can buy anybody, when the flute, harp, sackbut, dulcimer, and all kinds of music carry everything before them, when a mask and a vizor will infatuate even a saint; it is time that there were some men of the stern old mould of these three Jews, who could not, and would not, yield, whatever might happen. The pillars of the earth might be dissolved, but these men would still stand upright, and bear the whole world upon their shoulders by the grand power of God that made them strong. Be like unto them.

These three men command the admiration of heaven and earth. A fool would have pointed at them and said, "There go three fools—gentlemen high in office, with large incomes, and wives and families. They have only to take their cap off, and they may live in their wealth; but if they do not do it, they are to be burnt alive; and they will not do it. They will be burnt alive. They are fools." Yes, but the Son of God did not think so. When he in heaven heard them speak thus to king Nebuchadnezzar, he said, "Brave, brave men! I will leave the throne of God in heaven to go and stand by their side;" and invisibly he descended, till where the fires were glowing like one vast ruby, where the fierce flame had slain the men that threw the three confessors into the burning fiery furnace, HE came and stood. And there they walked. It was the greatest walk that they had ever had. On those burning coals the four of them were walking together in sweet fellowship. They had won the admiration and the sympathy of the Son of God, who left heaven itself, that he might come and stand side by side with them. It was therefore comparatively a little thing that they won the admiration of Nebuchadnezzar. That proud imperial tyrant cried to those about him, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered, "True, O king;" and he, with his visage white with

ghostly fear, said, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." He himself could not but stand there, and, awestruck, admire these three heroes. And now to-day you do the same. These three men still live. From the glowing coals their voices call aloud to us, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

To close: if we would be servants of God, we must be believers in his Son Jesus Christ. Come and trust Jesus Christ, and you are saved. When you are truly saved, you are to be saved from all hesitation about obedience to God—so saved, that henceforth God's law is your rule. Then, with that holy law imperative upon you, you will go forth into the world, and say, "It is not mine to ask what others will do. It is not mine to shape my course by them, not mine to enquire what will bring me most profit, what will bring me most honor. It is mine to look up to thee, my God, and ask, what wouldest thou have me to do? I will do it at all costs."

I wonder how many young men to whom these words are addressed have pluck enough in them to come out on Christ's side. I do believe that many young men do not want an easy life; they would rather have a hard time, and a stern battle. We have brave spirits among us still, who like to lead the forlorn hope, and are not afraid. I challenge such to come and serve my Master fully and thoroughly, and they shall have a rough time of it; but they shall have glory, and honor, and immortality as their reward. Make a whole burnt-offering of yourself, my brother, body, soul, and spirit, for Christ. These three young men "yielded their bodies", as we read in the twenty-eighth verse. "I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Let the faith of your spirit carry your whole body with it, in hearty obedience to God's command, and let this be true of you—

"In full and glad surrender,  
I give myself to thee,  
Thine utterly and only,  
And evermore to be.

"O Son of God thou lov'st me,  
I will be thine alone;  
And all I have, and am, Lord,  
Shall henceforth be thine own."

But I fear that I speak in vain to many, who will turn away, and say, "This world for me." Well, if you make choice of this world, and of ease and pleasure for yourself, then have you chosen Egypt's treasures, and you have disdained the reproach of Christ; you shall find one day how dreadful a folly you have committed. God grant that you may find it out soon, and not in the world to come! God bless you, and save you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **The Three Witnesses**

There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. - 1 John 5:8

Christianity puts forth very lofty claims. She claims to be the true faith, and the only true one. She avows her teachings to be divine, and therefore infallible; while for her great Teacher, the Son of God, she demands divine worship, and the unreserved confidence and obedience of men. Her commands are issued to every creature, and though at present her authority is rejected by millions of mankind, she confidently looks forward to a time when truth shall obtain universal dominion, and Jesus the Lord shall take unto himself his great power and reign.

Now, to justify such high claims, the gospel ought to produce strong evidence, and it does so. It does not lack for external evidences, these are abundant, and since many learned men have spent their lives in elaborating them, there is less need for me to attempt a summary of them. In these days scarce a stone is turned over among yonder eastern

reins which does not proclaim the truth of the word of God, and the further men look into either history or nature, the more manifest is the truth of scriptural statements. The armoury of external evidences is well stored with weapons of proof. The gospel also bears within itself its own evidence, it has a self-proving power. It is so pure, so holy, so altogether above the inventive capacity of fallen man, that it must be of God. But neither with these external or internal evidences have we to do this morning, but I call your attention to the three witnesses which are spoken of in the text, three great witnesses still among us, whose evidence proves the truth of our religion, the dinning, of our Lord, and the future supremacy of the faith. Our text speaks of three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood: may the Holy Ghost who is our Interpreter, lead us into the full meaning of this very, remarkable passage.

I. I shall note, first, that **OUR LORD HIMSELF WAS ATTESTED BY THESE THREE WITNESSES.** If you will carefully read in the twenty-ninth chapter of the Book of Exodus, or in the eighth chapter of the Book of Leviticus, you will see that when a priest was ordained (and a priest was a type of Christ) three things were always used: he was washed with water in every case, a sacrifice was brought, and his ear, his thumb, and his toe were touched with blood, and then he was anointed with oil, in token of that unction of the Spirit with which the coming High Priest of our profession would be anointed. So that every priest came by the anointing Spirit, by water, and by blood, as a matter of type, and if Jesus Christ be indeed the priest that was for to come, he will be known by these three signs.

Godly men in the olden times also well understood that there was no putting away of sin except with these three things; in proof of which we will quote David's prayer, "Purge me with hyssop"—that is, the hyssop dipped in blood—"and I shall be clean; wash me"—there is the water—"and I shall be whiter than snow;" and then, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." Thus the blood, the water, and the Spirit were recognized of old as necessary to cleanse from guilt, and if Jesus of Nazareth be indeed able to save his people from their sins, he must come with the triple gift—the Spirit, the water, and the blood. Now it was evidently so.

Our Lord was attested by the Spirit. The Spirit of God bore witness to Christ in the types and prophecies, "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" and Jesus Christ answers to those prophecies as exactly as a well-made key answers to the wards of a lock. By the power of the Holy Spirit our Lord's humanity was fashioned and prepared for him, for the angel said unto Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." When our Lord in due time commenced his public ministry, the Spirit of God descended upon him like a dove, and rested upon him, and a voice was heard from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This was indeed one of the surest seals of our Lord's Messiahship, for it had been given by the Spirit of prophecy unto John as a token—"upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." The Spirit abode in our Lord without measure, throughout his whole public career, so that he is described as full of the Spirit and led of the Spirit. Hence his life and ministry were full of power. How truthfully he said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind." Well said Peter, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing an that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him." Mighty signs and miracles were the witness of the divine Spirit to the mission of the Lord Jesus. The Spirit abode with our Lord all his life long, and to crown all, after he had died and risen again, the Holy Ghost gave the fullest witness by descending in full power upon the disciples at Pentecost. The Lord had promised to baptise his disciples with the Holy Ghost, and they tarried at Jerusalem in expectation of the gift: nor were they disappointed, for on a sudden "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Those cloven tongues of fire, and the "rushing mighty wind," were sacred tokens that he who had ascended was Lord and God. The apostles said, "We are witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." The word of the apostles, through the Holy Spirit,

convinced men "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," as the Master had foretold; and then the Spirit comforted the penitents, and they believed in the exalted Savior and were baptised the selfsame day. The words of Jesus were abundantly fulfilled,— "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." Thus from our Lord's birth, throughout his life, and after his ascension, the Holy Ghost bore conspicuous witness to him.

It is also manifest that our Lord came with water too. I have shown you that every priest was washed with water; our Lord was not unclean, and therefore one would have thought he might dispense with this; but to "fulfill all righteousness" his first step was to be washed in Jordan by the hands of John the Baptist, coming thus to the door of his ministry by that baptism in water which indicates that by death, burial, and resurrection, he was about to save his people. As soon as that baptism had been accomplished, ay, and before that, you could see that he had come with hater, for by water is signified that clean, pure, hallowed life which the outward washing was meant to typify. His first years of obscurity were years of holiness, and his after years of service were spotless. "In him was no sin." Who ever exercised a ministry so pure as his? Where else find we such immaculate holiness? He came not by the water merely as a symbol, but by that which the water meant, by unsullied purity of life. His doctrine was as pure as his example. Point me to a single syllable of all his teaching which would create, foster, or excuse sin! He was the friend of sinners, but not the apologist for their sins. His tenderness to sinners was that of a physician whose aim is to remove the disease. His whole doctrine is fitly comparable to purifying and life-giving water, and it operated upon men's hearts in that manner. In this last sense especially he came by water. It is very remarkable how John's Gospel is both the exposition and the text of John's First Epistle, for if you turn to it you find our Lord Jesus coming by water at the outset of his teaching. To Nicodemus he says a man must be "born of water and of the Spirit;" to the woman of Samaria he speaks at large of "living water;" and on the great day of the feast he vies, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." In his ministry he not only issued the invitation, but to all who believed on him he gave of the water of the fountain life freely. Thus our

Lord came by water in the sense of communicating a new; pure, and purifying life to men; for the water is the Emblem of the new life which springs up within the soul of believers, a life fresh and sparkling, leaping up from the eternal fountains of the divine existence; a life which will flow on for ever, and widen and deepen like Ezekiel's river, and increase in fullness of power and joy until it unites with the ocean of immortal bliss. Jesus came to pour forth this living flood among the sons of men. Blessed be his name!

Our Lord closed his life with washing his disciples' feet, a fit conclusion to a life which had by its example been cleansing throughout, and still remains as the grandest corrective of the corrupt examples of the world. Even after death our Lord retained the instructive symbol by giving forth from his pierced heart water as well as blood, which John evidently thought very significant; for when he wrote concerning it he said, "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." So that from the Jordan to the cross both the symbol and the substance were with our great Master, while his own personal purity, and his gift of life to others, proved his mission to be from above.

With Jesus also was the blood. This distinguished him from John the Baptist, who came by water, but Jesus came "not by water only, but by water and blood." We must not prefer any one of the three witnesses to another, but what a wonderful testimony to Christ was the blood! From the very first he came with blood, for John the Baptist cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! "Now, the lamb which takes away sin is a slaughtered lamb, a bleeding lamb; so that at the time when the baptismal waters were upon him, John saw that he must bleed for human sin. In his ministry there was often a clear testimony to his future sufferings and shedding of blood, for to the assembled crowd he said, "Except a man eat my flesh and drink my blood, there is no life in him:" while to his disciples he spake of the decease which he should shortly accomplish at Jerusalem. Then at the last, taking all our sins upon his shoulders, in the agony of Gethsemane, the blood bore witness that he was indeed the Lamb of God, and on yonder tree where he

"Bore all incarnate God could bear,  
With strength enough, but none to spare,"

disinterestedly dying for his enemies, unselfishly suffering an ignominious doom that he might redeem those who had rejected and scoffed at him, his invincible love triumphed over death itself, and endured divine wrath without repining, as none but the Son of God could have done. Now Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself; he was to make his soul an offering for sin, he was to make his grave with the wicked, and lie in the heart of the earth. The blood of the covenant was to be shed, the paschal victim was to be slain, the Shepherd was to be smitten, the Lamb was to be led to the slaughter, and therefore only by the shedding of his blood could Jesus prove himself to be the Messiah so long foretold. However pure the life he led, had he never died he could not have been the Savior appointed to bear the iniquity of us all. The blood was needed to complete the witness. The blood must now with the water, the suffering with the serving. The most pious example would not have proved him to be the divine Shepherd, if he had not laid down his life for the sheep. Take away the atonement, and Jesus is no more than any other prophet, the essential point of his mission is gone. It is evident that he who was to come was to finish transgression, and to make reconciliation for iniquity. Now, this could not be done except by an expiation, and as Jesus has made such an expiation by his own blood, we know him to be the Christ of God. His blood is the seal of his mission, the very life of his work.

I have thus shown that our Lord himself was attested by these three sacred witnesses.

II. Now, secondly, may God the Holy Spirit help me to show that THESE THREE REMAIN AS STANDING WITNESSES TO HIM TO ALL TIME.

And first, the Holy Spirit is witness at this hour that the religion of Jesus is the truth, and that Jesus is the Son of God. I say not that he bears such witness everywhere, for there are many that preach in the wisdom of men, and in carnal excellency of speech, and God the Holy Ghost does not



work with them, because he hath chosen other instruments. I do not say that he bears witness to the truth when it is defiled by a lukewarm ministry, and a prayerless church: but I do say this, that the Spirit of God, wherever Jesus is fully preached, is the great witness to the truth of his word; for what does he do? By his divine energy he convinces men of the truth of the gospel: and these so convinced are not only persons who, through their education are likely to believe it, but men like Saul of Tarsus who abhor the whole thing. He pours his influences upon men, and infidelity melts away like the iceberg in the Gulf Stream; he touches the indifferent and careless, and they repent, believe, and obey the Savior. He makes proud men tremble, and wicked men quake for fear. The conversions which are wrought where Christ is truly preached are the miracles which attest the truth of the gospel. He who can make the harlot to be chaste, the drunkard to be sober, the thief to be honest, the malicious to be forgiving, the covetous to be generous, and above all the self-righteous to be humble, is indeed the Christ of God, and when the Spirit does all this and more by the gospel, he bears conclusive witness to the power of the cross.

Then, too, the Spirit goes forth among believers, and by them he bears witness to our Lord and his gospel. Great is the variety of his operations, for which cause he is called the Seven Spirits of God; but in each one he witnesses to Jesus; whether he quickens, consoles, enlightens, refreshes, sanctifies, anoints, or inflames the soul, he does it always by taking the things of Christ and revealing them to us. How mightily does he comfort the saints! Have you not been consoled by him in deep distress? Have you not endured the loss of dear ones without repining, because your heart has been sustained by the Comforter? Now, that wondrous influence which wrought peace in you through the gospel, must have confirmed you in the belief of the truth: and others who have seen your serenity under heavy trial, if they are not convinced, at least are led to inquire what strange thing is this which makes the Christian suffer without repining. The Spirit bears witness to Christ, then, when he comforts the saints.

And he does the same when he gives them guidance, enlightenment and elevation of soul I will, however, for a moment, dwell upon "utterance." Some reject the idea, but for all that it is true that in the selfsame hour it

is given to God's servants to speak in his name. Look at the martyr times! How wondrously feeble women like Anne Askew baffled all their foes! How ignorant weavers stood up before bishops and doctors and confounded them! Even now, in answer to prayer, the Spirit comes upon chosen men who yield themselves to his influence. And bears them along with a whirlwind, making them eloquent in the divine sense, speaking out of their hearts that which God gives them to deliver. Some of us know this, for we have cast ourselves upon that eternal Spirit, and thoughts have been given us, and mouth and utterance also. By this also the Spirit bears witness to the truth of our faith.

I have not time to go into all the operations of the Spirit, only let me say that his sustaining, his consoling influences have been very especially seen in persecuting times. Men of God have been subjected to tortures which our mind finds it painful to dwell upon, yet they have not been vanquished by their foes; neither nakedness, nor peril, nor sword have separated them from the love of God. Blandina tossed in a net by a wild bull, and burned with hot plates of brass, wearies out her tormentors; and Lawrence, on his gridiron, finds joy enough for mirth. One cries aloud amid the flames, "None but Jesus," and another claps his blazing hands and shouts victory as his soul quits the body. The Spirit of God in the church has preserved her amid persecutions furious and long-continued, filling the saints with a dauntless courage and a serene invincibility which has both amazed and alarmed their enemies. So mightily has this patience convinced the world, that it has passed into a proverb, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

With equal power does the Spirit of God bear witness to the gospel in great revivals of religion. How wondrously did the Spirit of God testify to Christ during the Reformation! Scarcely had Luther opened his mouth to proclaim the good news than straightway men received it eagerly; they sang psalms as they ploughed the field or threw the shuttle; the precious word was in all men's mouths. They said that angels carried Luther's writings all over the world: it was not so, but the ever-blessed Spirit makes the truth to fly like flames of fire. So was it in Whitfield's day, and in many revivals which we have read of, and some which we have seen. Sometimes men have been struck down and convulsed, and at other

times, without outward violence, they have been with equal power renewed in their souls. Who that has been at Edinburgh, and seen many hundreds of people rushing through the streets to one appointed meeting-place, to fall on their knees and cry for mercy all at once, could doubt but what the gospel must be true? The Spirit of God, omnipotent in the realm of spirits, and able to guide the human will without violating it, has enlightened" men's darkened minds and made them see that Jesus Christ is God and Savior. Overwhelmed by the love of Jesus, they have yielded at once to his commands, A formal church, with a minister to stand up and talk officially, and a people who come and go mechanically, bears no witness to religion, but rather creates infidels; but where we see what some have called "real Methodist fire," and others "the old Protestant enthusiasm," or, rather, where we see the Holy Ghost, attended by marvellous conversion, deep repentance, singular illumination, the angelic and general love, we have indisputable evidence of the divinity of our faith.

The next abiding witness in the church is the water—not the water of baptism, but the new life implanted in Christians, for that is the sense in which John's Master had used the word "water": "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Where the Spirit of God comes he creates in the man a new nature, pure, bright, fresh, vigorous, like a fountain, and the fact that this new nature does exist in multitudes of men is a standing evidence that the gospel is true, for no other religion makes men new creatures, no other religion even pretends to do it; they may propose to improve the old nature, but none of them can say, "Behold, I make all things new." This is the sole prerogative of Jesus our Lord.

The existence of the new life is matter of fact. We ourselves know many whose lives are pure and blameless; they have faults before God, but before the eyes of men they are perfect and upright, blameless and harmless. The godly lives of Christians are good evidence of the truth of the gospel. Did I hear some one object, "But many professors of Christianity are not holy"? I grant you it, but then everybody knows that they are inconsistent with the religion which they profess. If I heard of a lustful Mahomedan I should not consider him inconsistent with

Mahomedanism; is he not allowed his harem? If I heard of a licentious Hindoo, I should not consider him to be dishonoring his religion, for some of its sacred rites are disgusting and unmentionable. The same may be said of all the idolatries. But everybody knows that if a man professes to be a Christian and he is guilty of a gross fault, the world rings with the scandal, because it recognizes the inconsistency of his conduct with his profession. Though some may at the first breath of a slander blazon it abroad and say, "This is your religion," the world knows it is not our religion, but the want of it. Why do they themselves make such a wonder of a fallen professor? Are adulterers so very scarce that such a noise should be made when a minister is, truly or falsely, charged with the crime? The world's conscience knows that the religion of Jesus is the religion of purity, and if professed Christians fall into uncleanness the world knows that such a course of action does not arise out of the religion of Christ, but is diametrically opposite to it. The gospel is perfect, and did we wholly yield to its sway sin would be abhorred by us, and slain in us, and we should live on earth the life of the perfect ones above. Oh, may God produce in his church more and more the witness of the new life, the testimony of holiness, love, meekness, temperance, godliness, and grace: these are the gospel's logic, its syllogisms and demonstrations, which none can refute.

The third abiding witness is the blood. The blood of Christ is still on the earth, for when Jesus bled it fell upon the ground and was never gathered up. O earth, thou still art bespattered with the blood of the murdered Son of God, and if thou dost reject him this will curse thee. But, O humanity, thou art blessed with the drops of that precious blood, and believing in him it doth save thee. Now, does the blood really save from guilt, terror, and despair? Does it operate among men? Let us our memory. Its answer is clear and full. I speak what I do know, and testify what I have seen. I have preached the blood of Jesus Christ and the love of the incarnate God, and I have seen proud, stout-hearted men shed tears in floods; the rock has wept when smitten with this wondrous rod of the cross. Men who could resist thee thunders of Sinai have melted before the tender notes of Calvary. Ay, and, on the other hand, I have seen the desponding, whose soul chose strangling rather than life, look up to that dear cross, and their faces have been brightened, and a joy unspeakable has chased

away despair. Miracles of consolation the blood has wrought. We have seen men at war with God, and opposed to holiness, to whom the blood has spoken; they have seen a God reconciled to them, and they have been reconciled to him themselves. We have seen them beneath the spell of the blood throw down their weapons and cry -

"I yield, by Jesus' love subdued,—  
Who can resist its charms?—  
And throw myself to be reserved  
Into my Savior's arms."

The blood of Jesus, after speaking peace to the conscience, inflames the heart with fervent love, and full often leads men to high deeds of consecration, self-denial, and self-sacrifice, such as can scarce be understood till they are traced back to that amazing love which bled upon the tree. Well might the martyrs bleed for him who was crucified for them; the blood is working mightily in men to will and to do for the glory of God. Yes, brethren, the blood has such a melting, such a converting, such a subduing, such a sanctifying, such a joy-creating power to every conscience which hears its matchless voice, that it remains, with the Spirit and the water, a convincing witness to the Christ of God.

III. In the third place, let us observe that THIS TRIPLE YET UNITED WITNESS IS PECULIARLY FORCIBLE WITHIN BELIEVING HEARTS. John tells us, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." Now, brethren, these three witnesses bear testimony in our souls abidingly. I speak not of years ago, but of last night, when you bowed your knee in prayer and prayed, and were heard. Did not the Spirit when he helped you to pray bear witness that the gospel was no lie? Was not the answer to your prayer good evidence? And that Sabbath morning, when you prayed that you might gather up your thoughts and forget the week's cares, and you did so by the Spirit's aid, did not this sacred rest of your soul prove that Christ is indeed a Savior? Sitting here this morning as your soul has burned within you, and your Master has been near you, has not that communion, given you of the Spirit, been to you a fresh witness to Christ? The other day, when you were so sad and the Holy Spirit comforted you, when you were so rebellious, and he made you

quiet, even as a weaned child, did not this confirm your faith? The other day when you were so in the dark, and he enlightened you, when you were in such dilemmas and he guided you had you not then fresh evidence that there is a life, a power, a divinity about the gospel? These sweet feelings of yours came to you by the Spirit of God revealing Jesus to you. He did not comfort you nor elevate you by the law, nor by the flesh, but by the love of God shed abroad in your heart, that precious love which comes streaming down from the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord. Ah, dear friends, I feel sick to death of the common talk about the healthiness of doubting and the beauty of "modern thought." This talk is only the self-praise of a set of concealed infidels treacherously lurking in God's church. There is a short way with sceptics which I commend to your use. Ask them—Do they know the Holy Ghost? Did they ever feel him in their own souls? If they say "No," we believe them; let them believe us when we declare that we do feel the operations of the Holy Ghost. There is the end of the controversy; if they are honest so are we, and we are witnesses to the divine working of the Holy Ghost in our own souls. If they never felt his power, their negative statements cannot in the least degree affect the truth of ours.

The next witness in us is the water, or the new and pure life. Do you feel the inner life, my brethren? I know you do—you feel it fighting, struggling, contending, sometimes winning the mastery, and at other times captive and groaning; you feel it often aspiring, desiring, hungering, thirsting, yearning, sighing; and sometimes singing, shouting, dancing, and leaping up to heaven. You are conscious that you are not what you used to be, you are conscious of a new life within your soul which you never knew till the date of your conversion, and that new life within you is the living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever. The fact that you know you are born of God forbids a doubt as to the truth by which you were begotten; the sense that you are forgiven forbids all scepticism as to the fact that Christ is come in the flesh, and that he is the Son of God, and that his gospel is the truth of God. To you all these things are clear.

Witnessing within us is also the blood. Beloved, this is a witness which never fails, speaking in us better things than the blood of Abel. It gives us

such peace that we can sweetly live and calmly die. It gives us such access to God that sometimes when we have felt its power we have drawn as near to our Father as if we had seen him face to face. And oh, what safety the blood causes us to enjoy! We feel that we cannot perish while the crimson canopy of atonement by blood hangs over our head. What victory it gives us! making us cry, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." These are mysterious sensations, not to be accounted for by fleshly enthusiasm, for they are strongest when we are calmest; not to be accounted for by any natural predilections to such emotions, for we are by nature as easily perturbed as others, and as apt to forget divine things. In times of trial we have looked to Jesus' flowing wounds and we have been comforted, we have found communion with Jesus to be so blessed that we would not envy Gabriel his angelhood.

Now, then, you young men, you need not read "Paley's Evidences," the evidence of the Spirit, the water, and the blood is better. You do not grant to study "Butler's Analogy," though you may if you please, but such books, excellent as they are, only prove the skin and shell of our religion, and the vital matter is the kernel. If you come by simple prayer, and ask to have the blood of Jesus applied to devour soul, and if the Spirit of God works mightily in your spirit so that you obtain a new inner principle, and lead a new life as the result thereof, you will have the best evidence in the world. You will laugh at doubters, and make a fire of Colenso's objections, and "Essays and Reviews," Tyndal's challenge, and Huxley's dreams, and all that heap of worthless muck which has polluted the church, and defiled the souls of men. O heavens, that ever we should live to see a day in which ministers tell us that it is good to doubt, when poets almost deify that very scepticism of which John says that it makes God a liar, and which therefore is to be denounced as an insult to God, and the curse of the age. Go, fling your doubts away, ye dotting men and dreaming women, and bow like penitents at Jesus' feet, and you will find far more than all your fancied learning can bestow. But if ye will not do this, yet know that in vain ye arraign your Maker at your bar, in vain do you re-judge his judgment, and act as if ye were the Gods of God!

Thus I have tried to show that these three witnesses testify in our souls; I beg you now to notice their order. These three bear witness in us thus, the

Spirit, the water, and the blood; why in this order? Because in this manner they operate. The Spirit of God first enters the heart, perhaps long before the man knows that such is the case; the Spirit creates the new life, which repents and seeks the Savior, that is the water; and that new life flies to the blood of Jesus and obtains peace. The Spirit mightily working, the new life is secretly created, and then faith in the blood is begotten, and the triple witness is complete. We have also found this to be the order of our consolation. I have said to myself, "Do I know that the Spirit of God is in me?" and I have been afraid that it is not; I have then turned to my inner life, the water, and have not always been certain concerning it, but when I have looked away to the blood, all has been clear enough! Jesus died; I throw myself once again into his arms. When I do not know whether I have the Spirit, and when I am in doubt as to whether I have the living water, I still know that I believe in the blood, and this brings perfect peace.

Having observed their order, now note their combination. "These three agree in one," therefore every true believer should have the witness of each one, and if each one does not witness in due time, there is cause for grave suspicion. For instance, persons have arisen who have said the Spirit of God has led them to do this and that. Of them we inquire what are your lives? Does the water bear witness? Are you pardoned? Does the blood testify for you? If these questions cannot be answered they may rave as they like about the Spirit of God, but the witness to their salvation is open to the gravest suspicion. We have known some who will say, "Look at my life, I am very different from what I was. I am a sober, honest, excellent man." Yes, but do you Test in the blood of Jesus? Practical evidence is good, but it must arise out of faith. If you do not believe in Jesus you have not the essential witness, and your case is not proved. Many also say to us, "I believe that Jesus died for me," but we must ask them concerning their lives. Are you cleansed in act? Are you an altered man? For remember, unless the water speaks with the blood, you have not the three-fold testimony. There may be some who say, "Well, we believe in Jesus, and our lives are changed": but remember, you may say that, but is it so? If so, the Spirit of God has changed you: if you have merely excited yourself into the belief that it is so, or if you were born by your own free will, you have not the witness, because the truly saved are



born not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of the Spirit of God.

The three witnesses agree in one. He believes in pardon by the blood believes also in sanctification by the water; he who rests in Jesus Christ's blood always honors the Spirit of God, and, on the other hand, he that believes in the Holy Ghost values both the inner life and the cleansing blood. God has joined these three together, and let no man put them asunder. The old theologians spake of *baptismus fluminis*, *baptismus fluminis*, and *baptismus sanguinis*. May we know all these, and rejoice in the Spirit, the flood, and the blood.

IV. Lastly, THESE WITNESSES CERTIFY TO US THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF OUR RELIGION. Is the Spirit working through the gospel? then the gospel will win the day, because the Spirit of God is Almighty, and complete master over the realm of mind. He has the power to illuminate the intellect, to win the affections, to curb the will, and change the entire nature of man, for he worketh all things after his own pleasure, and, like the wind, he "bloweth where he listeth." When he puts forth his omnipotent energy none can stand against him. He has converted three thousand in a day, and he could as readily convert three millions, or three hundred millions. He can do this, and he will. The wind at times blows so gently as scarcely to stir the wing of a butterfly, but at another time it rushes in a tornado, sweeping all before it; do not judge from its soft breath what its full tempest would be, for nothing can stand against the wind when once it speeds forth with power. Let the Spirit of God blow across this land and it will at once drive away the miasmas of superstition, and the clouds of ignorance.

The Holy Spirit is compared to fire. What can resist the energy of fire? There may be so little of it that a cowherd may carry it in his lantern, but lo, it sets a city on a blaze. One match contains all the fire on yonder prairie; it is flung into the dry grass, and lo, the heavens themselves are scorched with the exceeding heat. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Is anything too hard for the lord? Behold, the universe was chaos once, and the Spirit brooded over it and this fair world came forth: let him in like manner incubate over this chaos of sin, and a new heaven, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, shall rise therefrom. The gospel

must conquer, because the Holy Ghost who works with it is almighty.

Next, the gospel must conquer, because of the water, which I have explained to be the new life of purity. What says John? "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." It is impossible for the gospel to be vanquished so long as there remains in the world one soul that is born of God. Living and incorruptible seed abideth for ever! Those who would destroy the church only scatter her living seeds, and when Satan raises a hurricane it only bears those seeds further afield. Satan once sat down for weeks together to scheme, and he called in all the devils one by one till Pandemonium all met in one conclave, and what think you came of it all? The Papal Inquisition. They set that horrible machine to work to crush out what they called heresy. They said they would ride up to their saddle girths in the blood of Lutherans, and they almost redeemed their promise; but their cruelty availed not, the living faith survived, and their murders and infernal cruelties did but stir the world to a groan of sympathy, which helped the progress of the gospel. They cannot destroy the gospel. Do not talk about the Pope of Rome, or the Ritualistic or the infidel party, destroying the gospel church, they can as soon annihilate the Lord himself, because the inner life of Christians is a spark struck from the eternal sun of life, and can never be extinct while God lives.

Lastly, the gospel must spread and conquer because of the blood. Has that power? Oh, yes, I will tell you how. God, the everlasting Father, has promised to Jesus by covenant, of which the blood is the seal, that he "shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." As surely as Christ died on the cross, he must sit on a universal throne. God cannot lie to his Son, cannot mock his wounds, or be deaf to his death-cries, and, therefore, Christ must have what his Father has promised him, and he has said, "Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." They that bow in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust; for he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet.

Brethren, the inference from all this is, if you are not on Christ's side it is ill with you, for you will be surely conquered in the battle: but, if you are

on Christ's side, never speak hesitatingly or despondingly. When they bring out a new book to disprove Genesis, and another to evaporate the atonement, do not be afraid. As long as the gospel is in the world the devil will find somebody to write books against it. Take no notice of them, they cannot stand against facts. A philosopher once wrote a book to prove that there is no such thing as matter, and a certain reader believed it till he chanced to knock his head against the bedpost, and then he abandoned the theory. When a man feels the power of the Holy Spirit, or the power of the inner life, he does not care to argue; he has a homespun philosophy of facts which answers his purpose better. Though others may round upon him and say, "You are not learned," he feels that it does not need learning to prove that which is a matter of personal consciousness, any more than we need proof that sugar is sweet when we have a piece in our mouths. Do you doubt the gospel? Try it! The men who speak against the Bible as a rule have never read it; those who rail against Christ do not know him; and those who deny the efficacy of prayer have never prayed. Nothing is more convincing than fact. Get out of the realm of word-spinning and wind-bag-filling into practical Christian life, proving personally that these things are so, and you will soon be convinced by the blessed witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

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# The Throne Of Grace

The throne of grace. - Hebrews 4:16

These words are found embedded in that gracious verse, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"; they are a gem in a golden setting. True prayer is an approach of the soul by the Spirit of God to the throne of God. It is not the utterance of words, it is not alone the feeling of desires, but it is the advance of the desires to God, the spiritual approach of our nature towards the Lord our God. True prayer is not a mere mental exercise, nor a vocal performance, but it is deeper far than that—it is spiritual commerce with the Creator of heaven and earth. God is a Spirit unseen of mortal eye, and only to be perceived by the inner man; our spirit within us, begotten by the Holy Ghost at our regeneration, discerns the Great Spirit, communes with him, prefers to him its requests, and receives from him answers of peace. It is a spiritual business from beginning to end; and its aim and object end not with man, but reach to God himself.

In order to such prayer, the work of the Holy Ghost himself is needed. If prayer were of the lips alone, we should only need breath in our nostrils to pray: if prayer were of the desires alone, many excellent desires are easily felt, even by natural men: but when it is the spiritual desire, and the spiritual fellowship of the human spirit with the Great Spirit, then the Holy Ghost himself must be present all through it, to help infirmity, and give life and power, or else true prayer will never be presented, but the thing offered to God will wear the name and have the form, but the inner life of prayer will be far from it.

Moreover, it is clear from the connection of our text, that the interposition of the Lord Jesus Christ is essential to acceptable prayer. As prayer will not be truly prayer without the Spirit of God, so it will not be prevailing prayer without the Son of God. he, the Great High Priest, must

go within the veil for us; nay, through his crucified person the veil must be entirely taken away; for, until then, we are shut out from the living God. The man who, despite the teaching of Scripture, tries to pray without a Saviour insults the Deity; and he who imagines that his own natural desires, coming up before God, unsprinkled with the precious blood, will be an acceptable sacrifice before God, makes a mistake; he has not brought an offering that God can accept, any more than if he had struck off a dog's neck, or offered an unclean sacrifice. Wrought in us by the Spirit, presented for us by the Christ of God, prayer becomes power before the Most High, but not else.

In order, dear friends, that I may stir you up to prayer this morning, and that your souls may be led to come near to the Throne of Grace, I purpose to take these few words and handle them as God shall give me ability. You have begun to pray; God has begun to answer. This week has been a very memorable one in the history of this church. Larger numbers than ever before at one time have come forward to confess Christ,—as plain an answer to the supplications of God's people, as though the hand of the Most High had been stretched out of heaven handing down to us the blessings for which we asked. Now, let us continue in prayer, yea, let us gather strength in intercession, and the more we succeed, the more earnest let us be to succeed yet more and more. Let us not be straitened in our own bowels, since we are not straitened in our God. This is a good day, and a time of glad tidings, and seeing that we have the King's ear, I am most anxious that we should speak to him for thousands of others; that they also, in answer to our pleadings, may be brought nigh unto Christ.

In trying to speak of the text this morning, I shall take it thus: First, here is a throne; then, secondly, here is grace; then we will put the two together, and we shall see grace on a throne; and putting them together in another order, we shall see sovereignty manifesting itself, and resplendent in grace.

II. Our text speaks of A THRONE:—"The Throne of Grace." God is to be viewed in prayer as our Father; that is the aspect which is dearest to us; but still we are not to regard him as though he were such as we are; for

our Saviour has qualified the expression "Our Father," with the words "who art in heaven"; and close at the heels of that condescending name, in order to remind us that our Father is still infinitely greater than ourselves, he has bidden us say, "Hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come"; so that our Father is still to be regarded as a King, and in prayer we come, not only to our Father's feet, but we come also to the throne of the Great Monarch of the universe. The mercy-seat is a throne, and we must not forget this.

If prayer should always be regarded by us as an entrance into the courts of the royalty of heaven; if we are to behave ourselves as courtiers should in the presence of an illustrious majesty, then we are not at a loss to know the right spirit in which to pray. If in prayer we come to a throne, it is clear that our spirit should, in the first place, be one of lowly reverence. It is expected that the subject in approaching to the king should pay him homage and honour. The pride that will not own the king, the treason which rebels against the sovereign will should, if it be wise, avoid any near approach to the throne. Let pride bite the curb at a distance, let treason lurk in corners, for only lowly reverence may come before the king himself when he sits clothed in his robes of majesty. In our case, the king before whom we come is the highest of all monarchs, the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Emperors are but the shadows of his imperial power. They call themselves kings by right divine, but what divine right have they? Common sense laughs their pretensions to scorn. The Lord alone hath divine right, and to him only doth the kingdom belong. He is the blessed and only potentate. They are but nominal kings, to be set up and put down at the will of men, or the decree of providence, but he is Lord alone, the Prince of the kings of the earth.

"He sits on no precarious throne,  
Nor borrows leave to be."

My heart, be sure that thou prostrate thyself in such a presence. If he be so great, place thy mouth in the dust before him, for he is the most powerful of all kings; his throne hath sway in all worlds; heaven obeys him cheerfully, hell trembles at his frown, and earth is constrained to yield to him homage willingly or unwillingly. His power can make or can

destroy. To create or to crush, either is easy enough to him. My soul be thou sure that when thou drawest nigh to the Omnipotent, who is as a consuming fire, thou put thy shoes from off thy feet, and worship him with lowliest humility.

Besides, he is the most Holy of all kings. His throne is a great white throne, unspotted, and clear as crystal. "The heavens are not pure in his sight, and he charged his angels with folly." And thou, a sinful creature, with what lowliness shouldst thou draw nigh to him. Familiarity there may be, but let it not be unhallowed. Boldness there should be, but let it not be impertinent. Still thou art on earth and he in heaven; still thou art a worm of the dust, a creature crushed before the moth, and he the Everlasting: before the mountains were brought forth, he was God, and if all created things should pass away again, yet still were he the same. My brethren, I am afraid we do not bow as we should before the Eternal Majesty; but, henceforth, let us ask the Spirit of God to put us in a right frame, that every one of our prayers may be a reverential approach to the Infinite Majesty above.

A throne, and therefore, in the second place, to be approached with devout joyfulness. If I find myself favoured by divine grace to stand amongst those favoured ones who frequent his courts, shall I not feel glad? I might have been in his prison, but I am before his throne: I might have been driven from his presence for ever, but I am permitted to come near to him, even into his royal palace, into his secret chamber of gracious audience, shall I not then be thankful? Shall not my thankfulness ascend into joy, and shall I not feel that I am honoured, that I am made the recipient of great favours when I am permitted to pray? Wherefore is thy countenance sad, O suppliant, when thou standest before the throne of grace? If thou wert before the throne of justice to be condemned for thine iniquities, thy hands might well be on thy loins; but now thou art favoured to come before the King in his silken robes of love, let thy face shine with sacred delight. If thy sorrows be heavy, tell them unto him, for he can assuage them; if thy sins be multiplied, confess them, for he can forgive them. O ye courtiers in the halls of such a monarch, be ye exceeding glad, and mingle praises with your prayers.

It is a throne, and therefore, in the third place, whenever it is approached, it should be with complete submission. We do not pray to God to instruct him as to what he ought to do, neither for a moment must we presume to dictate the line of the divine procedure. We are permitted to say unto God, "Thus and thus would we have it," but we must evermore add, "But, seeing that we are ignorant and may be mistaken—seeing that we are still in the flesh, and, therefore, may be actuated by carnal motives—not as we will, but as thou wilt." Who shall dictate to the throne? No loyal child of God will for a moment imagine that he is to occupy the place of the King, but he bows before him who has a right to be Lord of all; and though he utters his desire earnestly, vehemently, importunately, and pleads and pleads again, yet it is evermore with this needful reservation: "Thy will be done, my Lord: and, if I ask anything that is not in accordance therewith, my inmost will is that thou wouldst be good enough to deny thy servant; I will take it as a true answer if thou refuse me, if I ask that which seemeth not good in thy sight." If we constantly remembered this, I think we should be less inclined to push certain suits before the throne, for we should feel, "I am here in seeking my own ease, my own comfort, my own advantage, and peradventure, I may be asking for that which would dishonour God; therefore will I speak with the deepest submission to the divine decrees."

But, brethren, in the fourth place, if it be a throne, it ought to be approached with enlarged expectations. Well doth our hymn put it:

"Thou art coming to a king:  
Large petitions with thee bring."

We do not come, as it were, in prayer, only to God's almonry where he dispenses his favours to the poor, nor do we come to the back-door of the house of mercy to receive the broken scraps, though that were more than we deserve; to eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table is more than we could claim; but, when we pray, we are standing in the palace, on the glittering floor of the great King's own reception room, and thus we are placed upon a vantage ground. In prayer we stand where angels bow with veiled faces; there, even there, the cherubim and seraphim adore, before that selfsame throne to which our prayers ascend. And shall we



come there with stunted requests, and narrow and contracted faith? Nay, it becomes not a King to be giving away pence and groats, he distributes pieces of broad gold; he scatters not as poor men must, scraps of bread and broken meat, but he makes a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. When Alexander's soldier was told to ask what he would, he did not ask stintedly after the nature of his own merits, but he made such a heavy demand, that the royal treasurer refused to pay it, and put the case to Alexander, and Alexander in right kingly sort replied: "He knows how great Alexander is, and he has asked as from a king; let him have what he requests." Take heed of imagining that God's thoughts are as thy thoughts, and his ways as thy ways. Do not bring before God stinted petitions and narrow desires, and say, "Lord, do according to these," but, remember, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts, and ask, therefore, after a God-like sort, ask for great things, for you are before the throne of grace, for then he would do for us exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think.

And, beloved, I may add, in the fifth place, that the right spirit in which to approach the throne of grace, is that of unstaggering confidence. Who shall doubt the King? Who dares impugn the Imperial word? It was well said that if integrity were banished from the hearts of all mankind besides, it ought still to dwell in the hearts of kings. Shame on a king if he can lie. The veriest beggar in the streets is dishonoured by a broken promise, but what shall we say of a king if his word cannot be depended upon? Oh, shame upon us, if we are unbelieving before the throne of the King of heaven and earth. With our God before us in all his glory, sitting on the throne of grace, will our hearts dare to say we mistrust him? Shall we imagine either that he cannot, or will not, keep his promise? Banished be such blasphemous thoughts, and if they must come, let them come upon us when we are somewhere in the outskirts of his dominions, if such a place there be, but not in prayer, when we are in his immediate presence, and behold him in all the glory of his throne of grace. There, surely, is the place for the child to trust its Father, for the loyal subject to trust his monarch; and, therefore, far from it be all wavering or suspicion. Unstaggering faith should be predominant before the mercy-seat.

Only one other remark upon this point, and that is, that if prayer be a coming before the throne of God, it ought always to be conducted with the deepest sincerity, and in the spirit which makes everything real. If you are disloyal enough to despise the King, at least, for your own sake, do not mock him to his face, and when he is upon his throne. If anywhere you dare repeat holy words without heart, let it not be in Jehovah's palace. If a person should ask for audience with royalty, and then should say, "I scarce know why I have come, I do not know that I have anything very particular to ask; I have no very urgent suit to press;" would he not be guilty both of folly and baseness? As for our great King, when we venture into his presence, let us have an errand there. As I said the other Sabbath, let us beware of playing at praying. It is insolence toward God. If I am called upon to pray in public, I must not dare to use words that are intended to please the ears of my fellow-worshippers, but I must realize that I am speaking to God himself, and that I have business to transact with the great Lord. And, in my private prayer, if, when I rise from my bed in the morning, I bow my knee and repeat certain words, or when I retire to rest at night go through the same regular form, I rather sin than do anything that is good, unless my very soul doth speak unto the Most High. Dost thou think that the King of heaven is delighted to hear thee pronounce words with a frivolous tongue, and a thoughtless mind? Thou knowest him not. He is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. If thou hast any empty forms to prate, go and pour them out into the ears of fools like thyself, but not before the Lord of Hosts. If thou hast certain words to utter, to which thou dost attach a superstitious reverence, go and say them in the bedizened courts of the harlot Rome, but not before the glorious Lord of Zion. The spiritual God seeks spiritual worshipers, and such he will accept, and only such; but the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord, and only a sincere prayer is his delight.

Beloved, the gathering up of all our remarks is just this,—prayer is no trifle. It is an eminent and elevated act. It is a high and wondrous privilege. Under the old Persian Empire a few of the nobility were permitted at any time to come in unto the king, and this was thought to be the highest privilege possessed by mortals. You and I, the people of God, have a permit, a passport to come before the throne of heaven at any

time we will, and we are encouraged to come there with great boldness; but still let us not forget that it is no mean thing to be a courtier in the courts of heaven and earth, to worship him who made us and sustains us in being. Truly, when we attempt to pray, we may hear the voice saying out of the excellent glory: "Bow the knee." From all the spirits that behold the face of our Father who is in heaven, even now, I hear a voice which saith, "Oh, come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before him all the earth."

II. Lest the glow and brilliance of the word "throne" should be too much for mortal vision, our text now presents us with the soft, gentle radiance of that delightful word—"GRACE." We are called to the throne of grace, not to the throne of law. Rocky Sinai once was the throne of law, when God came to Paran with ten thousand of his holy ones. Who desired to draw near to that throne? Even Israel might not. Bounds were set about the mount, and if but a beast touched the mount, it was stoned or thrust through with a dart. O ye self-righteous ones who hope that you can obey the law, and think that you can be saved by it, look to the flames that Moses saw, and shrink, and tremble, and despair. To that throne we do not come now, for through Jesus the case is changed. To a conscience purged by the precious blood there is no anger upon the divine throne, though to our troubled minds -

"Once 'twas a seat of burning wrath,  
And shot devouring flame;  
Our God appeared consuming fire,  
And jealous was his name."

And, blessed be God, we are not this morning to speak of the throne of ultimate justice. Before that we shall all come, and as many of us as have believed will find it to be a throne of grace as well as of justice; for, he who sits upon that throne shall pronounce no sentence of condemnation against the man who is justified by faith. But I have not to call you this morning to the place from whence the resurrection-trumpet shall ring out so shrill and clear. Nor yet do we see the angels with their vengeful

swords come forth to smite the foes of God; not yet are the great doors of the pit opened to swallow up the enemies who would not have the Son of God to reign over them. We are still on praying ground and pleading terms with God, and the throne to which we are bidden to come, and of which we speak at this time, is the throne of grace. It is a throne set up on purpose for the dispensation of grace; a throne from which every utterance is an utterance of grace; the scepter that is stretched out from it is the silver sceptre of grace; the decrees proclaimed from it are purposes of grace; the gifts that are scattered down its golden steps are gifts of grace; and he that sits upon the throne is grace itself. It is the throne of grace to which we approach when we pray; and let us for a moment or two think this over, by way of consolatory encouragement to those who are beginning to pray; indeed, to all of us who are praying men and women.

If in prayer I come before a throne of grace, then the faults of my prayer will be overlooked. In beginning to pray, dear friends, you feel as if you did not pray. The groanings of your spirit, when you rise from your knees are such that you think there is nothing in them. What a blotted, blurred, smeared prayer it is. Never mind; you are not come to the throne of justice, else when God perceived the fault in the prayer he would spurn it, —your broken words, your gaspings, and stammerings are before a throne of grace. When any one of us has presented his best prayer before God, if he saw it as God sees it, there is no doubt he would make great lamentation over it; for there is enough sin in the best prayer that was ever prayed to secure its being cast away from God. But it is not a throne of justice I say again, and here is the hope for our lame, limping supplications. Our condescending King does not maintain a stately etiquette in his court like that which has been observed by princes among men, where a little mistake or a flaw would secure the petitioner's being dismissed with disgrace. Oh, no; the faulty cries of his children are not severely criticized by him. The Lord High Chamberlain of the palace above, our Lord Jesus Christ, takes care to alter and amend every prayer before he presents it, and he makes the prayer perfect with his perfection, and prevalent with His own merits. God looks upon the prayer, as presented through Christ, and forgives all its own inherent faultiness. How this ought to encourage any of us who feel ourselves to be feeble,

wandering, and unskillful in prayer. If you cannot plead with God as sometimes you did in years gone by, if you feel as if somehow or other you had grown rusty in the work of supplication, never give over, but come still, yea and come oftener, for it is not a throne of severe criticism, it is a throne of grace to which you come.

Then, further, inasmuch as it is a throne of grace, the faults of the petitioner himself shall not prevent the success of his prayer. Oh, what faults there are in us! To come before a throne how unfit we are—we, that are all defiled with sin within and without! Dare any of you think of praying were it not that God's throne is a throne of grace? If you could, I confess that I could not. An absolute God, infinitely holy and just, could not in consistency with his divine nature answer any prayer from such a sinner as I am, were it not that he has arranged a plan by which my prayer comes up no longer to a throne of absolute justice, but to a throne which is also the mercy-seat, the propitiation, the place where God meets sinners, through Jesus Christ. Ah, I could not say to you, "Pray," not even to you saints, unless it were a throne of grace, much less could I talk of prayer to you sinners; but now I will say this to every sinner here, though he should think himself to be the worst sinner that ever lived, cry unto the Lord and seek him while he may be found. A throne of grace is a place fitted for you: go to your knees; by simple faith go to your Saviour, for he, he it is who is the throne of grace. It is in him that God is able to dispense grace unto the most guilty of mankind. Blessed be God, neither the faults of the prayer nor yet of the suppliant shall shut out our petitions from the God who delights in broken and contrite hearts.

If it be a throne of grace, then the desires of the pleader will be interpreted. If I cannot find words in which to utter my desires, God in his grace will read my desires without the words. He takes the meaning of his saints, the meaning of their groans. A throne that was not gracious would not trouble itself to make out our petitions; but God, the infinitely gracious One, will dive into the soul of our desires, and he will read there what we cannot speak with the tongue. Have you never seen the parent, when his child is trying to say something to him, and he knows very well what it is the little one has got to say, help him over the words and utter the syllables for him, and if the little one has half-forgotten what he

would say, you have seen the father suggest the word: and so the ever-blessed Spirit, from the throne of grace, will help us and teach us words, nay, write in our hearts the desires themselves. We have in Scripture instances where God puts words into sinners' mouths. "Take with you words," saith he, "and say unto him, Receive us graciously and love us freely." He will put the desires, and put the expression of those desires into your spirit by his grace; he will direct your desires to the things which you ought to seek for; he will teach you your wants, though as yet you know them not; he will suggest to you his promises that you may be able to plead them; he will, in fact, be Alpha and Omega to your prayer, just as he is to your salvation; for as salvation is from first to last of grace, so the sinner's approach to the throne of grace is of grace from first to last. What comfort is this. Will we not, my dear friends, with the greater boldness draw near to this throne, as we suck out the sweet meaning of this precious word, "the throne of grace"?

If it be a throne of grace, then all the wants of those who come to it will be supplied. The King from off such a throne will not say, "Thou must bring to Me gifts, thou must offer to Me sacrifices." It is not a throne for receiving tribute; it is a throne for dispensing gifts. Come, then, ye who are poor as poverty itself; come ye that have no merits and are destitute of virtues, come ye that are reduced to a beggarly bankruptcy by Adam's fall and by your own transgressions; this is not the throne of majesty which supports itself by the taxation of its subjects, but a throne which glorifies itself by streaming forth like a fountain with floods of good things. Come ye, now, and receive the wine and milk which are freely given, yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price. All the petitioner's wants shall be supplied, because it is a throne of grace.

And so, all the petitioner's miseries shall be compassionated. Suppose I come to the throne of grace with the burden of my sins; there is one on the throne who felt the burden of sin in ages long gone by, and has not forgotten its weight. Suppose I come loaded with sorrow; there is One there who knows all the sorrows to which humanity can be subjected. Am I depressed and distressed? Do I fear that God himself has forsaken me? There is One upon the throne who said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is a throne from which grace delights to look upon the

miseries of mankind with tender eye, to consider them and to relieve them. Come, then; come, then; come, then, ye that are not only poor, but wretched, whose miseries make you long for death, and yet dread it. Ye captive ones, come in your chains; ye slaves, come with the irons upon your souls; ye who sit in darkness, come forth all blindfold as you are. The throne of grace will look on you if you cannot look on it, and will give to you, though you have nothing to give in return, and will deliver you, though you cannot raise a finger to deliver yourself.

"The throne of grace." The word grows as I turn it over in my mind, and to me it is a most delightful reflection that if I come to the throne of God in prayer, I may feel a thousand defects, but yet there is hope. I usually feel more dissatisfied with my prayers than with anything else I do. I do not believe that it is an easy thing to pray in public so as to conduct the devotions of a large congregation aright. We sometimes hear persons commended for preaching well, but if any shall be enabled to pray well, there will be an equal gift and a higher grace in it. But, brethren, suppose in our prayers there should be defects of knowledge: it is a throne of grace, and our Father knoweth that we have need of these things. Suppose there should be defects of faith: he sees our little faith and still doth not reject it, small as it is. He doth not in every case measure out his gifts by the degree of our faith, but by the sincerity and trueness of faith. And if there should be grave defects in our spirit even, and failures in the fervency or in the humility of the prayer, still, though these should not be there and are much to be deplored; grace overlooks all this, forgives all this, and still its merciful hand is stretched out to enrich us according to our needs. Surely this ought to induce many to pray who have not prayed, and should make us who have been long accustomed to use the consecrated art of prayer, to draw near with greater boldness than ever to the throne of grace.

III. But, now regarding our text as a whole, it conveys to us the idea of GRACE ENTHRONED. It is a throne, and who sits on it? It is grace personified that is here installed in dignity. And, truly, to-day grace is on a throne. In the gospel of Jesus Christ grace is the most predominant attribute of God. How comes it to be so exalted? We reply, well, grace has a throne by conquest. Grace came down to earth in the form of the Well-

beloved, and it met with sin. Long and sharp was the struggle, and grace appeared to be trampled under foot of sin; but grace at last seized sin, threw it on its own shoulders, and, though all but crushed beneath the burden, grace carried sin up to the cross and nailed it there, slew it there, put it to death for ever, and triumphed gloriously. For this cause at this hour grace sits on a throne, because it has conquered human sin, has borne the penalty of human guilt, and overthrown all its enemies.

Grace, moreover, sits on the throne because it has established itself there by right. There is no injustice in the grace of God. God is as just when he forgives a believer as when he casts a sinner into hell. I believe in my own soul that there is as much and as pure a justice in the acceptance of a soul that believes in Christ as there will be in the rejection of those souls who die impenitent, and are banished from Jehovah's presence. The sacrifice of Christ has enabled God to be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth. He who knows the word "substitution," and can spell its meaning aright, will see that there is nothing due to punitive justice from any believer, seeing that Jesus Christ has paid all the believer's debts, and now God would be unjust if he did not save those for whom Christ vicariously suffered, for whom his righteousness was provided, and to whom it is imputed. Grace is on the throne by conquest, and sits there by right.

Grace is enthroned this day, brethren, because Christ has finished his work and gone into the heavens. It is enthroned in power. When we speak of its throne, we mean that it has unlimited might. Grace sits not on the footstool of God; grace stands not in the courts of God, but it sits on the throne; it is the regnant attribute; it is the king to-day. This is the dispensation of grace, the year of grace: grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. We live in the era of reigning grace, for seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for the sons of men, Jesus is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. Sinner, if you were to meet grace in the by-way, like a traveller on his journey, I would bid you make its acquaintance and ask its influence; if you should meet grace as a merchant on the exchange, with treasure in his hand, I would bid you court its friendship, it will enrich you in the hour of poverty; if you should see grace as one of the peers of heaven,



highly exalted, I would bid you seek to get its ear; but, oh, when grace sits on the throne, I beseech you close in with it at once. It can be no higher, it can be no greater, for it is written "God is love," which is an alias for grace. Oh, come and bow before it; come and adore the infinite mercy and grace of God. Doubt not, halt not, hesitate not. Grace is reigning; grace is God; God is love. Oh that you, seeing grace is thus enthroned, would come and receive it. I say, then, that grace is enthroned by conquest, by right, and by power, and, I will add, it is enthroned in glory, for God glorifies his grace. It is one of his objects now to make his grace illustrious. He delights to pardon penitents, and so to show his pardoning grace; he delights to look upon wanderers and restore them, to show his reclaiming grace; he delights to look upon the broken-hearted and comfort them, that he may show his consoling grace. There is a grace to be had of various kinds, or rather the same grace acting different ways, and God delights to make his grace glorious. There is a rainbow round about the throne like unto an emerald, the emerald of his compassion and his love. O happy souls that can believe this, and believing it can come at once and glorify grace by becoming instances of its power.

IV. Lastly, our text, if rightly read, has in it SOVEREIGNTY RESPLENDENT IN GLORY,—THE GLORY OF GRACE. The mercy seat is a throne; though grace is there, it is still a throne. Grace does not displace sovereignty. Now, the attribute of sovereignty is very high and terrible; its light is like unto a jasper stone, most precious, and like unto a sapphire stone, or, as Ezekiel calls it, "the terrible crystal." Thus saith the King, the Lord of hosts: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" "Hath not the potter power over the clay to make of the same lump one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?" These are great and terrible words, and are not to be answered. He is a King, and he will do as he wills. None shall stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? But, ah! lest any of you should be downcast by the thought of his sovereignty, I invite you to the text. It is a throne,—there is sovereignty; but to every soul that knows how to pray, to every soul that by faith comes to Jesus, the true mercy seat, divine sovereignty wears no dark and terrible aspect, but is full of

love. It is a throne of grace; from which I gather that the sovereignty of God to a believer, to a pleader, to one who comes to God in Christ, is always exercised in pure grace. To you, to you who come to God in prayer, the sovereignty always runs thus: "I will have mercy on that sinner; though he deserves it not, though in him there is no merit, yet because I can do as I will with my own, I will bless him, I will make him my child, I will accept him; he shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels." On the mercy seat God never executed sovereignty otherwise than in a way of grace. He reigns, but in this case grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

There are these two or three things to be thought of, and I have done. On the throne of grace sovereignty has placed itself under bonds of love. I must speak with words choice and picked here, and I must hesitate and pause to get the right sentences, lest I err while endeavouring to speak the truth in plainness. God will do as he wills; but, on the mercy seat, he is under bonds—bonds of his own making, for he has entered into covenant with Christ, and so into covenant with his chosen. Though God is and ever must be a sovereign, he never will break his covenant, not alter the word that is gone out of his mouth. He cannot be false to a covenant of his own making. When I come to God in Christ, to God on the mercy seat, I need not imagine that by any act of sovereignty God will set aside his covenant. That cannot be: it is impossible.

Moreover, on the throne of grace, God is again bound to us by his promises. The covenant contains in it many gracious promises, exceeding great and precious. "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." Until God had said that word or a word to that effect, it was at his own option to hear prayer or not, but it is not so now; for now, if it be true prayer offered through Jesus Christ, his truth binds him to hear it. A man may be perfectly free, but the moment he makes a promise, he is not free to break it; and the everlasting God wants not to break his promise. He delights to fulfil it. He hath declared that all his promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus; but, for our consolation when we survey God under the high and terrible aspect of a sovereign, we have this to reflect on, that he is under covenant bonds of promise to be faithful to the souls that seek him. His throne must be a

throne of grace to his people.

And, once more, and sweetest thought of all, every covenant promise has been endorsed and sealed with blood, and far be it from the everlasting God to pour scorn upon the blood of his dear Son. When a king has given a charter to a city, he may before have been absolute, and there may have been nothing to check his prerogatives, but when the city has its charter, then it pleads its rights before the king. Even thus God has given to his people a charter of untold blessings, bestowing upon them the sure mercies of David. Very much of the validity of a charter depends upon the signature and the seal, and, my brethren, how sure is the charter of covenant grace. The signature is the hand-writing of God himself, and the seal is the blood of the Only-begotten. The covenant is ratified with blood, the blood of his own dear Son. It is not possible that we can plead in vain with God when we plead the blood-sealed covenant, ordered in all things and sure. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the power of the blood of Jesus with God can never fail. It speaks when we are silent, and it prevails when we are defeated. Better things than that of Abel doth it ask for, and its cry is heard. Let us come boldly, for we hear the promise in our hearts. When we feel alarmed because of the sovereignty of God, let us cheerfully sing -

"The gospel bears my spirit up,  
A faithful and unchanging God  
Lays the foundation for my hope  
In oaths, and promises, and blood."

May God the Holy Spirit help us to use aright from this time forward "the throne of grace." Amen.

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## **Thus Saith The Lord; or, the Book of Common Prayer Weighed in the Balances of**

# the Sanctuary

Thus saith the Lord. - Ezekiel 11:16

The wise man saith, "Where the word of a king is, there is power." What power must there be where there is the word of the King of kings, who ruleth over all! We are not left to conjecture as to the power of the divine word, for we know that "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." Out of nothingness the glorious creation leaped at the bidding of the Most High, and when the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, there was nothing wanted but that solemn voice, "Light be," and straightway light was. God's word was sufficient in itself to build the temple of the universe and to finish it from its foundations to its pinnacles. That same word upholdeth by its power, and ruleth all things by its might. The pillars of heaven stand because the divine word hath fixed them upon their bases, nor shall they be shaken until that same almighty word shall bid them remove; then as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave which bears it and is gone forever, so shall the whole creation melt away. His word, which created, shall also destroy; but until that word be spoken every atom of this world is imperishable. Consider, my brethren, what power is concentrated in him who is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and whose name is "THE WORD OF GOD." With what glorious power our Lord Jesus Christ uplifted the burden of our sins, carried the load up to the tree, and cast it forever into the Red Sea of his own atoning blood! Ye know how he burst the bars of death, tore away the gates of the grave, overthrew all the hosts of hell, and dragged the mightiest principalities of darkness as captives at his chariot wheels. At this day the government is upon his shoulders, and his name is the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father. Heaven and earth salute him as the Omnipotent Word. He sustains the spiritual life of all his people by feeding them upon himself; and he shall in due time perfect his saints, and present them without spot before his Father's throne. We ought, therefore, to bow with reverence to that which is truly the word of God,

since it contains within itself the highest degree of power, and is ever the way in which divine omnipotence manifests itself.

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

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

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

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

1. Our first observation is that it is the minister's message. If he be God's minister, he does not found his teaching upon his own authority, for then his message would be only that of himself, and not to be esteemed; but he

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

2. "Thus saith the Lord" is the only authority in God church. When the tabernacle was pitched in the wilderness, what was the authority for its length and breadth? Why was the altar of incense to be placed here, and the brazen laver there? Why so many lambs or bullocks to be offered on a certain day? Why must the Passover be roasted whole and not sodden?

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

3. "Thus saith the Lord" is the most fitting word of rebuke for erring saints. God's people when they err, if they be rebuked, even though it should be in the gentlest manner, are too apt to resent the rebuff; but when we can come to them with "Thus saith the Lord," if there be a spark of spiritual life left, it is sure to catch at this flame. When the man of God came to Eli, how Eli's heart trembled when he began, "Thus saith the Lord," and described to him the doom of his house, because his sons had made themselves vile, and he had not restrained them. David the king

might have been moved to anger against Nathan for that personal parable and pungent application; but his anger was stayed, nay, better still, his heart was broken, because the prophet could say, "Thus saith the Lord." My dear brethren in Christ, you and I have often risen in anger at the intrusive proofs of ignorant men; but I hope we have far more often felt the melting power of a "Thus saith the Lord." When the heart is right, the word of God sweetly melts us, as the breath of the south wind melts the frozen rivers.

4. "Thus saith the Lord" is the only solid ground of comfort to God's people. Where can a child of God find true solace apart from that which cometh out of the mouth of the Most High! Truly, "Man doth not live by bread alone; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live;" "Thy words were found, and I did eat them;" "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" When Nathan came to tell David of the covenant which the Lord would make with him and his house, David would scarcely have believed so great a mercy to be really his if the prophet had not began with "Thus saith the Lord." It was not "Thus saith Nathan," or "Thus do the ancients say," but "Thus saith the Lord;" and David's heart was full of holy joy when he saw the covenant to be ordered in all things and sure. When Hezekiah lay sick unto death, he turned his face to the wall and prayed; but there was no comfort to the royal suppliant until the prophet came with "Thus saith the Lord;" and when Sennacherib was about to besiege Jerusalem, and Lachish had fallen, Hezekiah prayed, and the people with him; but oh! they could not think it possible that there should be a hook put into the jaw of the mighty Assyrian, and that he should be turned back by the way in which he came, till the prophet reassured their hearts with a "Thus saith the Lord." Zion's sons and daughters feast upon the sure word of their faithful God. Brethren, I need not enlarge here, for I hope most of you know the preciousness of a divine promise. There is nothing wanted to stay your soul in your worst troubles but the Word of God applied with power. God may not send you a friend; he may not raise up a deliverer; but if he shall only give you to believe his Word, that shall be enough for you. Martin Luther said: "I have covenanted with my Lord that he should not send me visions, or dreams, or even angels. I am content with this one gift of the Scriptures, which abundantly teaches and



supplies all that is necessary, both for this life and that which is to come." O Lord, only feed me on thy Word, and I will not envy kings their delicacies, nor even the angels around thy throne the bread of heaven on which they live.

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

6. To close this point. Such an authority has a "Thus saith the Lord," that it is not to be despised without entailing upon the offender the severest penalty. Samuel came to Saul with "Thus saith the Lord," and bade him destroy the Amalekites. He was utterly to cut them off, and not to spare so much as one of them. But Saul saved the best of the cattle and the sheep, and brought home Agag; and what was the result? His kingdom was taken from him and given to a neighbor of his that was better than he; and because he exalted himself beyond measure to do otherwise than

according to the letter of God's command, he was put away forever from having dominion over Israel. And mark this word: if any church in Christendom shall continue, after light is given and after plain rebuke is uttered, to walk contrary to the word of God, and to teach that which is inconsistent with Holy Scripture, as Saul was put away from the kingdom, so shall that church be put away from before the Lord of Hosts; and if any man, be he who he may, after receiving light from on high, continues willfully to shut his eyes, he shall not, if an heir of heaven, be rejected from eternal salvation, but he shall be cast off from much of the usefulness and comfort which he might otherwise have enjoyed. He knew his Master's will, and did it not: he shall be beaten with many stripes. He has been as the horse or the mule which have no understanding, and his mouth shall be held in with bit and bridle. Many sorrows shall be to those who dare to dash themselves against the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler by opposing his "Thus saith the Lord." Upon whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder; and whosoever shall fall upon it shall be broken, to his own lasting damage. O my brethren! I would that we trembled and stood more in awe of God's word. I fear me that many treat the things of God as though they were merely matters of opinion, but remember that opinion cannot govern in God's house. God's word, not man's opinion, claims your allegiance. Remember that although our ignorant conscience may not accuse us of error, yet if we walk contrary to God's word, our conscientiousness does not screen us from sin; for conscience is not the sovereign arbiter of right and wrong, but the plain word of God is the rule of equity. I do not sin so foully as if I sinned against my conscience, but I still sin, if, having an unenlightened conscience, I ignorantly transgress. But if I wilfully keep my conscience in darkness, and continue in errors which I might easily know to be such by a little thought and searching of God's word, then my conscience can offer me no excuse, for I am guilty of blindfolding the guide which I have chosen, and then, knowing him to be blindfolded, I am guilty of the folly of letting him lead me into rebellion against God. O church of God! hear thou the voice of thy great Founder and Lord: "Whosoever, therefore shall one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will

manifest myself to him." Oh for a stern integrity, that will hold the word, and will never depart from it, come what may. This much concerning the value of a "Thus saith the Lord."

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

The Rev. W. Goode, the Dean of Ripon, appears to be much better acquainted with the extent of my reading and mental acquirements than I am myself. He speaks with all the positiveness of a personal acquaintance concerning my reputed ignorance, and for my own part I am not at all anxious to question so very reverend an authority. He writes: "As to that young minister who is now raving against the Evangelical clergy on this point, it is to be regretted that so much notice has been taken of his railings. He is to be pitied, because his entire want of acquaintance with theological literature leaves him utterly unfit for the determination of such a question; which is a question, not of mere doctrine, but of what may be called historical theology; and his charges are just a parallel to those which the Romanists would bring against himself as well as others for the interpretation of the words, 'This is my body.' But were he a wiser man than he is, he would know better what his qualifications are for passing Judgment on such a point, and be willing to learn from such facts, among others, as the Gorham Judgment and the cases of Mr. Maskell and Mr. Mozley, what ground there is for his charges against the Evangelical clergy. Let him hold and enforce his own view of doctrine as

he pleases; but when he undertakes to determine what is the exclusive meaning of the Book of Common Prayer, and brings a charge of dishonesty against those who take a different view of that meaning from what he does, he only shows the presumptuous self-confidence with which he is prepared to pronounce judgment upon matters of which he is profoundly ignorant. To hold a controversy with him upon the subject would be to as little purpose as to attempt to hold a logically-constructed argument with a child unacquainted with logical terms."

When this paragraph caught my eye, my heart leaped with joy, for I knew that the sinners in Zion were afraid; and I thought I heard a voice crying from the Word, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." My mind flew back to the valley of Elah, and I remembered the words of the old record: "And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field." My spirit kindled at these words of the boastful champion of yore, and at their modern reproduction by the vainglorious divine of Ripon, and the answer of David was in my heart as it is even now upon my tongue: "Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands." Admitting the witness of the venerable dean to be correct, and that "the young minister" is inexpert in logic, I am not therefore ashamed; far otherwise, I will the rather glory in mine infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me; "for when I am weak, then am I strong." Take, O ye great ones

of the earth, every profit that can be made out of your belief in my utter total ignorance, and your own profound and extensive learning, and then go your ways, and learn what this meaneth: "Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee: thou shalt not know from whence it riseth.. And now at this hour, having been condemned as intolerably ignorant, I feel I have the liberty to ask just a few explanations of those reverend divines who do know or ought to know the grounds of their faith and practice.

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

runs only in this wise, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." I find it expressly declared that there cannot be a mixture of works and grace; for, says Paul, "If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work;" and I ask a "Thus saith the Lord" for this baptismal covenant, which is nominally of grace, but really of works, or at best an unnatural conglomerate of grace and works. I ask those who have searched Scripture through, to find me the form or the command for any baptismal covenant whatever. It is idle to say that such a covenant was allowed among the early Christians; their witness is not earlier enough for us: we want a "Thus saith the Lord," and nothing but this will justify this pretended covenant.

We then find that after this covenant has been made, and the water has been applied in a manner which we think needs also a "Thus saith the Lord" to justify it, it is publicly declared that the babe is regenerated,—"Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren that this child is regenerated and grafted into the body of Christ's church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits, and with one accord make our prayers unto him, that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning." And, again, "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy church," etc. We are told we do not understand the meaning of "regeneration" as it is used in the services of the Anglican Church. The meaning of this passage is historical, hypothetical, ecclesiastical, and we know not what. The words "to be born again" did not formerly seem to us to be so very difficult to understand, nor do they appear so now as they stand in Scripture; for we find in them the one regeneration which has renewed us in the spirit of our mind, and we cannot consent to use those words in any other sense. Well, whether regeneration be or be not a very equivocal word, we simply ask, Is there a "Thus saith the Lord" for the assertion that a sprinkled infant is therefore regenerate in any sense in the world? Will any person find us a text of Scripture?—he shall have large rewards from clergymen with uneasy consciences! We put our inquiry again in plain terms, Will some one oblige us with a plain "Thus saith the Lord" proving that water baptism in any one instance makes an

unconscious babe a member of Christ and a child of God, in any sense which any sane person chooses to attach to those words? Where is the passage—where? Echo answers "where?" But this subject you have been considering for some time, and are well convinced that the process of regenerating babies by occult influences conveyed by water is a pure—no, an impure—invention of priest-craft. There is therefore no necessity that I enlarge upon a point so well understood.

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

grace upon young people who in innumerable cases are thoughtless and unconverted, if not profane? We want a "Thus saith the Lord" for the whole thing, and then for each item in detail. Endless is the task thus proposed to the honest Churchman.

3. Another matter needs a little clearing up; and, as this Book was set forth by learned divines and bishops, I would like a lucid explanation. The priest visits a sick man, sits down by his bed-side, reads certain prayers, bids the patient remember his baptism, questions him as to his creed, gives him good advice about forgiving his enemies and making his will, moves him to make a special confession of his sin if he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter, after which confession the Rubric says "the priest shall absolve him" (if he humbly and heartily desire it), after this sort. Here is the absolution, and I humbly and heartily desire a "Thus saith the Lord" for it: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences; and by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Sir Priest, I want you to give me a plain warrant from God's Word for your absolving my dying neighbor at this rate. Who are you that you should use such words? The season is solemn: it is the hour of death, and the matter is weighty, for it concerns the eternal interests of the dying man, and may—nay, will, if you be found to be acting presumptuously in this matter—involve your own soul in eternal ruin. Whence did you derive your right to forgive that sick man? Might he not raise his withered hands and return the compliment by absolving you? Are you quite sure as to the committal of divine authority to you? Then show me the deed of gift, and let it be clearly of divine origin. The apostles were empowered to do many things; but who are you? Do you claim to be their successors? Then work miracles similar to theirs; take up serpents, and drink deadly things without being harmed thereby; prove to us that you have seen the Lord, or even that cloven tongues of fire have sat upon each of you. You evangelical clergy, dare you claim to be successors of the apostles, and to have power to forgive sins? Your Puseyite brethren go the whole length of superstitious pretension; but you have too much light to be so superstitious; and yet you do what is quite as wicked,—you solemnly



subscribe that this absolution is not contrary to the Word of God when you know it is? Gorham case, say you. I care nothing for your Gorham case: I want a "Thus saith the Lord" warranting you to swear to what you know to be false and dangerous. Mr. Mozley and Mr. Maskell may give you all the comfort which they can afford; but one word of Peter or of Paul would be of more weight in this matter than a thousand words from either of them.

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

4. I turn on and find that when the sick dies he is buried in consecrated ground; and though he may have cut his throat while under delirium tremens, if the jury do not return a verdict of suicide, the priest shall say, as he casts earth upon the body, "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground,—earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,—in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life." And again, "We give thee hearty thanks for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world." And yet again, "We meekly beseech thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in him, as our hope is this our brother doth." We beg a "Thus saith the Lord" for burying every baptized thief, harlot, rogue, drunkard, and liar who may die in the parish—"in sure and certain hope of the blessed resurrection." "Oh! it is commanded by

authority." What authority? We challenge it, and permit none to pass muster but a "Thus saith the Lord." Until clergymen will bring us scriptural warrant for uttering falsehoods over a grave, we dare not cease our testimony against them. How long will the many godly laymen in that Church remain quiet? Why do they not bestir themselves, and demand revision or disruption?

5. Turning a little further on, into a part of the Prayer-Book not much frequented by ordinary readers, we come to the "Ordering of Priests," or the way in which priests are made. Why priests? Is one believer more a priest than another, when all are styled a royal priesthood? Let that pass. Of course, brethren, the priests are made by the bishops, as the bishops are made by Lord Palmerston, or Lord Derby, or any other political leader who may be in office. The Prime Minister of England is the true fountain from whom all bishops flow, and the priests are minor emanations branching off from the mitre rather than the crown. Here is the way of ordering priests. Let heaven and earth hear this and be astonished: "When this prayer is done, the bishop with the priests present shall lay their hands severally upon the head of every one that receiveth the order of priesthood; the receivers humbly kneeling upon their knees, and the bishop saying, 'Receive the Holy Ghost.'" Listen to it, now! Think you behold the scene: a man of God, a bishop whom you have been in the habit of considering a most gracious, godly man, and such no doubt he may be, in a sort,—think you see him putting his hands upon the head of some evangelical man whom you will go and hear, or, if you like, upon some young rake fresh from Oxford,—and think you hear him say, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained." We want a "Thus saith the Lord" for that; for that is putting it rather strongly in the popish line, one would think. Is the way of ordering priests in the Church of Rome much worse than this? That the apostles did confer the Holy Ghost, we never thought of denying; but that Oxford, Exeter, or any other occupants of the bench can give the Holy Spirit, needs some proof other than their silk aprons or lawn sleeves can afford us. We ask, moreover, for one instance in which an apostle conferred upon any minister the power to forgive sins, and where it can

be found in Scripture that any man other than an apostle ever received authority to absolve sinners. Sirs, let us say the truth; however much yonder priest may pretend at his parishioner's bedside to forgive sin, the man's sins are not forgiven; and the troubled conscience of the sinner often bears witness to the fact, as the day of judgment and the fearful hell of sinners must also bear witness. And what think you, sirs, must be the curse that fills the mouth of damned souls, when in another world they meet the priest who absolved them with this sham absolution! With what reproaches will such deceived ones meet the priest who sent them down to perdition with a lie in their right hands! Will they not say to him, "Thou didst forgive me all my sins by an authority committed unto thee, and yet here am I cast into the pit of hell?" Oh! if I do not clear my Soul upon this infamous business, and if the whole Christian church does not cleanse herself of it, what guilt will lay upon us! This is become a crying evil, and a sin that is not to be spoken of behind the door, nor to be handled in gentle language. I have been severe, it is said, and spoken harshly. I do not believe it possible to be too severe in this matter; but, sirs, if I have been so, let that be set down as my sin if you will; but is there any comparison between my fault and that of men who know this to be contrary to the Word of God, and yet give it their unfeigned assent and consent? or the sin of those who can lie unto the Holy Ghost, by pretending to confer Him who bloweth where he listeth upon men who as likely as not are as graceless as the very heathen? Fresh from the dissipations of college-life, the sinner bows before the man in lawn, and rises a full-blown priest, fully able to remit or retain sins. After this, how can the priests of the Church of England denounce the Roman Catholics? It is so very easy to fume and bluster against Puseyites and Papists; but the moment our charity begins at home, and we give our Evangelical brethren the same benefit which they confer upon the open Romanists, they are incensed beyond measure. Yet will we tell them to their faces, that they, despite their fair speeches, are as guilty as those whom they denounce; for there is as much Popery in this priest-making as in any passage in the mass-book. Protestant England! wilt thou long tolerate this blasphemy? Land of Wiclif, birthplace of the martyrs of Smithfield, is this long to be borne with? I am clear of this matter before the Most High, or hope to be, ere I sleep in the grave; and having once sounded the trumpet, it hall ring till my lips are dumb. Do you tell me it is no business

of mine? Is it not the National Church?—does not its sin rest, therefore, upon every man and woman in the nation, Dissenter and Churchman, who does not shake himself from it by open disavowal? I am not meddling with anybody else's church; but the church that claims me as a parishioner would compel me, if it could, to pay its church rates, and that does take from me my share of tithe every year. I ask the sturdy Protestants of England, and especially the laity of the Church of England, whether they intend forever to foster such abominations? Arise, Britannia! nation of the free, and shake thy garments from the dust of this hoary superstition; and as for thee, O Church of England! may God bless thee with ministers who will sooner come forth to poverty and shame than pervert or assist in perverting the Word of God.

6. I have not quite done: I have another question to ask. Look at the thanksgiving which is offered on the twentieth day of June, on account of Her Majesty's accession: in this thanksgiving we very heartily join, although we decline to pray by book on the twentieth of June or any other day; look at the close that thanksgiving, and you see the name of Lord John Russell as a sort of official authority for the prayer! Is Earl Russell also among the prophets? And on the other side of the page, in order that the Tories may edify the church as well as the Whigs, I see the hand of S. H. Walpole. Is he also a governor in Christ's church? Hath the Lord given these men power to legislate for his church, or sign mandates for her to obey? But what is it all about? "Victoria Regina, our will and pleasure is that these four forms of prayer," etc. Do you see? here is royal supremacy! Further on, in the next page: "Now, therefore, our will and pleasure is," etc. See the Preface to the Articles, "Being by God's Ordinance, according to our just Title, Defender of the Faith, and Supreme Governor of the Church, within these our Dominions;" and again, "We are Supreme Governor of the Church of England." This is the way in which your Church bows herself before the kingdoms of this world. I demand, earnestly demand, a "Thus saith the Lord" for this royal supremacy. If any king, or queen, or emperor shall say, in any Christian church, "Our will and pleasure is," we reply, "We have another King,—one Jesus." As to the Queen, honored and beloved as she is, she is by her sex incapacitated for ruling in the church. Paul decides that point by his plain precept, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to

be in silence;" and if a king were in the case, we should say, "We render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things which are God's." In civil matters, we cheerfully obey princes and magistrates; but if any king, queen, emperor, or what not, usurps power in the church of God, we reply, "One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren. The crown-rights belong to King Jesus: he alone is King in Zion." But I am met at once with the reply, "Well, but Christ is the Head of the Established Church, as well as the Queen." I remember reading about a three-headed dog which kept the gates of hell, but I never dreamed of a two-headed church till I heard of the Anglican Establishment. A two-headed church is a monster! The Queen the Head of the Church, and King Jesus the Head of the Church, too! Never. Where is a "Thus saith the Lord" for this? No man living who calls himself an Englishman has a word to say of Her Majesty except that which is full of honor and esteem and loyal affection; but the moment we come to talk about the church of Christ, whoever shall say, or think, or believe, that there is any headship to the church of Christ except the person of Christ himself, he knoweth not what he saith nor whereof he affirmeth. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Head over all things to his church, which is his body: the fulness of him filleth all in all. Here stand the two letters "V. R." at the top of certain mandates, and they mean just this: "Our royal authority commands that you shall not believe this, and you shall believe that; you shall not pray this, and you shall pray that; and you shall pray on such a day," and so on. The church which thus bows to authority commits fornication with the kings of the earth, and virtually renounces her allegiance to Christ to gain the filthy lucre of state endowments. He is the freeman whom the truth makes free, and who wears no gilded collar, with a chain hanging therefrom held in a royal hand. Remember how the Chancellor laughed to scorn the whole bench of bishops, and rightly so; for he who voluntarily makes himself a bondman deserves to feel the lash. May the little finger of our state grow heavier than the loins of James or Elizabeth, until all good men flee from the house of bondage. Servants of God, will ye be servants of man? Ye who profess to follow King Jesus and see him crowned with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, do you take off his diadem to put it upon the head of another? No, it shall never be. Scotland has repelled the royal intrusion right bravely by her sons of the Free Church, who have left all to follow

King Jesus. Her bush burned in the olden times, but was not consumed; the covenant was stained with blood, but it was never slain. Let us revive that covenant, and, if need be, seal it with our blood. Let the Church of England have what king she pleases, or what prince she pleases for her head; but this I know, that there is no "Thus saith the Lord" concerning the ecclesiastical supremacy of Victoria Regina, nor the authority of Lord John Russell, or S. H. Walpole, or any of that company, honorable though they be.

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

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

charitable enough to believe that there are other churches beside his own? Search ye out of to book of the Lord, and read!

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

Now some will say, why do I thus take this matter up and look into it? I have already told you the reason, dear friends. There is an opportunity for pushing another Reformation given to us just now, of which if we do not avail ourselves we shall be very guilty. Some have said, "Why not go on preaching the gospel to sinners?" I do preach the gospel to sinners, as earnestly as ever I did in my life; and there are as many conversions to God as at any former period. This is God's work: and beware lest any of you lift a finger against it. The hand of the Lord is in this thing, and he that lives shall see it. Let us have our prayers, that good may come of this controversy, even though you may deplore it. As for anything else that you can do, it shall not turn us a hair's-breadth from this testimony to which we feel God has called us, though it bringeth upon us every evil that flesh would shrink from. The words of Dr. Guthrie are well worth quoting here: "The servant is no better than his master; and I do believe, were we more true to God, more faithful and honest in opposing the world for its good, we should get less smoothly along the path of life, and have less reason to read with apprehension these words of Jesus: 'Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.' Not less true than shrewd was the remark of a Scotch woman respecting one who, just settled in the ministry, had been borne to his pulpit amid the plaudits of all the people: 'If he is a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, he will have all the

blackguards in the parish on his head before a month is gone."

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

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## **Thy Redeemer**

And thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. - Isaiah 41:14

And why does it say, "and thy Redeemer?" What was the use of appending the Redeemer's name to this precious exhortation? By God's help it shall be the business of this evening to show why there is a peculiar blessedness in the fact that God hath not only said, "I will help



thee, saith the Lord," but has added, "and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

You will please to notice that it looks as if this were a repetition by three different persons. Israel was cast down, and Jehovah, for that is the first word—(you will notice that the word "Lord" is in capitals, and should be translated "Jehovah")—says to his poor, tried, desponding servant, "I will help thee." No sooner is that uttered than we think we shall not be straining the text if we surmise that God the Holy Spirit, the Holy One of Israel, adds his solemn affidavit also; and declares by oath and covenant, "I will help thee." Does not this, we say, look somewhat like repetition? Was it not sufficient that Jehovah the Father should declare that he would help his people! Why did the other persons of the divine Trinity unite in this solemn declaration? We think we shall be able, if God shall help us, to show great usefulness therein, especially dwelling to-night upon that word, "thy Redeemer," and marking how the repetition of the word by our Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, adds a peculiar blessedness to the exhortation—"Fear not, thou worm Jacob."

First, methinks this was added *for amplification*; secondly *for sweetness*; thirdly, *for confirmation*.

I. First, when it says, "and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel," it was added FOR AMPLIFICATION. There are some preachers from whom you will never learn anything; not because they do not say much which is instructive, but because they just mention the instructive thought once, and immediately pass on to another thought, never expanding upon the second thought, but immediately passing on, almost without connection, to a third—just casting forth, as it were, bare thoughts, without opening them up, and explaining them to the people. Such preachers are generally complained of as being very unprofitable to the hearers. "Why," said the hearer, "it made no impression upon me; it was good, but there was so much of it that I could not recollect it. I had nothing to bring away." Other preachers, on the other hand, follow a better method. Having given one idea, they endeavor to amplify it, so that their hearers, if they are not able to receive the idea in the abstract, at least are able to lay hold upon some of its points, when they come to the amplification of it. Now, God,

the great Author of the great book, God, the preacher of the truth by his prophets, when he would preach it, and when he would write it, so amplifies a fact, so extends a truth, and enlarges upon a doctrine, says, "I will help thee, saith Jehovah." That means Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "Ah! but," said God, "my people will forget that, unless I amplify the thought; so I will even break it up; I will remind them of my Trinity. They understand my Unity; I will bid them recollect that there are Three in One, though these Three be One;" and he adds, "thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Jehovah—Redeemer—Holy One of Israel—three persons, all included, indeed, in the word Jehovah, but very likely to be forgotten unless they had been distinctly enumerated.

Now, brethren, suffer your thoughts for a moment to enlarge upon the fact, that the promise contained in this verse, "Fear not, I will help thee" (*I will help thee*), is a promise from Three Divine Persons. Hear Jehovah, the everlasting Father, saying, "I will help them." "Mine are the ages: before the ages began, when there were no worlds, when nought had been created, from everlasting I am thy God. I am the God of election, the God of the decree, the God of the covenant; by my strength I did set fast the mountains, by my skill I laid the pillars of the earth; and the beams of the firmament of heaven; I spread out the skies as a curtain, and as a tent for man to dwell in; I the Lord made all these things. '*I will help thee.*'" Then comes Jehovah the Son. "And I, also, am thy Redeemer, I am eternal; my name is wisdom. I was with God, when there were no depths, before he had digged the rivers, I was there as one brought up with him. I am Jesus, the God of ages; I am Jesus, the man of sorrows; 'I am he that liveth and was dead, I am alive for evermore.' I am the High Priest of your profession, the Intercessor before the throne, the Representative of my people. I have power with God. '*I will help thee.*'" Poor worm, thy Redeemer vows to help thee; by his bleeding hands he covenants to give thee aid. And then in comes the Holy Spirit. "And I," saith the Spirit, "am also God—not an influence, but a person—I, eternal and everlasting, co-existent with the Father and the Son—I, who did brood over chaos, when as yet the world was not brought into form and fashion, and did sow the earth with the seeds of life when I did brood over it,—I, that brought again from the dead your Lord Jesus Christ, the Shepherd of the sheep, who am the Eternal Spirit, by whose power the Lord Jesus did arise from

the thralldom of his tomb —I, by whom souls are quickened, by whom the elect are called out of darkness into light—I, who have the power to maintain my children and preserve them to the end—'I will help thee.'" Now, soul, gather up these three, and dost thou want more help than they can afford? What! dost thou need more strength than the omnipotence of the United Trinity? Dost thou want more wisdom than exists in the Father, more love than displays itself in the Son, and more power than is manifest in the influences of the Spirit? Bring hither thine empty pitcher! Sure this well will fill it. Haste! gather up thy wants, and bring them here —thine emptiness, thy woes, thy needs. Behold, this river of God is full for thy supply. What canst thou want beside? Stand up, Christian, in this thy might Jehovah Father, Jehovah Jesus, Jehovah Spirit,—these are with thee to help thee. This is the first thing. It is an *amplification*.

II. And now, secondly, concerning that word, "thy Redeemer," it is a SWEETENING OF THE PROMISE. Did you never notice that a promise always seems all the sweeter for having Jesus in it? All the promises are yea and amen in him; but when a promise mentions the name of the Redeemer, it imparts a peculiar blessedness to it. Brethren, it is something like, if I may represent it by such a figure, the beautiful effect of certain decorations of stained glass. There are some persons whose eyes are so weak that the light seems to be injurious to them, especially the red rays of the sun, and a glass has been invented, which rejects the rays that are injurious, and allows only those to pass which are softened and modified to the weakness of the eye. It seems as if the Lord Jesus were some such a glass as this. The grace of God the Trinity, shining through the man Christ Jesus, becomes a mellow, soft light, so that mortal eye can bear it. My God, I could not drink from thy well, if thou hadst not put there the earthen pitcher of my Saviour; but with him living waters from thy sacred well I draw. Heaven! thou art too bright; I could not bear thine insufferable light, if I had not this shade with which I cover thee; but through it, as through a mist, I do behold the halo of thy glory, undiminished in its effulgence, but somewhat diminished in their potency which would be my destruction. The Saviour seems to calm his glory, to tone it down to our poor feeble frame. His name put into this wine of heaven, does not diminish in the least degree its sparkling and its exhilarating power; but it takes out of it that deep strength which might

upset an angel's brain, if he could drink to his full. It takes away the profundity of mystery, which would make the deep old wine of the kingdom intoxicating rather than cheering. Christ Jesus cast into the river of God, makes all the streams more sweet; and when the believer sees God in the person of the Saviour, he then sees the God whom he can love, and to whom with boldness he can approach. Surely I love this promise all the better, because I think I see my Saviour, with his hand all bleeding, stamping his hand upon it, and saying, "And thy Redeemer," and there is the blood mark left upon the promise. It does seem to me as if when God uttered that promise to the poor worm Jacob, Jesus Christ could not be still. He heard his Father say, "Fear not, worm Jacob;" and he saw the poor worm, with his head on one side, with his eyes all flowing with tears, with his heart palpitating with terror, and his arms folded in dismay; and when his Father had said, "Fear not," he stepped from behind, and whispered in a voice more soft than the voice of his Father, "Fear not, worm Jacob, it is God that speaks;" and then the soft voice says, "And it is thy Redeemer that speaks too." *He* says, "Fear not." He who loves thee, who knows thee, who has felt what thou feelest, who has passed through the woes which thou art now enduring—he who is thy Kinsman and thy Brother, he also says "Fear not, worm Jacob." Oh, it is sweet, it is precious to look upon that word, as spoken by our Redeemer.

III. And now we come to the other point. I think this is put in by way of CONFIRMATION. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses surely the whole shall be established."

"Blind unbelief is sure to err."

It needs many witnesses to make such unbelieving souls as we are, believe the promises. "Now," says God, "I will help thee. Unbelief! wilt thou doubt Jehovah? Can the "I Am that I Am" lie? Can the God of faithfulness and truth deceive thee? O unbelief! infamous traitor! wilt thou dare to doubt him? Yes, and Christ knew it would; and so he comes in and he says, "and thy Redeemer," as a second witness; whilst the Spirit is the third. "Thy Redeemer," volunteers to be the second guarantee, the other security to the faithfulness of this promise. The Father will lose his honor if he breaks his word; and I too do give as the security for the

fulfillment of this promise, my troth and honor also. "Thy Redeemer" engages that he will help thee, O thou worm!

And now, I want you to read the promise, recollecting that it says, "Thy Redeemer;" and then, as you read it through, you will see how the word "Redeemer" seems to confirm it all. Now begin. "*I will help thee;*" lay a stress on that word. If you read it so, there is one blow at your unbelief. "*I will help thee,*" saith the Redeemer. "Others may not, but I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and by the bands of my lovingkindness have I drawn thee. '*I will help thee, though the earth forsake thee; though thy father and thy mother forsake thee, I will take thee up. Wilt thou doubt me? I have proved my love to thee. Behold this gash, this spear thrust in my side. Look hither at my hands: wilt thou but believe me? 'Tis I.*' I said that on the waters, and I said to my people, '*Be not afraid; it is I.*' I say to thee, now thou art on the waters, '*Be not afraid; I will help thee.*' Sure thou needst not fear that I shall ever forget thee. '*Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.*' '*I have graven thee on my hands; thy walls are ever before me.*' '*I will help thee.*'" Now, you must just suppose the Saviour standing here—that Man whose garments are red with blood; you must suppose him standing where I stand to-night, and saying to you, personally, "Fear not, *I will help you.*" O my Lord, I have ungratefully doubted thy promise many a time; but methinks, if I could see thee in all thy woe and sorrow for me, if I could hear thee say, "*I will help thee,*" I should cast myself at thy feet, and say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." But though he is not here to speak it, though the lips that utter it are but the lips of man, remember that he speaks through me to-night, and through his word, as truly as if he spoke himself. If some great man should by a servant, or by a letter send to you this message, "*I will keep you,*" though you had not heard his own lips declare it, yet if you saw his own hand writing, you would say, "It is enough, I believe it; there is the master's hand writing; it is his own autograph, it is written by himself; behold the bloody signature! It is stamped with his cross, and I his messenger am sent to-night to myself and to you, and I say to my own heart and to you, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him; for the Redeemer says, *I will help thee,*" and if

he saith "*I will help thee,*" who can doubt him? who dare distrust him?

And now let us read the promise again, and lay the stress on the "will." Oh, the "wills" and the "shalls:" they are the sweetest words in the Bible. "*I will help thee.*" When God says "I will," there is something in it, brethren. The will of God started worlds into existence; the will of God made nature leap from chaos; the will of God sustains all worlds, "bears the earth's huge pillars up," and establishes creation. It is God's "I will." He lets the world live; they live on the "will" of God; and if he willed that they should die, they must sink as the bubble into the breaker, when its moment has arrived. And if the "will" of God is so strong as that, may we not lay a great stress upon it here—"I *will* help thee?" There is no doubt about it. I do not say I may help thee peradventure. No; I *will*. I do not say, that possibly I may be persuaded to help thee. No; I voluntarily *will* to help thee. "I *will* help thee." I do not say that, in an probability, ninety-nine chances out of a hundred, it is likely I may help thee. No; but without allowing any peradventure, or so much as a jot or tittle of hap or hazard, I *will*. Now, is there not strength in that? Indeed, my brethren, this is enough to cheer any man's spirit, however much he may be cast down, if God the Holy Spirit does but breathe upon the text, and let its spices flow abroad into our poor souls, "Fear not, I *will* help thee."

And now we lay stress on another word: "I will *help* thee." That is very little for me to do, to *help* thee. Consider what I have done already. What! not help thee? Why, I bought thee with my blood. What! not help thee? I have died for thee; and if I have done the greater, will I not do the less? *Help* thee, my beloved! It is the least thing I will ever do for thee. I have done more, and I will do more. Before the day-star first began to shine I chose thee. "I will *help* thee." I made the covenant for thee, and exercised all the wisdom of my eternal mind in the scheming of the plan of salvation. "I will *help* thee." I became a man for thee; I doffed my diadem, and laid aside my robe; I laid the purple of the universe aside to become a man for thee. If I did this, I will *help* thee. I gave my life, my soul, for thee; I slumbered in the grave, I descended into Hades, all for thee; I will *help* thee. It will cost me nothing. Redeeming thee cost me much, but I have all and abound. In helping thee, I am giving thee what I have bought for thee already. It is no new thing. I can do it easily. "Help thee?" Thou

needst never fear that. If thou needest a thousand times as much help as thou dost need, I would give it thee; but it is little that thou dost require compared with what I have to give. 'Tis great for thee to need, but it is nothing for me to bestow. "*Help thee?*" Fear not. If there were an ant at the door of thy granary asking for help, it would not ruin thee to give him a handful of thy wheat; and thou art nothing but a tiny insect at the door of my all-sufficiency. All that thou couldst ever eat, all that thou couldst ever take, if thou wert to take on to all eternity, would no more diminish my all-sufficiency, than the drinking of the fish would diminish the sea. No; "I will *help* thee." If I have died for thee, I will not leave thee.

And now, just take the last word—"I will help *thee*." Lay the stress there. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob; I will help *thee*." If I let the stars fall, I will help *thee*; if I let all nature run to rack and ruin, I will help *thee*. If I permit the teeth of time to devour the solid pillars upon which the earth doth stand, yet I will help *thee*. I have made a covenant with the earth, "that seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, shall never cease;" but that covenant, though true, is not so great as the covenant that I have made concerning thee. And if I keep my covenant with the earth, I will certainly keep my covenant with my Son. "Fear not; I will help *thee*." Yes, thee! Thou sayest, "I am too little for help;" but I will help thee, to magnify my power; thou sayest, "I am too vile to be helped," but I will help thee to manifest my grace. Thou sayest, "I have been ungrateful for former help;" but I will help thee to manifest my faithfulness. Thou sayest, "But I shall still rebel, I shall still turn aside." "I will help *thee*," to show forth my long suffering: let it be known, "I will help *thee*."

And now just conceive my Master on his gross bleeding there, looking down on you and on me. Picture him, whilst his voice falters with love and misery conjoined; and hear him. He has just now spoken to the thief, and he has said to him, "To-day, shalt thou be with me in Paradise." And after he has said that, he catches a sight of you and of me, poor and depressed, and he says, "Fear not, worm Jacob; I will help *thee*; I helped the thief—I will help *thee*. I promised him that he should be with me in paradise; I may well promise thee that thou shalt be helped. I will help thee. O Master! may thy love that prompts thee thus to speak, prompt us to believe thee.

And now hear Him again. He is exalted on high; he hath "led captivity captive and received gifts for men;"—now hear him, as in the midst of the solemn pomp of heaven he is not unmindful of his poor relations. He looks down, and he sees us in this world still struggling with sin and care and woe; he hears us claiming kingship with himself; and he says, "Worm Jacob! though I now do reign exalted high, my love is still as great. I *will* help *thee*." I pray the Lord apply the sweetness of that pronoun to your hearts, my brethren, and to mine. "I will help *thee*." O surely when the husband speaks to the wife in the hour of darkness and sorrow, and comforts her, you can easily understand what arguments he uses, when he says, "Wife of my youth! my joy, my delight, I will help *thee*!" You can easily conceive how he enumerates times of love, seasons when he stood by her in the hour of trouble; you can easily think how he reminds her of the days of their espousals, and tells her of their struggles, and of their joys; and he says, "Wife, canst thou doubt me? No; as I am a husband I *will* help *thee*! And now you hear the Saviour speaking of his church. "Betrothed to me ere time began, I have taken thee into union with my adorable person; and O my bride, though my palace stand in ruins, and heaven itself should shake, I *will* help thee. Forget thee? Forget my bride? Be false to my troth? Forsake my covenant? No; never. I *will* help *thee*." Hear the mother speaking to her little child in great danger; "Child," she says, "I will help *thee*;" and then she reminds that child that she is its mother, that from her breast the child drew its needed nourishment in the days of weakness; she reminds it how she has nursed it, and dandled it upon her knee, and how in every way she has been its solace and support. "Child !" says she, and her heart runs over—"I will help *thee*!" Why, the child never doubts it, it says, "Yes, mother, I know you will; I am sure of that, I do not need to be told it, I was certain you would, for I have had such proofs of your love." And now ought not we who love the Saviour just to let our eyes run with tears, and say, "O thou blest Redeemer! thou needst not tell us thou wilt help us, for we know thou wilt. Oh do not suppose that we doubt thee so much as to want to be told of it again; we know thou will help us; we are sure of it; thy former love, thine ancient love, the love of thine espousals, thy deeds of kindness, thine everlasting drawings, all these declare that thou never canst forsake us." No, no; "I *will* help *thee*."



And now, brethren, we are coming down stairs to eat the body of Christ and drink his blood in a spiritual manner; and I hope whilst we are partaking of that bread and wine, the emblems of the Saviour, we shall think we hear every mouthful of bread and every sip of wine saying out in the Master's behalf, "I *will* help *thee*, I *will* help *thee*." And then let us just frighten Satan, by cheering up our spirits through the power of the Holy Ghost, and buckling on our armor, let us go forth into the world tomorrow, to show what the Redeemer can do, when his promise is applied by the Spirit. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee." Come, bring your fears out to-night, and serve them in the worst way you can. Hang them here upon the scaffold this night. Come now, and blow them away at the great guns of the promises, let them be destroyed forever. They are renegade mutineers; let them be cut off, let them be utterly destroyed, and let us go and sing, "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." "I *will* help *thee*," saith the Redeemer.

O sinners, I pity you, that this is not your promise. If this were all that you did lose by being out of Christ, it were enough to lose indeed. May God call you, and help you to trust in the Redeemer's blood. Amen.

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## **To The Saddest Of The Sad**

And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage. - Exodus 6:9

Little words often contain great meanings. It is often the case with that monosyllable "so." In the present instance we must lay stress upon it and read the text thus—"Moses spake so unto the children of Israel." That is,

he said what God told him to say. He did not invent his message. He did not think out the gospel that he had to carry to the people. He was simply a repeater of the divine message. As he received it, so he spake it. "Moses spake as unto the children of Israel." If he had not done so, the responsibility must have rested upon himself, whether the nation was moved by his words or not; but when he was simply God's ambassador, saying only what God would have him say, his responsibility was limited. If he delivered the Lord's own word and it failed to win the heart of Israel, he could not be blamed. Although it was a great sadness of heart to him that the people did not, and even could not, receive the divine message, yet as far as he was concerned, his conscience was clear. It is ever so with the preacher of the gospel: if he declares the word of the Lord as he has received it, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, he is clear before God, whatever his hearers may do or may not do.

I often wonder what those preachers do who feel called to make up their message as they go on; for if they fail, their failure must be attributed in great measure to their want of ability to make up a moving tale. They have to spread their sails to the breeze of the age, and to pick up a gospel that comes floating down to them on the stream of time, altering every week in the year; and they must have an endless task to catch this new idea, or, as they put it, to keep abreast of the age. Unless, indeed, like chameleons, they have a natural aptitude to change colour, they must have a worrying time of it, and a horrible amount of shifting to get through. When they have done their best to preach this gospel of their own, then they are accountable for having made that gospel. For every bit of its teaching they are accountable, because they were the manufacturers of it, and it came forth from their foundry, bearing their stamp. If they take this yoke upon them, and so refuse to learn of Christ, they will find no rest to their souls. To me the preaching of the Lord's own gospel is a joy and a privilege; for notwithstanding that concern for your souls loads me with the burden of the Lord, it is his burden, and not one which I have selected for myself. I often feel on a Sabbath night when I go home weary: "I know that I have preached what I believe to be God's gospel." I have not said anything—I have not intended to say anything that was my own. I have not left out, at least, I have not intended to leave out anything that was in the text, nor anything which I believe to be the teaching of the

gospel of Christ. And then if you do not receive it, that is a sorrowful business, but it is no concern of mine so that I shall have to answer for it at the last great day. When a man-servant goes to the door with a message from his master, if you do not like what he tells you, do not be angry with him. What has he to do with it? Has he said what his master told him to say? If he has, then be angry with his master if you must be, or accept what his master says if you think fit; but let the poor man that brought the message be held clear if he has faithfully reported his master's words. I claim that, if I have preached my Master's gospel, whether men are saved or lost, whether they accept it or reject it, I must leave that with themselves, and not have their sin laid at my door. How heartily do I cry to God that the Word may not be a savour of death unto death, but a savour of life unto life; but oh, my hearers, if you perish after hearing the gospel of God, do not think that you can cast the blame on me.

Now, the message Moses brought was rejected, and he knew why it was rejected. He could see the reason. The people were in such bondage, they were so miserably ground down, they were so unhappy and hopeless, that what he spake seemed to them to be as idle words. There are hundreds of reasons why men reject the gospel. We will not go into them to-night. He that wants to beat a dog can always find a stick, and he that wishes to reject Christ can always find a reason for it; and, however unreasonable a reason may be, it will serve a sinner's turn, when that turn happens to be the making of some excuse for himself why he should not yield to the Saviour. Oh that men were less cunning in making apologies for refusing the Lord Jesus!

Amongst all the reasons, however, that I ever heard, that with which I have the most sympathy, is this one—that some cannot receive Christ because they are so full of anguish, and are so crushed in spirit that they cannot find strength enough of mind to entertain a hope that by any possibility salvation can come to them. It is to their sad case that I desire to speak. I think that I can speak to the case, if God help me, for I have felt the same. I do remember when I could not believe even Jesus himself by reason of sore anguish and straitness of spirit; and, therefore, as one who has worn the chains, I speak to those who are still in chains. I know

the clanking of those fetters, and what it is to feel the damp of the stone walls, and to fear that there is no coming out of prison, and to be so despairing that even when the emancipator turned the great key in the lock, and set the door wide open, yet still my heart had made for itself a direr cage, and I could not believe in the possibility of liberty, and therefore I sat bound in a dungeon of my own creation. Ah! there is no Bastille so awful as that which is built by despair, and kept under the custody of a crushed spirit. Many are the desponding ones whose eyes fail so that they cannot look up, or look out. To such I speak. May God speak through me by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter!

I. And first, will you notice that what Moses brought to these people was glad tidings. IT WAS A FREE AND FULL GOSPEL MESSAGE. To them it was the gospel of salvation from a cruel bondage, the gospel of hope, the gospel of glorious promise. It is a very admirable type and metaphorical description of what the gospel is to us. Moses' word to them was singularly clear, cheering, and comforting; but they could not receive it. "They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit and cruel bondage."

First, Moses spoke to them about their God. He said, "You have a God, and his name is Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." They looked up from their bricks, and they seemed to say, "God? What have we to do with him? Oh, that the straw were given us to make our bricks! We are up to our necks in this filthy Nile mud, making the bricks, and you come and talk to us about God. Go, and preach to Pharaoh and the taskmasters that rule us; but as for us poor creatures, slaves that we are, we do not understand you. What do you mean by JAH, Jehovah, our God? Bring us more garlic and onions, or lessen our daily tasks, or take away the sticks from our drivers, and then we will listen to you." And so they shook their heads, and said that such mysteries and theologies were not for them. And yet, dear sirs, if any of you are in such a case, it is for you. Jehovah, Israel's God, was indeed their only hope, and he is your only hope also. Alas, that they should be so unwise as to refuse to let the light shine upon them, for light it was! What a poor reason for refusing light because the night is so dark! Man's best hope lies in his God. O you whose lives are bitter with toil and want, there is something for you after all, much better than the hard saying,

"What shall we eat, and what shall we drink?" There is an inheritance above the grinding toil of every-day life. There is a portion much better than this killing care, which frets so many of you and makes life a calamity to you. Do not, therefore, because of the heaviness of your lot, refuse to hear about God, your Maker, your Benefactor. In that direction lies your only real hope. Have this God for a father and a friend, and life will wear another aspect, and you will be another man.

Then Moses went on to tell them about a covenant. He said, "You have a God, and that God has said, "I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.'" Covenant? Why, many of them would hardly know what it meant. "Covenant?" said they, "God made a covenant with us poor brickmakers, that have to slave from morning to night without wage, and now are forced to make bricks without straw?" God and a covenant: these are strange words in ears that hear the curses of taskmasters and the crack of their whips. It sounded like mockery to them to talk of such high matters. I doubt not they muttered to themselves, "This Moses is a mad philosopher who has grand mouthfuls of words; but what are words to us? A bit of fish out of the Nile, or a cumber from the irrigated fields would be a deal better than talking to us about a covenant." And yet, hearken. If any of you are in a sad condition, your best hopes may lie this way. What if God has entered into covenant with you that he will bless you for Jesus Christ's sake? There may be a mint of wealth for the sons of poverty in this everlasting covenant; and the best kind of wealth, too. There may be for you a promised emancipation which will break the fetters which now hold you, and set you free. I tell you that in the covenant of grace lies the charter of the poor and needy. At any rate, if you come under that covenant it cannot be worse with you than it is now. You seem now to be under a covenant of bondage and of sorrow, and any change will be for the better. If there be another covenant—a covenant of grace, and love, and peace, and everlasting faithfulness, it were worth while to hear about it, and to seek it out until you discover whether you have part and lot in it. I entreat you, look into this matter. Harken diligently to the voice of the gospel. Hear, and your soul shall live.

So, when Moses had spoken of the covenant, he went on to speak yet more about God's pity to them. He reported that Jehovah had said, "I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered my covenant." I fancy that those words opened their eyes a little. They looked up and said to one another, "Is there, indeed, a God who has heard our groanings? Oh, but," they muttered, "look at the many years we have been groaning. Why, it is forty years since this man Moses first came out and saw our burdens. Where has he been these forty years? What is the use of pity that is so tardy in its movements?" And yet, dear sirs, if you are inclined to talk so, it may be that if God be slow he is sure; and if he be slow to you it is out of patience and long-suffering to others. He knows best when and how to save his people. Remember that when the tale of bricks was doubled then Moses came; and when you are getting to your very worst, and your night is darkening into a sort of hellish midnight, it may be that your darkness is coming to an end. Therefore, be not so bowed down as to let the brick-earth get into your ears and eyes and make you deaf and blind. But do listen if there be anything to be heard that is better than your daily moans and groans. Listen to the messenger of God who comes to tell of what God is about to do. He is a God full of compassion, and he has respect unto broken hearts and tearful eyes.

And then Moses went on further with his blessed gospel message to tell them about the Lord's resolve to rescue them by a great redemption. The Lord had said, "I am Jehovah, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage." Do you notice that all along the Lord uses strong words, and speaks like a great king? "I am Jehovah. I will. I will. I will." When you go home just notice what a number of "I wills" there are in this declaration of the great God. When God says, "I will," he means it; depend upon it. He does not ask our leave, or wait for our help. "I will" is omnipotence putting itself into speech. Jehovah will accomplish what he promises. He told them, therefore, that he meant to come to their rescue. "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments." God means to save you. Poor, troubled, confessedly guilty sinner, believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and trust yourself with

him, and the Lord will save you. He will deliver you from all the guilt of your past life, from the evil habits of your present life, and from the temptations of your future life. He will break the yoke of Satan from off your neck and make you to be no more the slave of sin, but you shall become the child of the living God.

Moses told them about the Lord's ways of grace and the inheritance which he had prepared for them. My message is after the same sort. Thus saith Jehovah to-night, in the preaching of the gospel to every one that will believe in Jesus, "I will save and I will deliver you; and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord." These are great words, but they come from the mouth of the great God, who cannot lie. Wherefore believe them, and take heart of hope. God will take you, poor guilty ones, to be his children. He will promote you to be his willing servants. He will use you for his glory though now you dishonour his name. He will sanctify you and cleanse you, and he will bring you to heaven, even you who have lien among the pots and have been defiled in the brick-kilns of sin. He will never rest till he makes you sit upon his throne with him, where he is glorified, world without end. This I speak to you who are in bondage. Even as Jesus said of old, so say I in my measure as his messenger: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Believe you in Christ Jesus, and he who has come to save the lost will give you as clear and clean a deliverance from the power of sin as Jehovah gave Israel deliverance from the power of the Egyptian tyrant. He will bring you out of bondage and guide you through the wilderness till you come into the eternal rest, even to a goodlier land than Canaan, though it flowed with milk and honey.

II. We come now to note that **IT WAS RECEIVED WITH UNBELIEF CAUSED BY ANGUISH OF HEART.** The message was from the Lord, and it was full of hope for them, but they were too much broken down to receive it. We can quite understand what that meant. Let us look into the

case. They could not now receive this gospel because they had at first caught at it, and had been disappointed. They were under a misapprehension, for they expected to be free at once, as soon as Moses went to Pharaoh; and as they did not get immediate relief, they fell back into sullen despair. When Moses came to them and said that God had appeared to him at the bush, and had sent him to deliver them, they bowed their heads, and worshipped. Great things they looked for on the morrow, for they were at the end of their patience; but after that, when Moses went in unto Pharaoh, and the tyrant doubled their labour by denying them straw, then they could not believe in God or in his messenger. In the process of salvation it often happens—I have seen it many time—that after persons have come to hear the gospel, after they have, in some measure, become attentive to its invitations, they have for a season been much more miserable than they were before. Have you never noticed, in taking a medicine, how often you are made to feel more sick before you are made well? It is often so in the workings of the great remedy of divine grace: it discovers to us our disease that we may the more heartily accept the heavenly medicine. Yes, and in special cases there may be evils within the spiritual system which must be thrown out in the flesh, to be made visible, and so to become the subjects of repentance and abhorrence. The man who judges with shortness and straightness of judgment, demands a remedy that will cure his soul of all evils on the spot, and if it does not evidently and immediately do this, he cries, "Away with it." I find that the Hebrew word translated "anguish" here signifies shortness. Your marginal Bibles have "straitness." So they could not believe because of the shortness of their judgment: they measured God by inches. They limited the great and infinite God to minutes and days; and so, as they found themselves at first getting into a worse case than before, they said to Moses, deliberately, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." They did as good as say—You have done us no good; indeed you have increased our miseries; and we cannot believe in you or accept your message as really from God, seeing it has caused us a terrible increase of our sufferings.

Grace may truly and effectually come to a heart, and for a while cause no joy, no peace; but the reverse. I have known many a man coming to this Tabernacle, who has been prospering in business, and so on, and yet he



has been going down to hell as fast as ever he could travel. Well, he has come and heard the gospel, and he has made a great many improvements in his conduct, and has become a regular and attentive hearer; and at that very time he has fallen into an affliction the like of which he had never experienced before; and he has consequently complained, "Why, I am worse instead of better. I find my heart grows more rebellious against God than ever it was before." I do not wonder that it should be so, for I have seen so many examples of it. The discipline of the household of God begins very early. But a present increase of sorrow has nothing to do with what the main result will be, except that it works towards it in a mysterious manner. Perhaps what you at first thought was genuine faith was not faith; and God is going to knock down the false before he builds up the true. If you had an old house, and any friend of yours were to say, "John, I will build you a new house. When shall I begin?" "Oh!" you might say, "begin next week to build the new house." At the end of the week he has pulled half your old house down. "Oh," say you, "this is what you call building me a new house, is it? You are causing me great loss: I wish I had never consented to your proposal." He replies, "You are most unreasonable: how am I to build you a new house on this spot without taking the old one down?" And so it often happens that the grace of God does seem in its first work to make a man even worse than he was before, because it discovers to him sins which he did not know to be there, evils which had been concealed, dangers never dreamed of. Thus the work of grace even makes his bondage seem to be heavier than ever it was; and yet this is all done in wisdom, in love, and in fulfilment of the promise which God has given. Yet I am never very much astonished when I find people ready almost to turn away from the hearing of the gospel; because, after having at first heard it with pleasure, they find that, for the time being, it involves them in even greater sorrow than before. How earnestly would I persuade them to overcome their very natural tendency to a hasty judgment! Press on, dear friend. Be of good courage. Pharaoh will not long be able to make you keep up that enormous number of bricks. Within a very few days he will be glad to get rid of you. Wait hopefully; for the God who begins in darkness will end in light, and before long you will come to understand those ways of mercy, which are now past finding out. Not many weeks after the sobbing and sighing at the brickyards, Moses and the children at Israel sang this song unto the Lord: " Sing unto

the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." The work of deliverance began very grimly, but it ended very gloriously.

The inability of Israel to believe the message of Moses arose also from the fact that they were earthbound by heavy oppression: the mere struggle to exist exhausted all their energy, and destroyed all their hope. The extreme hardness of their lot made them despondent and sullen. They had to work from morning to night. The Egyptian fellahs of the present age have known what it is to work very, very hard, and to let their earnings go into the coffers of their precious princes. It seems always to have been so with wretched Egypt: it is ever the house of bondage. But these Israelites, being not even Egyptians, but strangers in Egypt, were worked without any pity or mercy. It was a daily question with them whether life was worth living under such cruel conditions. I do not wonder that a great many are unable to receive the gospel in this city of ours, because their struggle for existence is awful. I am afraid that it gets more and more intense, though even now it passes all bounds. If any of you can do anything to help the toil-worn workers, I pray you, do it. The poor workwoman, who sits so many hours with the candle and needle, and does not earn enough, when she has worked all those hours, to more than just pay the rent and keep body and soul together, do you wonder that she thinks that this gospel of ours cannot be for her, and does not care to listen to it? I know that it would be her comfort, but her soul refuseth to be comforted, she is so crushed. The dock labourer, who comes home five days out of the six having earned nothing, and hears his little children crying for bread—is it any wonder that he cannot hear about heavenly things? Why, it is with our white population very much as it was with the negro population of Jamaica. When there was work to be had, and they could get enough to eat and more, our churches were crowded with them. They were the best of hearers and the speediest of converts; they were soon gathered into immense churches. But when everything went badly with them, and they had to work very hard barely to live, there were groups of backsliders, and multitudes who did not feel that they could go to the house of God at all. They said that they had no garments to wear, and no money to spare; and do you wonder at it? Their poverty was so grinding, and their toil so severe, that the services they

had once delighted in they had no heart for. It is all very easy to say that it ought not to be so; but it is so; and it is so with multitudes in London. And yet, dear friend—if such a one has come in here to-night—I pray you do not throw away the next world because you have so little of this. This is sheer folly. If I have little here, I would make sure of the more hereafter. If you have such a struggle for existence here, you should seek that higher, nobler, better life, which would give you, even in penury and want, a joy and a comfort to which you are a stranger now. May the Holy Ghost come upon you, and raise you out of this present evil world into newness of life in Christ Jesus! I do not find that God's people get into a condition of utter desolation: they are, at their very worst, kept from total desertion; for the Lord hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." They do have to work hard, and they may come very near to want, but my observation satisfies me that they are happy still; that they are joyful still; and they are uplifted by the inner life above the down-dragging depression of external trials. I would to God that I could say a word that might comfort any child of poverty who should happen to be here to-night, and I pray the Lord himself to be their comforter and helper.

But, worst of all, there are some who seem as if they could not lay hold on Christ because their sense of sin has become so intolerable, and the wretchedness which follows upon conviction has become so fearful, that they have grown almost to be continually despairing. I hardly know any condition of mind that is worse than chronic despair, when at last that which seemed alarming enough to drive to madness settles down into a lifeless, sullen moroseness. These Israelites had at last sunk so low that they said, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." But your lot is terrible. "We know it is," they said, "but we shall never get out of it." But your bondage is horrible. "Yes, but you may make it worse by interfering. You will only aggravate our taskmasters, and bring upon us that last straw which breaks the back. Let us alone. We are doomed to suffer: we are predestined to be bondsmen. Let us go on as quietly as we may in our slavery. It may be that like poor fishes in the cave, we may lose our eyes yet, and then we shall not know that it is dark, for we shall have lost the capacity for light." Oh, it is a dreadful thing when a heart gets to that—when a man desires that Christ would depart from him, and let him alone

to perish. Do not some men virtually say, "I know I am lost. Let me enjoy myself as well as I can; I cannot—I cannot enjoy sin; but don't vex my conscience. Do not worry me with your talk here, for I shall suffer enough hereafter. Do not tantalize me about saving faith, for I shall never believe. Do not begin talking to me about repentance. I shall never have a soft and tender heart; I know I never shall." A man who has begun to be numbed with cold, cries to his comrades, "Leave me to sleep myself to death"; and thus do despairing ones ask to be left in their misery. Dear soul, we cannot, we dare not, thus desert you. I will tell you what you shall do, dear soul; do give me a hearing. In the name of God, believe that there is hope yet—that even now Christ Jesus invites men, and especially such as you, to put their trust in him. O you who are burdened with sin, he calls you to let him be your Saviour. If there is a man in the world he died for, you are the man. If I see a physician hurrying down the street in his brougham, and anybody says to me, "Where is that doctor going?" if I knew every house in the street, I should pick out the case of a man that I knew to be in the worst condition, and most near to death's door. "Sir," I should say, "the doctor is going there. That dying person needs him most, and I believe that he is hurrying to his bedside." If there is one man here that is worse than any other, more sad, more sick, more sorry, more despairing than another, my Lord Jesus Christ, who is here, has come to meet with such a one. O troubled heart, Jesus has come to seek and to save you! I am sure it is so. Hope thou! Hope thou! Hope thou! Thou art not beyond hope of salvation.

See, O soul, thou'rt yet alive,  
Not in torment; not in hell.  
Still doth his good Spirit strive,  
With the chief of sinners dwell.

Lift up thy eyes, for thou art not yet where the rich man was after his death and burial. Do not yet despair. May be, there awaits thee yet a happy life of joy in God. The sun may yet bring thee brighter days, days of peace, and rest, and usefulness. Did you never hear the story of John Newton, on the coast of Africa? He had got himself into such a state by his sins, his drunkenness, his vice, that at last he was left on the coast of Africa, and virtually became a slave. Did John Newton dream, when he

wandered up and down with a hungry belly, full of fever, and at death's door, that the day would come when he would be the companion and dear friend of Cowper, and when the church of St. Mary Woolnoth, over there in the city, would be crowded every time he stood up to preach of free grace and dying love? He did not think it, but it was so predestined. Something equally gracious may be ordered for you. Blasphemer, you may preach the gospel yet. O thou Magdalene, full of filthiness, thou wilt yet wash his feet with thy tears, and wipe them with the hairs of thy head. Thou black villain, thou mayest yet stand among that white-robed host, of whom the angel asked, "Who are these, and whence came they?" You, even you, will sing more sweet and loud than any of them unto him that loved you and washed you from your sins in his precious blood. God make it so, and unto his name shall be praise for ever and ever!

III. I have many more things to say, but I might weary you with them rather than bless you. The message was at first not received by Israel by reason of their anguish of soul, but **IT WAS TRUE FOR ALL THAT, AND THE LORD MADE IT SO.** What did the Lord do when he found that those people did not hearken to Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage? What did the Lord do? He was not going to give them up because of their wretched condition. He had said, "I will bring them out," and he meant to do it.

The first thing the Lord did to prove his persevering grace was to commission Moses again. (Ex. 6:1; 7:2.) So the Lord God, in everlasting mercy, says to his minister, "You have to preach the gospel again to them. Again proclaim my grace." It seems a terrible thing to have to pour our souls into deaf ears. Yet I shall not give it up, for I have done it with some here for nearly thirty-three years, and I may as well go on. Why should I lose so much labour? I will try again, like Peter, who, after toiling all night and taking nothing, yet let down the net at the Lord's bidding. One of these days those dead ears will be made to live. God in mercy says, "Go on with it. As long as there is breath in your body, tell them to believe in my Son, and they shall live. Tell them till you die that 'He that with his mouth confesseth, and with his heart believeth that God hath raised Christ from the dead shall be saved.'"

But the Lord did more than that for Israel. As these people had not listened to Moses, he called Moses and Aaron to him, and he renewed their charge. He laid it upon them—gave them again their marching orders: "He gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt." A monstrous thing it did look. They would not even hear Moses but the Lord will have his servants stand to their work. Moses and Aaron have to do it, however impossible it may appear. There is to be no backing out of it. They must know of a surety that Israel is to be delivered by their means. It is a grand point when the Lord lays the conversion of men on the hearts of his ministers, and makes them feel that they must win souls. Moses was bound to bring out Israel. "But there is Pharaoh" Pharaoh is included in the divine charge. They have to beat Pharaoh into submission. "But those children of Israel will not obey." The Lord put them in the charge: did you not observe the words, "He gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh"? Moses and Aaron, you have to bring Israel out, Pharaoh is to let them go, and Israel is to go willingly. God has issued his royal decree, and be you sure it will stand. I believe that God is saying to his church "You have to do it. You have to gather out mine elect out of every nation under heaven." To the church in London, he says, "Bring this people out of the bondage of sin." That terrible London with all its poverty, its drunkenness, its infidelity, and licentiousness: you are to save it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Its darkness is dense; you are to shine till it is enlightened. You have to save London. So do not back out of it. "Oh," says one man, who lives down some street near this place, "Sir, I can hardly live in the street. It teems with ill-living women." You have to save them. Passing a little shop as I did the other day, I saw written up in the window, "If any poor girl that wishes to lead a better life will only step inside she will find a friend." That is one of our dear members.\* I felt so pleased as I saw it. I should like to see such a notice in a great many windows. I would like to see you live among the wicked, and put up in your windows, "If anybody wants a friend, there is one inside. Come in." You are called to save them! They must not be lost. Somebody says, "What are you talking about, Mr. Spurgeon? We cannot save them." I am talking as God said, when he told Moses and Aaron that he gave them a charge to bring his people out of Egypt. They could not do it: but yet they did it. Anyone can do what he

can do, but it is only God's servant that can do what he cannot do. We, my brethren, are called to perform the impossible; we are to be familiar with miracles. Look at Ezekiel. There is a valley full of dry bones. Ezekiel is to go and say to them, "Thus saith the Lord, Ye dry bones, live." What a preposterous thing! An able divine of good repute once said that, to preach the gospel to dead sinners, was as preposterous as to wave a pocket-handkerchief over a grave. Ah, just so! Therefore, I would not have him do it. If the Lord has not sent him to do it he would do no good if he were to attempt to preach to the sinner dead in sin; but it is a different thing when it is my case, for I feel that I am sent to do it, and therefore I am not vexed at being thought to be acting absurdly. If God had sent me to wave a pocket-handkerchief over the dead in Nunhead cemetery, that they might live, I would go and wave that pocket-handkerchief, and they would live. To the eye of reason there is no use in preaching to men dead in sin. I freely admit that; but if it is a commission from God, then it is not ours to raise questions, but to do as we are bidden. God has commissioned his servants to preach the gospel to every creature. Whatever those creatures may be, we are to say to them, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This is our message and our mission, and we are just to tell the truth, and leave God to apply it to the heart. Oh that he may give us grace to tell out the gospel, and to keep on doing it till he has brought his own elect out of the bondage of sin and Satan, and saved them with an everlasting salvation!

Once more. As I told you in the reading, I greatly admire this chapter. I cannot help admiring the next thing that God did when he told his servant what to do. The Lord began to count the heads of those whom he would redeem out of bondage. You see the rest of the chapter is occupied with the children of Reuben, and the children of Simeon, and the children of Levi. God seemed to say, "Pharaoh, let my people go!" "I will not," said the despot. Straightway the Lord goes right down into the brick-town where the poor slaves are at work, and he makes out a list of all of them, to show that he means to set free. So many there of Simeon. So many here of Reuben. So many here of Levi. The Lord is counting them. Moreover he numbers their cattle, for he declares, "There shall not a hoof be left behind." Men say, "It is of no use counting your chickens before they are

hatched"; but when it comes to God's counting those whom he means to deliver, it is another matter; for he knows what will be done, because he determines to do it and he is almighty. He knows what is to come of the gospel, and he knows whom he means to bless. And so let Satan rage, and let adversaries do what they will, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his"; and to prove this, he goes on writing down their names, and taking an account of them. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels." Now, my hearers, if you do not come to Christ, it will be your own loss, and not his. If you refuse him, it will be because you are not Christ's sheep, as he said to you. He has a people, and he will save them, whether you, my hearer, believe in Jesus or wilfully refuse to do so. Out of the mass of mankind a company shall come to him, and shall glorify his name, as it is written, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." Oh, that you had such a mind in you that you would accept his gospel! Will you do so even now? Trust Christ, and you are saved. Look unto him, and be ye saved The Lord bless you, for his name's sake. Amen.

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## **The Tomb Of Jesus**

Come, see the place where the Lord lay. - Matthew 28:6

Every circumstance connected with the life of Christ is deeply interesting to the Christian mind. Wherever we behold our Saviour, he is well worthy of our notice.

"His cross, his manger, and his crown,  
Are big with glories yet unknown."

All his weary pilgrimage, from Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross, is, in our eyes, paved with glory. Each spot upon which he trod is, to our souls, consecrated at once, simply because there the foot of earth's



Saviour and our own Redeemer once was placed. When he comes to Calvary, the interest thickens; then our best thoughts are centered on him in the agonies of crucifixion, nor does our deep affection permit us to leave him, even when, the struggle being over, he yields up the ghost. His body, when it is taken down from the tree, still is lovely in our eyes - we fondly linger around the motionless clay. By faith we discern Joseph of Arimathea, and the timid Nicodemus, assisted by those holy women, drawing out the nails and taking down the mangled body; we behold them wrapping him in clean, white linen, hastily girding him round with belts of spices; then putting him in his tomb, and departing for the Sabbath rest. We shall, on this occasion, go where Mary went on the morning of the first day of the week, when waking from her couch before the dawn, she aroused herself to be early at the sepulchre of Jesus. We will try, if it be possible, by the help of God's Spirit, to go as she did - not in body, but in soul - we will stand at that tomb; we will examine it, and we trust we shall hear some truth-speaking voice coming from its hollow bosom which will comfort and instruct us, so that we may say of the grave of Jesus when we go away, "It was none other than the gate of heaven" - a sacred place, deeply solemn, and sanctified by the slain body of our precious Saviour.

I. AN INVITATION GIVEN. I shall commence my remarks this morning by inviting all Christians to come with me to the tomb of Jesus. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." We will labor to render the place attractive, we will gently take your hand to guide you to it; and may it please our Master to make our hearts burn within us while we talk by the way.

Away, ye profane - ye souls whose life is laughter, folly, and mirth! Away, ye sordid and carnal minds who have no taste for the spiritual, no delight in the celestial. We ask not your company; we speak to God's beloved, to the heirs of heaven, to the sanctified, the redeemed, the pure in heart - and we say to them, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Surely ye need no argument to move your feet in the direction of the holy sepulchre; but still we will use the utmost power to draw your spirit thither. Come, then, for 'tis the *shrine of greatness*, 'tis the resting-place of *the man*, the Restorer of our race, the Conqueror of death and hell.

Men will travel hundreds of miles to behold the place where a poet first breathed the air of earth; they will journey to the ancient tombs of mighty heroes, or the graves of men renowned by fame; but whither shall the Christian go to find the grave of one so famous as was Jesus? Ask me the greatest man who ever lived - I tell you the man Christ Jesus was "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellow." If ye seek a chamber honored as the resting-place of genius, turn in hither; if ye would worship at the grave of holiness, come ye here; if ye would see the hallowed spot where the choicest bones that e'er were fashioned lay for awhile, come with me, Christian, to that quiet garden, hard by the walls of Jerusalem.

Come with me, moreover, because *it is the tomb of your best friend*. The Jews said of Mary, "she goeth unto his grave to weep there." Ye have lost your friends, some of you, ye have planted flowers upon their tombs, ye go and sit at eventide upon the green sward, bedewing the grass with your tears, for there your mother lies, and there your father or your wife. Oh! in pensive sorrow come with me to this dark garden of our Saviour's burial; come to the grave of your best friend - your brother, yea, one who "sticketh closer than a brother." Come thou to the grave of thy dearest relative, O Christian, for Jesus is thy husband, "Thy maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name." Doth not affection draw you? Do not the sweet lips of love woo you? Is not the place sanctified where one so well-beloved slept, although but for a moment? Surely ye need no eloquence; if it were needed I have none. I have but the power, in simple, but earnest accents, to repeat the words, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." On this Easter morning pay a visit to his grave, for it is the grave of you best friend.

Yea, more, I will further urge you to this pious pilgrimage. *Come, for angels bid you*. Angels said, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." The Syriac version reads, "Come, see the place where *our* Lord lay." Yes, angels put themselves with those poor women, and used one common pronoun - *our*. Jesus is the Lord of angels as well as of men. Ye feeble women - ye have called him Lord, ye have washed his feet, ye have provided for his wants, ye have hung upon his lips to catch his honeyed sentences, ye have sat entranced beneath his mighty eloquence; ye call him Master and Lord, and ye do well; "But," said the seraph, "he is my

Lord too;" bowing his head, he sweetly said, "Come, see the place where *our* Lord lay." Dost fear then, Christian, to step into that tomb? Dost dread to enter there, when the angel pointeth with his finger and saith, "Come, we will go together, angels and men, and see the royal bedchamber?" Ye know that angels did go into his tomb, for they sat one at his head and the other at his foot in holy meditation. I picture to myself those bright cherubs sitting there talking to one another. One of them said, "It was there his feet lay;" and the other replied, "and there his hands, and there his head;" and in celestial language did they talk concerning the deep things of God; then they stooped and kissed the rocky floor, made sacred to the angels themselves, not because there they were redeemed, but because there their Master and their monarch, whose high behests they were obeying, did for awhile become the slave of death, and the captive of destruction. Come, Christian, then, for angels are the porters to unbar the door; come, for a cherub is thy messenger to usher thee into the death-place of death himself. Nay, start not from the entrance; let not the darkness affright thee; the vault is not damp with the vapors of death, nor doth the air contain aught of contagion. Come, for *it is a pure and healthy place*. Fear not to enter that tomb. I will admit that catacombs are not the places where we, who are full of joy, would love to go. There is something gloomy and noisome about a vault. there are noxious smells of corruption; oft-times pestilence is born where a dead body hath lain; but fear it not, Christian, for Christ was not left in hell - in Hades - neither did his body see corruption. Come, there is no scent, yea, rather a perfume. Step in here, and, if thou didst ever breathe the gales of Ceylon, or winds from the groves of Araby, thou shalt find them far excelled by that sweet, holy fragrance left by the blessed body of Jesus; that alabaster vase which once held divinity, and was rendered sweet and precious thereby. Think not thou shalt find aught obnoxious to thy senses. Corruption Jesus never saw; no worms ever devoured his flesh; no rottenness ever entered into his bones; he saw no corruption. Three days he slumbered, but no long enough to putrefy; he soon arose, perfect as when he entered, uninjured as when his limbs were composed for their slumber. Come then, Christian, summon up thy thoughts, gather all thy powers; here is a sweet invitation, let me press it again. Let me lead thee by the hand of meditation, my brother; let me take thee by the arm of thy fancy, and let me again say to thee, "Come, see the place where the Lord

lay."

There is yet one reason more why I would have thee visit this royal sepulchre - *because it is a quiet spot*. Oh! I have longed for rest, for I have heard this world's rumors in my ears so long, that I have begged for

"A lodge in some vast wilderness,  
Some boundless contiguity of shade,"

where I might hide myself forever. I am sick of this tiring and trying life; my frame is weary, my soul is mad to repose herself awhile. I would I could lay myself down a little by the edge of some pebbly brook, with no companion save the fair flowers or the nodding willows. I would I could recline in stillness, where the air brings balm to the tormented brain, where there is no murmur save the hum of the summer bee, no whisper save that of the zephyrs, and no song except the caroling of the lark. I wish I could be at ease for a moment. I have become a man of the world; my brain is racked, my soul is tired. Oh! wouldst thou be quiet, Christian? Merchant, wouldst thou rest from thy toils? wouldst thou be calm for once? Then come hither. It is in a pleasant garden, far from the hum of Jerusalem; the noise and din of business will not reach thee there; "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." It is a sweet resting spot, a withdrawing room for thy soul, where thou mayest brush from thy garments the dust of earth and muse awhile in peace.

II. ATTENTION REQUESTED. Thus I have pressed the invitation; now we will enter the tomb. Let us examine it with deep attention, noticing every circumstance connected with it.

And, first, mark that it is a *costly tomb*. It is no common grave; it is not an excavation dug out by the spade for a pauper, in which to hide the last remains of his miserable and overworn bones. It is a princely tomb; it was made of marble, cut in the side of a hill. Stand here, believer, and ask why Jesus had such a costly sepulchre. He had no elegant garments; he wore a coat without seam, woven from the top throughout, without an atom of embroidery. He owned no sumptuous palace, for he had not where to lay his head. His sandals were not rich with gold, or studded

with brilliants. He was poor. Why, then does he lie in a noble grave? We answer, for this reason: Christ was unhonored till he had finished his sufferings; Christ's body suffered contumely, shame, spitting, buffeting, and reproach, until he had completed his great work; he was trampled under foot, he was "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" but the moment he had finished his undertaking, God said, "No more shall that body be disgraced; if it is to sleep, let it slumber in an honorable grave; if it is to rest, let nobles bury it; let Joseph, the councillor, and Nicodemus, the man of Sanhedrim, be present at the funeral; let the body be embalmed with precious spices, let it have honor; it has had enough of contumely, and shame, and reproach, and buffeting; let it now be treated with respect." Christian, dost thou discern the meaning? Jesus, after he had finished his work, slept in a costly grave; for now his Father loved and honored him, since his work was done.

But, though it is a costly grave, *it is a borrowed one*. I see over the top of it, "Sacred to the memory of the family of Joseph of Arimathea;" yet Jesus slept there. Yes, he was buried in another's sepulchre. He who had no house of his own, and rested in the habitation of other men; who had no table, but lived upon the hospitality of his disciples; who borrowed boats in which to preach, and had not anything in the wide world, was obliged to have a tomb from charity. Oh! should not the poor take courage? They dread to be buried at the expense of their neighbors, but if their poverty be unavoidable, wherefore should they blush, since Jesus Christ himself was interred in another's grave? Ah! I wish I might have had Joseph's grave to let Jesus be buried in it. Good Joseph thought he had cut it out for himself, and that he should lay his bones there. He had it excavated as a family vault, and lo, the Son of David makes it one of the tombs of the kings. But he did not lose it by lending it to the Lord; rather, he had it back with precious interest. He only lent it three days; then Christ resigned it; he had not injured, but perfumed and sanctified it, and made it far more holy, so that it would be an honor in future to be buried there. It was a borrowed tomb; and why? I take it, not to dishonor Christ, but in order to show that, as his sins were borrowed sins, so his burial was in a borrowed grave. Christ had no transgressions of his own; he took ours upon his head; he never committed a wrong, but he took all my sin, and

all yours, if ye are believers; concerning all his people, it is true, he bore their griefs and carried their sorrows in his own body on the tree; therefore, as they were others' sins, so he rested in another's grave; as they were sins imputed, so that grave was only imputedly his. It was not his sepulchre; it was the tomb of Joseph.

Let us not weary in this pious investigation, but with fixed attention observe everything connected with this holy spot. The grave, we observe, *was cut in a rock*. Why was this? the rock of Ages was buried in a rock - a Rock within a rock. But why? Most persons suggest that it was so ordained, that it might be clear that there was no covert way by which the disciples or others could enter and steal the body away. Very possibly it was the reason; but O! my soul, canst thou find a spiritual reason? Christ's sepulchre was cut in a rock. It was not cut in mould that might be worn away by the water, or might crumble and fall into decay. The sepulchre stands, I believe, entire to this day; if it does not naturally, it does spiritually. The same sepulchre which took the sins of Paul, shall take my iniquities into his bosom, for if I ever lose my guilt, it must roll off my shoulders into the sepulchre. It was cut in a rock, so that if a sinner were saved a thousand years ago, I too can be delivered, for it is a rocky sepulchre where sin was buried - it was a rocky sepulchre of marble where my crimes were laid forever - buried never to have a resurrection.

You will mark, moreover, that tomb was *one wherein no other man had ever lain*. Christopher Ness says, when Christ was born, he lay in a virgin's womb, and when he died, he was placed in a virgin tomb; he slept where never man had slept before. The reason was that none might say that another person rose, for there never had been any other body there, thus a mistake of persons was impossible. Nor could it be said that some old prophet was interred in the place, and that Christ rose because he had touched his bones. You remember where Elisha was buried; and as they were burying a man, behold he touched the prophet's bones and arose. Christ touched no prophet's bones, for none had ever slept there; it was a new chamber where the monarch of the earth did take his rest for three day and three nights.

We have learned a little, then, with attention; but let us stoop down once

more before we leave the grave, and notice something else. We see the grave, but do you *notice the grave-clothes*, all wrapped and laid in their places, the napkin being folded up by itself? Wherefore are the grave-clothes wrapped up? The Jews said robbers had abstracted the body; but if so, surely they would have stolen the clothes; they would never have thought of wrapping them up and laying them down so carefully; they would be too much in haste to think of it. Why was it then? To manifest to us that Christ did not come out in a hurried manner. He slept till the last moment; then he awoke; he came not in haste. They shall not come out in haste, neither by flight, but at the appointed moment shall his people come to him. So at the precise hour, the decreed instant, Jesus Christ leisurely awoke, took off his cerements, left them all behind him, and came forth in his pure and naked innocence, perhaps to show us that as clothes were the offspring of sin - when sin was atoned for by Christ, he left all raiment behind him - for garments are the badges of guilt: if we had not been guilty we should never have needed them.

Then the napkin, mark you, was laid by itself. The grave-clothes were left behind for every departed Christian to wear. The bed of death is well sheeted with garments of Jesus, but the napkin was laid by itself, because the Christian, when he dies, does not need that; it is used by the mourners, and the mourners only. We shall all wear grave-clothes, but we shall not need the napkin. When our friends die, the napkin is laid aside for us to use; but do our ascended brethren and sisters use it? No; the Lord God hath wiped away all tears from their eyes. We stand and view the corpses of the dear departed, we moisten their faces with our tears, letting whole showers of grief fall on their heads; but do *they* weep? Oh, no. Could they speak to us from the upper spheres they would say, "Weep not for me, for I am glorified. Sorrow not for me; I have left a bad world behind me, and have entered into a far better." They have no napkin - they weep not. Strange it is that those who endure death weep not; but those who see them die, are weepers. When the child is born it weeps while others smile, (say the Arabs,) and when it dies it smiles while others weep. It is so with the Christian. O blessed thing! The napkin is laid by itself, because Christians will never want to use it when they die.

III. *Emotion excited.* We have thus surveyed the grave with deep

attention, and, I hope, with some profit to ourselves. But that is not all. I love a religion which consists, in a great measure, of emotion. Now, if I had power, like a master, I would touch the strings of your hearts, and fetch a glorious tune of solemn music from them, for this is a deeply solemn place into which I have conducted you.

First, I would bid you stand and see the place where the Lord lay with *emotions of deep sorrow*. Oh come, my beloved brother, thy Jesus once lay there. He was a murdered man, my soul, and thou the murderer.

"Ah, you my sins, my cruel sins,  
His chief tormentors were,  
Each of my crimes became a nail,  
And unbelief the spear."  
"Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?  
And did my Sov'reign die?"

I slew him - this right hand struck the dagger to his heart. My deeds slew Christ. Alas! I slew my best beloved; I killed him who loved me with an everlasting love. Ye eyes, why do you refuse to weep when ye see Jesus' body mangled and torn? Oh! give vent to your sorrow, Christians, for ye have good reason to do so. I believe in what Hart says, that there was a time in his experience when he could so sympathize with Christ, that he felt more grief at the death of Christ than he did joy. It seemed so sad a thing that Christ should have to die; and to me it often appears too great a price for Jesus Christ to purchase worms with his own blood. Methinks I love him so much, that if I had seen him about to suffer, I should have been as bad as Peter, and have said, "That be far from thee, Lord;" but then he would have said to me, "Get thee behind me, Satan", for he does not approve of that love which would stop him from dying. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" But I think, had I seen him going up to his cross, I could fain have pressed him back and said "Oh! Jesus, thou shalt not die; I cannot have it. Wilt thou purchase my life with a price so dear?" It seems too costly for him who is the Prince of Life and Glory to let his fair limbs be tortured in agony; that the hands which carried mercies should be pierced with accursed nails; that the temples that were always clothed with love should have cruel thorns



driven through them. It appears too much. Oh! weep, Christian, and let your sorrow rise. Is not the price all but too great, that your beloved should for you resign *himself*? Oh! I should think, if a person were saved from death by another, he would always feel deep grief if his deliverer lost his life in the attempt. I had a friend, who, standing by the side of a piece of frozen water, saw a young lad in it, and sprang upon the ice in order to save him. After clutching the boy, he held him in his hands and cried out, "Here he is! Here he is! I have saved him." But, just as they caught hold of the boy, he sank himself, and his body was not found for some time afterwards, when he was quite dead. Oh! it is so with Jesus. My soul was drowning. From heaven's high portals he saw me sinking in the depths of hell; he plunged in:

"He sank beneath his heavy woes,  
To raise me to a crown;  
There's ne'er a gift his hand bestows,  
But cost his heart a groan."

Ah! we may indeed regret our sin, since it slew Jesus.

Now, Christian, change thy note a moment. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," *with joy and gladness*. He does not lie there now. Weep, when ye see the tomb of Christ, but rejoice because it is empty. Thy sin slew him, but his divinity raised him up. Thy guilt hath murdered him, but his righteousness hath restored him. Oh! he hath burst the bonds of death, he hath ungirt the cerements of the tomb, and hath come out more than conqueror, crushing death beneath his feet. Rejoice, O Christian, for he is not there - he is risen.

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

One more thought, and then I will speak a little concerning the doctrines we may learn from this grave. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." *with solemn awe* for you and I will have to lie there too.

"Hark! from the tomb a doleful sound,  
Mine ears, attend the cry,  
Ye living men, come view the ground  
Where ye must shortly lie."

"Princes, this clay must be your bed,  
In spite of all your powers.  
The tall, the wise, the reverend head,  
Must lie as low as ours."

It is a fact we do not often think of, that we shall all be dead in a little while. I know that I am made of dust, and not of iron; my bones are not brass, nor my sinews steel; in a little while my body must crumble back to its native elements. But do you ever try to picture to yourself the moment of your dissolution? My friends, there are some of you who seldom realize how old you are, how near you are to death. One way of remembering our age, is to see how much remains. Think how old eighty is, and then see how few years there are before you will get there. We should remember our frailty. Sometimes I have tried to think of the time of my departure. I do not know whether I shall die a violent death or not; but I would to God that I might die suddenly; for sudden death is sudden glory. I would I might have such a blessed exit as Dr. Beaumont, and die in my pulpit, laying down my body with my charge, and ceasing at once to work and live. But it is not mine to choose. Suppose I lie lingering for weeks, in the midst of pains, and griefs, and agonies; when that moment comes, that moment which is too solemn for my lips to speak of, when the spirit leaves the clay - let the physician put it off for weeks, or years, as we say he does, though he does not - when that moment comes, O ye lips, be dumb, and profane not its solemnity. When death comes, how is the strong man bowed down! How doth the mighty man fall! They may say they will not die, but there is no hope for them; they must yield, the arrow has gone home. I knew a man who was a wicked wretch, and I remember seeing him pace the floor of his bedroom saying "O God, I will not die, I will not die." When I begged him to lie on his bed, for he was dying, he said he could not die while he could walk, and he would walk till he did die. Ah! he expired in the utmost torments, always shrieking, "O God, I will not die." Oh! that moment, that last moment. See how clammy is the sweat upon the brow, how dry the tongue, how parched the lips. The man shuts his eyes and slumbers, then opens them again: and if he be a Christian, I can fancy that he will say:

"Hark! they whisper: angels say,  
Sister spirit, come away."

What is this absorbs me quite -  
Steals my senses - shuts my sight -  
Drowns my spirit - draws my breath?  
Tell me, my soul, can this be death?"

We know not when he is dying. One gentle sigh, and the spirit breaks away. We can scarcely say, "he is gone," before the ransomed spirit takes its mansion near the throne. Come to Christ's tomb, then, for the silent vault must soon be your habitation. Come to Christ's grave, for ye must slumber there. And even you, ye sinners, for one moment I will ask you to come also, because ye must die as well as the rest of us. Your sins cannot keep you from the jaws of death. I say, sinner, I want thee to look at Christ's sepulchre too, for when thou diest it may have done thee great good to think of it. You have heard of Queen Elizabeth, crying out that she would give an empire for a single hour. Or have you heard the despairing cry of the gentleman on board the "Arctic," when it was going down, who shouted to the boat, "Come back! I will give you £30,000 if you will come and take me in." Ah! poor man, it were but little if he had thirty thousand worlds, if he could thereby prolong his life: "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life." Some of you who can laugh this morning, who came to spend a merry hour in this hall, will be dying, and then ye will pray and crave for life, and shriek for another Sabbath-day. Oh! how the Sabbaths ye have wasted will walk like ghosts before you! Oh! how they will shake their snaky hair in your eyes! How will ye be made to sorrow and weep, because ye wasted precious hours, which, when they are gone, are gone too far to be recalled. May God save you from the pangs of remorse.

IV. INSTRUCTION IMPARTED. And now, Christian brethren, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," to learn a doctrine or two. What did you see when you visited "the place where the Lord lay?" "He is not here; for he is risen." The first thing you perceive, if you stand by his empty tomb, is *his divinity*. The dead in Christ shall rise first at the resurrection: but he who rose first - their leader, rose in a different fashion. They rise by imparted power. He rose by his own. He could not slumber in the grave, because he was God. Death had no more dominion over him. There is no better proof of Christ's divinity than that startling resurrection of his,

when he rose from the grave, by the glory of the Father. O Christian, thy Jesus is a God; his broad shoulders that hold thee up are indeed divine; and here thou hast the best proof of it - because he rose from the grave.

A second doctrine here taught well may charm thee, if the Holy Spirit apply it with power. Behold his empty tomb, O true believer: it is a sign of *thine acquittal*, and thy full discharge. If Jesus had not paid the debt, he ne'er had risen from the grave. He would have lain there till this moment if he had not cancelled the entire debt, by satisfying eternal vengeance. O beloved, is not that an overwhelming thought?

"It is finished, it is finished,  
Hear the rising Saviour cry."

The heavenly turnkey came, a bright angel stepped from heaven and rolled away the stone; but he would not have done so if Christ had not done all: he would have kept him there, he would have said, "Nay, nay, thou art the sinner now; thou hast the sins of all thine elect upon thy shoulder, and I will not let thee go free till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." In his going free I see my own discharge.

"My Jesu's blood's my full discharge."

As a justified man, I have not a sin now against me in God's book. If I were to turn over God's eternal book, I should see every debt of mine receipted and cancelled.

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,  
It matter not how black their cast,  
And O my soul, with wonder view,  
For sins to come, here's pardon too.  
Fully discharged by Christ I am,  
From Christ's tremendous curse and blame."

One more doctrine we learn, and with that we will conclude - *the doctrine of the resurrection*. Jesus rose, and as the Lord our Saviour rose, so all his followers must rise. Die I must - this body must be a carnival for worms; it must be eaten by those tiny cannibals; peradventure it shall be scattered from one portion of the earth to another; the constituent

particles of this my frame will enter into plants, from plants pass into animals, and thus be carried into far distant realms; but, at the blast of the archangel's trumpet, every separate atom of my body shall find its fellow; like the bones lying in the valley of vision, though separated from one another, the moment God shall speak, the bone will creep to its bone; then the flesh shall come upon it; the four winds of heaven shall blow, and the breath shall return. So let me die, let beasts devour me, let fire turn this body into gas and vapor, all its particles shall yet again be restored; this very self-same, actual body shall start up from its grave, glorified and made like Christ's body, yet still the same body, for God hath said it. Christ's same body rose; so shall mine. O my soul, dost thou now dread to die? Thou wilt lose thy partner body a little while, but thou wilt be married again in heaven; soul and body shall again be united before the throne of God. The grave - what is it? It is the bath in which the Christian puts the clothes of his body to have them washed and cleansed. Death - what is it? It is the waiting-room where we robe ourselves for immortality; it is the place where the body, like Esther, bathes itself in spices that it may be fit for the embrace of its Lord. Death is the gate of life; I will not fear to die, then, but will say,

"Shudder not to pass the stream;  
Venture all thy care on him;  
Him whose dying love and power  
Stilled its tossing, hushed its roar,  
Safe in the expanded wave;  
Gentle as a summer's eve.  
Not one object of his care  
Ever suffered shipwreck there."

Come, view the place then, with all hallowed meditation, where the Lord lay. Spend this afternoon, my beloved brethren, in meditating upon it, and very often go to Christ's grave, both to weep and to rejoice. Ye timid ones, do not be afraid to approach, for 'tis no vain thing to remember that timidity buried Christ. Faith would not have given him a funeral at all; faith would have kept him above ground, and would never have let him be buried; for it would have said, it would be useless to bury Christ if he were to rise. Fear buried him. Nicodemus, the night disciple, and Joseph of Arimathea, secretly, for fear of the Jews, went and buried him.

Therefore, ye timid ones, ye may go too. Ready-to-halt, poor Fearing, and thou, Mrs. Despondency, and Much-afraid, go often there; let it be your favorite haunt, there build a tabernacle, there abide. And often say to your heart, when you are in distress and sorrow, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

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## **Tomorrow**

Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. - Proverbs 27:1

God's most holy Word was principally written to inform us of the way to heaven, and to guide us in our path through this world, to the realms of eternal life and light. But as if to teach us that God is not careless concerning our doings in the present scene, and that our benevolent Father is not inattentive to our happiness even in this state, he has furnished us with some excellent and wise maxims, which we may put in practice, not only in spiritual matters, but in temporal affairs also. I have always looked upon the book of Proverbs with pleasure, as being a book not only teaching us the highest spiritual wisdom, but as also more especially speaking on the "now" - the time that is present with us - giving us maxims that will make us wise for this world, and that will instruct us in conducting our affairs whilst we are here amongst our fellow-men. We need some temporal wisdom as well as spiritual illumination; it need not always be that the children of the kingdom should be more foolish than the children of darkness. It is well that we should be wise to order our common affairs aright, as well as to set out house in order for the grave; and hence we find in Scripture maxims and teachings for them both. Since God has been pleased thus to instruct us in the avocations of life, I shall not, then, be out of place, if I use my text, in some degree, in a merely temporal manner, and endeavour to give advice to my friends concerning the business of this life. Afterwards, I shall dwell upon it more

spiritually. There is first, *the abuse of to-morrow* forbidden in the text; in the second place, I shall mention *the right use of to-morrow*.

I. First, then, there is THE ABUSE OF TO-MORROW mentioned in the text; and we shall look upon it first in a worldly point of view, and yet, I trust, in a way of wisdom. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow." Oh! my brethren, whoso'er ye be, whether ye be Christians or no, this passage hath a depth of wisdom in it for you. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow," and this, for many very wise reasons.

First of all, *because it is extremely foolish to boast at all*. Boasting never makes a man any the greater in the esteem of others, nor does it improve the real estate either of his body or soul. Let a man brag as he will, he is none the greater for his bragging; nay, he is the less, for men invariably think the worse of him. Let him boast as much as he pleases of anything that he possesses, he shall not increase its value by his glorying. He cannot multiply his wealth by boasting of it; he cannot increase his pleasures by glorying in them. True, to be content with those pleasures, and feel a complacency in them, may render them very sweet; but not so with such a treasure as this, for it is a treasure which he has not yet, and, therefore, how foolish is he to glory in it! There is an old, old proverb, which I dare not quote here; it is something to do with chickens. Perhaps you can recollect it; it bears very well upon this text, for to-morrow is a thing that we have not yet obtained, and, therefore, not only if we had it would it be foolish to boast of it, but because we have it not, and may never have it, it becomes the very extremity of foolishness to glory in it. Glory, O man, in the harvest that may come to thee next year when thy seed is sown; but glory not in to-morrow, for thou canst sow no seeds of morrows. Morrows come from God; thou hast no right to glory in them. Glory if thou wilt, O fowler, that the birds have once flown to thy net, for they may come again; but glory not too soon, for they may find another decoy that shall be better to their taste than thine, or they may rove far off from thy snare. Though many a day has come to thee, think not that another will certainly arrive. Days are not like links of a chain; one does not ensure the other. We have one, but we may never see its fellow; each may be the last of its kind. Each springs of a separate birth. There are no twin days. To-day hath no brother, it stands alone, and to-morrow must

come alone, and the next and the next, also, must be born into this world without a brother. We must never look upon two days at once, nor expect that a whole herd of days shall be brought forth at one time.

We need not boast of to-morrow, for *it is one of the frailest things in all creation*, and, therefore, the least to be boasted of. Boast of the bubbles on the breaker, boast of the foam upon the sea, boast of the clouds that skim the sky, boast of what thou wilt, O man, but boast not of to-morrow, for it is too unsubstantial. To-morrow, it is a fleeting thing. Thou hast not seen it; why dost thou boast of it? To-morrow, it is a fleeting thing. Thou hast not seen it; why dost thou boast of it? To-morrow, it is the cup which the idiot dreams lieth at the foot of the rainbow. It is not there, nor hath he found it. To-morrow - it is the floating island of Loch Lomond; many have talked of it, but none have seen it. To-morrow - it is the wrecker's beacon, enticing men to the rock of destruction. Boast not thyself of to-morrow; it is the frailest and most brittle thing thou canst imagine. Not glass were half so easily broken as thy to-morrow's joys and thy to-morrow's hopes; a puff of wind shall crush them, while yet they seem not to be full blown. He said, good easy man, full surely my greatness is a ripening, but there came a frost - a killing, frost which nipped his shoot and then he fell. Boast not of to-morrow; thou hast it not. Boast not of to-morrow; thou mayest never have it. Boast not of to-morrow; if thou hadst it, it would deceive thee. Boast not of to-morrow, for to-morrow thou mayest where morrows will be dreadful things to tremble at.

Boast not thyself of to-morrow, not only because it is extremely foolish, but *because it is exceedingly hurtful*. Boasting of to-morrow is hurtful to us every way. It is hurtful to us *now*. I never knew a man who was always hoping to do great things in the future, that ever did much in the present. I never knew a man who intended to make a fortune by-and-bye, who ever saved sixpence a week now. I never knew a man who had a very great and grand hopes on the death of some old grandmother, or the coming-in of some property from chancery, or the falling to him of something because his name was Jenyns, I never saw him very prosperous in the mean time. I have heard of a man going to be rich to-morrow, and boasting of it; but I never knew him do much. Such men spend so much time in building castles in the air, that they have no stones left wherewith



to build so much as a cottage on the ground. They were wasting all their energies on to-morrow, consequently they had no time to reap the fields of the present, for they were waiting for the heavy harvests of the future. The heavily laden boats of to-day come in with abundance of fish from the depths of time; but they said of them, "They are nothing; there will be heavier draughts to-morrow; there will be greater abundance then. Go away, little ships; an argosy shall come home to-morrow - a very fleet of wealth;" and so they let to-day's wealth go by because they expected the greater wealth of to-morrow; therefore, they were hurt even for the present.

And worse than that. *Some men were led into extraordinary extravagance* from their hopes of the future. They spend what they are going to have, or rather what they never will have. Many have been ruined by the idle dream of speculation; and what is that but boasting of to-morrow? They have said, "True, I cannot pay for this which I now purchase; but I shall to-morrow, for to-morrow I shall roll in wealth, to-morrow, perhaps, I shall be the richest of men. A lucky turn of business (as they term it) will lift me off this shoal." So they keep still, and not only do they refuse to toil, to push themselves off the sand, but worse than that, they are throwing themselves away and wasting what they have, in the hope of better times coming in the future. Many a man has been made halt, and lame, and blind, and dumb, in the present, because he hoped to be greater than a man in the future. I always laugh at those who say to me, "Sir, rest a while; you will work all the longer of it. Stay while, lest you wast your strength, for you may work to-morrow." I bid them remember that such is not the teaching of Scripture, for that says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;" and I would count myself worse than a fool, if I should throw away my to-days in the expectation of to-morrows, and rest upon the couch of idleness to-day, because I thought the chariot of to-morrow would make up for all my sloth. No, beloved, if we love our God, we shall find enough to do, if we have all our to-morrows, and use all our to-days too. If we serve our God as we ought to serve him, considering what he has done for us, we shall find that we shall have more than our handsfull, let our life be spared as long as Methuselah's - enough for every moment, enough for every hour, long as life may be. But hoping to do things in the future takes away our strength

in the present, unnerves our resolution, and unstrings our diligence. Let us take care that we are not hurt in the present by boasting of to-morrow.

And, remember, that if you boast of to-morrow, it will not only hurt you to-day, but *hurt you to-morrow also*. Do you know why? because, as sure as you are alive, you will be disappointed with to-morrow, if you boast of it before it comes. To-morrows would be very good things if you did not give them such a very good character. I believe one of the very worst things a minister can possess is to have anybody to recommend him; for the people say, "Here comes a man, how he will preach, how eloquent he will be!" The poor creature cannot come up to their expectations, and so they are disappointed. So with to-morrow; you give him such flattering encomiums; "Oh! he is everything; he is perfection." To-days - they are nothing; they are the very sweepings of the floors; but to-morrows - they are the solid gold. Today's - they are exhausted mines, and we get little from them; but to-morrows - they are the very mines of wealth. We have only to get them, and we are rich, immensely rich. The to-morrows are everything; and then the to-morrows come laden with mercy and big with blessings of God; but, notwithstanding, we are disappointed, because to-morrow is not what we expected it to be, even when to-morrow is marvellously abundant. But sometimes to-morrow comes with storms, and clouds, and darkness, when we expected it to be full of light and sunshine, and oh, how terrible is our feeling then, from the very reason that we expected something different. It is not at all a bad beatitude, "Blessed is the man that expecteth nothing, for he shall never be disappointed."

If we know how to practise that, and expect nothing, we shall not be disappointed, it is certain; and the less we expect, and the less we boast of our expectations, the more happy will the future be; because we shall have far less likelihood of being disappointed. Let us recollect, then, that if we would kill the future, if we would ruin the to-morrows, if we would blast their hopes, if we would take away their honey, we must press them in the hand of boasting, and then we shall have done it. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow;" for thou spoilest the to-morrow by boasting of it.

And then, remember, *what disastrous circumstances have occurred to*

*men in this life* after to-morrow had gone, from boasting of to-morrows. Ay, there is many a man that set all his hope upon one single thing; and the to-morrow came which he did not expect - perhaps a black and dark to-morrow, and it crushed his hopes to ashes; and how sad he felt afterwards! He was in his nest; he said, "Peace, peace, peace;" and sudden destruction came upon his happiness and his joy. He had boasted of his to-morrow by over security, and see him there, what a very wreck of a man he is, because he had set his hope on that; now his joy is blasted. Oh! my friends, never boast too much of the to-morrows, because if you do, your disappointment will be tremendous, when you shall find your joys have failed you, and your hopes have passed away. See there that rich man; he has piled heaps on heaps of gold; but now for a desperate venture, he is about to have more than he ever possessed before, and he reckons on that to-morrow. Nothingness is his; and what is his disappointment? because he boasted of imagined wealth. See that man! his ambition is to raise his house, and perpetuate his name; see that heir of his - his joy, his life, his fulness of happiness. A handful of ashes and a coffin are left to the weeping father. Oh! if he had not boasted too much of the certainty of that son's life, he had not wept so bitterly, after the to-morrow had swept over him, with all its blast and mildew of his expectations. See yonder, another; he is famous, he is great; to-morrow comes a slander, and his fame is gone, and his name disgraced. Oh! had he not set his love on that, he had not cared whether men cried, "crucify," or "hallelujah;" he had disregarded both alike. But believing that fame was a stable thing, whereas its foot is on the sand, he reckoned on to-morrows; and mark how sad he walks the earth, because to-morrow has brought him nothing but grief. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow."

And I would have you remember just one fact; and that I think to be a very important one; that very often when men boast of to-morrow, and are over confident that they shall live, *they not only entail great sorrow upon themselves, but upon others also*. I have, when preaching, frequently begged of my friends to be quite sure to make their wills, and see to their family affairs. Many are the solemn instances which should urge you to do so. One night a minister happened to say, in the course of his sermon, that he held it to be a Christian duty for every man to have his house set in order, so that if he were taken away, he would know, that

as far as possible, everything would be right. And there was one member of his church there, who said to himself, "What my minister has said is true. I should not like to see my babes and my wife left with nothing, as they must be if I were to die." So he went home. That night he made his will and cleared up his accounts. That night he died! It must have been a joyful thing for the widow, in the midst of her sadness, to find herself amply provided for, and everything in order for her comfort. Good Whitfield said he could not lie down in bed of a night, if he did not know that even his gloves were in their place; for he said he should not like to die with anything in his house out of order. And I would have every Christian very careful, to be so living one day, that if he were never to see another, he might feel that he had done the utmost that he could, not only to provide for himself, but also for those who inherit his name and are dear to him. Perhaps you call this only worldly teaching; very good; you will find it very much like heavenly teaching one of these dark days, if you do not practise it. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow."

II. But now I come to dwell upon this *in a spiritual manner*, for a moment or two. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow." Oh! my beloved friends, never boast of to-morrow with regard to your soul's salvation.

They do so in the first place, *who think that it will be easier for them to repent to-morrow than it is to-day*. Felix said there would be a more convenient season, and then he would again send for Paul, that he might hear him seriously. And many a sinner thinks that just now it is not easy to turn and to repent, but that by-and-bye it will be. Now, is not that a very string of falsehoods? In the first place, is it ever easy for a sinner to turn to God? Must not that be done, at any time, by divine power? And again, if that be not easy for him *now*, how will it be easier in after life? Will not his sins bind fresh fetters to his soul, so that it will be even more impossible for him to escape from his iron bondage? If he be dead now, will he not be corrupt before he reaches to-morrow? And when to-morrow comes, to which he looks forward as being easier for a resurrection, will not his soul be yet more corrupt, and, therefore, if we may so speak, even further from the possibility of being raised? Oh! sirs, ye say it is easy for ye to repent to-morrow; why, then, not to-day? Ye would find the difficulty of it, if you should try it; yea, you would find

your own helplessness in that matter. Possibly you dream that on a future day repentance will be more agreeable to your feelings. But how can you suppose that a few hours will make it more pleasant? If it be vinegar to your taste now, it shall be so then; and if ye love your sins now, ye will love them better then; for the force of habit will have confirmed you in your course. Every moment of your lives is driving in another rivet to your eternal state. So far as we can see, it becomes less and less likely (speaking after the manner of men) that the sinner should burst his chains each sin that he commits; for habit has bound him yet faster to his guilt, and his iniquity has got another hold upon him. Let us take care, then, that we do not boast of to-morrow, by a pretence that it will be so much easier to repent to-morrow; whereas, it is one of Satan's lies, for it will only be the more difficult.

He boasts of to-morrow, again, *who supposes that he shall have plenty of time to repent and to return to God.* Oh! there are many who say, "When I come to die, I shall be on my death-bed, and then I shall say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner.'" I remember an aged minister telling me a story of a man whom he often warned, but who always said to him, "Sir, when I am dying, I shall say 'Lord, have mercy on me;' and I shall go to heaven as well as anybody else." Returning home from market one night, rather "fou" with liquor, he guided his horse with a leap right over the parapet of a bridge into the river; the last words he was heard to utter, were a most fearful imprecation; and in the bed of the river he was found dead, killed by the fall. So it may be with you. You think you will have space for repentance, and it may be that sudden doom will devour you: or, perhaps, even while you are sitting there in the pew, your last moment is running out. There is your hour-glass. See! it is running. I marked another grain just then, and then another fell; it fell so noiselessly, yet methought I heard it fall. Yes! there it is! The clock's tick is the fall of that grain of dust down from your hour-glass. Life is getting shorter every moment with all of you; but with some the sand is almost out; there is not a handful left. A few more grains. See, now they are less, two or three. Oh! in a moment it may be said, "There is not one left." Sinner! never think that thou hast time to spare! thou never hadst; man never had. God says, "Haste thee," when he bids men flee from Sodom. Lot had to haste; and depend upon it, when the Spirit speaks in a man's heart, he doth always bid him haste.

Under natural convictions, men are very prone to tarry; but the Spirit of God, when he speaks in the heart of man, always says, "to-day." I never knew a truly anxious soul yet, who was willing to put off till to-morrow. When God the Holy Ghost has dealings with a man, they are always immediate dealings. The sinner is impatient to get deliverance; he must have pardon now; he must have present mercy, or else he fears that mercy will come too late to him. Let me beseech you, then, (and may God the Holy Spirit grant that my entreaty may become successful in your case) let me beseech every one of you to take this into consideration - that there is never time to spare, and that your thought that there is time to spare, is an insinuation of Satan; for when the Spirit pleads with man, he pleads with him with demands of immediate attention. "*To-day*, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation."

"Boast not thyself of to-morrow," O sinner, as I doubt not thou art doing in another fashion. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow," *in the shape of resolves to do better*. I think I have given up resolutions now; I have enough of the *debris* and the rubbish of my resolutions to build a cathedral with, if they could but be turned into stone. Oh! the broken resolutions, the broken vows, all of us have had! Oh! we have raised castles of resolutions, structures of enormous size, that outvied Babylon itself, in all its majesty. Says one, "I know I shall be better to-morrow; I shall renounce this vice and the other; I shall forsake this lust; I shall give up that darling sin; true, I shall not do so now - a little more sleep and a little more slumber; but I know I shall do it to-morrow." Fool! thou knowest not that thou shalt see to-morrow. Oh! greater fool! thou oughtest to know, that what thou art not willing to do to-day, thou wilt not be willing to do to-morrow. I believe there are many souls that have been lost by good intentions, which were never carried out. Resolutions strangled at their birth brought on men the guilt of spiritual infanticide; and they have been lost, with resolutions sticking in their mouths. Many a man has gone down to hell with good resolution on his lip, with a pious resolve on his tongue. Oh! if he had lived another day, he said he would have been so much better; if he had lived another week, oh, then he thought he would begin to pray. Poor soul! if he had been spared another week, he would only have sunk the deeper into sin! But he did not think so, and he went to hell with a choice morsel rolling under his tongue -

that he should do better directly, and that meant to amend by-and-bye. There are many of you present, I dare say, who are making good resolutions. You are apprentices: well, you are not going to carry them out till you get to be journeymen. You have been breaking the Sabbath: but you intend to leave it off when you are in another situation. You have been accustomed to swear: you say, "I shall not swear any more when I get out of this company, they try my temper so." You have committed this or that petty theft: to-morrow you will renounce it, because to-morrow you will have enough, and you can afford to do it. But of all the lying things - and there are many things that are deceptive - resolutions for to-morrow are the worst of all. I would not trust one of them; there is nothing stable in them; you might sooner sail to America across the Atlantic on a sere leaf, than float to heaven on a resolution.

It is the frailest thing in the world, tossed about by every circumstance, and wrecked with all its precious freight - wrecked to the dismay of the man who ventured his soul in it - wrecked, and wrecked for aye. Take care, my dear hearers, that none of you are reckoning on to-morrows. I remember the strong but solemn words of Jonathan Edwards, where he says, "Sinner, remember, thou art at this moment standing over the mouth of hell upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten; thou art hanging over the jaws of perdition by a solitary rope, and lo! the strands of that rope are creaking - breaking now, and yet thou talkest of to-morrows!" If thou wert sick, man, wouldst thou send for thy physician to-morrow? If thine house were on fire, wouldst thou call "fire" to-morrow? If thou wert robbed in the street on thy road home, wouldst thou cry "stop thief" to-morrow? No, surely; but thou art wiser than that in natural concerns. But man is foolish, oh! too foolish in the things that concern his soul; unless divine and infinite love shall teach him to number his days, that he may apply his heart unto true wisdom, he will still go on boasting of to-morrows, until his soul has been destroyed by them.

Just one hint to the child of God. Ah! my beloved brother or sister, do not, I beseech thee, boast of to-morrow thyself. David did it once: he said, "My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved." Do not boast of your to-morrows. You have feathered your nest pretty well; ay, but you may have a thorn in it before the sun has gone down, and you will be glad

enough to fly aloft. You are very happy and joyful, but do not say you will always have as much faith as you have now - do not be sure you will always be as blessed. The next cloud that sweeps the skies may drive many of your joys away. Do not say you have been kept hitherto, and you are quite sure you will be preserved from sin to-morrow. Take care of to-morrows. Many Christians go tumbling on without a bit of thought; and then, on a sudden, they tumble down and make a mighty mess of their profession. If they would only look sharp after the to-morrows - if they would only watch their paths instead of star-gazing and boasting about them, their feet would be a great deal surer. True, God's child need not think of to-morrow as regards his soul's eternal security, for that is in the hand of Christ and safe for ever; but as far as his profession, and comfort, and happiness are concerned, it will well become him to take care of his feet every day. Do not get boasting; if you get boasting of to-morrow, you know the Lord's rule is always to send a canker where we put our pride. And so if you boast of to-morrow, you will have a moth in it before long. As sure as ever we glory in our wealth, it becomes cankered, or it takes to itself wings and flies away; and as certainly as we boast of to-morrow, the worm will gnaw its root, as it did Jonah's gourd, and the to-morrow under which we rested shall, with dropping leaves, only stand a monument to our disappointment. Let us take care, Christian brethren, that we do not waste the present time with hopes of to-morrow - that we do not get proud, and so off our guard, by boasting of what we most assuredly shall be then, as we imagine.

III. And now, in the last place, if to-morrows are not to be boasted of, are they good for nothing? No, blessed be God! There are great many things we may do with to-morrows. We may not boast of them, but I will tell you what we may do with them if we are the children of God. We may always look forward to them with *patience and confidence*, that they will work together for our good. We may say of the to-morrows, "I do not boast of them, but I am not frightened at them; I would not glory in them, but I will not tremble about them."

"What may be my future lot,  
Well I know concerns me not;  
This doth set my heart at rest,



What my God appoints is best."

We may be very easy and very comfortable about to-morrow; we may remember that all our times are in his hands, that all events are at his command; and though we know not all the windings of the path of providence, yet *He* knows them all. They are all settled in his book, and our times are all ordered by his wisdom; whether they be

"Times of trial and of grief;  
Times of triumph and relief;  
Times the tempter's power to prove,  
Times to taste a Saviour's love:  
All must come, and last, and end,  
As shall please my heavenly Friend."

And, therefore, we may look upon the to-morrows as we see them in the rough bullion of time, about to be minted into every day's expenditure, and we may say of them all, "They shall all be gold; they shall all be stamped with the King's impress, and, therefore, let them come; they will not make me worse - they will work together for my good."

Yea, more, a Christian may rightly look forwards to his to-morrows, not simply with resignation, but also with *joy*. To-morrow to a Christian is a happy thing, it is one stage nearer glory. To-morrow! It is one step nearer heaven to a believer; it is just one knot more that he has sailed across the dangerous sea of life, and he is so much the nearer to his eternal port - his blissful heaven. To-morrow, it is a fresh lamp of fulfilled promise that God has placed in his firmament, that the Christian may hail it as a guiding star, in the future, or at least as a light to cheer his path. To-morrow, the Christian may rejoice at it; he may say of to-day, "O day, thou mayest be black, but I shall bid thee good-bye, for lo, I see the morrow coming, and I shall mount upon its wings, and shall flee away and leave thee and thy sorrows far behind me."

And, moreover, the Christian may await to-morrow with even more than simple hope and joy; he may look forward to it with *ecstasy* in some measure, for he does not know but that to-morrow his Lord may come.

To-morrow Christ may be upon this earth, "for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." To-morrow, all the glories of millennial splendour may be revealed; to-morrow, the thrones of judgment may be set, and the King may summon the people to judgment. To-morrow, we may be in heaven; to-morrow, we may be on the breast of Christ; to-morrow, ay, before then, this head may wear a crown, this hand may wave the palm, this lip may sing the son, this foot may tread the streets of gold, this heart may be full of bliss, immortal, everlasting, eternal. Be of good cheer, oh, fellow-Christian; to-morrow can have nothing black in it to thee, for it must work for thy good, but it may have in it a precious, precious jewel. It is an earthen pitcher, and it may have in it some dark black waters, but their bitterness is taken away by the cross. But mayhap, also, it may have in it the precious jewel of eternity; for wrapt up within to-morrow may be all the glories of immortality. Anoint thine head with fresh oil of gladness at the prospect of each coming day. Boast not of to-morrow, but often comfort thyself with it. Thou hast a right to do so; it cannot be a bad tomorrow to thee; it may be the best day of thy life, for it may be thy last.

And yet, another hint. To-morrow ought to be observed by Christians in the way of providence. Though we may not boast of to-morrow, yet we may seek to provide for the morrow. On one occasion I pleaded for a benefit society, and not knowing a more appropriate text, I selected this, "Take no thought for the morrow, for to-morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." Some of my hearers, when I announced my text, feared the principle of it was altogether hostile to anything like an insurance, or providing for the future, but I just showed them that it was not, as I looked upon it. It is a positive command that we are to take no anxious thought concerning to-morrow. No, how can I do that? How can I put myself into such a position that I can carry out this command of taking no thought for the morrow! If I were a man struggling in life, and had it in my power to insure for something which would take care of wife and family in after days, if I did not do it, you might preach to me all eternity about not taking thought for the morrow; but I could not help doing it, when I saw those I loved around me unprovided for. Let it be in God's word, I could not practise it; I should still be at some time or other taking thought for the morrow. But let me go to one of the many of the

excellent institutions which exist, and let me see that all is provided for, I come home and say, "Now, I know how to practise Christ's command of taking no thought for the morrow; I pay the policy-money once a year, and I take no further thought about it, for I have no occasion to do so now, and have obeyed the very spirit and letter of Christ's command." Our Lord meant that we were to get rid of cares; now it is apparent that those distressing cares are removed, and we are able to live above anxiety by that single process.

Now, if that is so, if there is anything that enables us to carry out Christ's commands, is it not in the very bowels of the commandments to do that? If God has pleased to put into the hearts of wise men to devise something that should in some way ameliorate the misfortunes of their kind, and relieve them from the distresses and casualties of God's providence, how can it but be our duty to avail ourselves of that wisdom which, doubtless, God gave to men, that we might thereby in these times be enable to carry out in the fullest extent the meaning of that passage, "Take no thought for the morrow." Why, if a man says, "I shall take no thought for the morrow, I will just spend all I get, and not think of doing anything or taking any thought for the morrow," how is he going to pay his rent? Why, the text could not be carried out, if it meant what some people think. It cannot mean that we should carelessly live by the day, or else a man would spend all his money on Monday, and have nothing left for the rest of the week; but that would be simple folly. It means that we should have no anxious, distressing thought about it. I am preaching about benefit societies; I would not attempt to recommend many of them, and I do not believe in the principles of half of them; I believe a great deal of mischief is done by their gatherings in alehouses and pothouses; but wherever there is a Christian society, I must endeavour to promote its welfare, for I look on the principle as the best means of carrying out the command of Christ, "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for itself." Allow me to recommend this Asylum to your liberality as a refuge in adversity for those who were careful in prosperity. It is a quiet retreat for decayed members of Benefit Societies, and I am sorry to inform you that many of its rooms are vacant, not from want of candidates, but from a lack of funds. It is a pity that so much public property should lie unemployed. Help the committee then to use the houses.

And, now, in concluding, let me remind the Christian that there is one thing he has not do, and that is, he has not to provide salvation, nor grace, nor sustenance, nor promises for the morrow. No, beloved; but we often talk as if we had. We say, "How shall I persevere through such and such a trial?" "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." You must not boast of to-day's grace, as though it were enough for to-morrow. But you need not be afraid. With to-morrow's difficulties there will be to-morrow's help; with to-morrow's foes, to-morrow's friends; with to-morrow's dangers, to-morrow's preservations. Let us look forward, then, to to-morrow as a thing we have not to provide for in spiritual matters, for the atonement is finished, the covenant ratified, and therefore every promise shall be fulfilled, and be "yea and amen" to us, not only in one to-morrow, but in fifty thousand to-morrows, if so many could run over our heads.

And now just let us utter the words of the text again, very solemnly and earnestly. O young men in all your glory! O maidens in all your beauty! "Boast not yourselves of to-morrow." The worm may be at your cheeks very soon. O strong men, whose bones are full of marrow! O ye mighty men, whose nerves seem of brass, and your sinews of steel! "Boast not of to-morrow." "How, fir tree," for cedars have fallen ere now; and though you think yourselves great, God can pull you down. Above all, ye grey heads, "Boast not yourselves of to-morrow," with one foot hanging over the unfathomable gulf of eternity, and the other just tottering on the edge of time! I beseech you do not boast yourselves of to-morrow. In truth I do believe that grey heads are not less foolish on this point than very childhood. I remember reading a story of a man who wanted to buy his neighbour's farm next to him, and he went to him and asked him whether he would sell it. He said, "No; I will not;" so he went home, and said, "Never mind, Farmer So-and-so is an old man; when he is dead, I shall buy it." The man was seventy, and his neighbour sixty-eight; he thought the other would be sure to die before him. It is often so with men. They are making schemes that will only walk over their graves, when they will not feel them. The winds shall soon howl across the green sward that covers their tomb, but they shall not hear its wailing. Take care of the "to-days." Look not through the glass of futurity; but look at the things of to-

day. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

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## The Touchstone Of Godly Sincerity

Will he always call upon God? - Job 27:10

When Job resumes his address in this chapter, he appeals to God in a very solemn matter as to the truth of all that he had spoken. No less vehemently does he assert his innocence of any signal crime, or his consciousness of any secret guile, which could account for his being visited with extraordinary suffering. I do not know that his language necessarily implies any culpable self-righteousness; it appears to me rather that he had good cause to defend himself against the bitter insinuations of his unfriendly friends. Possibly his tone was rash, but his meaning was right. He might well feel the justice of vindicating his character before men: but it was a pity if in so doing he seemed to utter a protest of complete purity in the sight of God. You may remember how Paul under equal, if not exactly similar, provocation, tempered his speech and guarded against the danger of misconstruction. Thus he wrote to the Corinthians: "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself [or myself, as though he should say, 'My conscience does not accuse me of wrong']; yet am I not hereby justified." But the two holy men are very like in one respect, for just as Paul, in the struggles of the spirit against the flesh, faced the peril and mounted guard against it, "lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself shall be a castaway;" so Job lays bare before his own eyes, and points to the view of those who heard him, the features of a hypocrite, lest by any means he should turn out to be such. In terrible language he describes and denounces the hypocrite's flattering hope and withering doom. The suspicion that he himself could harbour a vain presence in his own breast, or would pretend to be what he was not, was utterly abhorrent to Job's honest heart. He placed himself at the bar, he laid down the law with rigour, he weighed his case with exactness; and so forestalled his adversaries' verdict, by judging himself that he might not be judged.

Who, then, is this "wicked man," thus portrayed before us? And what are the first symptoms of his depravity? We ask not the question idly, but in order that we take heed against the uprise of such an evil in ourselves.

"Beneath the saintly veil the votary of sin  
May lurk unseen; and to that eye alone  
Which penetrates the heart, may stand revealed."

The hypocrite is very often an exceedingly neat imitation of the Christian. To the common observer he is so good a counterfeit that he entirely escapes suspicion. Like base coins which are cunningly made, you can scarcely detect them by their ring; it is only by more searching tests that you are able to discover that they are not pure gold, the current coin of the realm. It would be difficult to say how nearly any man might resemble a Christian, and yet not be "in Christ a new creature;" or how closely he might imitate all the virtues, and yet at the same time possess none of the fruits of the Spirit as before the judgment of a heart-searching God. In almost all deceptions there is a weak point somewhere. Never is a lying story told but, if you be keen enough, you may from internal evidence somewhere or other detect the flaw. Though Satan himself has been engaged in the manufacture of impostures for thousands of years, yet whether through the lack of skill on his part, or through the folly of his agents, he always leaves a weak point; his clattering statements are a little too strongly scented and smell of a lie; and his mimic Christians are so overdone in one place, and slovenly in another, that their falsehood betrays itself. Now, in discriminating between saints and hypocrites, one great test-point is prayer. "Behold, he prayeth," was to the somewhat sceptical mind of Ananias demonstration enough that Paul was really converted. If he prays, it may be safely inferred that the breath of prayer arises from the life of faith. The process of spiritual quickening has at least begun. Hence the hypocrite feigns to possess that vital action. If the Christian prays, he will betake himself to the like exercise: if the Christian calls upon God the deceiver takes care that he will likewise make mention of the name of the Lord. And yet, between the prayer of the truly converted man and the prayer of the hypocrite there is a difference as radical as between life and death, although it is not apparent to

everybody. No one, it may be, at first can be aware of it except the man himself, and sometimes even he scarcely perceives it. Many are deceived by the fine expressions, by the apparent warmth, and by the excellent natural disposition of the hypocrite, and they think when they hear him call upon God that his supplications are sufficient evidence that he is truly a quickened child of God. Prayer is always the tell-tale of spiritual life. No right prayer, then is there no grace within. Slackened prayer, then is there a decrease of grace. Prayer stronger, thee the whole man also is stronger. Prayer is as good a test of spiritual life and health as the pulse is of the condition of the human frame. Hence I say the hypocrite imitates the action of prayer while he does not really possess the spirit of prayer.

Our text goes deeper than the surface, and enquires into vital matters. Prayer is a test, but here is a test for the test—a trial even for prayer itself. "Will he always call upon God?" There is the point. He does call upon God now, and he appears to be intensely devout; he says he was converted in the late revival; he is very fervid in expression, and very forward in manner at present. But will it wear? Will it wear? Will it last? His prayerfulness has sprung up like Jonah's gourd in a night. Will it perish in a night? It is beautiful to look upon, like the early dew that glistens in the sunlight as though the morning had sown the earth with orient pearl; will it pass away like that dew? or will it always abide? "Will he always call upon God?" There is the point. O that each one of us now may search ourselves, and see whether we have those attributes connected with our prayer which will prove us not to be hypocrites, or whether, on the contrary, we have those sad signs of base dissembling and reckless falsehood which will before long discover us to be dupes of Satan, impostors before heaven.

"Will he always call upon God?" This question, simple as it is, I think involves several pertinent enquiries. The first point which it raises is that of CONSISTENCY. Is the prayer occasional, or is it constant? Is the exercise of devotion permanent and regular, or is it spasmodic and inconstant? Will this man call upon God in all seasons of prayer? There are certain times when it is most fit to pray, and a genuine Christian will and must pray at such periods. Will this hypocrite pray at all such times, or will he only select some of the seasons for prayer? Will he only be



found praying at certain times and in selected places? Will he always, in all fit times, be found drawing near to God? For instance, he prayed standing at the corners of the streets where he was seen of men: he prayed in the synagogue, where everybody could mark his fluency and his fervor, but will he pray at home? Will he enter into his closet and shut to the door? Will he there speak unto the Father who heareth in secret? Will he there pour forth petitions as the natural outflow of his soul? Will he walk the field at eventide, in lonely meditation, like Isaac, and pray there? Will he go to the housetop with Peter, and pray there? Will he seek his chamber as Daniel did, or the solitude of the garden as did our Lord? Or is he one who only prays in public, who has the gift of prayer rather than the spirit of prayer, who is fluent in utterance rather than fervent in feeling? Oh, but this, this is one of the surest of tests, by which we may discern between the precious and the vile. Public prayer is no evidence of piety: it is practiced by an abundance of hypocrites; but private prayer is a thing for which the hypocrite has no heart—and if he gives himself to it for a little time he soon finds it too hot and heavy a business for his soulless soul to persevere in, and he lets it drop. He will sooner perish than continue in private prayer. O for heart searchings about this! Do I draw near to God alone? Do I pray when no eye sees, when no ear hears? Do I make a conscience of private prayer? Is it a delight to pray? For I may gather that if I never enjoy private prayer I am one of those hypocrites who will not always call upon God.

The true Christian will pray in business; he will pray in labor; he will pray in his ordinary calling: like sparks out of the smithy chimney short prayers fly up all day long from truly devout souls. Not thus is it with the mere pretender. The hypocrite prays at prayer-meetings, and his voice is heard in the assembly, sometimes at tedious length; but will he pray with ejaculatory prayer? Will he speak with God at the counter? Will he draw near to God in the field? Will he plead with his Lord in the busy street with noiseless pleadings? When he finds that a difficulty has occurred in his daily life, will he without saving a word breathe his heart into the ear of God? Ah, no! hypocrites know nothing of what it is to be always praying, to abide in the spirit of prayer. This is a choice part of Christian experience with which they do not meddle. But be sure of this—where there is genuine religion within, it will be more or less habitual to the soul

to pray. Some of us can say that to be asking blessings from God in brief, wordless prayers, comes as natural to us as to eat and drink, and breathe. We never encounter a difficulty now but we resolve it by appealing to the wisdom of God—never meet with any opposition but what we overcome it by leaning upon the power of God. To wait upon the Lord and speak with him has become a habit with us—not because it is a duty—we have left legal bondage far behind—but because we cannot help it, our soul is inwardly constrained thereto. The nature within as naturally cries to God as a child cries after its mother. The hypocrite prays in his fashion because it is a task allotted to him: the Christian because it is a part of his very life. Herein is an everstanding mark of distinction by which a man may discern himself. If your prayer is only for certain hours, and certain places, and certain times, beware lest it turn out to be an abomination before the Lord. The fungus forced by artificial heat is a far different thing from the rosy fruit of a healthy tree, and the unreal devotions of the unspiritual differ widely from the deep inward groanings of renewed hearts. If you pray by the almanac, observing days and weeks, you may well fear that your religion never came from the great Father of Lights, with whom are no changing moons. If you can pray by the clock, your religion is more mechanical than vital. The Christian does not fast because it is Lent; if his Lord reveals his face he cannot fast merely because a church commands him. Neither can he therefore feast because it happens to be a festival in the calendar. The Spirit of God might make his soul to be feasting on Ash-Wednesday, or his soul might be humbled within him at Easter; he cannot be regulated by the dominical letter, and the new moons and days of the month. He is a spiritual character, and he leaves those who have no spiritual life to yield a specious conformity to such ecclesiastical regulations, his new-born nature spurns such childish bonds. The living soul prays evermore with groanings that cannot be uttered, and believingly rejoices evermore with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

A second point in debate is that of CONTINUANCE. "Will he always call upon God?" There are trying periods and sifting seasons; those who hold on through these are the true, but those who suspend prayer at these test intervals are the false. Now times of joy and sorrow are equally critical seasons. Let us look at them in turn. Will the hypocrite call upon God in

times of pleasure? No; if he indulges himself in what he calls pleasure, he dares not pray at night when he comes home. He goes to places where he would think it a degradation of prayer to think of praying. The genuine Christian prays always, because if there be any spot where he dares not pray, just there he dares not be found; or if there be any engagement about which he could not pray, it is an engagement that shall never ensnare him. Some one once proposed to write a collect to be said by a pious young lady when attending a theater, and another to be repeated by a Christian gentleman when shuffling a pack of cards. There might be another form of prayer to be offered by a pious burglar when he is breaking open a door, or by a religious assassin when he is about to commit murder. There are things about which you cannot pray: they have nothing to do with prayer. Many tolerated amusements lead to outrages upon the morals of earth, and are an insult to the holiness of heaven. Who could think of praying about them? Herein is the hypocrite discerned; he does that which he could not ask a blessing upon. Poor as is the conscience he owns, he knows it is ridiculous to offer prayer concerning certain actions which, notwithstanding, he has the hardihood to perform. The Christian avoids things which he could not pray about; and so he feels it a pleasure to pray always.

Equally trying is the opposite condition of depression and sorrow. There, too, we try the question, "Will he always call upon God?" No; the hypocrite will not pray when in a desponding state. He breathed awhile the atmosphere of enthusiasm. His passions were stirred by the preacher, and fermented by the contagious zeal of the solemn assembly. But now a damp cold mist obscures his view chills his feelings, settles in his heart. Others are growing cold, and he is among the first to freeze. He is down-hearted and discouraged. Forthwith, like King Saul, he succumbs to the evil spirit. Were he a Christian indeed, he would follow in the wake of David, and say: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God;" but he has no heart to hope on in ill weather. He built up his hopes tastefully, and he admired the structure which was of his own piling, but the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew, and down it all went; and therefore, being a hypocrite, he said within himself: "Now I have no enjoyment of religion:

it has lost its novelty; I have worn out its delights; I have now no comfort from it; I will give it up." Thus in the trying hour the deceiver is laid bare. Look at the real Christian when a storm bursts over him which shakes his confidence and spoils his joy: what does he do? He prays more than ever he did. When his mountain stood firm, and he said, "I shall not be moved," he perhaps grew too slack in prayer; but now, when all God's waves and billows are going over him, and he hardly knows whether he is a child of God or not, and questions whether he has any part or lot in the matter, he proves that all is right within, by crying unto God in the bitterness of his soul, "O God, have mercy upon me, and deliver me from going down into the pit." A Christian's despair makes him pray; it is a despair of self. A worldling's despair makes him rave against God, and give up prayer. Mark then, how in the opposite seasons of joy and sorrow prayer is put into the crucible and tested. All our times of pleasure ought to be times of prayer; Job accounted his family festivities opportune for calling his children together for special devotion. No less should our periods of despondency become incentives to prayer; every funeral knell should ring us to our knees. The hypocrite cannot keep the statutes and ordinances, but the true Christian follows them out; for he is alike at home in seeking the Lord, calling upon his name, and asking counsel and guidance at his mercy-seat, in any variety of experience, and every diversity of circumstance.

"Will he always call upon God?" Here is the question of CONSTANCY. Will he pray constantly? It seems to most men a very difficult thing to be praying always, to continue in prayer, to pray without ceasing. Yes; and herein again is there a great distinction between the living child of God and the mere pretender. The living child of God soon finds that it is not so much his duty to pray, as his privilege, his joy, a necessity of his being. What moment is there when a Christian is safe without prayer? Where is there a place wherein he would find himself secure if he ceased to pray? Just think of it. Every moment of my life I am dependent upon the will of God as to whether I shall draw another breath or not. Nothing stands between me and death but the will of God. An angel's arm could not save me from the grave, if now the Lord willed me to depart. Solemn, then, is the Christian's position: ever standing by an open tomb. Should not dying men pray? We are always dying. As life is but a long dying, should it not

be also a long praying? Should we not be incessantly acknowledging to God in prayer and praise the continuance of our being, which is due to his grace? Brethren, every moment that we live we are receiving favors and benefits from God. There is never a minute in which we are not recipients of his bounty. We are wont to thank God for his mercies as if we thought they came at certain set times; so in truth they do: they are new every morning; great is his faithfulness; and they soothe us night by night, for his compassion faileth not, but there are mercies streaming on in one incessant flow. We never cease to need; he never ceases to supply. We want constant protection, and he that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. Lest any hurt us, he keeps us night and day. The river of God rolls on with undiminished volume and unimpeded velocity. How greatly doth he enrich us thereby! Should we not be ever careful to secure his gifts, to reap the harvest he provides, and as his people to take these good things from his gracious hands? But, oh! let us take heed to mingle prayer with all our thanksgiving, lest he should curse the boon over which we have asked no blessing; blight the crops, of which we have dedicated to him no firstfruits; or smite us with the rod of his anger, while the food is yet in our mouth. Our cravings know no abatement, our dependence on God knows no limit; therefore our prayers should know no intermission. Speak of beggars, we are always beggars. Is it not better for us, then, to be regular pensioners than mere casuals? Whatever God has given us we are as needy still; we are always, if taken apart from him, naked, and poor, and miserable, altogether dependent upon him, as well for the soul as for the body; for good thoughts, for spiritual aspirations, for holy graces, ay, and for the breath of our nostrils and the bread of our mouths; always needing temporals, always needing spirituals. If we are always needing, we should be always pleading. Besides that, dear friends, we are always in danger; we are in an enemy's country, behind every bush there is a foe; we cannot reckon ourselves to be secure in any place. The world, the flesh, and the devil constantly assail us. Arrows are shot from beneath us, and from around us, while the poison of our own corruption rankles within us. At any moment temptation may get the mastery over us, or we ourselves may go astray and be our own tempters. Storms may drive us, whirlpools suck us down, quicksands engulf us, and if none of these accomplish our shipwreck we may founder of ourselves, or perish of spiritual dry-rot. We need, then, each hour to watch, and each separate

moment to pray, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." Are ye wealthy? Pray God that your silver and your gold bring no spiritual plague with them! Do not let your money stick to your hand or your heart, for in proportion as it glues itself to you it poisons you. Pray God to sanctify your abundance, so that you may know how to abound; a difficult piece of knowledge to attain. Are ye poor? Then ask to be kept from envy, from discontent, and all the evils that haunt the narrow lanes of poverty. Pray that as you are each in danger one way or another, you may all be kept hour by hour by the constant grace of God. If we knew what poor, weak, helpless creatures we are, we should not want to be told always to pray; we should wonder how we could think of living without prayer. How can I, whose legs are so feeble, try to wall: without leaning on my Father's hand? How can I, who am so sickly, wish to be a day without the Good Physician's care? The hypocrite does not see this; he does not discern these perpetual needs and perpetual gifts, these perpetual dangers and perpetual preservations—not be. He thinks he has prayed enough when he has had his few minutes in the morning and his few minutes at night. He trots through his form of morning devotion just as he takes his morning wash, and has he not settled the business for the day? If at evening he says his prayers with the same regularity with which he puts on his slippers, is it not all he needs? He almost thinks that little turn at his devotions to be a weariness. As to his heart going up in prayer to God, he does not understand it; if he be spoken to concerning it, it sounds like an idle tale, or mere cant.

Dear brethren, "we ought always to pray, and not to faint," because we are always sinning. If I were not evermore sinning, if I could pause in that constant aberration of mind from the pure, the unselfish, the holy, perhaps I might suspend confession, and relax supplication awhile; but if unholiness stains even my holy things—if in my best endeavors there is something of error, something of sin—ought I not to be continually crying to God for pardon, and involving his grace? And are we not constantly liable to new temptations? May we not fall into grosser sins than we have hitherto committed, unless we are preserved by a power beyond our own? O pray perpetually, for you know not what temptations may assail you. Pray that ye enter not into temptation. If perchance in some favored moment we could imagine ourselves to have exhausted all the list of our

needs, were we enjoying complete pardon and full assurance, did we stand upon the mountain's brow, bathing our foreheads in the sunlight of God's favor, if we had no fear, no care, no trouble of our own to harass us, yet we might not therefore cease to pray. The interests of others, our kindred, our neighbors, our fellow creatures might—ah! must—then start up before us, and claim that we should bear upon our breasts their memorial. Think of the sinners around you hardening in transgression, some of them dying, seared with guilt or frenzied with despair. O brethren, how could you cease to intercede for others, were it possible, which it is not, that you should have no further need to supplicate for yourselves? The grand old cause which we have espoused, and the Christ who hath espoused our cause—both these demand our prayers. By the truth whose banner waves above us, by the king who has ennobled us, love to whose person fires us this day with ardor for his cross, and zeal for his gospel, we are constrained to unwavering devotion. So spake the gospel of old, and so doth the Spirit of God prompt us now. "Prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised." O that in our case the prediction might be verified, the promise fulfilled! Not so the hypocrite: he will not have it on this fashion. Enough for him to have prayers on the Sunday; enough to get through family prayers at any rate, and if that does not please you, the morning prayer and the evening prayer shall be said by rote at the bedside; will not these suffice? Praying all day long, why he considers that it would be almost as bad as heaven, where they are singing without ceasing. So he turns on his heel, and saith he will have none of it. Nor shall he; for where God is he shall not come, but the Lord will tell him, "I never knew you: depart from me, thou worker of iniquity."

"Will he always call upon God?" The question may be an enquiry as to IMPORTUNITY. Will the hypocrite pray importunately? He will do no such thing. I have heard farmers talk about the way to know a good horse. It will serve me to illustrate the way to tell a good Christian. Some horses when they get into the traces pull, and when they feel the load move they work with all their might, but if they tug and the load does not stir, they are not for drawing any longer. There is a breed of really good horses in Suffolk which will tug at a dead weight, and if they were harnessed to a post, they would pull till they dropped though nothing

stirred. It is so with a lively Christian. If he is seeking a great favor from God, he prays, whether he gets it or not, right on: he cannot take a denial; if he knows his petition to be according to God's will and promise, he pleads the blood of Jesus about it; and if he does not get an answer at once, he says, "My soul, wait"—wait! a grand word—"wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." As for the hypocrite, if he gets into a church and there is a prayer-meeting and he feels, "Well, there is a fire kindling and an excitement getting up"—ah! how that man can pray, the waggon is moving behind him, and he is very willing to pull. But the sincere believer says, "I do not perceive any revival yet. I do not hear of many conversions. Never mind, we have prayed that, God will glorify his dear Son: we will keep on praying. If the blessing does not come in one week, we will try three; if it does not come in three weeks, we will try three months; if it does not come in three months, we shall still keep on for three years; and if it does not come in three years, we will plead on for thirty years: and if it does not; come then, we will say, 'Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.' We will plead on until we die, and mingle with those who beheld the promise afar off, were persuaded of it, prayed for it, and died believing it would be fulfilled." Such prayer would not be wasted breath. It is treasure put out to interest; seed sown for a future harvest; rather it is the aspiration of saints kindled by the inspiration of God. The genuine believer knows how to tug. Jacob, when he came to Jabbok, found that the angel was not easily to be conquered. He laid hold of him, but the angel did not yield the blessing; something more must be done. Had Jacob been a hypocrite he would have let the angel loose at once, but being one of the Lord's own, he said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." When the angel touched him in the hollow of his thigh and made the sinew shrink, had he been a hypocrite he would have thought, "I have had enough of this already; I may be made to shrink all over; I cannot tell what may happen next. I will have no more of this midnight encounter with an unknown visitor. I will get me back to my tent." But no; he meant to prevail, and though he felt the pain, Yet he said—

"With thee all night I mean to stay,  
And wrestle till the break of day."



He did so, and became a prince from that night. Will you take a denial from God, you shall have it; but if you will not be denied, neither shall you. O importunate Christian, you are he whom God loves! Alas for those who only give, as it were, runaway knocks at the door of heaven, like boys in the street that knock and run away—they shall never find the blessing. Oh, to continue in prayer! it is the very test of sincerity. Hence of the hypocrite it is said, "Will he always call upon God?" A hypocrite leaves off praying in either case; he leaves off if he does not get what he asks for, as I have shown you; and he leaves off if he does get what he asks for. Has he asked to be recovered from sickness when ill? If he gets well, what cares he for praying again? Did he pray that he might not die? Oh, what a long face he drew, and what drawling professions of repentance he groaned out! But when his health is regained, and his nerves braced, his spirits are cheered, and his manly vigor has come back to him; where are his prayers? where are the vows his soul in anguish made? He has forgotten them all. That he is a hypocrite is palpable, for he leaves off praying if he does not get heard, and if he does. There is no keeping this man up to God's statute or his own promise; he has not the heart for true devotion, and soon fails in the attempt to exercise it.

"Will He always call upon God?" Here is the trial of PERSEVERANCE. Will he always continue to pray in the future? Will he pray, in years to come, as he now professes to do? I call to see him, and he is very sick; the doctor gives a very poor account of him; his wife is weeping; all over the house there is great anxiety. I sit down by his bedside; I talk to him, and he says, "Oh, yes, yes, yes;" he agrees with all I say, and he tells me he believes in Jesus. And when he can sit up, he cries, "God be merciful to me." His dear friends are godly people; they feel so pleased; they look forward to his recovery, and reckon upon seeing him a new creature, a disciple of Christ. Besides, he has told them, when he gets up, how earnest he will be in a life of faith and obedience to the Lord. He will not be a mere professor, he means to throw his whole soul into the Master's service. Now mark him. He recovers; and when he breaks forth from that sick chamber, and can dispense with the ministry of those gentle patient women who nursed him and prayed for him, what does the hypocrite do? Oh, he says he was a fool to think and speak as he did. He admits he was frightened, but he disclaims every pious expression as an infirmity of his

distracted brain, the delirium of his malady, not the utterance of his reason; and he recants all his confessions like the atheist in Addison's "Spectator." Addison tells us that certain sailors heard that an atheist was on board their vessel: they did not know what an atheist was, but they thought it must be some odd fish; and when told it was a man who did not believe in God, they said, "Captain, it would be an uncommonly good thing to pitch him overboard." Presently a storm comes on, and the atheist is dreadfully sick and very fearful; there, on the deck, he is seen crying to God for mercy, and whining like a child that he is afraid he will be lost and sink to hell. This is the usual courage of atheism! But when the coward reached the shore, he begged the gentlemen who heard him pray to think nothing of it, for indeed he did not know what he was saying, he had no doubt uttered a great deal of nonsense. There are plenty of that sort—who pray in danger, but brag when they get clear of the tempest. Hereby the hypocrite is discovered. Once take away from him the trouble and you do away with the motive for which he put on the cloak of religion. He is like a boy's top, which will spin as long as you whip it. The man will pray while he smarts, but not one whit longer. The hypocrite will pray to-day in society congenial for prayer, but he will discard prayer to-morrow when he gets laughed at for it in his business. Some old friend of his drops in, who has heard that he has been converted, and he begins to ridicule him. He asks him whether he has really turned a Methodist? The next thing he expects to hear is, that he is dipped. He makes some coarse remarks rather to the chagrin of our courageous friend, till he, who set out so boldly to heaven with his prayers, feels quite small in the presence of the sceptic. If he were right in heart, he would not only have a proper answer to give to the mocker, but in all probability he would carry the war into the enemy's country, and make his antagonist feel the folly of his sins and the insanity of his conduct in living without a God and without a Savior. The meet object of ridicule and contempt is the godless, the Christless man. The Christian need never be ashamed or lower his colors. The hypocrite may well blush and hide his head, for if there is any creature that is contemptible, it is a man who has not his heart where he professes it to be.

Neither will such a one always call upon God if he gets into company where he is much flattered; he feels then that he has degraded himself

somewhat by associating with such low, mean people as those who make up the church of God. And if he prospers in business, then he considers that the people he once worshipped with are rather inferior to himself: he must go to the world's church: he must find a fashionable place where he can hear a gospel that is not for the poor and needy, but for those who have the key of aristocratic drawing-rooms and the select assemblies. His principles—well, he is not very particular—he swallows them; probably his nonconformity was a mistake. The verities which his fathers suffered martyrdom to defend, for which they were mulcted of their possessions, driven as exiles from their country, or cast into prison, he flings away as though they were of no value whatever. Many have fallen from us through the temptations of prosperity who stood firmly enough under persecution and adversity. It is another form of the same test, "Will he always call upon God?"

Besides, if none of these things should occur the man who is not savingly converted and a genuine Christian, generally gives up his religion after a time because the novelty of it dies off. He is like the stony ground that received the seed, and because there was no depth of earth the sun could play upon it with great force, and up it sprang in great haste, but because there was no depth of earth, therefore it soon was scorched. So this man is easily impressible, feels quickly, and acts promptly under the influence of a highly emotional nature. Says he, "Yes, I will go to heaven," as he inwardly responds to the appeal of some earnest minister. He thinks he is converted, but we had better not be quite so sure as he is. "Wait a bit, wait a bit." He cools as fast as he was heated. Like thorns under a pot that crackle and blaze and die out, leaving but a handful of ashes, so is it with all his godliness. Ere long he gets tired of religion, he cannot away with it—what a weariness it is. If he perseveres awhile, it is no more pleasure to him than a pack is to a pack horse. He keeps on as a matter of formality: he has got into it and he does not see how to break away, but he likes it no better than an owl loves daylight. He holds on to his forms of prayer with no heart for prayer—and what a wretched thing that is! I have known people who felt bound to keep up their respectability when they had little or no income. Their debts were always increasing, their respectability was always tottering, and the strain upon their dignity was exhausting their utmost resources. Such persons I have considered to be the poorest of the

poor. An unhappy life they lead, they never feel at ease. But what an awful thing it is to have to keep up a spiritual respectability with no spiritual income; to overflow with gracious talk when there is no well of living water springing up within the soul; to be under the obligation to pay court to the sanctuary while the heart is wandering on the mountain; to be bound to speak gracious words and yet possess no gracious thoughts to prompt their utterance. O man, thou art one of the devil's double martyrs, because thou hast to suffer for him here in the distaste and nausea of thy hypocritical profession, and then thou will be made to suffer hereafter also for having dared to insult God, and ruin thy soul by being insincere in thy profession of faith in Jesus Christ!

I may be coming very close home to some persons before me: I am certainly pressing my own conscience very severely. I suppose there is no one amongst us who does not feel that this is a very searching matter. Well, dear friends, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we peace towards God; but if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things. Let us confess to him all past failures, and though we may not be conscious of hypocrisy (and I trust we are not so), yet, let us say, "Lord, search and try me, and know my ways; see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." I was speaking with a gentleman last night, and I said to him, "You are a director of such a Life Assurance Company, are you not?" "Yes," he said. "Well," I said, "yours is a poor society, is it not?" "It is a very good one," he replied; "a very good one." "But it is very low down in the list." "What list is that?" "Why, the list that has been sent round by certain persons to let the public see the condition of the life assurance companies." "Well," said he, "where is it to be seen?" "Oh, never mind where it is to be seen: is it true?" "No, it is not true; our society stands well—admirably well." "How so?" "Well, you know such a man, he is an excellent actuary and a man of honor." "Yes." "Well, when we employed him to go over our accounts, we said just this to him: "Take the figures, examine them thoroughly, sift our accounts, and tell us where the figures land you; tell us just that, neither less nor more, do not shirk the truth in the slightest degree. If we are in a bankrupt state, tell us; if we are flourishing, tell us so." My friend has convinced me that his office is not what I feared it was. I have much confidence in any man's business when he wishes to

know and to publish the unvarnished truth. I have great confidence in the sincerity of any Christian man who says habitually and truthfully, "Lord, let me know the very worst of my case, whatever it is. Even if all my fair prospects and bright ideals should be but dreams—the fabric of a vision; if yonder prospect before me of green fields and flowing hills should be but an awful mirage, and on the morrow should change into the hot burning desert of an awful reality; so be it, only let me know the truth; lead me in a plain path; let me be sincere before thee, O thou heart-searching, rein-trying God!" Let us, with such frank candour, such ingenuous simplicity, come before the Lord. Let as many of us as fear the Lord and distrust ourselves, take refuge in his omniscience against the jealousies and suspicions which haunt our own breasts. And let us do better still, let us hasten anew to the cross of Jesus, and thus end our difficulties by accepting afresh the sinners' Savior. When I have a knot to untie as to my evidence of being a child of God, and I cannot untie it, I usually follow Alexander's example with the Gordian knot, and cut it. How cut it? Why, in this way. Thou sayest, O conscience, this is wrong, and thus is wrong. Thou sayest, O Satan, thy faith is a delusion, thy experience a fiction, thy profession a lie. Be it so then, I will not dispute it, I end that matter; if I am no saint, I am a sinner; there can be no doubt about that! The devil himself is defied to question that. Then it is written that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and to sinners is the gospel preached, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." I do believe on him; if I never did before I will now, and all my transgressions are therefore blotted out. And now, Lord, grant me grace to begin again, and from this time forth let me live the life of faith, the life of prayer; let me be one of those who will pray always, let me be one of those who will pray when they are dying, having prayed all their lives. Prayer is our very life: ceasing prayer we cease to live. As long as we are here preserved in spiritual life we must pray. Lord, grant it may be so with each one here present, through the power of thy Spirit, and the merit of Jesus' blood. Amen, and Amen.

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# Travailing For Souls

As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. - Isaiah 66:8

Israel had fallen into the lowest condition, but an inward yearning of heart was felt in the midst of God's people for the return of the divine blessing; and no sooner had this anxious desire become intense, than God heard the voice of its cry, and the blessing came. It was so at the time of the restoration of the captives from Babylon, and it was most evidently so in the days of our Lord. A faithful company had continued still to expect the coming of the Lord's anointed messenger; they waited till he should suddenly come in his temple; the twelve tribes, represented by an elect remnant, cried day and night unto the Most High, and when at last their prayers reached the fulness of vehemence, and their anxiety wrought in them the deepest agony of spirit, then the Messiah came; the light of the gentiles, and the glory of Israel. Then began the age of blessedness in which the barren woman did keep house and become the joyful mother of children. The Holy Ghost was given, and multitudes were born to the church of God, yea we may say, a nation was born in a day. The wilderness and the solitary place were glad for them, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose. We are not, however, about to enter into the particular application of our text as Isaiah uttered it: the great declarations of revelation are applicable to all cases, and, once true, they stand fast for ever and ever. Earnestly desiring that God may give a large spiritual blessing to his church this morning, through the subject to which my mind has been directed, I shall first ask you to note that in order to the obtaining of an increase to the church, there must be travail, and that, secondly, this travail is frequently followed by surprising results. I shall then have to show why both the travail and the result are desirable, and pronounce woe on those who stand back and hinder it, and a blessing on such as shall be moved by God's own Spirit to travail for souls.

I. It is clear from the text, "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children," that **THERE MUST BE THE TRAVAIL** before there will be

the spiritual birth.

Let me first establish this fact from history. Before there has fallen a great benediction upon God's people, it has been preceded by great searchings of heart. Israel was so oppressed in Egypt, that it would have been very easy, and almost a natural thing, for the people to become so utterly crushed in spirit as to submit to be hereditary bond-slaves, making the best they could of their miserable lot; but God would not have it so; he meant to bring them out "with a high hand and an outstretched arm." Before, however, he began to work, he made them begin to cry. Their sighs and cries came up into the ears of God, and he stretched out his hand to deliver them. Doubtless, many a heart-rending appeal was made to heaven by mothers when their babes were torn from their breasts to be cast into the river. With what bitterness did they ask God to look upon his poor people Israel, and avenge them of their oppressors. The young men bowed under the cruel yoke and groaned, while hoary sires, smarting under ignominious lashes from the taskmaster, sighed and wept before the God of Israel. The whole nation cried, "O God visit us; God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, remember thy covenant, and deliver us." This travail brought its result; for the Lord smote the field of Zoan with mighty plagues, and forth from under the bondage of the sons of Misraim, the children of Israel marched with joy.

As we shall not have time to narrate many instances, let us take a long leap in history to the days of David. The era of the son of Jesse was evidently a time of religious revival. God was honored and his service maintained in the midst of Judea's land in the days of the royal bard; but it is clear to readers of the Scriptures that David was the subject of spiritual throes and pangs of the most intense kind. His bosom throbbed and heaved like that of a man made fit to be the leader of a great revival. What yearnings he had! He thirsted after God, after the living God! What petitions he poured forth that God would visit Zion, and make the vine which he had planted to flourish once again. Even when his own sins pressed heavily upon him, he could not end his personal confession without entreating the Lord to build the walls of Jerusalem, and to do good in his good pleasure unto Zion. Now, David was only the mouth of hundreds of others, who with equal fervency cried unto God that the

blessing might rest upon his people. There was much soul-travail in Israel and Judah, and the result was that the Lord was glorified, and true religion flourished.

Remember also the days of Josiah, the king. You know well now the book of the law was found neglected in the temple, and when it was brought before the king, he rent his clothes, for he saw that the nation had revolted, and that wrath must come upon it to the uttermost. The young king's heart, which was tender, for he feared God, was ready to break with anguish to think of the misery that would come upon his people on account of their sins. Then there came a glorious reformation which purged the land of idols, and caused the passover to be observed as never before. Travails of heart among the godly produced the delightful change.

It was the same with the work of Nehemiah. His book begins with a description of the travail of his heart. He was a patriot, a man of nervous, excitable temperament, and keen sensibility for God's honor, and when his soul had felt great bitterness and longing, then he arose to build, and a blessing rested on his efforts.

In the early dawn of Christian history, there was a preparation of the church before it received an increase. Look at the obedient disciples sitting in the upper room, waiting with anxious hope; every heart there had been ploughed with anguish by the death of the Lord, each one was intent to receive the promised boon of the Spirit. There, with one heart and one mind, they tarried, but not without wrestling prayer, and so the Comforter was given, and three thousand souls were given also.

The like living zeal and vehement desire have always been perceptible in the Church of God before any season of refreshing. Think not that Luther was the only man that wrought the Reformation. There were hundreds who sighed and cried in secret in the cottages of the Black Forest, in the homes of Germany, and on the hills of Switzerland. There were hearts breaking for the Lord's appearing in strange places, they might have been found in the palaces of Spain, in the dungeons of the Inquisition, among the canals of Holland, and the green lanes of England. Women, as they hid their Bibles, lest their lives should be forfeited, cried out in spirit, "O



God, how long?" There were pains as of a woman in travail, in secret places there were tears and bitter lamentations, on the high places of the field there were mighty strivings of spirit, and so at length there came that grand revulsion which made the Vatican to rock and reel from its foundation to its pinnacle. There has been evermore in the history of the church, the travail before there has been the result.

And this, dear friends, while it is true on the large scale, is true also in every individual case. A man with no sensibility or compassion for other men's souls, may accidentally be the means of a conversion; the good word which he utters will not cease to be good because the speaker had no right to declare God's statutes. The bread and meat which were brought to Elijah were not less nourishing because the ravens brought them, but the ravens remained ravens still. A hard-hearted man may say a good thing which God will bless, but, as a rule, those who bring souls to Christ are those who first of all have felt an agony of desire that souls should be saved. This is imaged to us in our Master's character. He is the great Saviour of men; but before he could save others, he learned in their flesh to sympathize with them. He wept over Jerusalem, he sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane; he was, and is, a high priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. As the Captain of our salvation, in bringing many sons unto glory he was made perfect by sufferings. Even Christ went not forth to preach until he had spent nights in intercessory prayer, and uttered strong cryings and tears for the salvation of his hearers. His ministering servants who have been most useful, have always been eagerly desirous to be so. If any minister can be satisfied without conversions, he shall have no conversions. God will not force usefulness on any man. It is only when our heart breaks to see men saved, that we shall be likely to see sinners' hearts broken. The secret of success lies in all-consuming zeal, all-subduing travail for souls. Read the sermons of Wesley and of Whitfield, and what is there in them? It is no severe criticism to say that they are scarcely worthy to have survived, and yet those sermons wrought marvels, and well they might, for both preachers could truly say—

"The love of Christ doth me constrain  
To seek the wandering souls of men;

With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,  
To snatch them from the fiery wave."

In order to understand such preaching, you need to see and hear the man, you want his tearful eye, his glowing countenance, his pleading tone, his bursting heart. I have heard of a great preacher who objected to having his sermons printed, "Because," said he, "you cannot print me." That observation is very much to the point. A soul-winner throws himself into what he says. As I have sometimes said, we must ram ourselves into our cannons, we must fire ourselves at our hearers, and when we do this, then, by God's grace, their hearts are often carried by storm. Do any of you desire your children's conversions? You shall have them saved when you agonize for them. Many a parent who has been privileged to see his son walking in the truth, will tell you that before the blessing came he had spent many hours in prayer and in earnest pleading with God, and then it was that the Lord visited his child and renewed his soul. I have heard of a young man who had grown up and left the parental roof, and through evil influences, had been enticed into holding skeptical views. His father and mother were both earnest Christians, and it almost broke their hearts to see their son so opposed to the Redeemer. On one occasion they induced him to go with them to hear a celebrated minister. He accompanied them simply to please them, and for no higher motive. The sermon happened to be upon the glories of heaven. It was a very extraordinary sermon, and was calculated to make every Christian in the audience to leap for joy. The young man was much gratified with the eloquence of the preacher, but nothing more; he gave him credit for superior oratorical ability, and was interested in the sermon, but felt none of its power. He chanced to look at his father and mother during the discourse, and was surprised to see them weeping. He could not imagine why they, being Christian people, should sit and weep under a sermon which was most jubilant in its strain. When he reached home, he said, "Father, we have had a capital sermon, but I could not understand what could make you sit there and cry, and my mother too?" His father said, "My dear son, I certainly had no reason to weep concerning myself, nor your mother, but I could not help thinking all through the sermon about you, for alas, I have no hope that you will be a partaker in the bright joys which await the righteous. It breaks my heart to think that you will be shut out of heaven." His mother

said, "The very same thoughts crossed my mind, and the more the preacher spoke of the joys of the saved, the more I sorrowed for my dear boy that he should never know what they were." That touched the young man's heart, led him to seek his father's God, and before long he was at the same communion table, rejoicing in the God and Saviour whom his parents worshiped. The travail comes before the bringing forth; the earnest anxiety, the deep emotion within, precede our being made the instruments of the salvation of others.

I think I have established the fact; now for a minute or two let me show you the reason for it. Why is it that there must be this anxiety before desirable results are gained? For answer, it might suffice us to say that God has so appointed it. It is the order of nature. The child is not born into the world without the sorrows of the mother, nor is the bread which sustains life procured from the earth without toil: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," was a part of the primeval curse. Now, as it is in the natural, so is it in the spiritual; there shall not come the blessing we seek, without first of all the earnest yearning for it. Why, it is so even in ordinary business. We say, "No sweat no sweet," "no pains no gains," "No mill no meal." If there be no labor there shall be no profit. He that would be rich must toil for it; he that would acquire fame must spend and be spent to win it. It is ever so. There must ever be the travail and then the desire cometh. God has so appointed it: let us accept the decree.

But better still, he has ordained this for our good. If souls were given us without any effort, anxiety or prayer it would be our loss to have it so, because the anxieties which throb within a compassionate spirit exercise his graces; they produce grateful love to God; they try his faith in the power of God to save others; they drive him to the mercy-seat; they strengthen his patience and perseverance, and every grace within the man is educated and increased by his travail for souls. As labor is now a blessing, so also is soul-travail; men are fashioned more fully into the likeness of Christ thereby, and the whole church is by the same emotion quickened into energy. The fire of our own spiritual life is fanned by that same breath which our prayers invite to come from the four winds to breath upon the slain. Besides, dear friends, the zeal that God excites within us is often the means of effecting the purpose which we desire.

After all, God does not give conversions to eloquence, but to heart. The power in the hand of God's Spirit for conversions is heart coming in contact with heart. This is God's battle-axe and weapons of war in his crusade. He is pleased to use the yearnings, longings, and sympathies of Christian men, as the means of compelling the careless to think, constraining the hardened to feel, and driving the unbelieving to consider. I have little confidence in elaborate speech and polished sentences, as the means of reaching men's hearts; but I have great faith in that simple-minded Christian woman, who must have souls converted or she will weep her eyes out over them; and in that humble Christian who prays day and night in secret, and then avails himself of every opportunity to address a loving word to sinners. The emotion we feel, and the affection we bear, are the most powerful implements of soul-winning. God the Holy Ghost usually breaks hard hearts by tender hearts.

Besides, the travail qualifies for the proper taking care of the offspring. God does not commit his new-born children to people who do not care to see conversions. If he ever allows them to fall into such hands, they suffer very serious loss thereby. Who is so fit to encourage a new-born believer as the man who first anguished before the Lord for his conversion? Those you have wept over and prayed for you will be sure to encourage and assist. The church that never travailed, should God send her a hundred converts, would be unfit to train them; she would not know what to do with little children, and would leave them to much suffering. Let us thank God, brethren, if he has given us any degree of the earnest anxiety and sympathy, which marked soul-winning men and women, and let us ask to have more for, in proportion as we have it, we shall be qualified to be the instruments in the hand of the Spirit, of nursing and cherishing God's sons and daughters.

Once more, there is a great benefit in the law which makes travail necessary to spiritual birth, because it secures all the glory to God. If you want to be lowered in your own esteem, try to convert a child. I would like those brethren who believe so much in free will, and the natural goodness of the human heart, to try some children that I could bring to them, and see whether they could break their hearts and make them love the Saviour. Why, sir, you never think yourself so great a fool as after trying

in your own strength to bring a sinner to the Saviour. Oh! How often have I come back defeated from arguing with an awakened person whom I have sought to comfort: I did think I had some measure of skill in handling sorrowful cases, but I have been compelled to say to myself, "What a simpleton I am! God the Holy Ghost must take this case in hand, for I am foiled." When one has tried in a sermon to reach a certain person who is living in sin, you learn afterwards that he enjoyed the sermon which he ought to have smarted under; then, you say, "Ah, now I see what a weak worm I am, and if good be done, God shall have the glory." Your longing, then, that others should be saved, and your vehemence of spirit, shall secure to God all the glory of his own work; and this is what the Lord is aiming at, for his glory he will not give to another, nor his praise to an arm of flesh.

And now, having established the fact, and shown the reasons for it, let us notice how this travail shows itself.

Usually when God intends greatly to bless a church, it will begin in this way:—Two or three persons in it are distressed at the low state of affairs, and become troubled even to anguish. Perhaps they do not speak to one another, or know of their common grief, but they begin to pray with flaming desire and untiring importunity. The passion to see the church revived rules them. They think of it when they go to rest, they dream of it on their bed, they muse on it in the streets. This one thing eats them up. They suffer great heaviness and continual sorrow in heart for perishing sinners; they travail in birth for souls. I have happened to become the centre of certain brethren in this church; one of them said to me the other day, "O sir, I pray day and night for God to prosper our church; I long to see greater things; God is blessing us, but we want much more." I saw the deep earnestness of the man's soul, and I thanked him and thanked God heartily, thinking it to be a sure sign of a coming blessing. Sometime after, another friend, who probably now hears me speak, but who did not know any thing about the other, felt the same yearning, and must needs let me know it; he too is anxious, longing, begging, crying, for a revival; and thus from three or four quarters I have had the same message, and I feel hopeful because of these tokens for good. When the sun rises the mountain tops first catch the light, and those who constantly live near to

God will be the first to feel the influence of the coming refreshing. The Lord give me a dozen importunate pleaders and lovers of souls, and by his grace we will shake all London from end to end yet. The work would go on without the mass of you, Christians; many of you only hinder the march of the army; but give us a dozen lion-like, lamb-like men, burning with intense love to Christ and souls, and nothing will be impossible to their faith. The most of us are not worthy to unloose the shoe-latches of ardent saints. I often feel I am not so myself, but I aspire and long to be reckoned among them. Oh, may God give us this first sign of the travail in the earnest ones and twos.

By degrees the individuals are drawn together by sacred affinity, and the prayer-meetings become very different. The brother who talked twenty minutes of what he called prayer, and yet never asked for a single thing, gives up his oration and falls to pleading with many tears and broken sentences: while the friend who used to relate his experience and go through the doctrines of grace, and call that a prayer, forgets that rigmarole and begins agonizing before the throne. And not only this, but little knots here and there come together in their cottages, and in their little rooms cry mightily to God. The result will be that the minister, even if he does not know of the feeling in the hearts of his people, will grow fervent himself. He will preach more evangelically, more tenderly, more earnestly. He will be no longer formal, or cold, or stereotyped; he will be all alive. Meanwhile, not with the preacher only will be the blessing, but with his hearers who love the Lord. One will be trying a plan for getting in the young people; another will be looking after the strangers in the aisles, who come only now and then. One brother will make a vehement attempt to preach the gospel at the corner of the street; another will open a room down a dark court; another will visit lodging-houses and hospitals; all sorts of holy plans will be invented, and zeal will break out in many directions. All this will be spontaneous, nothing will be forced. If you want to get up a revival, as the term is, you can do it, just as you can grow tasteless strawberries in winter, by artificial heat. There are ways and means of doing that kind of thing but the genuine work of God needs no such planning and scheming; it is altogether spontaneous. If you see a snowdrop next February in your garden, you will feel persuaded that spring is on the way; the artificial-flower maker could put as many snow-

drops there as you please, but that would be no index of coming spring. So you may get up an apparent zeal which will be no proof of God's blessing; but when fervor comes of itself, without human direction or control, then is it of the Lord. When men's hearts heave and break, like the mould of the garden under the influence of the reviving life which lay buried there, then in very deed a benediction is on the way. Travail is no mockery, but a real agony of the whole nature. May such be seen in this our church, and throughout the whole Israel of God.

II. Now, with great brevity, let us consider that THE RESULT IS OFTEN VERY SURPRISING. It is frequently surprising for rapidity. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." God's works are not tied by time. The more spiritual a force is the less it lies within the chains of time. The electric current, which has a greater nearness to the spiritual than the grosser forms of materialism, is inconceivably rapid from that very reason, and by it time is all but annihilated. The influences of the Spirit of God are a force most spiritual, and more quick than any thing beneath the sun. As soon as we agonize in soul the Holy Spirit can, if he pleases, convert the person for whom we have pleaded. While we are yet speaking he hears, and before we call he answers. Some calculate the expected progress of a church by arithmetic; and I think I have heard of arithmetical sermons in which there have been ingenious calculations as to how many missionaries it would take to convert the world, and how much cash would be demanded. Now, there is no room here for the application of mathematics; spiritual forces are not calculable by an arithmetic which is most at home in the material universe. A truth which is calculated to strike the mind of one man to-day may readily enough produce a like effect upon a million minds to-morrow. The preaching which moves one heart needs not be altered to tell upon ten thousand. With God's Spirit our present instrumentalities will suffice to win the world to Jesus; without him, ten thousand times as much apparent force would be only so much weakness. The spread of truth, moreover, is not reckonable by time. During the ten years which ended in 1870, such wondrous changes were wrought throughout the world that no prophet would have been believed had he foretold them. Reforms have been accomplished in England, in the United States, in Germany, in Spain, in Italy, which according to ordinary reckoning, would have occupied at

least one hundred years. Things which concern the mind cannot be subjected to those regulations of time which govern steamboats and railways; in such matters God's messengers are flames of fire. The Spirit of God is able to operate upon the minds of men instantaneously: witness the case of Paul. Between now and to-morrow morning he could excite holy thought in all the minds of all the thousand millions of the sons of Adam; and if prayer were mighty enough, and strong enough, why should it not be done on some bright day? We are not straitened in him, we are straitened in our own bowels. All the fault lies there. Oh for the travail that would produce immediate results.

But the result is surprising, not only for its rapidity, but for the greatness of it. It is said, "Shall a nation be born at once?" As soon as ever Zion was in distress concerning her children, tens of thousands came and built up Jerusalem, and re-established her fallen state. So, in answer to prayer, God not only bestows speedy blessings, but great blessings. There were fervent prayers in that upper room "before the day of Pentecost had fully come," and what a great answer it was when, after Peter's sermon, some three thousand were ready to confess their faith in Christ, and to be baptized. Shall we never see such things again? Is the Spirit straitened? Has his arm waxed short? Nay, verily, but we clog and hinder him. He cannot do any mighty work here because of our unbelief; and, if our unbelief were cast out, and if prayer went up to God with eagerness, and vehemence, and importunity, then would a blessing descend so copious as to amaze us all.

But enough of this, for I must needs pass on to the next point.

III. THIS TRAVAIL AND ITS RESULT ARE ABUNDANTLY DESIRABLE; pre-eminently desirable at this hour. The world is perishing for a lack of knowledge. Did any one among us ever lay China on his heart? Your imagination cannot grapple with the population of that mighty empire, without God, without Christ, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. But it is not China alone; there are other vast nations lying in darkness; the great serpent hath coiled himself around the globe, and who shall set the world free from him? Reflect upon this one city with its three millions. What sin the moon sees! What sin the



Sabbath sees! Alas for the transgressions of this wicked city. Babylon of old could not have been worse than London is, nor so guilty, for she had not the light that London has received. Brethren, there is no hope for China, no hope for the world, no hope for our own city, while the church is sluggish and lethargic. Through the church the blessing is usually bestowed. Christ multiplies the bread, and gives it to the disciples; the multitudes can only get it through the disciples. Oh, it is time, it is high time that the churches were awakened to seek the good of dying myriads. Moreover, brethren, the powers of evil are ever active. We may sleep, but Satan sleepeth never. The church's plough lies yonder, rusting in the furrow; do you not see it to your shame? But the plough of Satan goes from end to end of his great field, he leaves no headland, but he ploughs deep while sluggish churches sleep. May we be stirred as we see the awful activity of evil spirits and persons who are under their sway. How industriously pernicious literature is spread abroad, and with what a zeal do men seek for fresh ways of sinning. He is eminent among men who can invent fresh songs to gratify the lascivious tongue, or find new spectacles to delight unclean eyes. O God, are thine enemies awake, and only thy friends asleep? O Sufferer, once bathed in bloody sweat in Gethsemane, is there not one of the twelve awake but Judas? Are they all asleep except the traitor? May God arouse us for his infinite mercy's sake.

Besides this, my brethren, when a church is not serving God, mischief is brewing withing herself. While she is not bringing others in, her own heart is becoming weak in its pulsations, and her entire constitution is a prey to decline. The church must either bring forth children unto God, or else die of consumption: she has no alternative but that. A church must either be fruitful or rot, and of all things, a rotting church is the most offensive. Would God we could bury our dead churches out of our sight, as Abraham buried Sarah, for above ground they breed a pestilence of scepticism; for men say, "Is this religion?" and taking it to be so, they forego true religion altogether.

And then, worst of all is, God is not glorified. If there be no yearning of heart in the church, and no conversions, where is the travail of the Redeemer's soul? Where, Immanuel, where are the trophies of thy terrible conflict? Where are the jewels for thy crown? Thou shalt have

thine own, thy Father's will shall not be frustrated; thou shalt be adored; but as yet we see it not. Hard are men's hearts, and they will not love thee; unyielding are their wills, and they will not own thy sovereignty. Oh! weep because Jesus is not honored. The foul oath still curdles our blood as we hear it, and blasphemy usurps the place of grateful song. Oh! by the wounds and bloody sweat, by the cross and nails, and spear, I beseech you followers of Christ, be in earnest, that Jesus Christ's name may be known and loved through the earnest agonizing endeavors of the Christian church.

IV. And now I must come near to a close, by, in the fourth place, noticing THE WOE WHICH WILL SURELY COME TO THOSE WHO HINDER THE TRAVAIL OF THE CHURCH, and so prevent the bringing forth of her children. An earnest spirit cannot complete its exhortations to zeal without pronouncing a denunciation upon the indifferent. What said the heroine of old who had gone forth against the enemies of Israel, when she remembered coward spirits? "Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Some such curse will assuredly come upon every professing Christian who is backward in helping the church in the day on her soul's travail. And who are they that hinder her? I answer, every worldly Christian hinders the progress of the gospel. Every member of a church who is living in secret sin, who is tolerating in his heart any thing that he knows to be wrong, who is not seeking eagerly his own personal sanctification, is to that extent hindering the work of the Spirit of God. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord," for to the extent that we maintain known unholiness, we restrain the Spirit. He cannot work by us as long as any conscious sin is tolerated. It is not over breaking of commandments that I am now speaking of, brethren, but I include worldliness also—a care for carnal things, and a carelessness about spiritual things, having enough grace just to make us hope that you are a Christian, but not enough to prove you are; bearing a shriveled apple here and there on the topmost bough, but not much fruit; this I mean, this partial barrenness, not complete enough to condemn, yet complete enough to restrain the blessing, this robs the treasure of the church, and hinders her progress. O brethren, if any of you are thus described, repent and do your first works; and God help you to be

foremost in proportion as you have been behind.

They are also guilty who distract the mind of the church from the subject in hand. Anybody who calls off the thoughts of the church from soul-saving is a mischief maker. I have heard it said of a minister, "He greatly influences the politics of the town." Well, it is a very doubtful good in my mind, a very doubtful good indeed. If the man, keeping to his own calling of preaching the gospel, happens to influence these meaner things, it is well, but any Christian minister who thinks that he can do two things well, is mistaken. Let him mind soul-winning, and not turn a Christian church into a political club. Let us fight out our politics somewhere else, but not inside the church of God. There our one business is soul-winning, our one banner is the cross, our one leader is the crucified King. Inside the church there may be minor things that take off the thoughts of men from seeking souls,—little things that can be made beneath the eye that is microscopical, to swell into great offences. Oh, my brethren, let us, while souls are perishing, waive personal differences. "It must need be that offences come, but woe unto him by whom the offence cometh;" but, after all, what can there be that is worth taking notice of, compared with glorifying Christ. If our Lord and Master would be honored by your being a doormat for his saints to wipe their feet on, you would be honored to be in the position; and if there shall come glory to God by your patient endurance, even of insult and contumely, be glad in your heart that you are permitted to be nothing that Christ may be all in all. We must by no means turn aside to this or that; not even golden apples must tempt us in this race! There lies the mark, and until it is reached, we must never pause, but onward press, for Christ's cause and crown.

Above all, my brethren, we shall be hindering the travail of the church if we do not share in it. Many church members think that if they do nothing wrong, and make no trouble, then they are all right. Not at all, sir; not at all. Here is a chariot, and we are all engaged to drag it. Some of you do not put out your hands to pull; well, then, the rest of us have to labor so much the more; and the worst of it is we have to draw you also. While you do not add to the strength which draws, you increase the weight that is to be drawn. It is all very well for you to say, "But I do not hinder;" you do hinder, you cannot help hindering. If a man's leg does not help him in

walking, it certainly hinders him. Oh, I cannot bear to think of it. That I should be a hindrance to my own soul's growth is bad indeed; but that I should stand in the way of the people of God and cool their courage, and damp their ardor—my Master, let it never be! Sooner let me sleep among the clods of the valley, than be a hindrance to the meanest work that is done for thy name.

V. And now I shall close, not with this note of woe, but with A WORD OF BLESSING. Depend upon it there shall come a great blessing to any of you who feel the soul travail that brings souls to God. Your own heart will be watered. You know the old illustration, so often used that it is now almost hackneyed, of the two travelers, who passed a man frozen in the snow, and thought to be dead; and the one said, "I have enough to do to keep myself alive, I will hasten on;" but the other said, "I cannot pass a fellow-creature while there is the least breath in him." He stooped down and began to warm the frozen man by rubbing him with great vigor; and at last the poor fellow opened his eyes, came back to life and animation, and walked along with the man who had restored him to life; and what think you was one of the first sights they saw? It was the man who so selfishly took care of himself frozen to death. The good Samaritan had preserved his own life by rubbing the other man; the friction he had given had caused the action of his own blood, and kept him in vigor. You will bless yourselves if you bless others.

Moreover, will it not be a joy to feel that you have done what you could? It is always well on a Sunday evening for a preacher to feel when he gets home, "Well, I may not have preached as I could wish, but I have preached the Lord Jesus, and poured forth all my heart and I could do no more." He sleeps soundly on that. After a day spent in doing all the good you can, even if you have met with no success, you can lean your head on Christ's bosom and fall asleep, feeling that if souls be not gathered, yet you have your reward. If men are lost, it is some satisfaction to us that they were not lost because we failed to tell them the way of salvation. But what a comfort it will be to you supposing you should be successful in bringing some to Christ. Why it will set all the bells of your soul ringing. There is no greater joy except the joy of our own communion with Christ, than this of bringing others to trust the Saviour. Oh seek this joy and pant

after it. And what if you should see your own children converted? You have long hoped for it, but your hopes have been disappointed; God means to give you that choice blessing when you live more nearly to him yourself. Yes, wife, the husband's heart will be won when your heart is perfectly consecrated. Yes, mother, the girl shall love the Saviour when you love him better. Yes, teacher, God means to bless your class, but not until first of all he has made you fit to receive the blessing. Why, now, if your children were to be converted through your teacher, you would be mightily proud of it: God knows you could not bear such success, and does not mean to give it until he has laid you low at his feet, and emptied you of yourself, and filled you with himself.

And now I ask the prayers of all this church, that God would send us a time of revival. I have not to complain that I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for nought; far from it. I have not even to think that the blessing is withdrawn from the preaching of the word, even in a measure, for I never had so many cases of conversion in my life as I have known since I have been restored from sickness; I have never before received so many letters in so short a time, telling me that the sermons printed have been blest, or the sermons preached here; yet I do not think we ever had so few conversions from the regular congregation. I partly account for it from the fact, that you cannot fish in one pond always and catch as many fish as at first. Perhaps the Lord has saved all of you he means to save; sometimes, I am afraid he has; and then it will be of little use for me to keep on preaching to you, and I had better shift quarters and try somewhere else. It would be a melancholy thought if I believed it: —I do not believe it, I only fear it. Surely it is not always to be true that strangers, who drop in here only once, are converted, and you who are always hearing the gospel remain unaffected. Strange, but may it not be strangely, lamentably true of you? This very day may the anxiety of your Christian friends be excited for you, and then may you be led to be anxious for yourselves, and give your eyes no slumber till you find the Saviour. You know the way of salvation; it is simply to come with your sins and rest them on the Saviour; it is to rely upon or trust in the atoning blood. Oh that you may be made to trust this morning, to the praise of the glory of his grace. The elders mean to meet together tomorrow evening to have a special hour of prayer; I hope, also, the mothers will meet and

have a time wrestling, and that every member of the church will try to set apart a time for supplication this week, that the Lord may visit again his church, and cause us to rejoice in his name. We cannot go back; we dare not go back. We have put our hand to the plough, and the curse will be upon us if we turn back. Remember Lot's wife. It must be onward with us; backward it cannot be. In the name of God the Eternal, let us gird up our loins by the power of his Spirit, and go onward conquering through the blood of the Lamb. We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **The Treasure of Grace**

The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. - Ephesians 1:7

As is Iasiah among the prophets, so is Paul among the apostles; each stands forth with singular prominence, raised up by God for a conspicuous purpose, and shining as a star of extraordinary brilliance. Isaiah spake more of Christ, and described more minutely his passion and his death than all the other prophets put together. Paul proclaimed the grace of God - free, full, sovereign, eternal race - beyond all the glorious company of the apostles. Sometimes he soared to such amazing heights, or dived into such unsearchable depths, that even Peter could not follow him. He was ready to confess that "our beloved brother Paul, according to his wisdom given unto him," had written "some things hard to be understood." Jude could write of the judgments of God, and reprove with terrible words, "ungodly men, who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness." But he could not tell out the purpose of grace as it was planned in the eternal mind, or the experience or grace as it is felt and realized in the human heart, like Paul. There is James again: he, as a faithful minister, could deal very closely with the practical evidences of Christian character. And yet he seems to keep very much on the surface; he does not bore down deep into the substratum on which must rest the visible soil of all spiritual graces. Even John, most favoured of all those

apostles who were companions of our Lord on earth - sweetly as the beloved disciple writes of fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ - even John doth not speak of grace so richly as Paul, "in whom God first showed forth all long-suffering as a pattern to hem which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Not, indeed, that we are at any liberty to prefer one apostle above another. We may not divide the Church, saying, I am of Paul, I of Peter, I of Apollos; but we may acknowledge the instrument which God was pleased to use; we may admire the way in which the Holy Ghost fitted him for his work; we may, with the churches of Judea, "glorify God in Paul." Among the early fathers Augustine was singled out as the "Doctor of Grace;" so much did he delight in those doctrines that exhibit the freeness of divine favour. And surely we might affirm the like of Paul. Among his compeers he outstripped them all in declaring the grace that bringeth salavation. The sense of grace pervaded all his thoughts as the life blood circulates through all the veins of one" body. Does he speak of conversion, "he was called by grace." Nay, he sees grace going before his conversion, and "separating him from his mother's womb." He attributes all his ministry to grace. "To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." See him at any time, and under any circumstances, whether bowed down with infirmity, or lifted to the third heavens with revelation, he has but one account to give of himself, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

There are no ministers who contend so fully and so unflinchingly for free, sovereign, unconditional grace, as those who before their conversion have revelled in gross and outrageous sin. Your gentleman preachers who have been piously brought up, and sent from their cradle to school, from school to college, and from college to the pulpit, without encountering much temptation, or being rescued from the haunts of profanity - they know comparatively little, and speak with little emphasis of *free grace*. It is a Bunyan who breathed curses, a Newton who was a ver monster in sin; it is the like of these, who cannot forget for one hour of their lives afterwards, the grace that snatched them from the pit, and plucked them as brands from the burning. Strange indeed that God should have it so. The providence is inscrutable that permits some of the Lord's chosen

people to wander and rove as far as sheep can stray. Such men, however, make the most valiant champions for that grace which only can rescue any sinner from eternal woe.

This morning we propose to expound to you *"the riches of God's grace; this is the Treasure; then, secondly, we shall speak of the "Forgiveness of Sins," which is to be judged of by that Measure; the forgiveness is according to the riches of his grace; and we shall afterwards wind up by considering some of the privileges connected therewith.*

I. First, consider the RICHES OF HIS GRACE. In attempting to search out that which is unsearchable, we must, I suppose, use some of those comparisons by which we are wont to estimate the wealth of the monarchs, and mighty ones of this world. It happened once that the Spanish ambassador, in the haleyon days of Spain, went on a visit to the French ambassador, and was invited by him to see the treasures of his master. With feelings of pride he showed the repositories, profusely stored with earth's most precious and most costly wealth. "Could you show gems so rich," said he, "or aught the life of this for magnificence of possessions in all your sovereign's kingdom?" "Call your master rich?" replied the ambassador of Spain, "why; my master's treasures have no bottom" - alluding, of course, to the mines of Peru and Petrosa. So truly in the riches of grace there are mines too deep for man's finite understanding ever to fathom. However profound your investigation, there is still a deep couching beneath that baffles all research. Who can ever discover the attributes of God? Who can find out the Almighty to perfection? We are at a loss to estimate the ver quality and properties of grace as it dwells in the mind of Deity. Love in the human breast is a passion. With God it is not so. Love is an attribute of the divine essence. God is love. In men, grace and bounty may grow into a habit, but grace with God is an intrinsic attribute of his nature. He cannot but be gracious. As by necessity of his Godhead he is omnipotent, and omnipresent, so by absolute necessity of his divinity is he gracious.

Come then, my brethren, into this glittering mine of the attributes of the grace of God. Every one of God's attributes is infinite, and therefore this attribute of grace is without bounds. You cannot conceive the infinity of



God, why, therefore, should I attempt to describe it. Recollect however, that as the attributes of God are of the like extent, the gauge of one attribute must be the gauge of another. Or, further, if one attribute is without limit, so is another attribute. Now, you cannot conceive any boundary to the omnipotence of God. What cannot he do? He can create, he can destroy; he can speak a myriad universe into existence; or he can quench the light of myriads of stars as readily as we tread out a spark. He hath but to will it, and creatures without number sing his praise; yet another volition, and those creatures subside into their naked nothingness, as a moment's foam subsides into the wave that bears it, and is lost for ever. The astronomer turns his tube to the remotest space, he cannot find a boundary to God's creating power; but could he seem to find a limit, we would then inform him that all the worlds on worlds that cluster in space, hick as the drops of morning dew upon the meadows, are but the shreds of God's power. He can make more than all these, can dash those into nothingness, and can begin again. Now as boundless as is his power, so infinite is his grace. As he hath power to do anything, so hath he grace enough to give anything - to give everything to the very chief of sinners.

Take another attribute if you please - God's omniscience, there is no boundary to that. We know that his eye is upon every individual of our race - he sees him as minutely as if he were the only creature that existed. It is boasted of the eagle that though he can outstare the sun, yet when at his greatest height, he can detect the movement of the smallest fish in the depths of the sea. But what is this compared with the omniscience of God? His eye tracks the sun in his marvellous course, his eye marks the winged comet as it flies through space. His eye discerns the utmost bound of creation inhabited or uninhabited. There is nothing hid from the light thereof, with him there is no darkness at all. If I mount to heaven he is there; if I dive to hell he is there; if I fly mounted on the morning ray beyond the western sea,  
"His swifter hand shall first arrive,  
And there arrest the fugitive."

There is no limit to his understanding, nor is there to his grace. As his knowledge comprehendeth all things, so doth his grace comprehend all

the sins, all the trials all the infirmities of the people upon whom his heart is set. Now, my dear brethren, the next time we fear that God's grace will be exhausted, let us look into this mine, and then let us reflect that all that has ever been taken out of it has never diminished it a single particle. All the clouds that have been taken from the sea have never diminished its depth, and all the love, and all the mercy that God has given to all but infinite numbers of the race of man, has not diminished by a single rain the mountains of his grace. But to proceed further; we sometimes judge of the wealth of men, not only by their real estate in mines and the like, but by what they have on hand stored up in the treasury. I must take you now, my brethren, to the glittering treasury of divine grace. Ye know its names, it is called the Covenant, have you not heard the marvellous story of what was done in the olden time before the world was made. God foreknew that man would fall, but he determined of his own infinite purpose and will that he would raise out of this fall a multitude which no man can number. The Eternal Father held a solemn council with the Son and Holy Spirit. Thus spoke the Father:--"I will that those whom I have chosen be saved!" Thus said the Son:--"My Father, I am ready to bleed and die that thy justice may not suffer and that thy purpose may be executed." "I will," said the Holy Spirit, "that those whom the Son redeems with blood shall be called by grace, shall be quickened, shall be preserved, shall be sanctified and perfected, and brought safely home." Then was the Covenant written, signed, and sealed, and ratified between the Sacred Three. The Father gave his Son, the Son gave himself, and the Spirit promises all his influence, all his presence, to all the chosen. Then did the Father give to the Son the persons of his elect, then did the Son give himself to the elect, and take them into union with him; and then did the Spirit in covenant vow that these chosen ones should surely be brought safe home at last. Whenever I think of the old covenant of grace, I am perfectly amazed and staggered with the grace of it. I could not be an Arminian on any inducement; the very poetry of our holy religion lies in these ancient things of the everlasting hills, that glorious covenant signed and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well from old eternity.

Pause here, my hearer, awhile, and think before this world was made, ere God had settled the deep foundations of the mountains, or poured the

seas from the laver of the bottom of his hand, he had chosen his people, and set his heart on hem. To them he had given himself, his Son, his heaven, his all. For them did Christ determine to resign his bliss, his home, his life; for them did the Spirit promise all his attributes, that they might be blessed. O grace divine, how glorious thou art, without beginning, without end. How shall I praise thee? Take up the strain ye angels; sing these noble themes, the love of the Father, the love of the Son, the love of the Spirit.

This, my brethren, if ye think it over, may well make you estimate aright the riches of God's grace. If you read the roll of the covenant from beginning to end, containing as it does, election, redemption, calling, justification, pardon, adoption, heaven, immortality - if you read all his, you will say, "This is riches of grace - God, great and infinite! Who is a God like unto thee for the riches of thy love!"

The riches of great kings again, may often be estimated by the munificence of the monuments which they reared to record their feats. We have been amazed in these modern times at the marvellous riches of the kings of Nineveh and Babylon. Modern monarchs with all their appliances, would fail to erect such monstrous piles of palaces as those in which old Nebuchadnezzar walked in times of yore. We turn to the pyramids, we see there what the wealth of nations can accomplish; we look across the sea to Mexico and Peru, and we see the relics of a semi-barbarous people but we are staggered and amazed to think what wealth and what mines of riches they must have possessed ere such works could have been accomplished. Solomon's riches are perhaps best judged of by us when we think of those great cities which he built in the wilderness, Tadmora and Palmyra. When we go and visit those ruins and see the massive columns and magnificent sculpture, we say, Solomon indeed was rich. We feel as we walk amid the ruins somewhat like the queen of Sheba, even in Scripture the half has not been told us of the riches of Solomon. My brethren, God has led us to inspect mightier trophies than Solomon, or Nebuchadnezzar, or Montezuma, or all the Pharaohs. Turn your eyes yonder, see that blood-bought host arrayed in white, surrounding the throne - hark, how they sing, with voice triumphant, with melodies seraphic, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our

sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." And who are these? Who are these trophies of his grace? Some of them have come from the stews of harlotry; many of them have come from the taverns of drunkenness. Nay, more, the hands of some of those so white and fair, were once red with the blood of saints. I sere yonder the men that nailed the Saviour to the tree; men who cursed God, and invoked on themselves death and damnation. I see there Manasseh, who shed innocent blood so much, and the thief who in the last moment looked to Christ, and said, "Lord, remember me." But I need not turn your gaze so far aloft; look, my brethren, around, you do not know your next neighbour by whom you are sitting his morning, it may be. But there are stories of grace that might be told by some here this morning, that would make the ver angels sing more loudly than they have done before. Well, I know these cheeks have well nigh been scarlet with tears when I have heard the stories of free grace wrought in this congregation. Then are those known to me, but of course not so to you, who were among the vilest of men, the scum of society. We have here those to whom cursing was as their breath, and drunkenness had grown to be a habit; and yet here they are servants of God, and of his church; and it is their delight to testify to others what a Saviour they have found. Ah, but my hearer, perhaps thou art one of those trophies, and if so, the best proof of the riches of his grace is that which thou findest in thy own soul. I think God to be gracious when I see others saved, I know he is because he has saved me; that wayward, wilful boy, who scoffed a mother's love, and would not be melted by all her prayers, who only wished to know a sin in order to perpetrate it? Is he standing here to preach the gospel of the grace of God to you to-day? Yes. Then there is no sinner out of hell that has sinned too much for grace to save. That love which can reach to me, can reach to you. Now I know the riches of his grace, because I hope I prove it, and feel it in my own inmost heart, my dear hearer, and may you know it too, and then you will join with our poet, who says -

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,  
While heavens resounding mansions ring  
With shouts of sovereign grace."

Go a little further now. We have thus looked at the wine and treasures, and at the monuments. But more. One thing which amazed the queen of

Sheba, with regard to the riches of Solomon, was the sumptuousness of his table. Such multitudes sat down to it to eat and drink, and though they were many, yet they all had enough and to spare. She lost all heart when she saw the provisions of a single day brought in. I forget just now, although I meant to refer to the passage how many fat beasts, how many bullocks of the pasture, how many bucks and fallow deer and game of all sorts, and how many measures of flour and how many gallons of oil were brought to Solomon's table every day, but it was something marvellous; and the multitudes that had to feast were marvellous also, yet had they all enough. And now think my brethren of the hospitalities of the God of grace each day. Ten thousand of his people are this day sitting down to feast; hungry and thirsty they bring large appetites with them to the banquet, but not one of them returns unsatisfied; there is enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore. Though the host that feeds there is countless as the stars of heaven, yet I find that not one lacks his portion. He openeth his hand and supplies the want of every living saint upon the face of the earth. Think how much grace one saint requires, so much that nothing but the Infinite could supply him for one day. We burn so much fuel each day to maintain the fire of love in our hearts, that we might drain the mines of England of all their wealth of coal. Surely were it not that we have infinite treasures of grace, the daily consumption of a single saint might out-demand everything that is to be found upon the face of the earth. And yet it is not one but many saints, and many hundreds, not for one day, but for many years; not for many years only, but generation after generation, century after century, race after race of men, living on the fulness of God in Christ. Yet are none of them starved; they all drink to the full; they eat and are satisfied. What riches of grace then may we see in the sumptuousness of his hospitality.

Sometimes, my brethren, I have thought if I might but get the broken meat at God's back door of grace I should be satisfied; like the woman who said, "The dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table;" or like the prodigal who said, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." But you will remember that no child of God is ever made to live on husks; God does not give the parings of his grace to the meanest of them, but they are all fed like Mephibosheth; they eat from the king's own table the daintiest dishes. And if one may speak for the rest, I think in matters of

grace we all have Benjamin's mess - we all have ten times as we could have expected, and though not more than our necessities, yet are we often amazed at the marvellous plenty of grace which God gives us in the covenant and the promise.

Now we turn to another point to illustrate the greatness of the riches of God's grace. A man's riches may often be judged of by the equipage of his children, the manner in which he dresses his servants and those of his household. It is not to be expected that the child of the poor man, though he is comfortably clothed, should be arrayed in like garments to those which are worn by the sons of princes. Let us see, then, what are the robes in which God's people are apparelled, and how they are attended. Here again I speak upon a subject where a large imagination is needed, and my own utterly fails me. God's children are wrapped about with a robe, a seamless robe, which earth and heaven could not buy the like of if it were once lost. For texture it excels the fine linen of the merchants; for whiteness it is purer than the driven snow; no looms on earth could make it, but Jesus spent his life to work my robe of righteousness. There was a drop of blood in every throw of the shuttle, and every thread was made of his own heart's agonies. 'Tis a robe that is divine, complete; a better one than Adam wore in the perfection of Eden. He had but a human righteousness though a perfect one, but we have a divinely perfect righteousness. Strangely, my soul, art thou arrayed, for thy Saviour's garment is on thee; the royal robe of David is wrapped about his Jonathan. Look at God's people as they are clothed too in the garments of sanctification. Was there ever such a robe as that? It is literally stiff with jewels. He arrays the meanest of his people every day as though it were a wedding day; he arrays them as a bride adorneth herself with jewels; he has given Ehtiopia and Sheba for them, and he will have them dressed in gold of Ophir. What riches of grace then must there be in God who thus clothes his children!

But to conclude this point upon which I have not as yet begun. If you would know the full riches of divine grace, read the Father's heart when he sent his Son upon earth to die; read the lines upon the Father's countenance when he pours his wrath upon his only begotten and his well-beloved Son. Read too the mysterious handwriting on the Saviour's

flesh and soul, when on the cross quivering in agony the waves of swelling grief do o'er his bosom roll. If ye would know love ye must repair to Christ, and ye shall see a man so full of pain, that his head, his hair, his garments bloody be. 'Twas love that made him sweat as it were great drops of blood. If ye would know love, you must see the Omnipotent mocked by his creatures, you must hear the Immaculate slandered by sinners, you must hear the Eternal One groaning out his life, and crying in the agonies of death, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In fine, to sum up all in one, the riches of the grace of God are infinite, beyond all limit; they are inexhaustible, they can never be drained; they are all-sufficient, they are enough for every soul that ere shall come to take of them; there shall be enough for ever while earth endureth, until the last vessel of mercy shall be brought home safely.

So much, then, concerning the riches of His grace.

II. For a minute or two, let me now dwell upon THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. The *treasure* of God's grace is the *measure* of our forgiveness; this forgiveness of sins is according to the riches of his grace. We may infer, then, that the pardon which God gives to the penitent is no niggard pardon. Have not you asked a man's pardon sometimes, and he has said, "Yes, I forgive you," and you have thought, "Well, I would not even have asked for pardon if I thought you would have given it in such a surly style as that; I might as well have continued as I was, as to be so ungraciously forgiven." But when God forgives a man, though he be the chief of sinners, he puts out his hand and freely forgives; in fact, there is as much joy in the heart of God when he forgives, as there is in the heart of the sinner when he is forgiven; God is as blessed in giving as we are in receiving. It is his very nature to forgive; he must be gracious, he must be loving, and when he lets his heart of love out to free us from our sins it is with no stinted stream; he doth it willingly, he upbraideth it not. Again: if pardon be in proportion to the riches of his grace, we may rest assured it is not a limited pardon, it is not the forgiving of some sins and the leaving of others upon the back. No, this were not Godlike, it were not consistent with the riches of his grace. When God forgives he draws the mark through every sin which the believer ever has committed, or ever will commit. That last point may stagger you, but I do believe with John Kent,

that in the blood of Christ  
"There's pardon for transgressions past,  
It matters not how black their cast;  
And, oh! My soul, with wonder view,  
For sins to come there's pardon too."

However many, however heinous, however innumerable your sins may have been, the moment you believe they are ever one of them blotted out. In the Book of God there is not a single sin against any man in this place whose trust is in Christ, not a single one, not even the shadow of one, not a spot, or the remnant of a sin remaining, all is gone. When Noah's flood covered the deepest mountains, you may rest assured it covered the mole-hills; and when God's love covers the little sins it covers the big ones, and they are all gone at once! When a bill is receipted fully there is not an item which can be charged again, and when God pardons the sins of the believer there is not one single sin left; not even half-an-one can ever be brought to his remembrance again. Nay, more than this; when God forgives, he not only forgives all but once for all. Some tell us that God forgives men and yet they are lost. A fine god yours! They believe that the penitent sinner finds mercy, but that if he slips or stumbles in a little while he will be taken out of the covenant of grace and will perish. Such a covenant I could not and would not believe in; I tread it beneath my feet as utterly despicable. The God whom love when he forgives never punishes afterwards. By one sacrifice there is a full remission of all sin that ever was against a believer, or that ever will be against him. Though you should live till your hair is bleached thrice over, till Methuselah's thousand years should pass over your furrowed brow, not a single sin shall ever stand against you, nor shall you ever be punished for a single sin; for every sin is forgiven, fully forgiven, so that not even part of the punishment shall be executed against you. "Well, but," saith one, "how is it that God does punish his children?" I answer, he does not. He chastises them as a father, but that is a different thing from the punishment of a judge. If the child of a judge were brought up to the bar, and that child were freely forgiven all that he had done amiss, if justice exonerated and acquitted him, it might nevertheless happen that there was evil in the heart of that child which the father, out of love to the child, might have to whip out of him. But there is a great deal of difference between a rod in



the hand of the executioner, and a rod in a father's hand. Let God smite me, if I sin against him, yet it is not because of the guilt of sin, there is no punishment in it whatever, the penal clause is done away with. It is only that he may cure me of my fault, that he may fetch the folly out of my heart. Do you chasten your children vindictively because you are angry with them? No; but because you love them; if you are what parents should be, the chastisement is a proof of your affection, and your heart smarts more than their body pains, when you have to chasten them for what they have done amiss. God is not angry against his children, nor is there a sin in hem which he will punish. He will whip it out of them, but punish them for it he will not. O glorious grace! It is a gospel worth preaching.

"The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in his crucified God,  
His pardon at once he receives  
Redemption in full through Christ's blood."

All is gone; every atome gone; gone for ever and ever; and well he knows it.

"Now freed from sin I walk at large,  
My Saviour's blood my full discharge;  
At his dear feet my soul I lay,  
A sinner saved, and homage pay."

Having thus spoken of the pardon of sin as being fully commensurate with the grace of God, I will put this question to my hearer: My friend, are you a forgiven man? Are your sins all gone? "No," saith one, "I cannot say they are, but I am doing my best to reform." Ah! you may do your best to reform, I hope you will, but that will never wash away a single blood-red stain of guilt. "But," saith one, "may I, just I am, believe that my sins are forgiven?" No, but I tell thee what thou mayst do. If God help thee, thou mayst now cast thyself simply upon the blood and righteousness of Christ; and the moment thou dost that, thy sins are all gone, and gone so that they never can return again. "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." Nay, he is saved in the moment of his faith. He is no more in the sight of God received as a sinner; Christ has been punished for him. The righteousness of Christ is wrapped about him, and

he stands accepted in the beloved. "Well, but," saith one, "I can believe that a man, after he has been a long time a Christian, may know his sins to be forgiven, but I cannot imagine that I can know it at once." The knowledge of our pardon does not always come the moment we believe, but the fact of our pardon is before our knowledge of it, and we may be pardoned before we know it. But if thou believest on the Lord Jesus Christ with all hine heart, I will tell thee this: If thy faith be free of all self-trust thou shalt know to-day that thy sins are forgiven, for the witness of the Spirit shall bear witness with thy heart, and thou shalt hear that secret, still small voice, saying, "Be of good cheer; thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven." "Oh," saith one, "I would give all I have for that." And you might give all you have, but you would not have it at that price. You might give the firstborn for your transgression, the fruit of your body for the sin of your soul, you might offer rivers of oil, and ten thousand of the fat of fed beasts; you would not have it for money, but you may have it for nothing; it is freely brought to you; you are bidden to take it. Only acknowledge your sin, and put your trust in Christ, and there is not one man among you who shall hear aught about his sin in the day of judgment. It shall be cast into the depth of the sea - it shall be carried away for ever.

I will give you a picture, and then leave this subject. See, there stands the high-priest of the Jews. A goat is brought to him: it is called "the scape-goat." He puts his hands upon the head of this goat, and begins to make confession of sin. Will you come and do the like? Jesus Christ is the scape-goat; come and lay your hand on his thorn-crown'd head by faith, and make confession of your sin, as the high-priest did of old. Have you done it? Is your sin confessed? Now believe that Jesus Christ is able and willing to take your sin away. Rest wholly and entirely on him. Now what happens? The high-priest takes the scape-goat, gives it into the hand of a trusty man, who leads it over hill and down dale, till he is many miles away, and then, suddenly loosing its bonds, he frightens it, and the goat flees with all its might. The man watches it till it is gone, and he can see it no more. He comes back, and he says, "I took the scape-goat away, and it vanished out of my sight; it is gone into the wilderness." Ah, my hearer, and if thou hast put thy sins on Christ by a full confession, remember he has taken hem all away, as far as the east is from the west, they are gone,

and gone eternally. Thy drunkenness, thy swearing is gone, thy lying, thy theft is gone, thy Sabbath-breaking, thy evil thoughts are gone - all gone, and thou shalt never see them again -

"Plunged, as in a shoreless sea,

Lost, as in immensity."

III. And now I conclude by noticing THE BLESSED PRIVILEGES WHICH ALWAYS FOLLOW THE FORGIVENESS WHICH IS GIVEN TO US ACCORDING TO THE GRACE OF GOD. I think here are a great many people who do not believe there is any reality in religion at all. They think it is a very respectable thing to go to church and to go to chapel, but as to ever enjoying a consciousness that their sins are all forgiven, they never think about that. And I must confess that, in the religion of these modern times, there does not seem to be much reality. I do not hear at this day that clear ringing distinct proclamation of the gospel that I want to hear. It is a grand thing to carry the gospel to all manner of men, to take it to the theatre, and the like, but we want to have the gospel undiluted - the milk must have a little less water with it. There must be a more distinct, palpable truth taught to the people, a something that they can really lay hold of, a something that they can understand, even if they will not believe it. I trust no man will misunderstand me this morning in what I have said. There is such a thing as having all our sins forgiven now. There is such a thing as knowing it and enjoying it. Now I will show you what will be the happiness resulting to you, should you obtain this blessing.

In the first place, you will have peace of conscience, that heart of yours that throbs so fast when you are alone will be quite still and quiet. You will be least alone when you are alone. That fear of yours which makes you quicken your step in the dark because you are afraid of something, and you do not know what, will all be gone. I have heard of a man who was so constantly in debt, and continually being arrested by the bailiffs, that once upon a time, when going by some area railings, having caught his sleeve upon one of the rails, he turned round and said, "I don't owe you anything, Sir." He thought it was a bailiff. And so it is with unforgiven sinners, wherever they are, they think they are going to be arrested. They can enjoy nothing. Even their mirth, what is it, but the colour of joy, the

crackling of thorns under the pot; there is no solid steady fire. But when once a man is forgiven, he can walk anywhere, He says, "to me it is nothing whether I live or die, whether ocean depths engulf me, or whether I am buried beneath the avalanche, with sin forgiven, I am secure. Death has no sting to him. His conscience is at rest. Then he goes a step further. Knowing his sins to be forgiven he has joy unspeakable. No man has such sparkling eyes as the true Christian; a man then knows his interest in Christ, and can read his title clear. He is a happy man, and must be happy. His troubles, what are they? Less than nothing and vanity; for all his sins are forgiven. When the poor slave first lands in Canada, it may be he is without a single farthing in his purse, and scarcely anything but rags on his back; but he puts his foot on British soil, and is free; see him leap and dance, and clap his hands, saying, "Great God I thank thee, I am a free man." So it is with the Christian, he can say in his cottage when he sits down to his crust of bread, thank God I have no sin mixed in my cup - it is all forgiven. The bread may be dry, but it is not half so dry as it would be if I had to eat it with the bitter herbs of a guilty conscience, and with a terrible apprehension of the wrath of God. He has a joy that will stand all weathers, a joy that will keep in all climates, a joy that shines in the dark, and glitters in the night as well as in the day.

Then, to go further, such a man has access to God. Another man with unforgiven sin about him stands afar off; and if he thinks of God at all it is as a consuming fire. But the forgiven Christian looking up to God when he sees the mountains and the hills, and rolling streams and the roaring flood, he says, "My Father made them all;" and he clasps hands with the Almighty across the infinite expanse that sunders man from his Maker. His heart flies up to God. He dwells near to him, and he feels that he can talk to God as a man talketh with his friend.

Then another effect of this is that the believer fears no hell. There are solemn things in the Word of God, but they do not affright the believer. There may be a pit that is bottomless, but into that his foot shall never slide; it is true there is a fire that never shall be quenched, but it cannot burn him. That fire is for the sinner, but he has no sin imputed to him; it is all forgiven. The banded host of all the devils in hell cannot take him there, for he has not a single sin that can be laid to his charge. Daily

sinning though he is, he feels those sins are all atoned for; he knows that Christ has been punished in his stead, and therefore Justice cannot touch him again.

Once more, the forgiven Christian is expecting heaven. He is waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, for if death should intervene before that glorious advent, he knows that to him sudden death is sudden glory; and in the possession of a quiet conscience and of peace with God, he can go up to his chamber when the last solemn hour shall come; he can gather up his feet in his bed; he can bid farewell to his brethren and companions, to his wife and to his children, and can shut his eye in peace without a fear that he shall open them in heaven. Perhaps never does the joy of forgiven sin come out more brightly than it does on a dying bed. It has often been my privilege to test the power of religion when I have been sitting by the bedside of the dying. There is a young girl in heaven now, once a member of this our church. I went with one of my beloved deacons to see her when she was very near her departure. She was in the last stage of consumption. Fair and sweetly beautiful she looked, and I think I never heard such syllables as those which fell from that girl's lips. She had had disappointments, and trials, and troubles, but all these she had not a word to say about, except that she blessed God for hem; they had brought her nearer to the Saviour. And when we asked her whether she was not afraid of dying, "No," she said, "the only thing I fear is his, I am afraid of living, lest my patience should wear out. I have not said an impatient word yet, sir, hope I shall not. It is sad to be so very weak, but I think if I had my choice I would rather be here than be in health, for it is very precious to me; I know that my Redeemer liveth, and I am waiting for the moment when he shall send his chariot of fire to take me up to him." I put the question, "Have you not any doubts?" "No, none, sir, why should I? I clasp my arms around the neck of Christ." "And have not you any fear about your sins?" "No, sir, they are all forgiven, I trust the Saviour's precious blood." "And do you think that you will be as brave as this when you come actually to die?" "Not if he leaves me, sir, but he will never leave me, for he has said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'" There is faith, dear brothers and sisters, may we all have it and receive forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.

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## **Tried By The Word**

Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him. -  
Psalm 105:19

Joseph was altogether an extraordinary personage. He was a young man of great personal beauty, and he exhibited also a lovely character, full of gentleness, kindness, and truth. The grace of God had made him as beautiful in mind as nature had made him comely in person. He was also exceedingly thoughtful; perhaps at first rather more thoughtful than active, so that his brothers, not only because he had seen two remarkable visions, but probably because of his contemplative habits, said of him, "Behold, this dreamer cometh." He was the swan in the duck's nest; his superior genius and character separated him from the rest of the family, and none of them could understand him; he was, therefore, the object of their envy and hatred, so that they even proposed to murder him, and ultimately sold him for a slave. He was destined, however, for a nobler lot than theirs; they were to feed their flocks, but he was ordained to feed the world; they were to rule their own families, but he to govern the most ancient of empires. From the very beginning his supremacy in Israel had been foretold by a double dream. Their sheaves were seen to pay homage to his sheaf, while the sun and moon and eleven stars also made obeisance to him. This was the light which shone upon Joseph's early days, the star of prophecy which afterwards gilded his darkest moments and cheered him on while he endured affliction. You may rest assured, brethren, that wherever God gives extraordinary gifts or graces, and appoints an extraordinary career, he also appoints unusual trial. There is a verse—I think it is Cowper's—which says that

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,

Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

To eminence of any desirable kind there is no royal road, but we must wade through tribulation to it. For Joseph to become prime minister of Egypt the path lay through the prison-house: to all true honor the road is difficult. Expect, then, dear friend, if God gifts thee, or if he graces thee, that he intends to try thee. Such a reflection will tone down thine exultation and prevent its degenerating into pride, and it will aid thee to gird up the loins of thy mind and stand in all sobriety, prepared for that which awaits thee. Look upon talents and graces, and high hopes of eminent usefulness as signs of inevitable tribulation. Do not congratulate yourself, and sing, "Soul, take thine ease; thou art happy in possessing such special gifts," but prepare to do the life-work to which thou art called. Thou art favored of the Lord, but do not look for the happiness of ease, carnal enjoyment, and human approval, for "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

Joseph's worst trial happened to him when he was accused of attempting a foul assault upon his mistress. Who would not writhe under so horrible a charge? When he was put in prison, and his feet were made fast with fetters, he became exceedingly troubled, so that the iron surrounded his soul. How long he was in "durance vile," as a chained prisoner, we do not know, but it must have been some considerable period; and during those dreary months thoughts of his father and his fond love, memories of his cruel brothers, and reflections upon his sad lot, must have keenly wounded him. He was pained to remember how much his character had suffered from a woman's malicious falsehood, and most of all how much blasphemy the heathen had poured upon the name of God, whom he had represented in the house of Potiphar. Do you wonder that the iron entered into his soul?

The word of the Lord tried him very severely. Alone, in darkness, in an uncomfortable cell, his limbs fretted with chains, no one to speak to him, every one condemning him as guilty of the basest treachery towards the man who had made him his confidential and favored servant—he found

himself regarded as the offscouring of all things, and the object of ridicule to all who were about him. "The archers sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him;" but, blessed be God, his bow abode in strength, and he overcame at the last.

This morning we will commune together upon the trials of Joseph, and our own afflictions. Our first reflections shall be spent upon the importance of trial; secondly, we will consider the peculiarity of the believer's trial for "the word of the Lord tried him;" and thirdly, we will observe the continuance and the conclusion of the trial,— "until the time that his word came." May the ever blessed Spirit direct our meditations.

I. First, let us dwell upon THE IMPORTANCE OF TRIAL. The Lord might easily have taken every one of us home to heaven the moment we were converted. Certainly his omnipotence was equal to the task of our immediate perfect sanctification. If the dying thief was rendered fit to be in Paradise the same day on which he believed, so might each one of us have been made ready to enter heaven; but it has not so pleased God. We doubt not that there are myriads before the eternal throne who have reached the abode of bliss without treading the winepress of affliction.

"Babes hither caught from womb and breast,  
Claim right to sing above the rest;  
Because they found the happy shore,  
They never saw nor sought before."

Theirs is a victory for which they never fought; they wear a crown though they never bore a cross. To sovereign grace these blessed ones will never cease to ascribe their bliss. But as for those of us who live to riper years, it will be written concerning all of us as of others who have gone before, "These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." But why is it so appointed? Is this discipline of any use to us? The word here used is in itself a light upon the question, "The word of the Lord assayed him"—that would be the correct translation. The word of the Lord assayed Joseph as gold is assayed: it is a term best understood at the Mint, and among



refiners. Trial in the Christian church is the Lord's fining pot, which is never off the fire. It has this excellent effect, that it separates the precious from the vile. As long as the church exists, I suppose she will have traitors amongst her number, for if Judas intruded under the watchful eye of the Chief Shepherd, we may be pretty sure that many a Judas will elude the far less watchful eyes of the minor shepherds. Because trial and persecution test men's professions, they are used as the winnowing fan in the Lord's hand, as it is written, "He will thoroughly purge his floor." In persecution, the mere professors, the camp-followers and hangers-on, soon flee away, for they have no heart to true religion when the profession of it involves the cross. They could walk with Jesus in silver slippers, but they cannot travel with him when his bleeding feet go barefoot over the world's rough ways, and therefore they depart every man to his own, and we may say of them "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." So that trial as a permanent institution is of much service to the church in promoting her purity, and we are bound to praise the Lord whose fire is in Zion and his furnace in Jerusalem.

A similar process goes on in the individual soul. No Christian man is all that he thinks he is; our purest gold is alloyed. We have none of us so much faith as we impute to ourselves, nor so much patience, or humility, or meekness, or love to God, or love to men. Spurious coin swells our apparent wealth. It is amazing how rich and increased in goods we are till the Lord deals with us by a trial, and then full often we discover that we are naked, and poor, and miserable in the very respects in which we boasted ourselves. Oh, man, if thou be a child of God thou art like a house which he is building with gold, and silver, and precious stones; but by reason of thine old nature thou art mixing up with the divine material much of thine own wood, and hay, and stubble; therefore is it that the fire is made to rage around thee to burn out this injurious stuff which mars the whole fabric. If the Holy Spirit be pleased to bless thine afflictions to thee then wilt thou be daily led to put away the materials of the old nature with deep abhorrence and repentance, and thus shall the true work of God which he has built upon the sure foundation, stand in its true beauty, and thou shalt be builded for eternity.

Every good man is not only tested by trial, but is the better for it. To the evil man affliction brings evil, he rebels against the Lord, and, like Pharaoh, his heart is hardened. But to the Christian it is good to be afflicted, for, when sanctified by the Spirit trial is a means of instruction to him, second to none in value. The rod of God teacheth us more than all the voices of his ministers. When the Christian has been passed through the fire, the assaying, by removing the dross, adds a new lustre to the gold. Brother, thou art not what thou shalt be, nor canst thou be what thou shalt be except through a measure of trial. Child, it is needful for thee to feel the weight of thy Father's hand, or thou wilt never behave thyself as a man. Thou must see his face veiled with frowns, and hear his voice in harshness chiding thee for thy transgressions, otherwise thou wilt always retain the follies of childhood. Our chastisements are our promotions. They are privileges more precious than the rights of princes. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Joseph could say this, and all the Lord's Josephs either own it now or will have to own it hereafter.

Let us look a little more closely, and we shall see that trial did much for Joseph. First, it corrected the juvenile errors of the past. Far be it from me to find any fault with so admirable a youthful character; but it was youthful, and needed maturing. As a simple-hearted, trustful child, he certainly told his dreams quite as freely as it was wise to have done. Perhaps he thought that his brothers and his father would have been as gratified as himself, but even his father rebuked him, and his brothers were indignant to the last degree. It was natural that a boy of seventeen should be pleased with the thought of power and eminence, but such a feeling might have gendered evil, and therefore it needed to be toned down, and its eager expression kept within bounds. We find Joseph more self-possessed and more reticent by-and-by, and we read in after life that he restrained himself—ay, when the strongest passions were at work within him, and his own brother Benjamin was before him, he sacrificed his feelings to the dictates of prudence. We see no more boyish exultation, no more telling of his dreams: in quietness and confidence he found his strength. This he no doubt learned amid the sorrows of his prison-house.

He was, perhaps, also in his early days too much in a hurry to realize the promised blessing. He would see the sheaves do obeisance to his sheaf at once, while he and his brethren were as yet but green corn, and the harvest had not come: hence the pleasure he had in the coat of many colors which his father's fondness put upon him. He thought the dream was being realized, no doubt, when that princely garment was put upon him, and he began in some measure to exercise the dignity which the Lord had promised him by reporting his brethren to his father, which action I do not condemn, but it, no doubt, made his brothers feel that he took too much upon himself, since they were many of them old enough to have been his father, and had families of their own. At any rate, he had not learned then, as he had to learn afterwards, during thirteen weary years, that visions tarry, and that we must wait for them, since the promise is not for to-day nor for to-morrow, but abides until it reaches ripeness. God promiseth us great things which we see not as yet, and therefore we must with patience wait for them—we must not put on the coat of many colors yet, nor be hasty to rebuke our elder brothers, for we are not yet set on high by the hand of the Lord. Joseph had his royal coat in due time, and he had the fullest conceivable opportunity for reproving his brothers when in after days they went down into Egypt to buy corn, and their hearts smote them for all the wrong that they had done to him. In prison Joseph learned to wait: I do not know a harder or more valuable lesson. It is worth while to suffer slander and to feel the fret of fetters to acquire the patience which sits still and knows that Jehovah is God. To tarry awhile and not to pluck our fruit while it is yet green and sour, this is rare wisdom. To be instructed to leave the time as well as the form of the blessing in the hands of God is to have been to school with the best result.

Joseph also learned in his trial much that was good for present use. For instance, he found by sweet experience that the divine presence can cheer us anywhere. If he had always been at home with his father, always his father's darling, he would have known that the love of God is sweet to a favored youth, but no one would have been astonished at that. Even Satan would have said, "Well may he rejoice in thee, O Lord. Hast thou not set a hedge about him and all that he hath?" But he learned that God could be with him when he was sold for the price of a slave: with him

when led as a captive across the desert, when he walked wearily by the camel's side with the Ishmaelites: with him in the slave mart to find him a master who might appreciate him; with him when he became a servant in the house, by blessing him, prospering him, and causing him to find favor in the eyes of his master till he became overseer of all that Potiphar had: and then, best of all, though some would say worst of all, he learned that God could be with him in a dungeon. He could not have known that if he had stopped at home, he must be brought into the thick darkness, that the brightness of the divine presence might be the more fully seen. There is nothing in this world so delightful as the light of God's countenance when all around is dark. You may tell me that the presence of Jesus is glorious upon Tabor's glorious mount, and I will not contradict you, though I have realized the poet's words—

"At the too transporting light  
Darkness rushes o'er my sight."

but give me the soft subdued light of God's love in adversity; Christ on the stormy waters for me: Christ in the midst of the furnace with his persecuted ones. Never does the Lord's love taste so sweet as when all the world is wormwood and gall. See how the mother presses her dear babe to her bosom when it is sick, or has had a bone broken. The little one may run about the house at other times, and the mother is pleased with it and loves it, but if you want to see all her tenderness, if you would read all her heart, you should see her when it scarcely breathes, when she fears that every moment will be its last. Then all the mother is revealed. How she fondles it, and what a store of sweet words she brings forth. So, if you would see all of God, you must know what deeps of trouble mean, for then the great heart, the glorious, infinite love comes welling over, and the soul is filled with all the fullness of God. It was worth while, I say, for Joseph to be falsely accused, and to be laid in irons, to learn experimentally the supporting power of the heavenly Father's smile.

There, too, Joseph learned that temporal things are not to be depended upon. The indulgences of his father's house end in his being sold as a slave, and the coat of many colors is dipped in blood. His prosperity in the house of Potiphar also came to a sudden end, and from being an

overseer he became a prisoner in irons. Now he knew that earthly good is not to be depended on, and therefore not worthy to be the object of pursuit to an immortal soul: he sees that all things beneath the moon change, waxing and waning as doth the moon herself, and he learns to look to something higher and more stable than circumstances and surroundings.

Here, too, he was instructed in one sad truth, which we are all so slow to learn, namely, to "cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" I do not think Joseph had learned that fully when he interpreted the dream of the butler. It was very natural, and therefore not to be censured that he should say, "Think of me when it shall be well with thee;" but when two whole years had passed and all the while he was forgotten, Joseph must have felt that, "Cursed is he that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm." He ceased from man, and no longer looked for enlargement from that quarter. Cost us what it may, we are great gainers by any process which enables us to say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." It is a blessed thing when providence knocks away all the dog-shores, and lets the vessel launch into her true element. See how freely she floats upon the deep sea of God's everlasting love and immutable faithfulness. She is no more liable to decay from the dry rot of carnal confidence, but on the broad sea of divine power "she walks the waters as a thing of life" in joyful reliance upon the ever blessed God. Confidence in man seems bred in our bone, but it must be taken out of us, and happy shall the day be which sees us rid of all hope but that which stays itself upon the Lord alone.

But, dear brethren, the chief use of trial to Joseph and to us is very often seen in our future lives. While Joseph was tried in prison God's great object was to prepare him for the government which awaited him. It was designed first to give him power to bear power: a rare acquirement. Solomon says, "As the fining pot to silver, and the furnace to gold, so is a man to his praise." Many a man can bear affliction, but few men can endure prosperity; and I have marked it, and you must have marked it too, that the most perilous thing in all the world is to step suddenly from obscurity into power. Have we not seen men, illiterate and unknown, suddenly introduced to the Christian pulpit, and made much of, and has

it not frequently turned out that their names have been by-and-by prudently forgotten, for they were overthrown by the dizzy heights to which they were lifted? It is far better that a man should fight his way up to his position, that he should be assailed by enemies and distrusted by friends, and should pass through a probationary career. Even then he can only stand as the Lord holds him, but without it he is in especial peril. Hence the apostle says, "not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." If I knew that some young man here present would be greatly owned of God in the future, and become in future a prince in our Israel, if by lifting up of this finger I could screen him from fierce criticism, misrepresentation, and abuse, I would not do it, because, severe as the ordeal might be to him, I am persuaded it is needful that he should pass through it in order to make him able to bear the giddy heights of the position for which God intends him. Joseph on the throne of Egypt, I know not what he might have been if first of all he had not been laid in the stocks. His feet learned to stand fast on a throne through having been set fast in a dungeon. His gold chain was worn without pride because he had worn a chain of iron; and he was fit to be the ruler of princes because he had himself been a servant among prisoners. Through his trial God gave him power to bear power, and this is a far rarer gift than the power to endure oppression and contempt.

Joseph was also trained to bear the other dangers of prosperity. These are neither few nor small. Great riches and high positions are not to be desired. Agur's prayer is a wise one: "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Joseph was in great peril when he came to be lord over the land of Egypt, but during his time in prison he had been learning to spell out a mystery and answer a riddle. Practically, his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream was what he had been learning in prison, namely, that it is idle to boast of the fat kine, since the lean kine can soon eat them up, and it is unwise to be proud of the full ears, because the withered ears can soon devour them. Pharaoh saw in the dream the lean devouring the full-fleshed, but Joseph alone understood it. He saw his fat kine when he was in his father's house eaten up when he was sold as a slave; he saw his full ears when he was in Potiphar's house devoured by the withered ears when he was thrown into prison, and he now knew that there was nothing here below worth our relying upon, since on the chariot of all earthly good

there rides a Nemesis, and every day is followed by a night. He was tutored to be a ruler for he had learned the prisoner's side of politics, and felt how hard it was for men to be unjustly condemned without trial. He foresaw that this could not be for ever endured, and that one day the long-suffering lean kine would be goaded to fury, and would eat up the fat ones that oppressed them. Hence Joseph's rule would be just and generous, for in this he would see the elements which would preserve law and order, and prevent the poorer sort from overturning everything.

In the prison, too, he had learned to speak out. His whole course had been a rehearsal fitting him to be bravely truthful before the king. What temptation was there to him when he stood before Pharaoh to conceal his faith in God? To him, I say, who had risked life and lost liberty for God's sake? It would have been a very great temptation to an ordinary young man not to say anything about the one God in the presence of the head of the Egyptian superstitions, but this did not suggest itself to Joseph. Had he confessed his God in Potiphar's house? Did he not say to Potiphar's wicked wife, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God"? He had stood to his God in prison, and told the butler and baker that "interpretations belong unto God": and now he stands before Pharaoh he does not flinch for a moment, but he says "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Why, brethren, have you ever thought of the moral courage of Joseph in interpreting that dream? All the soothsayers there who had tried to interpret it and could not—was it likely the heathen king would believe a youth who had been a slave and was fresh brought from a dungeon? When he foretold seven years of plenty and seven years of famine, it was a marvel that Pharaoh believed him. If the narrative had gone on to say, "Then the king said unto his servants, cast this man into prison and feed him with the bread of affliction and the water of affliction until we see whether his word shall come to pass," we should not have been at all surprised. The magicians naturally enough would be ready to say that he was set on to give this preposterous interpretation by persons interested in selling corn; or else they would urge that a man who dared to foretell events so utterly improbable had better be sent back to his prison house. But Joseph believed the word of the Lord, and he spoke with the accent of conviction, and Pharaoh believed also. Whence came this simple-minded courage? Whence this boldness? It was the right royal

velour which doth hedge about a virtuous soul—or rather the fearlessness which follows from the fear of God. He stood forth and delivered his message, and the Lord established his word. He had been preparing for this in the day of his sorrow: like a good sword-blade, he had been passed through the fire and through the fire again, that now he might not fail in the day of battle. Oh, dear brothers and sisters, may you gain as much from tribulation as Joseph did, and you will do so if the Holy Spirit sanctifies them to you.

II. We must pass on secondly to notice THE PECULIARITY OF THE TRIAL. According to the text, "the word of the Lord tried him." This might have escaped our observation if the Spirit of God had not placed it upon record. "The word of the Lord tried him." How was that? Potiphar tried him, and the chains tried him, but did the word of the Lord try him? Yes. But there is a previous question—how did he receive any word of the Lord? There was no Bible then; Moses had not lived, there was not even the book of Genesis,—what word of God had he? His dreams were to him the word of God, for they were communications from heaven; the instruction he received from his father was also the word of God to him, his knowledge of the covenant which God had made with Abraham and Isaac, and his father Jacob, was God's word to him. Moreover, the secret teachings of the Holy Spirit quickened his conscience and afforded him light on the way. When there was no written word the divine Spirit spoke without words, impressing truth upon the heart itself. All these were to Joseph the word of God. How did it try him? It tried him thus,—the word said to him in his conscience, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Without that word he would not have been tried, for nature suggested compliance with his mistress's desires. The pleasure of ease, of wealth, of favor, were to be had through that woman's smile, but the word of God came in and said, "Thou shalt not," and Joseph was tried. The test, however, he could bear: grace enabled him to flee youthful lusts and to cry, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

The trial which arose out of his innocence must have again tested him by the word of God. There he is in prison—for what? Why, for an action so pure that had he been set on a throne for it he would have well deserved it. Do you not think that many questions perplexed him while he lay in



prison? Would not the evil spirit say, "Were you not a fool after all? Do you not think that your chastity was mere superstition?" Thus would the purity of his heart be tried, and the word would search him, and test his hatred of sin. Would not the word of God try his constancy as it asked, "Do you now believe?" What problems were put before him—Is there a moral governor of the universe? If so why does he allow the innocent to suffer? Why am I in fetters, and the lewd woman in favor? Could not an omnipotent God deliver me? Why then does he leave me here? Could Joseph in the face of such questions still cling to the faithful word? He could, and he did; but the word tried him, and proved his constancy, his faith, and his integrity.

Then, too, the word of the Lord which he had heard many years before would come to him and try him. His trembling heart would say, Has God ever spoken to you at all? Those dreams, were they not childish? That voice which you thought you heard in your heart was it not imagination? This providence of God which has prospered you wherever you have gone was it not after all good luck? Has the living God ever revealed himself to one who at length became a slave? Look at your fetters, and ask if you can be his child? And then I suspect that during the time in which Joseph was fettered the word of God had ceased to speak to him as of old: he did not dream nor interpret dreams, and that seems to have been the especial way in which the Lord revealed himself to him. Brother, do you know what it is to be tried by the cessation of comfortable communications? Did you ever live for a time without feeling any text of Scripture applied to your soul, without beholding any vivid flashes of the divine light, or any in-streamings of the Spirit's power through the word? If you have been so afflicted, you have been tempted to enquire, did the Lord ever speak to me at all? Have I been truly converted, or is it after all a myth? And these things which I have looked upon as communications from heaven, have they been after all nothing but the vapours of a heated brain? The word of God tried him, and he had to weigh himself in the balances of the sanctuary.

The bright promise of future good would also try him. His fears would say "How is it possible that your brothers should pay homage to you? You are far away from your family and cannot hope to see them again—as for the

sheaves that did obeisance to your sheaf, where are they? You are shut up and cannot come forth. Within these walls the jealous Potiphar has doomed you to die." The word of God would say to him then, "Can you believe me? Can you trust the Lord to fulfill his promises?" Oh, my brethren, it is easy for us to talk about this, but if we had to pass through the same ordeal, lying friendless in a dungeon under an accusation of guilt which we abhorred, far away from all we loved, we might feel the word of God to be a very trying thing, and perhaps the dark thought might even flit across our spirit, "Would God I had never heard that word but could have lived as the Egyptians do, for then I might have been dwelling in pleasure in Potiphar's house still. But this word of God into what trials has it dragged me, into what difficulties has it thrown me. Is it, after all, worth while to know it?" I remember once being very, very ill, and a man who had no godliness, but who was full of wicked wit, accosted me thus. "Ah, you see, whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." "Yes," I said, "I am suffering greatly." "Well," said he with a sneer, "I can do very well without such love, so long as I get off such chastening." I burst into tears, and my very soul boiled over as I cried "If the Lord were to grind me to powder, I would accept it at his hands, so that I might but have his love. It is you who need to be pitied, for sound as your health may be and merry as you look, you are a poor creature, since you have missed the only thing worth living for." I let fly a volley at him, I could not help it. I felt forced to stand up for my Master. Joseph took the Lord's yoke upon him gladly, and found rest unto his soul. He counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the luxuries of Potiphar's house. Thus the word tried him and he was found upright.

I have no doubt the word of the Lord tried Joseph in this way. That word seemed to say, "You thought you loved your father's God, Joseph, do you love him now? You have lost your father's house, you have forfeited the ease of Potiphar's household, you have sacrificed your liberty, and perhaps the next thing will be that you will be taken out to die, can you still hold fast to the Lord?" Joseph was firm in his allegiance, and prepared to follow the Lord at all hazards to the death. The word had come to him, and it tried his steadfastness. Now I may be addressing some young men who are getting into all sorts of trouble through being Christians. I congratulate you! Thus does the Lord train his bravest

soldiers. I may be addressing some of you older men who are passing through storms of trial mainly because you hold fast your integrity. I congratulate you! Rejoice ye in this day and leap for joy, for you are only enduring trials which have fallen to the lot of better men than yourselves. Men do not put base metal into the furnace, they spend their assaying upon precious gold. I see in the fact of your trial some evidence of your value, and I congratulate you, my brethren, and pray the Lord to bear you up and bear you through, that like Joseph you may be of great service to Israel and bring glory to God.

III. The last thought is THE CONTINUANCE AND THE CONCLUSION OF THE TRIAL. Trial does not last for ever. Cheer up; the tide ebbs out, but the flood will return again. Note the word "until." He who counts the stars also numbers your sorrows, and if he ordains the number ten your trials will never be eleven. The text says, "until"; for the Lord appoints the bounds of the proud waters, and they shall no more go over your soul when they reach the boundary of the divine "until." "Until the time that his word came"—the same word which tried Joseph in due time set him free. If the Lord gives the turnkey permission to keep us in prison there we must remain, until he sends a warrant for our liberation, and then all the devils in hell cannot hold us in bondage for an instant longer. My dear brother, I want you in your trouble to look entirely to God, whose word is a word of power. He speaks, and it is done. He has spoken trouble to you, but he can just as readily speak comfort to you. Never mind what the butler's word is. Do not entreat him, saying, "When it is well with thee speak a word for me." The butler's word will not avail, it is Jehovah's word you need, for "where the word of a king is there is power." It is a blessed thing to know that trouble comes direct from God, whatever the secondary agent may be. You must not say, "I could have borne it if it had not been for that wicked woman." Never mind the wicked woman, look to God as overruling her malice and everything else. He sends the trial, and therefore look to him to deliver you from it.

"'Tis he that lifts our comforts high,  
Or sinks them in the grave."

He shuts us up in prison, and he brings us out again.

The time was in God's hands, and it was very wisely ordered. Suppose that the butler had thought of Joseph, and had spoken to Pharaoh about the interpretation of his dream, the probabilities are that when the courtiers of Pharaoh's court heard it they would have made the halls of the palace ring with laughter; and the magicians would especially have poured scorn on the idea that a slave boy who had been imprisoned for scandalous behavior knew more about interpreting dreams than the wise men of Egypt who had been brought up to the art and had gained high degrees in the profession. It would have been a theme of ridicule all over the land. It was the wrong time, and God would not let the butler recollect, because that recollection would have marred the plot and spoiled the whole business: but God's "until" came at the nick of time when Joseph was ready for court, and when Pharaoh was ready to appreciate Joseph. The hour needed its man, and here was the hour for the man. The straight way from the dungeon to the throne was not open until Pharaoh dreamed his dream,—then must Joseph come forth and not before. Oh, brother, sit still and wait. The deliverance you are craving for is not ripe yet; wait while the word tries you, for that same word will in due time set you free.

The word set him free in a way which cleared his character, for never a whisper would be raised against him, and Potiphar would know the truth, even if he had not already guessed it. It set him free in a way which secured his eminence, and gave him the means of providing for his father and his household. He might have been liberated from prison before, and have remained only a common person, or gone back to be a slave to some new master; but now his liberation secured his emancipation from slavery and set him in the position which enabled him to provide for his father and his family in the land of Goshen, and so the sheaves did homage to his sheaf, and the sun and moon and eleven stars fulfilled the vision which he had seen so many years before.

You see, brethren, there is a time of deliverance, and the time is fixed of God, and it is a right time: therefore we have quietly to wait for it. Doth not the husbandman wait for the precious fruits of the earth, and will not you tarry for the fruits of the promise? Be not impetuous. Hush those

murmuring thoughts, never allow rash expressions to escape your lips. Bear on, young man, bear on. Ay, and greyheaded man, bear on, bear on. The anvil breaks the hammers in the long run; bear on, bear on. The rock breaks the billows, and is not itself broken. Bear the trials which come to you from God and from his word with joy and patience, for the end is not yet, but when it cometh it shall be everlasting joy.

I think I hear some saying all round the place, "Ah, I see these believers are a very tried people, who would wish to be one of them?" Harken, friend, and I will tell thee something. Joseph was not the only person in prison, and the righteous are not the only people who are afflicted. The chief butler was in prison, and the chief baker, too. I wonder whether the butler and baker are here, looking sadly to-day. If so, there is this difference between them and Joseph, that the Lord is not with them, but he is with Joseph, and that makes a vast difference, for

"Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage."

If God is in the prison with Joseph, Joseph is happy, but it is not so with you tried worldlings. I wonder, O butler and baker, whether you have had any dream; I wonder what has passed through your minds this morning. Wherefore look you so sadly to-day? I am no interpreter of dreams, but perhaps I can unriddle yours. Was a vine before you in your dream? That true and living vine? Did it bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit before your eyes, and did you take of its clusters, and present its pure blood to the King? If so, you will be set free, your dream means salvation: for there is a vine of the Lord's own planting whose wine maketh glad the heart of man, and he who takes of its living fruit is accepted. Dost thou know how to take those clusters and to squeeze them out? If so, the King will rejoice in thee, for nothing is so dear to him as the fruit of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus.

But hast thou dreamed of cakes which thou hast made by thine own skill? Not fruits from a vine, living and full, but mere cakes, sweetened with thine own self-righteousness, baked in the oven of thine own zeal and industry, and dost thou hope to set these before the King? The birds of

the air already peck at them, thou beginnest now to feel that thy works are not altogether what thou thoughtest them to be. Oh, if this be thy dream I tremble for thee, for thou wilt come to an ill end. I pray the Lord put that dream from thee, and teach thee something better. Salvation is of the Lord; whether for butler, or baker, or Joseph, redemption is by Jesus only. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength, and they that trust in him shall never be ashamed or confounded, world without end. Amen.

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## **The Triumphal Entry Into Jerusalem**

Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. - Matthew 21:5

We have read the chapter from which our text is taken; let me now rehearse the incident in your hearing. There was an expectation upon the popular mind of the Jewish people, that Messiah was about to come. They expected him to be a temporal prince, one who would make war upon the Romans and restore to the Jews their lost nationality. There were many who, though they did not believe in Christ with a spiritual faith, nevertheless hoped that perhaps he might be to them a great temporal deliverer, and we read that on one or two occasions they would have taken him and made him a king, but that he hid himself. There was an anxious desire that somebody or other should lift the standard of rebellion and lead the people against their oppressors. Seeing the mighty things which Christ did, the wish was father to the thought, and they imagined that He might probably restore to Israel the kingdom and set them free. The Saviour at length saw that it was coming to a crisis. For him it must either be death for having disappointed popular expectation, or else he must yield to the wishes of the people, and be made a king. You know which he chose. He came to Save others, and not to be made a king himself in the sense in which they understood him. The Lord had worked a most remarkable miracle, he had raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been buried four days. This was a miracle so novel and so astounding, that it became town talk. Multitudes went out of Jerusalem to Bethany, it was only about two miles distant, to see Lazarus. The miracle was well authenticated, there were multitudes of witnesses, it was generally accepted as being one of the greatest marvels of the age, and they drew the inference from it that Christ must be the Messiah. The people determined that now they would make him a king, and that now he should lead them against the hosts of Rome. He, intending no such thing, nevertheless overruled their enthusiasm that by it he might have an opportunity of performing that which had been written of him in the

prophets. You must not imagine that all those who strewed the branches in the way and cried "Hosanna" cared about Christ as a spiritual prince. No, they thought that he was to be a temporal deliverer, and when they found out afterwards that they were mistaken they hated him just as much as they had loved him, and "Crucify him, crucify him," was as loud and vehement a cry as "Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Our Saviour thus availed himself of their mistaken enthusiasm for divers wise ends and purposes. It was needful that the prophecy should be fulfilled—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold thy King cometh unto thee, he is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." It was needful again, that he should make a public claim to be the Son of David, and that he should claim to be the rightful inheritor of David's throne,—this he did on this occasion. It was needful too, that he should leave his enemies without excuse. In order that they might not say, "If thou be the Messiah, tell us plainly," he did tell them plainly. This riding through the streets of Jerusalem was as plain a manifesto and proclamation of his royal rights as could possibly have been issued. I think, moreover,—and upon this I build the discourse of this morning,—I think that Christ used the popular fanaticism as an opportunity of preaching to us a living sermon, embodying great truths which are too apt to be forgotten because of their spiritual character, embodying them in the outward form and symbol of himself riding as a king, attended by hosts of followers. We come to this as the subject of our sermon. Let us what we can learn from it.

I. One of the first things we learn is this. By thus through the streets in state, Jesus Christ claimed to be a king. That claim had been to a great extent kept in the background until now, but ere he goes to his Father, when his enemies' rage has reached its utmost fury, and when his own hour of deepest humiliation has just arrived, he makes an open claim before the eyes of all men to be called and acknowledged a king. He summonses first his heralds. Twit disciples come. He sends forth his mandate—"Go ye into the village over against you, and ye shall find an ass and a colt." He gathers together his courtiers. His twelve disciples, those who usually attended him, come around him. He mounts the ass which of old had been ridden by the Jewish lawgivers, the rulers of the



people. He begins to ride through the streets and the multitudes clap their hands. It is reckoned by some that no fewer than three thousand people must have been present on the occasion, some going before some following after, and others standing on either side to see the show. He rides to his capital; the streets of Jerusalem, the royal city, are open to him, like a king, he ascends to his palace. He was a spiritual king, and therefore he went not to the palace temporal but to the palace spiritual. He rides to the temple, and then, taking possession of it, he begins to teach in it as he had not done before. He had been sometimes in Solomon's porch, but he was oftener on the mountain's side than in the temple; but now, like a king, he takes possession of his palace, and there, sitting down on his prophetic throne, he teaches the people in his royal courts. Ye princes of the earth, give ear, there is one who claims to be numbered with you. It is Jesus, the Son of David, the King of the Jews. Room for him, ye emperors, room for him! Room for the man who was born in a manger! Room for the man whose disciples were fishermen! Room for him whose garment was that of a peasant, without seam, woven from the top throughout! He wears no crown except the crown of thorns, yet he is more royal than you. About his loins he wears no purple, yet he is more imperial far than you. Upon his feet there are no silver sandals bedight with pearls, yet he is more glorious than you. Room for him: room for him! Hosanna! Hosanna! Let him be proclaimed again a King! a King! a King! Let him value his place upon his throne, high above the kings of the earth. This is what he then did, he proclaimed himself a King.

II. Moreover, Christ by this act showed what sort of a king he might have been if he had pleased, and what sort of a king he might be now, if he willed it. Had it been our Lord's will, those multitudes who followed him in the streets would actually have crowned him there and then, and bowing the knee, they would have accepted him as the branch that sprung out of the dried root of Jesse—him that was to come—the ruler, the Shiloh among God's people. He had only to have said a word, and they would have rushed with him at their head to Pilate's palace, and taking him by surprise, with but few soldiers in the land, Pilate might soon have been his prisoner, and have been tried for his life. Before the indomitable valor and the tremendous fury of a Jewish army, Palestine might soon have been cleared of all the Roman legions, and have become again a royal

land. Nay, we aver it, with his power of working miracles, with his might by which he drove the soldiers back, when he said, "I am he;" he might have cleared not only that land but every other, he might have marched from country to country, and from kingdom to kingdom, till every royal city and every regal state would have yielded to his supremacy. He could have made those that dwelt in the isles of the sea to bow before him, and they that inhabit the wilderness could have been bidden to lick the dust. There was no reason, O ye kings of the earth, why Christ should not have been mightier than you. If his kingdom had been of this world, he might have founded a dynasty more lasting than yours, he might have gathered troops before whose might your legions would be melted like snow before the summer's sun, he might have dashed to pieces the Roman image, till, a broken mass, like a potter's vessel shivered by a rod of iron, it might have been dashed to shivers.

It is even so, my brethren. If it were Christ's will, he might make his saints, everyone of them, a prince, he might make his Church rich and powerful, he might lift up his religion if he chose, and make it the most magnificent and sumptuous. If it were his will, there is no reason why all the glory we read of in the Old Testament under Solomon, might not be given to the Church under David's greater Son. But he does not come to do it, and hence the impertinence of those who think that Christ is to be worshipped with a gorgeous architecture, with magnificent vestments, with proud processions, with the alliance of states with churches, with making the bishops of God magnificent lords and rulers, with lifting up the Church herself, and attempting to put upon her shoulders those garments that will never fit her, vestments that were never meant for her. If Christ cared for this world's glory, it might soon be at his feet. If he willed to take it, who should raise a tongue against his claim, or who should lift a finger against his might! But he cares not for it. Take your gewgaws elsewhere, take your tinsel hence, he wants it not. Remove your glory, and your pomp, and your splendor, he needs it not at your hands. His kingdom is not of this world, else would his servants fight, else were his ministers clothed in robes of scarlet, and his servants would sit among princes, he cares not for it. People of God, seek not after it. What your Master would not have, do not court yourselves. Oh! Church of Christ what thine husband disdained, do thou disdain also. He might have had

it, but he would not. And he read to us the lesson, that if all these things might be the Church's, it were well for he to pass by and say, "These are not for me—I was not meant to shine in these borrowed plumes."

III. But thirdly, and here lies the pith of the matter, you have seen that Christ claimed to be a king; you have seen what kind of a king he might have been and would not be, but now you see what kind of a king he is, and what kind of a king claimed to be. What was his kingdom? What its nature? What was his royal authority? Who were to be his subjects? What his laws? What his government? Now you perceive at once from the passage taken as a whole, that Christ's kingdom is a very strange one, totally different from anything that ever has been seen or ever will be seen besides.

It is a kingdom, in the first place, in which the disciples are the courtiers. Our blessed Lord had no prince in waiting, no usher of the black rod, no gentlemen-at-arms who supplied the place of those grand officers? Why a few poor humble fishermen, who were his disciples. Learn, then, that if in Christ's kingdom you would be a peer you must be a disciple; to sit at his feet is the honor which he will give you. Hearing his words obeying his commands, receiving of his grace—this is true dignity, this is true magnificence. The poorest man that loves Christ, or the humblest woman who is willing to accept him as her teacher, becomes at once one of the nobility that wait upon Christ Jesus. What a kingdom is this which makes fishermen nobles, and peasants princes while they remain but fishermen and peasants still! This is the kingdom of which we speak, in which discipleship is the highest degree, in which divine service is the patent of nobility.

It is a kingdom, strange to say it, in which the king's laws are none of them written upon paper. The king's laws are not promulgated by mouth of herald, but are written upon the heart. Do you not perceive that in the narrative Christ bids his servants go and take his royal steed, such as it was, and this was the law, "Loose him and let him go?" but where was the law written? It was written upon the heart of that man to whom the ass and the foal belonged, for he immediately said, "Let them go" cheerfully and with great joy; he thought it a high honor to contribute to the royal

state of this great King of peace. So, brethren, in the kingdom of Christ you shall see no huge law books, no attorneys, no solicitors, no barristers who have need to expound the law. The law-book is here in the heart, the barrister is here in the conscience, the law is written no more on parchment, no more promulgated and written, as the Roman decrees were, upon steel and brass, but upon the fleshy tablets of the heart. The human will is subdued to obedience, the human heart is moulded to Christ's image, his desire becomes the desire of his subjects, his glory their chief aim, and his law the very delight of their souls. Strange kingdom this, which needs no law save those which are written upon the hearts of the subjects.

Stranger still, as some will think it, this was a kingdom in which riches unsure no part whatever of its glory. There rides the King, the poorest of the whole state, for yonder King had not where to lay his head. There rides the King, the poorest of them all, upon another man's ass that he has borrowed. There rides the King, one who is soon to die; stripped of his robes to die naked and exposed. And yet he is the King of this kingdom, the First, the Prince, the Leader, the crowned One of the whole generation, simply because he had the least. He it was who had given most to others, and retained least himself. He who was least selfish and most disinterested, he who lived most for others, was King of this kingdom. And look at the courtiers, look at the princes! they were all poor too; they had no flags to hang out from the windows, so they cast their poor clothes upon the hedges or hung them from the windows as he rode along. They had no splendid purple to make a carpet for the feet of his ass, so they cast their own toil-worn clothes in the way, they strewed along the path palm branches which they could easily reach from the trees which lined the road, because they had no money with which to bear the expense of a greater triumph. Every way it was a poor thing. No spangles of gold, no flaunting banners no blowing of silver trumpets, no pomp, no state! It was poverty's own triumph. Poverty enthroned on Poverty's own beast rides through the streets. Strange kingdom this, brethren! I trust we recognize it—a kingdom in which he that is chief among us, is not he that is richest in gold, but he that is richest in faith; a kingdom which depends on no revenue accept the revenue of divine grace; a kingdom which bids every man sit down under its shadow with

delight, be he rich or be he poor.

Strange kingdom this! But, brethren, here is something perhaps yet more exceeding wonderful, it was a kingdom without armed force. Oh, prince, where are thy soldiers? Is this thine army? These thousands that attend thee? Where are their swords? They carry branches of palm. Where are their accoutrements? They have almost stripped themselves to pave thy way with their garments. Is this thine host? Are these thy battalions? Oh strange kingdom, without an army! Most strange King, who wears no sword, but rides along in this midst of his people conquering and to conquer a strange kingdom, in which there is the palm without the sword, the victory without the battle. No blood, no tears, no devastation, no burned cities, no mangled bodies! King of peace, King of peace, this is thy dominion! 'Tis even so in the kingdom over which Christ is king to-day, there is no force to be used. If the kings of the earth should any to the ministers of Christ, "We will lend you our soldiers," our reply would be, "What can we do with them?—as soldiers they are worthless to us." It was an ill day for the Church when she borrowed the army of that unhallowed heathen, the emperor Constantine and thought that would make her great. She gained nothing by it save pollution, degradation and shame, and that Church which asks the civil arm to help it, that Church which would make her Sabbaths binding on the people by force of law, that Church which would have her dogmas proclaimed with beat of drum, and make the fist or the sword to become her weapons, knoweth not what spirit she is of. These are carnal weapons. They are out of place in a spiritual kingdom. His armies are loving thoughts, his troops are kind words. The power by which he rules his people is not the strong hand and the stretched-out arm of police or soldiery, but by deeds of love and words of overflowing benediction he asserts his sovereign sway.

This was a strange kingdom too, my brethren, because it was without any pomp. If you call it pomp, what singular pomp it was! When our kings are proclaimed, three strange fellows, the like of whom one would never see at any other time, called heralds, come riding forth to proclaim the king. Strange are their dresses, romantic their costume, and with sound of trumpet the king is magnificently proclaimed. Then comes the coronation and how the nation is moved from end to end with transport when the

new king is about to be crowned! What multitudes crowd the street. Sometimes of old the fountains were made to flow with wine, and there was scarce a street which was not hung with tapestry throughout. But here comes the King of kings, the Prince of the kings of the earth; no mottled steed, no prancing horse which would keep at a distance the sons of poverty; he rides upon his ass, and as he rides along speaks kindly to the little children, who are crying, "Hosanna," and wishes well to the mothers and fathers of the lowest grade, who crowd around him. He is approachable; he is not divided from them; he claims not to be their superior, but their servant so little stately as a king, he was the servant of all. No trumpet sounds—he is content with the voice of men, no caparisons upon his ass, but his own disciple's garments, no pomp but the pomp which loving hearts right willingly yielded to him. Thus on he rides; his the kingdom of meekness, the kingdom of humiliation. Brethren, may we belong to that kingdom too; may we feel in our hearts that Christ is come in us to cast down every high and every proud thought, that every valley may be lifted up, and every hill may be abased, and the whole land exalted in that day!

Listen again, and this perhaps is a striking part of Christ's kingdom—he came to establish a kingdom without taxations. Where were the collectors of the King's revenue? You say he had not any; yes he had, but what a revenue it was! Every man took off his garments willingly; he never asked it; his revenue flowed freely from the willing gifts of his people. The first had lent his ass and his colt, the rest had given their clothes. Those who had scarce clothes to part with, plucked the branches from the trees, and here was state for once which cost no man anything, or rather for which nothing was demanded of any man, but everything spontaneously given. This is the kingdom of Christ,—a kingdom which subsists not upon tithe, Church-rate or Easter dues, but a kingdom which lives upon the free-will offering of the willing people, a kingdom which demands nothing of any man, but which comes to him with a stronger force than demand, saying to him, "Thou art not under the law, but under grace, wilt thou not, being bought with a price, consecrate thyself and all that thou hast, to the service of the King of kings! Brethren, do you think me wild and fanatical in talking of a kingdom of this sort? Indeed, 'twere fanatical if we said that any mere man could establish such a dominion. But Christ has done

it, and this day there be tens of thousands of men in this world who call him King, and who feel that he is more their King than the ruler of their Dative land; that they give to him a sincerer homage than they ever give to the beg beloved sovereign, they feel that his power over them is such as they would not wish to resist—the power of love, that their gifts to him are an too little, for they wish to give themselves away, 'tis all that they can do. Marvellous and matchless kingdom! it's like shall never be found on earth.

Before I leave this point, I should like to remark that apparently this was a kingdom in which all creatures were considered. Why did Christ have two beasts? There was an ass and a colt the foal of an ass; he rode on the foal of the ass because it had never been ridden before. Now I have looked at several of the commentators to see what they say about it, and one old commentator has made me laugh—I trust he will not make you laugh too—by saying, that Christ telling his disciples to bring the foal as well as the sea should teach us thee infants ought to be baptized as well as their parents, which seemed to me to be an argument eminently worthy of childish baptism. Thinking the matter over, however, I consider there is a better reason to be given,—Christ would not have any pain in his kingdom, he would not have even an ass suffer by him, and if the foal had been taken away from its mother, there would have been the poor mother in the stable at home, thinking of its foal, and there would have been the foal longing to get back, like those oxen that the Philistines used when they took back the ark, and which went lowing as they went, because their calves were at home. Wondrous kingdom of Christ, in which the very beast shall have its share! "For the creature was made subject to vanity by our sin." It was the beast that suffered because we sinned, and Christ intends that his kingdom should bring back the beast to its own pristine happiness. He would make us merciful men, considerative even to the beasts. I believe that when his kingdom fully comes, the animal nature will be put back to its former happiness. "Then shall the lion eat straw like the ox, the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den." Old Eden's peacefulness, and the familiarity between man and the lower creatures, shall come back once more. And even now, wherever the gospel is fully known in man's heart, man begins to recognize that he has no right

wantonly to kill a sparrow or a worm, because it is in Christ's dominion; and he who would not ride a foal without having its mother by its side, that it might be at peace and happy, would not have any of his disciples think lightly of the meanest creature that his hands have made. Blessed kingdom this which considereth even the berate! Doth God care for oxen? Ay, that he doth; and for the very ass itself, that heir of toil, he careth. Christ's kingdom, then, shall care for beasts as well as men.

Once more: Christ, in riding through the streets of Jerusalem, taught in a public manner, that his kingdom was to be one of joy. Brethren, when great conquerors ride through the streets, you often hear of the joy of the people; how the women throw roses on the pathway, how they crowd around the hero of the day, and wave their handkerchiefs to show their appreciation of the deliverance he has wrought. The city has been long besieged; the champion has driven away the besiegers, and the people will now have rest. Fling open wide the gates, clear the road and let the hero come, let the meanest page that is in his retinue be honored this day for the deliverer's sake. Ah! brethren, but in those triumphs how many tears there are that are hidden! There is a woman who hears the sound of the bells for victory, and she says, "Ah! victory indeed, but I am a widow, and my little ones are orphans." And from the balconies where beauty looks down and smiles, there may be a forgetfulness for the moment of friends and kindred over whom they will soon have to weep, for every battle is with blood, and every conquest is with woe, and every shout of victory hath in it weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Every sound of trumpet because the battle is obtained, doth but cover over the cries, the sorrows, and the deep agonies of those that have been bereaved of their kinsfolk! But in thy triumph, Jesu, there were no tears! When the little children cried, "Hosanna," they had not lost their fathers in battle. When the men and women shouted, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," they had no cause to shout with bated breath, or to mar their joys with the remembrance of misery. No, in his kingdom there is unalloyed, unmingled joy. Shout, shout, ye that are subjects of King Jesus! Sorrows ye may have, but not from him, troubles may come to you because you are in the world, but they come not from him, His service is perfect liberty. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace.



"Joy to the world, the Saviour comes,  
The Saviour promised long;  
Let every heart prepare a tune,  
And every voice a song."

He comes wipe away your tears and not to make them flow, he comes to lift you from your dunghills and set you upon his throne, to fetch you from your dungeons and make you leap in liberty.

"Blessings abound wherein he reigns,  
The prisoner leaps to lose his chain;  
The weary find eternal rest,  
And all the eons of want are blessed."

Singular kingdom this!

IV. And now I come to my fourth and last head. The Saviour, in his triumphal entrance into the capital of his fathers, declared to us very plainly the practical effects of his kingdom. Now what are these? One of the first effects was that the whole city was moved. What does that mean? It means that everybody had something to say about it, and that everybody felt something because Christ rode through the street. There were some who leaned from the tops of their houses, and looked down the street and said to one another—"Aha! Did ever you see such fool's play as this? Humph! Here is Jesus of Nazareth down here riding on an ass! Surely if he meant to be king he might have chosen a horse. Look at him! They call that pomp! There is some old fisherman has just thrown down his bad-smelling garment; I dare say it had fish in it an hour or two ago? "Look," says one, "see that old beggar throwing his cap into the air for joy!" "Aha!" say they, "was there ever such a ridiculous thing as that?" I cannot put it in such terms as they would describe it; if I could, I think I would. I should like to make you see how ridiculous this must have seemed to the people. Why, if Pilate himself had heard about it he would have said—"Ah! there is nothing much to fear from that. There is no fear that that man will ever upset Caesar; there is no fear that he will ever overturn an army. Where are their swords? There is not a sword among

them! They have no cries that sound like rebellion; their songs are only some religious verses taken out of the Psalms." "Oh!" says he, "the whole thing is contemptible and ridiculous." And this was the opinion of a great many in Jerusalem. Perhaps that is your opinion, my friend. The kingdom of Christ, you say, is ridiculous; you do not believe perhaps that there are any people who are ruled by him though we say that we own him as our King, and that we feel the law of love to be a law which constrains us to sweet obedience. "Oh," you say, "it is cant and hypocrisy." And there are some who attend where they have golden censers, and altars, and priests, and they say, "Oh! a religion that is so simple—singing a few hymns, and offering extempore prayer!—Ah! give me a bishop with a mitre—a fine fellow in lawn sleeves—that is the thing for me." "Oh," says another, "let me hear the peals of the organ; let me see the thing done scientifically, let me see a little drapery too; let the man come up clad in his proper garb to show that he is something different from other people; do not let him stand dressed as if he were an ordinary man; let me see something in the worship different from anything I have seen before." They want it clothed with a little pomp, and because if is not so they say—"Ah! Humph!" They sneer at it, and this is all that Christ gets from multitudes of men who think themselves exceeding wise. He is to them foolishness and they pass by with a sneer. Your sneers will be exchanged for tears ere long sirs! When he comes with real pomp and splendor you will weep and wail, because you disowned the King of Peace.

"The Lord shall come! a dreadful form,  
With rainbow wreath and robes of storm,  
With cherub voice and wings of wind,  
The appointed Judge of all mankind."

Then you will find it inconvenient to have treated him with contempt. Others no doubt there were in Jerusalem who were filled with curiosity. They said—"Dear me, whatever can it be? What is the meaning of it? Who is this? I wish you would come," they said to their neighbors, "and tell us the history of this singular man, we should like to know about it." Some of them said, "He is gone to the temple, I dare say he will work a miracle;" so off they ran, and squeezed and pressed, and thronged to see a marvel. They were like Herod, they longed to see some wonder wrought by him. It

was the first day of Christ's coming too, and of course the enthusiasm might last some nine days if he would keep it up, so they were very curious about it. And this is all Christ gets from thousands of people. They hear about a revival of religion. Well, they would like to know what it is and hear about it. There is something doing at such-and-such a place of worship; well, they would like to go if it were only to see the place. "There is a strange minister says queer things; let us go and hear him. We had intended to go out"—you know who I mean among yourselves—"we had intended to go out on an excursion today," said you, "but let us go there instead." Just so, curiosity, curiosity; this is all Christ gets to-day, and he that died upon the cross becomes a theme for an idle tale, and he that is Lord of angels and adored of men, is to be talked of as though he were a Wizard of the North or some eccentric impostor! Ah! you will find it inconvenient to have treated him thus by-and-bye; for when he comes, and when every eye shall see him, you who merely curiously enquired for him shall find that he shall inquire for you, not with animosity but with wrath, and it shall be—"Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." But anon the crowd there were some who were worse still, for they looked on the whole thing with envy "Ah!" said Rabbi Simeon to Rabbi Hillel, "the people were never so pleased with us. We know a great deal more than that impostor; we have read through all our religious books." "Don't you remember him," says one, "that when he was a boy he was rather precocious? You remember he came into the temple and talked with us, and since then he deceiveth the people," meaning by that he outshone them, that he had more esteem in the hearts of the multitude than they had, though they were prouder far. "Oh!" said the Pharisee, "he does not wear any phylactery, and I have made mine very large; I have made my garments almost all borders, so that they may be exceeding broad." "Ah!" says another, "I tithe my mint, my anise, and my cummin, and I stand at the corner of the street and blow a trumpet when I give away a penny, but yet people will not put me on an ass; they will not clap their hands and say, 'Hosanna' to me, but the whole earth is gone after this man like a parcel of children. Besides, think of going into the temple disturbing their betters, disturbing us who are making a show of our pretended prayers and standing in the courts!" And this is what Christ gets from a great many. They do not like to see Christ's cause get on. Nay, they would have Christ be lean that they might fatten themselves upon the plunder, they

would have his Church be despicable. They like to hear of the falls of Christian ministers. If they can find a fault in a Christian man "Report it, report it, report it," say they. But if a man walk uprightly, if he glorifies Christ, if the Church increases, if souls are saved, straightway there is an uproar and the whole city is stirred, the whole uproar begins and is carried on by falsehoods, lying accusations, and slanders against the characters of Christ's people. In some way or other, men are sure to be moved, if they are not moved to laugh, if they are not moved to enquire, they are moved to envy. But blessed is it that some in Jerusalem were moved to rejoice. Oh! there were many who, like Simeon and Anna rejoiced to see that day, and many of them went home and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." There was many a bedridden woman in the back streets of Jerusalem, that sat up in the bed and said, "Hosanna," and wished that she could get down into the street, that she might throw her old mantle in the way, and might bow before him who was the King of the Jews. There were many weeping eyes that wiped away their tears that day, and many mourning believers who began from that hour to rejoice with joy unspeakable. And so there are some of you that hear of Christ the King with joy. You join in the hymn; not as we have all joined with the voice, but with the heart.

"Rejoice, the Saviour reigns,  
The God of peace and love  
When he had purged our stains.  
He took his seat above  
Rejoice, rejoice!  
Rejoice aloud, ye saints, rejoice!"

Such, then, the first effect of Christ's kingdom! Wherever it comes, the city is stirred. Do not believe the gospel is preached at all if it does not make a stir. Do not believe, my brethren, that the gospel is preached in Christ's way if it does not make some angry and some happy, if it does not make many enemies and some friends.

There is yet another practical effect of Christ's kingdom. He went up to the temple and there at one table sat a lot of men with baskets containing

pairs of doves. "Any doves, sir, any doves!" He looked at them and said, "Take these things hence." He spoke with a holy furore. There were others changing money as the people came in to pay their half shekel; he overturned the tables and set them all a-flying, and soon emptied the whole court of all these merchants who were making a gain of godliness, and making religion a stalking-horse for their own emolument. Now this is what Christ does wherever he comes. I wish he would come in the Church of England a little more, and purge out the sale of advowsons, get rid of that accursed simony which is still tolerated by law and purge out the men that are malappropriators, who take that which belongs to the ministers of Christ, and apply it to their own uses. I would that he would come into all our places of worship, so that once for all it might be seen that they who serve God serve him because they love him, and not for what they can get by it. I would that every professor of religion could be quite clean in his own conscience that he never made a profession to get respectability or to get esteem, but only made it that he might honor Christ and glorify his Master. The spiritual meaning of it all is this—We have no houses of God now; bricks and mortar are not holy, the places where we worship God are places of worship, but they are not the houses of God any longer than we are in them. We believe no superstition which makes any place holy, but we are the temple of God. Men themselves are God's temples, and where Christ comes he drives out the buyers and sellers, he expunges all selfishness. I will never believe that Christ, the King, has made your heart his palace till you are unselfish. Oh, how many professors there are who want to get so much honor, so much respect! As to giving to the poor, thinking it more blessed to give than to receive, as for feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, as for living for other people, and not for themselves—they do not think of that. O Master, come into thy temple and drive out our selfishness, now come, turn out all those things which would make it convenient to serve Mammon by serving God; help us to live unto thee, and to live for others by living to thee, and not live unto ourselves!

The last practical effect of our Lord Jesus Christ's kingdom was he held a grand levee; he had, if I may so speak, a drawing-room day; and who were the people who came to attend him? Now, ye courtiers, the disciples, show up your nobility and gentry that are come to wait upon him. Here

comes one man, he has a bandage over here, and the other eye has almost failed—show him in, here comes another, his feet are all twisted and contorted—show him in, here comes another limping on two crutches, both his limbs are disabled, and another has lost his limbs. Here they come and here is the levee. The King himself comes here and holds a grand meeting, and the blind and the lame are his guests, and now he comes, he touches that blind eye and light shines in; he speaks to this man with a withered leg, he walks; he touches two eyes at once, and they both see, and to another he says, "I will take away thy crutches, stand upright and rejoice and leap with joy." This is what the King does wherever he comes. Come hither this morning, I beseech thee, thou great King! There are blind eyes here that cannot see thy beauty. Walk, Jesu, walk among this crowd and touch the eyes. Ah! then, brethren, if he should do that, you will say, "There is a beauty in him that I never saw before." Jesu, touch their eyes, they cannot take away their own blindness, do thou do it! Help them to look to thee hanging upon the cross! They cannot do it unless thou dost enable them. May they do it now, and find life in thee! O Jesu, there are some here that are lame—knees that cannot bend, they have never prayed; there are some here whose feet will not run in the way of thy commandments—feet that will not carry them up where thy name is praised, and where thou art had in honor. Walk, great King, walk thou in solemn pomp throughout this house, and make it like the temple of old! Display here thy power and hold thy grand meeting in the healing of the lame and the curing of the blind "Oh!" saith one, "I would that he would open my blind eyes." Soul, he will do it, he will do it. Breathe thy prayer out now, and it shall be done, for he is nigh thee now. He is standing by thy side, he speaks to thee, and he saith—"Look unto me and be thou saved, thou vilest of the vile." There is another, and he says—"Lord, I would be made whole." He says—"Be thou whole then." Believe on him and he will save thee. He is near you, brother, he is near you. He is not in the pulpit more than he is in the pew, nor in one pew more than in another. Say not—"Who shall go to heaven to find him, or into the depths to bring him up?" He is near you; he will hear your prayer even though you speak not; he will hear your heart speak. Oh! say unto him—"Jesus, heal me," and he will do it; he will do it now. Let us breathe the prayer, and then we will part.

Jesus, heal us! Save us, Son of David, save us! Thou seest how blind we be—oh, give us the sight of faith! Thou seest how lame we be—oh, give us the strength of grace! And now, e'en now, thou Son of David, purge out our selfishness, and come and live and reign in us as in thy temple-palaces! We ask it, O thou great King, for thine own sake. Amen. And ere we leave this place, we cry again, "Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

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## **The True Christian's Blessedness**

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. - Romans 8:28

I. We have here the description of a true Christian, and a declaration of that Christian's blessedness. We have him first very succinctly, but very fully described in these words - "Them that love God, them who are the called according to his purpose." These two expressions are the great distinguishing marks whereby we are able to separate the precious from the vile, by discovering to us who are the children of God.

The first contains an outward manifestation of the second - "Them that love God." Now, there are many things in which the worldly and the godly do agree, but on this point there IS a vital difference. No ungodly man loves God - at least not in the Bible sense of the term. An unconverted man may love a God, as, for instance, the God of nature, and the God of the imagination; but the God of revelation no man can love, unless grace has been poured into his heart, to turn him from that natural enmity of the heart towards God, in which all of us are born. And there may be many differences between godly men, as there undoubtedly are; they may belong to different sects, they may hold very opposite opinions, but all godly men agree in this, that they love God. Whosoever loveth God, without doubt, is a Christian; and whosoever loveth him not, however high may be his pretensions, however boastful his professions, hath not

seen God, neither known him for "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." True believers love God as their *Father*; they have "the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry Abba, Father." They love him as their *King*, they are willing to obey him, to walk in his commands is their delight; no path is so soft to their feet as the path of God's precepts, the way of obedience thereunto. They love God also as their *Portion*, for in him they live and move and have their being; God is their all, without him they have nothing, but possessing him, however little they may have of outward good, they feel that they are rich to all the intents of bliss. They love God as their future *Inheritance*, they believe that when days and years are past they shall enter into the bosom of God; and their highest joy and delight is the full conviction and belief, that one day they shall dwell for ever near his throne, be hidden in the brightness of his glory, and enjoy his everlasting favor. Dost thou love God, not with lip-language, but with heart-service? Dost thou love to pay him homage? Dost thou love to hold communion with him? Dost thou frequent his mercy-seat? Dost thou abide in his commandments, and desire to be conformed unto his Image? If so, then the sweet things which we shall have to say this morning are thine. But if thou art no lover of God, but a stranger to him, I beseech thee do not pilfer to-day and steal a comfort that was not intended for thee. "All things work together for good," but not to all men; they only work together for the good of "them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Note the second phrase, which contains also a description of the Christian - "the *called* according to his purpose." However much the Arminian may try to fritter away the meaning of this 8th chapter of the Romans we are obliged as long as we use terms and words to say, that the 8th chapter of the Romans and the 9th, are the very pillars of that Gospel which men now call Calvinism. No man after having read these chapters attentively, and having understood them, can deny that the doctrines of sovereign, distinguishing grace, are the sum and substance of the teaching of the Bible. I do not believe that the Bible is to be understood except by receiving these doctrines as true. The apostle says that those who love God are "the called according to his purpose" by which he means to say two things - first, that all who love God love him because he called them to love him. *He* called them, mark you. All men are called by



the ministry, by the Word, by daily providence, to love God, there is a common call always given to men to come to Christ, the great bell of the gospel rings a universal welcome to every living soul that breathes; but alas! though that bell hath the very sound of heaven, and though all men do in a measure hear it, for "their line is gone out into all the earth and their Word unto the end of the world" yet there was never an instance of any man having been brought to God simply by that sound. All these things are insufficient for the salvation of any man; there must be superadded the special call, the call which man cannot resist, the call of efficacious grace, working in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure. Now, all them that love God love him because they have had a special, irresistible, supernatural call. Ask them whether they would have loved God if left to themselves, and to a man, whatever their doctrines, they will confess -

"Grace taught my soul to pray,  
Grace made my eyes o'erflow,  
'Tis grace that kept me to this day  
And will not let me go."

I never heard a Christian yet who said that he came to God of himself, left to his own free-will. Free-will may look very pretty in theory, but I never yet met any one who found it work well in practice. We all confess that if we are brought to the marriage-banquet -

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast  
That gently forced us in  
Else we had still refused to taste,  
And perished in our sin."

Many men cavil at election; the very word with some is a great bug ear; they no sooner hear it than they turn upon their heel indignantly. But this know, O man, whatever thou sayest of this doctrine, it is a stone upon which, if any man fall, he shall suffer loss, but if it fall upon him it shall grind him to powder. Not all the sophisms of the learned, nor all the legerdemain of the cunning, will ever be able to sweep the doctrine of election out of Holy Scripture. Let any man hear and judge. Hearken ye to

this passage in the 9th of Romans! "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand not of works, but of him that calleth; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor! What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory. Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." These are God's words; if any man doth cavil at them, let him cavil; he rejecteth the testimony of God against himself. If I promulgated the doctrine on my own authority, I could not blame you if you should turn against me, and reject it; but when, on the authority of Holy Scripture, I propound it, God forbid that any man should quarrel therewith.

I have affirmed, and I am sure most Christians will bear witness, that what I said was the truth, that if any man loveth God he loves him because God gave him grace to love him. Now, suppose I should put the following question to any converted man in this hall. *Side by side with you there sits an ungodly person; you two have been brought up together, you have lived in the same house, you have enjoyed the same means of grace, you are converted, he is not; will you please to tell me what has made the difference?* Without a solitary exception the answer would be this - "If I am a Christian and he is not, unto God be the honor." Do you suppose for a moment that there is any injustice in God in having given you grace which he did not give to another? I suppose you say, "Injustice, no; God has a right to do as he wills with his own; I could not

claim grace, nor could my companions, God *chose* to give it to me, the other has rejected grace wilfully to his own fault, and I should have done the same, but that he gave 'more grace,' whereby my will was constrained." Now, sir, if it is not wrong for God to do the thing, how can it be wrong for God to purpose to do the thing? and what is election, but God's purpose to do what he does do? It is a fact which any man must be a fool who would dare to deny that God does give to one man more grace shall to another; we cannot account for the salvation of one and the non-salvation of another but by believing, that God has worked more effectually in one man's heart than another's - unless you choose to give the honor to man, and say it consists in one man's being better than another, and if so I will have no argument with you, because you do not know the gospel at all, or you would know that salvation is not of works but of grace. If, then, you give the honor to God, you are bound to confess that God has done more for the man that is saved than for the man that is not saved. How, then, can election be unjust, if its effect is not unjust? However, just or unjust as man may choose to think it, God has done it, and the fact stands in man's face, let him reject it as he pleases. God's people are known by their outward mark: they love God, and the secret cause of their loving God is this - God chose them from before the foundation of the world that they should love him, and he sent forth the call of his grace, so that they were called according to his purpose, and were led by grace to love and to fear him. If that is not the meaning of the text I do not understand the English language. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, *to them who are the called according to his purpose.*"

Now, my hearers, before I proceed to enter into the text, let the question go round. Do I love God? Have I any reason to believe that I have been called according to his purpose? Have I been born again from above? Has the Spirit operated in my heart in a manner to which flesh and blood never can attain? Have I passed from death unto life by the quickening agency of the Holy Ghost? If I have, then God purposed that I should do so, and the whole of this great promise is mine.

II. We shall take the words one by one, and try to explain them.

1. Let us begin with the word "work." "We know that all things *work*." Look around, above, beneath, and all things *work*. They work, *in opposition to idleness*. The idle man that folds his arms or lies upon the bed of sloth is an exception to God's rule; for except himself all things work. There is not a star though it seemeth to sleep in the deep blue firmament, which doth not travel its myriads of miles and work; there is not an ocean, or a river, which is not ever working, either clapping its thousand hands with storms, or bearing on its bosom the freight of nations. There is not a silent nook within the deepest forest glade where work is not going on. Nothing is idle. The world is a great machine, but it is never standing still: silently all through the watches of the night, and through the hours of day, the earth revolveth on its axis, and works out its predestinated course. Silently the forest groweth, anon it is felled; but all the while between its growing and felling it is at work. Everywhere the earth works; mountains work: nature in its inmost bowels is at work; even the center of the great heart of the world is ever beating; sometimes we discover its working in the volcano and the earthquake, but even when most still all things are ever working.

They are ever working too, *in opposition to the word play*. Not only are they ceaselessly active, but they are active for a purpose. We are apt to think that the motion of the world and the different evolutions of the stars are but like the turning round of a child's windmill; they produce nothing. That old preacher Solomon once said as much as that. He said - "The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits." But Solomon did not add, that things are not what they seem. The world is not at play; it hath an object in its wildest movement. Avalanche, hurricane, earthquake, are but order in an unusual form; destruction and death are but progress in veiled attire. Everything that is and is done, worketh out some great end and purpose. The great machine of this world is not only in motion, but there is something weaving in it, which as yet mortal eye hath not fully seen, which our text hinteth at when it says, It is working out good for God's people.

And once again, all things work *in opposition to Sabbath*. We morally speak of work, especially on this day, as being the opposite of sacred rest and worship. Now, at the present moment all things work. Since the day when Adam fell all things have had to toil and labor. Before Adam's fall the world kept high and perpetual holiday; but now the world has come to its work-days, now it hath to toil. When Adam was in the garden the world had its Sabbath: and it shall never have another Sabbath till the Millennium shall dawn, and then when all things have ceased to work, and the kingdoms shall be given up to God, even the Father, then shall the world have her Sabbath, and shall rest; but at present all things do work.

Dear brethren, let us not wonder if we have to work too. If we have to toil, let us remember, this is the world's week of toil. The 6,000 years of continual labor, and toil, and travail, have happened not to us alone, but to the whole of God's great universe; the whole world is groaning, and travailing. Let us not be backward in doing our work. If all things are working, let us work too - "work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh when no man can work." And let the idle and slothful remember that they are a great anomaly; they are blots in the great work-writing of God; they mean nothing; in all the book of letters with which God has written out the great word "work," they are nothing at all. But let the man that worketh, though it be with the sweat of his brow and with aching hands, remember that he, if he is seeking to bless the Lord's people, is in sympathy with all things - not only in sympathy with their work, but in sympathy with their aim.

2. Now, the next word, "All things work *together*." That is *in opposition to their apparent confliction*. Looking upon the world with the mere eye of sense and reason, we say, "Yes, all things work, but they work contrary to one another. There are opposite currents; the wind bloweth to the north and to the south. The world's barque, it is true, is always tossed with waves, but these waves toss her first to the right and then to the left; they do not steadily bear her onward to her desired haven. It is true the world is always active, but it is with the activity of the battle-field, wherein hosts encounter hosts and the weaker are overcome." Be not deceived; it is not so; things are not what they seem; "all things work *together*." There is no

opposition in God's providence; the raven wing of war is co-worker with the dove of peace. The tempest strives not with the peaceful calm - they are linked together and work together, although they seem to be in opposition. Look at our history. How many an event has seemed to be conflicting in its day, that has worked out good for us? The strifes of barons and kings for mastery might have been thought to be likely to tread out the last spark of British liberty; but they did rather kindle the pile. The various rebellions of nations, the heavings of society, the strife of anarchy, the tumults of war - all, all these things, overruled by God, have but made the chariot of the church progress more mightily; they have not failed of their predestinated purpose - "good for the people of God." I know my brethren, it is very hard for you to believe this. "What!" say you? "I have been sick for many a day, and wife and children, dependent on my daily labor, are crying for food: will this work together for my good?" So saith the word, my brother, and so shalt thou find it ere long. "I have been in trade," says another, "and this commercial pressure has brought me exceedingly low, and distressed me: is it for my good?" My brother, thou art a Christian. I know thou dost not seriously ask the question, for thou knowest the answer of it. He who said, "all things work together," will soon prove to you that there is a harmony in the most discordant parts of your life. You shall find, when your biography is written, that the black page did but harmonize with the bright one - that the dark and cloudy day was but a glorious foil to set forth the brighter noon-tide of your joy. "All things work together." There is never a clash in the world: men think so, but it never is so. The charioteers of the Roman circus might with much cleverness and art, with glowing wheels, avoid each other; but God, with skill infinitely consummate, guides the fiery coursers of man's passion, yokes the storm, bits the tempest, and keeping each clear of the other from seeming evil still enduceth good, and better still; and better still in infinite progression.

We must understand the word "together," also in another sense. "All things work *together* for good:" that is to say, *none of them work separately*. I remember an old divine using a very pithy and homely metaphor, which I shall borrow to-day. Said he, "All things work *together* for good; but perhaps, any one of those 'all things' might destroy us if taken alone. The physician," says he, "prescribes medicine; you go to the

chemist, and he makes it up; there is something taken from this drawer, something from that phial, something from that shelf: any one of those ingredients, it is very possible, would be a deadly poison, and kill you outright, if you should take it separately, but he puts one into the mortar, and then another, and then another, and when he has worked them all up with his pestle, and has made a compound, he gives them all to you as a whole, and together they work for your good, but any one of the ingredients might either have operated fatally, or in a manner detrimental to your health." Learn, then, that it is wrong to ask, concerning any particular act of providence; is this for my good? Remember, it is not the one thing alone that is for your good; it is the one thing put with another thing, and that with a third, and that with a fourth, and all these mixed together, that work for your good. Your being sick very probably might not be for your good only God has something to follow your sickness, some blessed deliverance to follow your poverty, and he knows that when he has mixed the different experiences of your life together, they shall produce good for your soul and eternal good for your spirit. We know right well that there are many things that happen to us in our lives that would be the ruin of us if we were always to continue in the same condition. Too much joy would intoxicate us, too much misery would drive us to despair: but the joy and the misery, the battle and the victory, the storm and the calm, all these compounded make that sacred elixir whereby God maketh all his people perfect through suffering, and leadeth them to ultimate happiness. "All things work *together* for good."

3. Now we must take the next words. "All things work together *for good*." Upon these two words the meaning of my text will hinge. There are different senses to the word "good." There is *the worldling's sense*: "Who will show us any good?" - by which he means *transient good*, the good of the moment. "Who wilt put honey into my mouth? Who will feed my belly with hid treasures? Who will garnish my back with purple and make my table groan with plenty?" That is "good," - the vat bursting with wine, the barn full of corn! Now God has never promised that "all things shall work together" for such good as that to his people. Very likely all things will work together in a clean contrary way to that. Expect not, O Christian, that all things will work together to make thee rich; it is just possible they

may all work to make thee poor. It may be that all the different providences that shall happen to thee will come wave upon wave, washing thy fortune upon the rocks, till it shall be wrecked, and then waves shall break o'er thee, till in that poor boat, the humble remnant of thy fortune thou shalt be out on the wide sea, with none to help thee but God the Omnipotent. Expect not, then, that all things shall work together as for thy good.

*The Christian* understands the word "good" in another sense. By "good," he understands *spiritual good*. "Ah!" saith he, "I do not call gold good, but I call faith good! I do not think it always for my good to increase in treasure, but I know it is good to grow in grace. I do not know that it is for my good that I should be respectable and walk in good society; but I know that it is for my good that I should walk humbly with my God. I do not know that it is for my good that my children should be about me, like olive branches round my table, but I know that it is for my good that I should flourish in the courts of my God, and that I should be the means of winning souls from going down into the pit. I am not certain that it is altogether for my good to have kind and generous friends, with whom I may hold fellowship; but I know that it is for my good that I should hold fellowship with Christ, that I should have communion with him, even though it should be in his sufferings. I know it is good for me that my faith, my love, my every grace should grow and increase, and that I should be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ my blessed Lord and Master." Well, Christian, thou hast got upon the meaning of the text, then. "All things work together," for that kind of good to God's people. "Well!" says one, "I don't think anything of that, then." No, perhaps thou dost not; it is not very likely swine should ever lift their heads from their troughs to think aught of stars. I do not much wonder that thou shouldst despise spiritual good, for thou art yet "in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity;" a stranger to spiritual things, and let thy despising of spiritual things teach thee that thou art not spiritual, and therefore thou canst not understand the spiritual, because it must be spiritually discerned. To the Christian, however, the highest good he can receive on earth is to grow in grace. "There!" he says, "I had rather be a bankrupt in business than I would be a bankrupt in grace; let my fortune be decreased - better that, than that I should backslide; there! let thy waves and thy



billows roll over me - better an ocean of trouble than a drop of sin, I would rather have thy rod a thousand times upon my shoulders, O my God, than I would once put out my hand to touch that which is forbidden, or allow my foot to run in the way of gainsayers." The highest good a Christian has here is good spiritual.

And we may add, the text also means *good eternal*, lasting good. All things work together for a Christian's lasting good. They all work to bring him to Paradise - all work to bring him to the Saviour's feet. "So he bringeth them to their desired haven," said the Psalmist - by storm and tempest, flood and hurricane. All the troubles of a Christian do but wash him nearer heaven; the rough winds do but hurry his passage across the straits of this life to the port of eternal peace. All things work together for the Christian's eternal and spiritual good.

And yet I must say here, that sometimes all things work together for the Christian's *temporal good*. You know the story of old Jacob. "Joseph is not, Simeon is not, and now ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me," said the old Patriarch. But if he could have read God's secrets, he might have found that Simeon was not lost, for he was retained as a hostage - that Joseph was not lost but gone before to smooth the passage of his grey hairs into the grave, and that even Benjamin was to be taken away by Joseph in love to his brother. So that what seemed to be against him, even in temporal matters, was for him. You may have heard also the story of that eminent martyr who was wont always to say, "All things work together for good." When he was seized by the officers of Queen Mary, to be taken to the stake to be burned, he was treated so roughly on the road that he broke his leg; and they jeeringly said, "All things work together for good, do they? How will your broken leg work for your good?" "I don't know," said he, "how it will, but for my good I know it will work, and you shall see it so." Strange to say, it proved true that it was for his good; for being delayed a day or so on the road through his lameness, he just arrived in London in time enough to hear that Elizabeth was proclaimed queen, and so he escaped the stake by his broken leg. He turned round upon the men who carried him, as they thought, to his death, and said to them, "Now will you believe that all things work together for God?" So that though I said the drift of the text

was spiritual good, yet sometimes in the main current there may be carried some rich and rare temporal benefits for God's children as well as the richer spiritual blessings.

4. I am treating the text as you see, verbally. And now I must return to the word "work" - to notice the tense of it. "All things *work* together for good." It does not say that they *shall* work, or that they *have* worked; both of these are implied, but it says that they do work now. All things at this present moment are working together for the believer's good. I find it extremely easy to believe that all things *have* worked together for my good. I can look back at the past, and wonder at all the way whereby the Lord hath led me. If ever there lived a man who has reason to be grateful to Almighty God, I think I am that man. I can see black storms that have lowered o'er my head, and torrents of opposition that have run across my path, but I can thank God for every incident that ever occurred to me from my cradle up to now, and do not desire a better pilot for the rest of my days, than he who has steered me from obscurity and scorn, to this place to preach his word and feed this great congregation. And I doubt not that each of you, in looking back upon your past experience as Christians, could say very much the same. Through many troubles you have passed, but you can say, they have all been for your good. And somehow or other you have an equal faith for the future. You believe that all things will in the end work for your good. The pinch of faith always lies in the present tense. I can always believe the past, and always believe the future, but the present, the present, the present, that is what staggers faith. Now, please to notice that my text is in the present tense. "All things *work*," at this very instant and second of time. However troubled, downcast, depressed, and despairing, the Christian may be, all things are working now for his good; and though like Jonah he is brought to the bottom of the mountains, and he thinks the earth with her bars is about him for ever, and the weeds of despair are wrapped about his head, even in the uttermost depths all things are now working for his good. Here, I say again, is the pinch of faith. As an old countryman once said to me, from whom I gained many a pithy saying - "Ah! sir, I could always do wonders when there were no wonders to do. I feel, sir, that I could believe God; but then at the time I feel so there is not much to believe." And he just paraphrased it in his own dialect like this - "My arm is always strong,

and my sickle always sharp, when there is no harvest, and I think I could mow many an acre when there is no grass; but when the harvest is on I am weak, and when the grass groweth then my scythe is blunt." Have not you found it so too? You think you can do wondrous things; you say,

"Should earth against my soul engage,  
And hellish darts be hurled,  
Now I can smile at Satan's rage,  
And face a frowning world."

And now a little capful of wind blows on you and the tears run down your cheeks, and you say, "Lord, let me die; I am no better than my fathers." You, that were going to thrash mountains, find that molehills cast you down.

It behoveth each of us, then, to comfort and establish our hearts upon this word "work." "All things work." Merchant; though you have been sore pressed this week, and it is highly probable that next week will be worse still for you, believe that all things even then are working for your good. It will cost you many a pang to keep that confidence; but oh! for thy Master's honor, and for thine own comfort, retain that consolation. Should thine house of business threaten to tumble about thine ears so long as thou hast acted honourably, still bear thy cross. It shall work, it is working for thy good. This week, mother, thou mayest see thy first-born carried to the tomb. That bereavement is working for thy good. O man, within a few days, he that hath eaten bread with thee may lift up his heel against thee. It shall work for thy good. O thou that art high in spirits to-day, thou with the flashing eye and joyous countenance, ere the sun doth set some evil shall befall thee, and thou shalt be sad. Believe then that all things work together for thy good; if thou lovest God, and art called according to his purpose.

5. And now we close by noticing the *confidence* with which the apostle speaks. "A fiction!" says one; "a pleasant fiction, sir!" "Sentimentalism!" says another; "a mere poetic sentimentalism." "Ah!" cries a third; "a downright lie." "No," says another, "there is some truth in it, certainly; men do get bettered by their afflictions, but it is a truth that is not

valuable to me, for I do not realize the good that these things bring." Gentlemen, the apostle Paul was well aware of your objections; and therefore mark how confidently he asserts the doctrine. He does not say, "I am persuaded;" he does not say, "I believe;" but with unblushing confidence he appears before you and says, "*We*" (I have many witnesses) *we know* that all things work together." What Paul are you at? So strange and startling a doctrine as this asserted with such dogmatic impudence? What can you be at? Hear his reply! "*We know;*' In the mouth of two or three witnesses it shall all be established; but I have tens of thousands of witnesses." "*We know,*" and the apostle lifts his hand to where the white-robed hosts are praising God for ever. - "These," says he, "passed through great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: ask them!" And with united breath they reply, "*We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.*" Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Daniel, all the mighty ones that have gone before, tell out the tale of their history, write their autobiography, and they say, "*We!*" It is proven to a demonstration in our own lives; it is a fact which runs like a golden clue through all the labyrinth of our history - "All things work together for good to them that love God." "*We,*" says the apostle again - and he puts his hand upon his poor distressed brethren - he looks at his companions in the prisonhouse at Rome; he looks at that humble band of teachers in Rome, in Philippi, in all the different parts of Asia, and he says, "*We!*" "*We know* it. It is not with us a matter of doubt; we have tried it, we have proved it. Not only does faith believe it, but our own history convinces us of the truth of it." I might appeal to scores and hundreds here, and I might say, brethren, you with grey heads, rise up and speak. Is this true or not? I see the reverend man rise, leaning on his staff, and with the tears "uttering his old cheeks, he says, "Young man it is true, I have proved it; even down to grey hairs I have proved it; he made, and he will carry; he will not desert his own!" Veteran! you have had many troubles, have you not? He replies, "Youth! troubles? I have had many troubles that thou reckest not of, I have buried all my kindred, and I am like the last oak of the forest, all my friends have been felled by death long ago. Yet I have been upheld till now, who could hold me up but my God!" Ask him whether God has been once untrue to him and he will say, "No; not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised; all hath come to pass!" Brethren, we can confidently say, then,

hearing such a testimony as that, "We *know* that all things work." Besides, there are you of middle age, and even those of us who are young: the winter has not spared our branches, nor the lightnings ceased to scathe our trunk; yet here we stand; preserved by conquering grace. Hallelujah to the grace that makes all things work together for good!

O my hearer, art thou a believer in Christ? If not, I beseech thee, stop and consider! Pause and think of thy state; and if thou knowest thine own sinfulness this day, believe on Christ, who came to save sinners, and that done, all things shall work for thee, the tumbling avalanche, the rumbling earthquake the tottering pillars of heaven, all, when they fall or shake, shall not hurt thee, they shall still work out thy good. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved," for so runneth the gospel. The Lord bless you! Amen.

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## **True Prayer True Power!**

Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive and ye shall have them. - Mark 11:24

This verse has something to do with the faith of miracles; but I think it hath far more reference to the miracle of faith. We shall say at any rate, this morning, consider it in that light. I believe that this text is the inheritance not only of the apostles, but of all those who walked in the faith of the apostles, believing in the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ. The advice which Christ gave to the twelve and to his immediate followers, is repeated to us in God's Word this morning. May we have grace constantly to obey it. "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." How many persons

there are who complain that they do not enjoy prayer. They do not neglect it, for they dare not; but they would neglect it if they dared, so far are they from finding an pleasure therein. And have we not to lament that sometimes the chariot-wheels are taken off, and we drive right heavily when we are in supplication? We spend the time allotted, but we rise from our knees unrefreshed, like a man who has lain upon his bed but has not slept so as to really recover his strength. When the time comes round again conscience drives us to our knees, but there is not sweet fellowship with God. There is no telling out of our wants to him in the firm conviction that he will supply them. After having gone again through a certain round of customary utterances, we rise from our knees perhaps more troubled in conscience and more distressed in mind than we were before. There are many Christians, I think, who have to complain of this—that they pray not so much because it is a blessed thing to be allowed to draw near to God, as because they must pray, because it is their duty, because they feel that if they did not, they would lose one of the sure evidences of being Christians. Brethren, I do not condemn you; but at the same time, if I may be the means of lifting you up this morning from so low a state of grace into a higher and more healthy atmosphere, my soul shall be exceeding glad. If I can show you a more excellent way; if from this time forth you may come to look at prayer as your element, as one of the most delightful exercises of your life; if you shall come to esteem it more than your necessary food, and to value it as one of heaven's best luxuries, surely I shall have answered a great end, and you shall have to thank God for a great blessing.

Give me then your attention while I beg you, first, *to look at the text*; secondly *to look about you*; and the, *to look above you*.

I. First, LOOK AT THE TEXT. If you look at it carefully, I think you will perceive the essential qualities which are necessary to any great success and prevalence in prayer. According to our Saviour's description of prayer, there should always be some *definite objects* for which we should plead. He speaks of *things*—"what things soever ye desire." It seems then that he did not put it that God's children would go to him to pray when they have nothing to pray for. Another essential qualification of prayer is *earnest desire*; for the Master supposes here that when we pray we have

desires. Indeed it is not prayer, it may be something like prayer, the outward form or the bare skeleton, but it is not the living thing, the all-prevailing, almighty thing, called prayer, unless there be a fulness and overflowing of desires. Observe, too, that *faith* is an essential quality of successful prayer—"believe that ye receive them." Ye cannot pray so as to be heard in heaven and answered to your soul's satisfaction, unless you believe that God really hears and will answer you. One other qualification appears here upon the very surface, namely, that *a realizing expectation* should always go with a firm faith—"believe that ye receive them." Not merely believe that "ye shall" but "ye do" receive them—count them as if they were received, reckon them as if you had them already, and act as if you had them—act as if you were sure you should have them—believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Let us review these four qualifications, one by one.

To make prayer of any value, there should be definite objects for which to plead. My brethren, we often ramble in our prayers after this, that, and the other, and we get nothing because in each we do not really desire anything. We chatter about many subjects, but the soul does not concentrate itself upon any one object. Do you not sometimes fall on your knees without thinking beforehand what you mean to ask God for? You do so as a matter of habit, without any motion of your heart. You are like a man who should go to a shop and not know what articles he would procure. He may perhaps make a happy purchase when he is there, but certainly it is not a wise plan to adopt. And so the Christian in prayer may afterwards attain to a real desire, and get his end, but how much better would he speed if having prepared his soul by consideration and self-examination, he came to God for an object at which he was about to aim with real request. Did we ask an audience at Her Majesty's court, we should be expected to reply to the question, "What do you wish to see her for?" We should not be expected to go into the presence of Royalty, and then to think of some petition after we came there. Even so with the child of God. He should be able to answer the great question, "What is thy petition and what is thy request, and it shall be done unto thee?" Imagine an archer shooting with his bow, and not knowing where the mark is! Would he be likely to have success? Conceive a ship on a voyage of discovery, putting to sea without the captain having any idea of what he

was looking for! Would you expect that he would come back heavily laden either with the discoveries of science, or with the treasures of gold? In everything else you have a plan. You do not go to work without knowing that there is something that you designed to make; how is it that you go to God without knowing what you design to have? If you had some object you would never find prayer to be dull and heavy work; I am persuaded that you would long for it. You would say, "I have something that I want. Oh that I could draw near my God, and ask him for it; I have a need, I want to have it satisfied, and I long till I can get alone, that I may pour out my heart before him, and ask him for this thing after which my soul so earnestly pants" You will find it more helpful to your prayers if you have some objects at which you aim, and I think also if you have some persons whom you will mention. Do not merely plead with God for sinners in general, but always mention some in particular. If you are a Sunday-school teacher, don't simply ask that you class may be blessed, but pray for your children definitely by name before the Most High. And if there be a mercy in your household that you crave, don't go in a round-about way, but be simple and direct in your pleadings with God. When you pray to him, tell him what you want. If you have not money enough, if you are in poverty, if you are in straits, state the case. Use no mock-modesty with God. Come at once to the point; speak honestly with him. He needs no beautiful periphrasis such as men will constantly use when they don't like to say right out what they mean. If you want either a temporal or spiritual mercy, say so. Don't ransack the Bible to find out words in which to express it. Express your wants in the words which naturally suggest themselves to you. They will be the best words, depend upon it. Abraham's words were the best for Abraham, and yours will be the best for you. You need not study all the texts in Scripture, to pray just as Jacob and Elias did, using their expressions. If you do you will not imitate them. You may imitate them literally and servilely, but you lack the soul that suggested and animated their words. Pray in your own words. Speak plainly to God; ask at once for what you want. Name persons, name things, and make a straight aim at the object of your supplications, and I am sure you will soon find that the weariness and dullness of which you often complain in your intercessions, will no more fall upon you; or at least not so habitually as it has heretofore done.



"But," saith one, "I do not feel that I have any special objects for which to pray." Ah! My dear brother, I know not who you are, or where you live, to be without special objects for prayer, for I find that every day brings neither its need or its trouble, and that I have every day something to tell to my God. But if we had not a trouble, my dear brethren, if we had attained to such a height in grace that we had nothing to ask for, do we love Christ so much that we have no need to pray that we may love him more? Have we so much faith that we have ceased to cry, "Lord increase it?" You will always, I am sure, by little self-examination, soon discover that there is some legitimate object for which you may knock at Mercy's door and cry, "Give me, Lord, the desire of my heart." And if you have not any desire, you have but to ask the first tried Christian you meet, and he will tell you of one. "Oh," he will reply to you, "If you have nothing to ask for yourself, pray for me. Ask that a sick wife may be recovered. Pray that the Lord will lift up the light of his countenance upon a desponding heart; ask that the Lord would send help to some minister who has been labouring in vain, and spending his strength for nought." When you have done for yourself, plead for others; and if you cannot meet with one who can suggest a theme, look on this huge, Sodom, this city like another Gomorrah lying before you; carry it constantly in your prayers before God and cry, "Oh that London may live before thee, that its sin may be stayed, that its righteousness may be exalted, that the God of the earth may get unto himself much people out of this city."

Equally necessary is it with the definite object for prayer that there should be an earnest desire for its attainment. "Cold prayers," says an old divine, "ask for a denial." When we ask the Lord coolly, and fervently, we do as it were, stop his hand, and restrain him from giving us the very blessing we pretend that we are seeking. When you have your object in your eye, your soul must become so possessed with the value of that object, with your own excessive need for it, with the danger which you will be in unless that object should be granted, that you will be compelled to plead for it as a man pleadeth for his life. There was a beautiful illustration of true prayer addressed to man in the conduct of two noble ladies, whose husbands were condemned to die and were about to be executed, when they came before king George and supplicated for their pardon. The king rudely and cruelly repulsed them. George the first! it

was like his very nature. And when they pleaded yet again, and again, and again, they could not be gotten to rise from their knees; they had actually to be dragged out of court, for they would not retire until the king had smiled upon them, and told them that their husbands should live. Alas! they failed, but they were noble women for their perseverance in thus pleading for their husbands' lives. That is the way for us to pray to God. We must have such a desire for the thing we want, that we will not rise until we have it—but in submission to his divine will, nevertheless. Feeling that the thing we ask for cannot be wrong, and that he himself hath promised it, we have resolved it must be given, and if not given, we will plead the promise, again, and again, till heaven's gates shall shake before our pleas shall cease. No wonder that God has not blessed us much of late, because we are not fervent in prayer as we should be. Oh, those cold-hearted prayers that die upon the lips—those frozen supplications; they do not move men's hearts, how should they move God's heart? they do not come from our own souls, they do not well up from the deep secret springs of our inmost heart, and therefore they cannot rise up to him who only hears the cry of the soul, before whom hypocrisy can weave no veil, or formality practice any disguise. We must be earnest, otherwise we have no right to hope that the Lord will hear our prayer.

And surely, my brethren, it were enough to restrain all lightness and constrain an unceasing earnestness, did we apprehend the greatness of the Being before whom we plead. Shall I come into thy presence, O my God, and mock thee with cold-hearted words? Do the angels veil their faces before thee, and shall I be content to prattle through a form with no soul and no heart? Ah, my brethren! we little know how many of our prayers are an abomination unto the Lord. It would be an abomination to you and to me to hear men ask us in the streets, as if they did not want what they asked for. But have we not done the same to God? Has not that which is heaven's greatest boon to man, become to us a dry dead duty? It was said of John Bradford that he had a peculiar art in prayer, and when asked for his secret he said, "When I know what I want I always stop on that prayer until I feel that I have pleaded it with God, and until God and I have had dealings with each other upon it." I never go on to another petition till I have gone through the first." Alas! for some men who begin "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;" and before they

have realized the adoring thought—"hallowed be thy name,"—they have begun to repeat the next words—"Thy kingdom come;" then perhaps something strikes their mind, "Do I really wish his kingdom to come? If it were to come now where should I be?" And while they are thinking of that, their voice is going on with, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" so they jumble up their prayers and run the sentences together. Oh! stop at each one till you have really prayed it. Do not try to put two arrows on the string at once, they will both miss. He that would load his gun with two charges cannot expect to be successful. Discharge one shot first, and then load again. Plead once with God and prevail, and then plead again. Get the first mercy, and then go again for the second. Do not be satisfied with running the colours of your prayers into one another, till there is no picture to look at but just a huge daub, a smear of colours badly laid on. Look at the Lord's Prayer itself. What clear sharp outlines there are in it. There are certain definite mercies, and they do not run into one another. There it stands, and as you look at the whole it is a magnificent picture; not confusion, but beautiful order. Be it so with your prayers. Stay on one till you have prevailed with that, and then go on to the next. With definite objects and with fervent desires mixed together, there is the dawning of hope that ye shall prevail with God.

But again: these two things would not avail if they were not mixed with a still more essential and divine quality, namely, a firm faith in God. Brethren, do you believe in prayer? I know you pray because you are God's people; but do you believe in the power of prayer? There are a great many Christians that do not, they think it is a good thing, and they believe that sometimes it does wonders; but they do not think that prayer, real prayer, is always successful. They think that its effect depends upon many other things, but that it has not any essential quality or power in itself. Now, my own soul's conviction is, that prayer is the grandest power in the entire universe; that it has a more omnipotent force than electricity, attraction, gravitation, or any other of those secret forces which men have called by names, but which they do not understand. Prayer hath as palpable, as true, as sure, as invariable and influence over the entire universe as any of the laws of matter. When a man really prays, it is not a question whether God will hear him or not, he must hear him; not because there is any compulsion in the prayer, but there is a sweet

and blessed compulsion in the promise. God has promised to hear prayer, and he will perform his promise. As he is the most high and true God, he cannot deny himself. Oh! to think of this; that you a puny man may stand here and speak to God, and through God may move all the worlds. Yet when your prayer is heard, creation will not be disturbed; though the grandest ends be answered, providence will not be disarranged for a single moment. Not a leaf will fall earlier from the tree, not a star will stay in its course, nor one drop of water trickle more slowly from its fount, all will go on the same, and yet your prayer will have effected everything. It will speak to the decrees and purposes of God, as they are being daily fulfilled; and they will all shout to your prayer, and cry, "Thou art our brother; we are decrees, and thou a prayer; but thou art thyself a decree, as old, as sure, as ancient as we are." Our prayers are God's decrees in another shape. The prayers of God's people are but God's promises breathed out of living hearts, and those promises are the decrees, only put into another form and fashion. Do not say, "How can my prayers affect the decrees?" They cannot, except in so much that your prayers are decrees, and that as they come out, every prayer that is inspired of the Holy Ghost unto your soul is as omnipotent and as eternal as that decree which said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" or as that decree which chose his people, and ordained their redemption by the precious blood of Christ. Thou has power in prayer, and thou standest to-day among the most potent ministers in the universe that God has made. Thou has power over angels, they will fly at thy will. Thou hast power over fire, and water, and the elements of earth. Thou hast power to make thy voice heard beyond the stars; where the thunders die out in silence, thy voice shall wake the echoes of eternity. The ear of God himself shall listen and the hand of God himself shall yield to thy will. He bids thee cry, "Thy will be done," and thy will shall be done. When thou canst plead his promise then thy will is his will. Seems it not my dear friends, an awful thing to have such a power in one's hands as to be able to pray? You have heard sometimes of men who pretended to have a weird and mystic might, by which they could call up spirits from the vasty deep, by which they could make showers of rain, or stop the sun. It was all a figment of the fancy, but were it true the Christian is a greater magician still. If he has but faith in God, there is nothing impossible to him. He shall be delivered out of the deepest waters—he shall be rescued out of the sorest

troubles—in famine he shall be fed—in pestilence he shall go unscathed—amidst calamity he shall walk firm and strong—in war he shall be ever shielded—and in the day of battle he shall lift up his head, if he can but believe the promise, and hold it up before God's eyes and plead it with the spell of unfaltering reliance. There is nothing, I repeat it, there is no force so tremendous, no energy so marvellous, as the energy with which God has endowed every man, who like Jacob can wrestle, like Israel can prevail with him in prayer. But we must have faith in this; we must believe prayer to be what it is, or else it is not what it: should be. Unless I believe my prayer to be effectual it will not be, for on my faith will it to a great extent depend. God may give me the mercy even when I have not faith; that will be his own sovereign grace, but he has not promised to do it. But when I have faith and can plead the promise with earnest desire, it is no longer a probability as to whether I shall get the blessing, or whether my will shall be done. Unless the Eternal will swerve from his Word, unless the oath which he has given shall be revoked, and he himself shall cease to be what he is, "We know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

And now to mount one step higher, together with definite objects, fervent desires and strong faith in the efficacy of prayer there should be—and (Oh may divine grace make it so with us!—there should be mingled a realising expectation. We should be able to count over the mercies before we have got them, believing that they are on the road. Reading the other day in a sweet little book, which I would commend to the attention of you all, written by an American author who seems to know the power of prayer thoroughly, and to whom I am indebted for many good things—a little book called *The Still Hour*, I met with a reference to a passage in the book of Daniel, the tenth chapter I think, where, as he says, the whole machinery of prayer seems to be laid bare. Daniel is on his knees in prayer, and Michael the archangel come to him. He talks with him and tells him that as soon as ever Daniel began to set his heart to understand, and to chasten himself before God, his words were heard, and the Lord had dispatched the angel. Then he tells him in the most business-like manner in the world, "I should have been here before, but the Prince of Persia withstood me; nevertheless the prince of thy nation helped me, and I am come to comfort and instruct thee." See now. God breathes the

desire into our hearts, and as soon as the desire is there, before we call he begins to answer. Before the words have got half way up to heaven, while they are yet trembling on the lip—knowing the words we mean to speak—he begins to answer them, sends the angel; the angel comes and brings down the needed blessing. Why the thing is a revelation if you could see it with your eyes. Some people think that spiritual things are dreams, and that we are talking fancies. Nay, I do believe there is as much reality in a Christian's prayer as in a lightning flash; and the utility and excellency of the prayer of a Christian may be just as sensibly known as the power of the lightning flash when it rends the tree, breaks off its branches, and splits it to the very root. Prayer is not a fancy of fiction; it is a real actual thing, coercing the universe, binding the laws of God themselves in fetters, and constraining the High and Holy One to listen to the will of his poor hut. favoured creature-man. But we want always to believe this. We need a realizing assurance in prayer. To count over the mercies before they are come! To be sure that they are coming! To act as if we had got them! When you have asked for your daily bread, no more to be disturbed with care, but to believe that God has heard you, and will give it to you. When you have taken the case of your sick child before God to believe that the child will recover, or if it should not, that it will be a greater blessing to you and more glory to God, and so to leave it to him. To be able to say, "I know he has heard me now; I will stand on my watch-tower; I will look for my God and hear what he will say to my soul." Were you ever disappointed yet, Christian, when you prayed in faith and expected the answer? I bear my own testimony here this morning, that I have never yet trusted him and found him fail me. I have trusted man and have been deceived, but my God has never once denied the request I have made to him, when I have backed up the request with belief in his willingness to hear, and in the assurance of his promise.

But I hear some one say, "May we pray for temporals?" Ay, that you may. In everything make known your wants to God. It is not merely for spiritual, but for everyday concerns. Take your smallest trials before him. He is a God that heareth prayer; he is your household God as well as the God of the Sanctuary. Be ever taking all that you have before God. As one good man who is about to be united with this Church told me of his departed wife, "Oh," said he, "she was a woman that I could never get to

do anything till she had made a matter of prayer of it. Be it what it might, she used to say, 'I must make it a matter of prayer;' Oh for more of this sweet habit of spreading everything before the Lord, just as Hezekiah did Rabshekah's letter, and there leaving it, saying, "Thy will be done, I resign it to thee!" Men say Mr. Muller of Bristol is enthusiastic, because he will gather seven hundred children and believe that God will provide for them; though there is nothing in the purse he is only doing what ought to be the commonplace action of every Christian man. He is acting upon a rule at which the worldling always must scoff, because he does not understand it; a system which must always appear to weak judgment of sense, not upon common sense, but upon something higher than common sense—upon uncommon faith. Oh that we had that uncommon faith to take God at his word! He cannot and he will not permit the man that trusteth him to be ashamed or confounded. I have thus now, as best I could, set forth before you what I conceive to be four essentials of prevailing prayer—"Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them."

II. Having thus asked you to look at the text, I want you now to LOOK ABOUT YOU. Look about you at our meetings for prayer, and look about you at your private intercessions, and judge them both by the tenour of this text. First, look about you at the meetings for prayer; I cannot speak very pointedly in this matter, because I do honestly believe that the prayer-meetings which are usually held among us, have far less of the faults which I am about to indicate, than any others I have ever attended. But, still they have some of the faults, and I hope that what we shall say, will be taken personally home by every brother who is in the habit of engaging publicly in supplication at prayer-meetings. Is it not a fact, that as soon as you enter the meeting, you feel, the case of many praying men (to speak hardly perhaps, but I think honestly) lies in having a good memory to recollect a great many texts, which always have been quoted since the days of our grandfather's grandfather, and to be able to repeat them in good regular order. The gift lies also in some churches, especially in village churches, in having strong lungs, so as to be able to hold out, without taking breath for five and twenty minutes when you are brief, and three quarters of an hour when you are rather drawn out. The gift lies also in being able not to ask for anything in particular, but in passing

through a range of everything, making the prayer, not an arrow with a point, but rather like a nondescript machine, that has no point whatever, and yet is meant to be all point, which is aimed at everything, and consequently strikes nothing. Those brethren are often the most frequently asked to pray, who have those peculiar, and perhaps, excellent gifts, although I certainly must say that I cannot obey the apostle's injunction in coveting very earnestly such gifts as these. Now, if instead thereof, some man is asked to pray, who has never prayed before in public; suppose he rises and says, "*Oh Lord, I feel myself such a sinner that I can scarcely speak to thee, Lord, help me to pray! o Lord, save my poor soul! O that thou wouldst save my old companions! Lord, bless our minister! be pleased to give us a revival. O Lord, I can say no more; hear me for Jesu's sake! Amen.*" Well, then, you feel somehow, as if you had begun to pray yourself. You feel an interest in that man, partly from fear lest he should stop, and also because you are sure that what he did say, he meant. And if another should get up after that, and pray in the same spirit, you go out and say, "This is real prayer." I would sooner have three minutes prayer like that, than thirty minutes of the other sort, because the one is praying, and the other is preaching. Allow me to quote what an old preacher said upon the subject of prayer, and give it to you as a little word of advice—"Remember, the Lord will not hear thee, because of the *arithmetic* of thy prayers; he does not count their numbers. He will not hear thee because of the *rhetoric* of thy prayers; he does not care for the eloquent language in which they are conveyed. He will not listen to thee because of the *geometry* of thy prayers; he does not compute them by their length, or by their breadth. He will not regard thee because of the *music* of thy prayers; he doth not care for sweet voices, nor for harmonious periods. Neither will he look at thee because of the *logic* of thy prayers; because they are well arranged, and excellently comparted. But he will hear thee, and he will measure the amount of the blessing he will give thee, according to the *divinity* of thy prayers. If thou canst plead the person of Christ, and if the Holy Ghost inspire thee with zeal and earnestness, the blessings which thou shalt ask, shall surely come unto thee." Brethren, I would like to burn the whole stock of old prayers that we have been using this fifty years. That "oil that goes from vessel to vessel,"—that "horse that rushes into the battle,"—that misquoted mangled text, "where two or three are met together, thou wilt be in the



midst of them," and that to bless them,"—and all those other quotations which we have been manufacturing, and dislocating, and copying from man to man. I would we came to speak to God, just out of our own hearts. It would be a grand thing for our prayer meetings; they would be better attended; and I am sure they would be more fruitful, if every man would shake off that habit of formality, and talk to God as a child talks to his father; ask him for what we want and then sit down and have done. I say this with all Christian earnestness. Often, because I have not chosen to pray in any conventional form, people have said, "That man is not reverent!" My dear sir, you are not a judge of my reverence. To my own master, I stand or fall. I do not think that Job quoted anybody. I do not think that Jacob quoted the old saint in heaven,—his father Abraham. I do not find Jesus Christ quoted Scripture in prayer. They did not pray in other people's words, but they prayed in their own. God does not want you to go gathering up those excellent but very musty spices of the old sanctuary. He wants the new oil just distilled from the fresh olive of your own soul. He wants spices and frankincense, not of the old chests where they have been lying until they have lost their savour, but he wants fresh incense, and fresh myrrh, brought from the ophir of your own soul's experience. Look well to it that you really pray, do not learn the language of prayer, but seek the spirit of prayer, and God Almighty bless you, and make you more mighty in your supplications.

I have said, "Look about you." I want you to continue the work, and look about at your own closets. Oh, Brethren and sisters, there is no place that some of us need to be so much ashamed to look at as our closet door. I cannot say the hinges are rusty; they do open and shut at their appointed seasons. I cannot say that the door is locked and cobwebbed. We do not neglect prayer itself; but those walls, those beams out of the wall, what a tale might they tell! "Oh!" the wall might cry out, "I have heard thee when thou hast been in so vast a hurry that thou couldst scarcely spend two minutes with thy God, and I have heard thee, too, when thou wast neither asleep nor awake, and when thou didst not know what thou wast saying." Then one beam might cry out, "I have heard thee come and spend ten minutes and not ask for anything, at least thy heart did not ask. The lips moved, but the heart did not ask. The lips moved, but the heart was silent." How might another beam cry out—"Oh! I have heard thee

groan out thy soul, but I have seen thee go away distrustful, not believing thy prayer was heard, quoting the promise, but not thinking God would fulfil it." Surely the four walls of the closet might come together and fall down upon us in their anger, because we have so often insulted God with our unbelief and with our hurry, and with all manner of sins. We have insulted him even at his mercy seat, on the spot where his condescension is most fully manifested. Is it not so with you? Must we not each confess it in our turn? See to it then, Christian brethren, that an amendment be made, and God make you more mighty and more successful in your prayers that heretofore.

III. But not to detain you, the last point is look upward, LOOK ABOVE. Look above. Christian brethren and sisters, and let us weep. Oh God, thou hast given us a mighty weapon, and we have permitted it to rust. Thou hast given us that which is mighty as thyself, and we have let that power lie dormant. Would it not be a vile crime if a man had an eye given him which he would not open, or a hand that he would not lift up, or a foot that grew stiff because he would not use it. And what must we say of ourselves when God has given us power in prayer, and yet that power lies still. Oh, if the universe was as still as we are, where should we be? Oh God, thou givest light to the sun and he shines with it. Thou givest light even to the stars and they twinkle. To the winds thou givest force and they blow. And to the air thou givest life and it moves, and men breathe thereof. But to thy people thou hast given a gift that is better than force, and life, and light, and yet they permit it to lie still. Forgetful almost that they wield the power, seldom exercising it, though it would be blessed to countless myriads. Weep, Christian man. Constantine, the Emperor of Rome, saw that on the coins of the other Emperors, their images were in an erect posture—triumphing. Instead thereof he ordered that his image should be struck kneeling, for said he—"That is the way in which I have triumphed." We shall never triumph till our image is struck kneeling. The reason why we have been defeated, and why our banners trail in the dust, is because we have not prayed. Go—go ye back to your God, with sorrow, confess before him, ye children of Ephraim, that ye were armed, and carried bows, but turned your backs in the day of battle. Go to your God and tell him that if souls are not saved, it is not because he has not power to save, but because you have never travailed as it were in birth for

perishing sinners. Your bowels have not sounded like a harp for Kir-haresh, neither has your spirit been moved, because of the defenses of the tribe of Reuben. Wake up, wake up, ye people of Israel; be astonished, ye careless ones; ye who have neglected prayer; ye sinners that are in Zion's own self, and that have been at ease. Wake up yourselves; wrestle and strive with your God, and then the blessing shall come—the early and the latter rain of his mercy, and the earth shall bring forth plenteously, and all the nations shall call him blessed. Look up then, and weep.

Once more look up and rejoice. Though you have sinned against him he loves you still. Ye have not prayed unto him nor sought his face, but behold he cries to you still—"Seek ye my face;" and he saith not "Seek ye me in vain." Ye may not have gone to the fountain, but it flows as freely as before. Ye have not drawn near to God, but he waiteth to be gracious still, and is ready to hear all your petitions. Behold, he says unto you, "Enquire of me concerning things to come, and concerning my sons and daughters, command ye me." What a blessed thing it is that the master in heaven is always ready to hear! Augustine has a very beautiful thought upon the parable of the man who knocked at his friend's door at midnight, saying, "Friend, give me three loaves." His paraphrase of it runs something like this—I knock at mercy's door, and it is the dead of night. "Will not some of the servants of the louse come and answer me?" No; I knock, but they are asleep. Oh! ye apostles of God—ye glorified martyrs—ye are asleep; ye rest in your beds; ye cannot hear my prayer. But will not the children answer? Are there not children who are ready to come and open the door to their brother? No; they are asleep. My brethren that have departed—with whom I took sweet counsel, and who were the companions of my heart—ye cannot answer me for ye rest in Jesus; your works do follow you, but you cannot work for me. But while the servants are asleep, and while the children cannot answer, the Master is awake,—awake at midnight too. It may be midnight with my soul, but he hears me, and when I am saying "Give me three loaves," he comes to the door and giveth me as much as I need. Christian, look up then and rejoice. There is always an open ear if you have an open mouth. There is always already hand if you have a ready heart. You have but to cry and the Lord hears; nay, before you call he will answer, and while you are speaking he will hear. Oh! be not backward then in prayer. Go to him when you reach your

home; nay, on the very way lift up you ears silently; and whatever your petition or request may be, ask it in Jesu's name, and it shall be done unto you.

Yet, again, look up dear Christian brethren, and amend your prayers from this time forth. Look on prayer no loner as a romantic fiction or as an arduous duty; look at it as a real power, as a real pleasure. When philosophers discover some latent power, they seem to have a delight to put it in action. I believe there have been many great engineers, who have designed and constructed some of the most wonderful of human works, not because they would be renumerative, but simply from a love of showing their own power to accomplish wonders. To show the world what skill could do and what man could accomplish, they have tempted companies into speculations that could never remunerate apparently, so far as I could see, in order that they might have an opportunity of displaying their genius. O Christian men, and shall a great Engineer attempt great works and display his power, and will you who have a mightier power that ever was wielded by any man apart from his God—will you let that be still? Nay think of some great object, strain the sinews of your supplications for it. Let every vein of your heart be full to the brim with the rich blood of desire, and struggle, and wrestle, and tug and strive with God for it, using the promises and pleading the attributes, and see if God does not give you your heart's desire. I challenge you this day to exceed in prayer my Master's bounty. I throw down the gauntlet to you. Believe him to be more than he is; open your mouth so wide that he cannot fill it; go to him now for more faith than the promise warrants; venture it, risk it, outdo the Eternal if it be possible; attempt it. Or as I would rather put it thus, take your petitions and wants and see if he does not honor you. Try whether if you believe him he doth not fulfill the promise, and richly bless you with the anointing oil of his Spirit by which you will be strong in prayer.

I cannot refrain from adding just these few syllables as you go away. I know there are some of you that never prayed in your lives. You have said a form of prayer, perhaps, many years, but have never prayed once. Ah! poor soul, you must be born again, and until you are born again you cannot pray as I have been directing the Christian to pray. But let me say

this much to you. Does your heart long after salvation? Has the Spirit whispered, "Come to Jesus, sinner, he will hear you?" Believe that whisper, for he will hear you. The prayer of the awakened sinner is acceptable to God. He heareth the broken in heart and healeth them too. Take your groanings and your sighs to God and he will answer you. "Ah," but says one, "I have nothing to plead." Well, but plead as David did—"Pardon my iniquity, for it is great." You have that plea—say, for his dear sake who shed his blood," and you shall prevail, sinner. But do not go to God, and ask for mercy with thy sin in thy hand. What would you think of the rebel, who appeared before the face of his sovereign and asked for pardon with the dagger sticking in his belt, and with the declaration, of his rebellion on his breast? Would he deserve to be pardoned? He could not deserve it in any case, and surely he would deserve double his doom for having thus mocked his master while he pretended to be seeking mercy. If a wife had forsaken her husband do you think she would have the impudence, with brazen forehead, to come back and ask pardon for leaning on the arm of her paramour? No, she could not have such impudence, and yet it is so with you—perhaps asking for mercy and going on in sin—praying to be reconciled to God, and yet harbouring and indulging your lust. Awake! awake! and call upon thy God, thou sleeper. The boat is nearing the rock, perhaps to-morrow it may strike and be shivered, and thou be cast into the unfathomable depths of everlasting woe. Call on thy God, I say, and when thou callest upon him, cast away thy sin or he cannot hear thee. If thou lift up thy unholy hands with a lie in thy right hand, a prayer is worthless on thy lip. Oh, come unto him, say unto him, "Take away all iniquity, receive us graciously, love us freely," and he will hear you, and you shall yet pray as prevailing princes, and one day shall stand as more than conquerors before the starry throne of him who ever reigns God over all, blessed for evermore.

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# **The True Tabernacle, And Its Glory Of Grace And Peace**

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. - John 1:14

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. - John 1:17

There was a time when God freely communed with men. The voice of the Lord God was heard walking in the garden in the cool of the day. With unfallen Adam the great God dwelt in sweet and intimate fellowship; but sin came and not only destroyed the garden, but destroyed the intercourse of God with His creature man. A great gulf opened between man as evil, and God as infinitely pure; and had it not been for the amazing goodness of the most High, we must all of us forever have been banished from His presence, and from the glory of His power. The Lord God in infinite love resolved that He Himself would bridge the distance, and would again dwell with man; and in token of this He made Himself manifest to His chosen nation Israel when they were in the wilderness. He was pleased to dwell in type and symbol among His people, in the very center and heart of their camp. Do you see yonder tent with its curtains of goats' hair in the center of the canvas city? You cannot see within it; but it was all glorious within with precious wood, and pure gold, and tapestry of many colors. Within its most sacred shrine shone forth a bright light between the wings of cherubim, which light was the symbol of the presence of the Lord. But if you cannot see within, yet you can see above the sacred tent a cloud, which arises from the top of the Holy of Holies, and then expands like a vast tree so as to cover all the host, and protect the chosen of God from the intense heat of the sun, so apt to make the traveler faint when passing over the burning sand. If you will wait till the sun is down, that same cloud will become Alimonies, and light up the whole camp. Thus it was both shade and light; and by its means was

enjoyed that safety which was afterwards set forth in the promise, "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." Over all the glory was a defense and a comfort. The Lord dealt not so with any nation, save only His people Israel, of whom He said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

The day of the type is over; we see no more a nation secluded from all others and made to be as "the church in the wilderness." God doth not now confine His abode to one people; for "The God of the whole earth shall he be called." There is now no spot on earth where God dwells in preference to another. Did not our Lord say, at the well of Sychar, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." "But . . . the true worshipers shall worship the Father it spirit and in truth"? Wherever true hearts seek the Lord, He is found of them. He is as much present on the lone mountain's side as in the aisles of yonder above, or in the galleries of this tabernacle. "Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool; what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?"

Yet there is a true house of, a real temple of the infinite, a living abode of the Godhead. The epistle to the Hebrews speaks of "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." There is still a trysting-place where God doth still meet with man, and hold fellowship with him. That place is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, "in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. "The manhood of Christ is become to us the anti-type of that tent in the center of the camp. God is in Christ Jesus; Christ Jesus is God; and in His blessed person God dwells in the midst of us as in a tent; for such is the force of the original in our text. "The Word was made flesh, and tabernacled, or tented, among us." That is to say, in Christ Jesus the Lord dwelt among men, as God of old dwelt in His sanctuary in the midst of the tribes of Israel. This is very delightful and hopeful for us: the Lord God doth dwell among us through the incarnation of His Son.

But the substance far excels the shadow; for in the wilderness the Lord

only dwelt in the abode of man, but now His approach to us is closer, for He dwells in the flesh of man. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Note that word "flesh." It doth not say, "The Word was made man": it means that, but the use of the word "flesh brings the Lord Jesus still closer to us, and shows that He took on Him the very nature and substance of manhood: He did not merely assume the name and notion, and appearance, of manhood, but the reality: the weakness, the suffering, the mortality of our manhood He actually took into union with Himself. He was no phantom, or apparition, but He had a human body and a human soul. "The Word was made flesh." When the Lord became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, His incarnation in a human body brought Him far nearer to man than when He only abode within curtains, and occupied a tent in the midst of Israel.

Moreover, it is to be noted that God does in the person of Jesus not merely dwell among men; but He hath joined Himself unto men—the Word not only dwelt in flesh, but "was made flesh." It is impossible to use words which are exactly accurate to describe the wonderful incarnation of the Son of God in human flesh; but these words are used to show that our Lord is as truly and as really man as He is God. Not only does God dwell in the body of man; but our Lord Jesus is God and man in one person. He is not ashamed to speak of men as His brethren. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same with us. This approach to us is exceeding close. God was never one with the tabernacle, but in Christ Jesus He is one with us. This union hath in it a sweetness of sympathy, a tenderness of relationship, and a condensation of fellowship greatly to be admired. Now we listen to the music of that blessed name Emmanuel, "God with us." In the person of the only begotten, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we see God reconciling the world unto Himself. Let us rejoice and be glad that we have in Jesus more than Israel had in the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. The ancient believer gazed upon the sacred tent, he thought of the holy place of sacrifice, and the Holy of Holies, the inner shrine of the Lord's indwelling; but we have unfeignedly more, we have God in our nature, and in Him "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."



In and around the tent wherein the Lord dwelt in the center of the camp there was a manifestation of the presence of God. This was the glory of that house: but how scanty was the revelation! A bright light which I have already mentioned, the Shekinah, is said to have shone over the mercy-seat; but the high priest only could see it, and he only saw it once in the year when he entered with blood within the veil. Outside, above the holy place, there was the manifest glory of the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. This sufficed to bear witness that God was there; but still, cloud and fire are but physical appearances, and cannot convey a true appearance of God, who is a spirit. God cannot be perceived by the senses; and yet the fiery, cloudy pillar could appeal to the eyes only. The excellence of the indwelling of God in Christ is this—that there is in Him a glory as of the only begotten of the Father, the moral and spiritual glory of Godhead. This is to be seen, but not with the eyes; this is to be perceived, but not by the carnal senses: this is seen, and heard, and known, by spiritual men, whose mental perceptions are keener than those of sight and hearing. In the person of the Lord there is a glory which is seen by our faith, which is discerned of our renewed spirits, and is made to operate upon our hearts. The glory of God in the sanctuary was seen only by the priest of the house of Aaron; the glory of God in the face of Christ is seen by all believers, who are all priests unto God. That glory the priest beheld but once in the year; but we steadily behold that glory at all times, and are transformed by the sight. The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is not a thing of outward appearance, to be beheld with the eyes, like the pillar of cloud and fire; but there is an abiding, steady luster of holy, gracious, truthful character about our Lord Jesus Christ, which is best seen by those who by reason of sanctification are made fit to discern it. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; yea, they do see Him in Christ Jesus. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Many of us besides the apostles can say, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." We have not seen Jesus raise the dead; we have not seen Him cast out devils; we have not seen Him hush the winds and calm the waves, but we do see, with our mind's eye, His spotless holiness, His boundless love, His superlative love and truth, His wondrous heavenliness; in a word, we have seen, and do see, His fullness of grace and truth; and we rejoice in the fact that the

tabernacling of God among, men in Christ Jesus is attended with a more real glory than the mere brilliance of light and the glow of flame. The condescension of Christ's love is to us more glorious than the pillar of cloud, and the zeal of our Lord's self-sacrifice is more excellent than the pillar of fire. As we think of the divine mysteries which meet in the person of the Lord, we do not envy Israel the gracious manifestation vouchsafed her when "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord covered the tabernacle"; for we have all this and more in our incarnate God, who is with us always, even to the end of the world.

As the Holy Spirit shall help me, I shall at this time say, first of all, *Let us behold this tabernacling of God; and secondly, Let us avail ourselves of this tabernacling of God in all the ways for which it was intended.*

1. First, then, LET US BEHOLD THIS 'TABERNACLING OF GOD WITH US. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. "In Jesus Christ all the attributes of God are to be seen; veiled, but yet verily there. You have only to read the gospels, to look with willing eyes, and you shall behold in Christ all that can possibly be seen of God. It is veiled in human flesh, as it must be; for the glory of God is not to be seen by us absolutely; it is toned down to these dim eyes of ours; but the Godhead is there, the perfect Godhead in union with the perfect manhood of Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Two divine things are more clearly seen in Jesus than aught else. Upon these I would speak at this time, considering the two together, and then each one separately—"Full of grace and truth."

Observe the two glorious qualities, joined inseparably—grace and truth—and observe that they are spoken of *in the concrete*. The apostle says that the only begotten is "full of grace and truth." He did not come to tell us about grace, but actually to bring us grace. He is not full of the news of grace and truth, but of grace and truth themselves. Others had been messengers of gracious tidings, but He came to bring grace. Others teach us truth, but Jesus is the truth. He is that grace and truth whereof others spoke. Jesus is not merely a teacher, an exhorter, a worker of grace and

truth; but these heavenly things are in Him: He is full of them. I want you to note this. It raises such a difference between Christ and others: you go to others to hear of grace and truth, but you must go to Christ to see them. There may be, there is, grace in other men; but not as it is in Christ: they have take it as water flowing through a pipe, but He has it as water in its fountain and source. He has grace to communicate to the sons of men, grace without measure, grace essential and abiding. There is truth in others where God has wrought it, by His Spirit; but it is not in them as it is in Christ. In Him dwell the depth, the substance, the essence of the fact. Grace and truth come to us by Him, and yet they evermore abide in Him. I say again, our Lord did not merely come to teach grace and truth, or to impress them upon us; but He came to exhibit in His own person, life, and work, all the grace and truth which we need. He has brought us grace in rivers and truth in streams: of these He has an infinite fullness; of that fullness all His saints receive.

This grace and truth are *blended*. The "and" between the two words I would treat as more than a common conjunction. The two rivers unite in one fullness—"Full of grace and truth": that is to say. The grace is truthful grace, grace not in fiction nor in fancy, grace not to be hoped for and to be dreamed of, but grace every atom of which is fact; redemption which does redeem, pardon which does blot out sin, renewal which actually regenerates, salvation which completely saves. We have not here blessings which charm the ear and cheat the soul; but real, substantial favors from God that cannot lie. Then blend these things the other way. "Grace and truth": the Lord has come to bring us truth, but it is not the kind of truth which censures, condemns, and punishes; it is gracious truth, truth steeped in love, truth saturated with mercy. The truth which Jesus brings to His people comes not from the judgment-seat, but from the mercy-seat; it hath a gracious drift and aim about it, and ever tends unto salvation. His light is the life of men. If thou art overshadowed with a dark truth which seems to deepen thy despair, look thou to it again and thou wilt perceive within it a hidden light which is sown for the righteous. The darkness of convincing and humbling truth maketh for light: by engendering despair of self, heart-searching truth is meant to drive thee to the true hope. There is grace to God's people in everything that falls from the lips of Jesus Christ. His lips are like lilies dropping sweet

smelling myrrh; myrrh in itself is bitter, but such is the grace of our Lord Jesus that His lips impart sweetness to it. See how grace and truth thus blend, and qualify each other! The grace all true, and the truth is all gracious, This is a wondrous compound made according to the art of the divine Apothecary. Where else is grace so true, or truth so gracious?

Furthermore, it is grace and truth *balanced*. I wish I were able to communicate my thoughts this morning as they came to me when I was meditating upon this passage; but this thought almost speaks for itself. The Lord Jesus Christ is full of grace; but then He has not neglected the other quality which is somewhat sterner, namely, that of truth. I have known many in this world very loving and affectionate, but they have not been faithful: on the other hand, I have known men to be sternly honest and truthful, but they have not been gentle and kind: but in the Lord Jesus Christ there is no defect either way. He is full of grace which doth invite the publican and the sinner to Himself; but He is full of truth which doth repel the hypocrite and Pharisee. He does not hide from man a truth however terrible it may be, but He plainly declares the wrath of God against all unrighteousness. But when He has spoken terrible truth, He has uttered it in such a gracious and tender manner, with so many tears of compassion for the ignorant and those that are out of the way, that you are much won by His grace as convinced by His truth. Our Lord's ministry is not truth alone, nor grace alone; but it is a balanced, well-ordered system of grace and truth. The Lord Himself is in His character "just and having salvation." He is both King of righteousness and King of peace. He does not even save unjustly, nor does He proclaim truth unlovingly. Grace and truth are equally conspicuous in Him.

Beloved, notice here that these qualities in our Lord are *at the full*. He is "full of grace." Who could be more so? In the person of Jesus Christ the immeasurable grace of God is treasured up. God has done for us by Christ Jesus exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or even think. It is not possible even for imagination to conceive of any person more gracious than God in Christ Jesus. You cannot desire, certainly you cannot require, anything that should exceed what is found of grace in the person, offices, work, and death of the only begotten. Come, ye that have large minds, and intellects that are creative, and see if ye can devise anything that

should be mentioned in the same day with what God, in the infinite glory of His grace, has given us in the person of His Son. And there is an equal fullness of truth about our Lord. He Himself, as He comes to us as the revelation and manifestation of God, declares to us, not some truth, but all truth. All of God is in Christ; and all of God means all that is true, and all that is right, and all that is faithful, and all that is just, all that is according to righteousness and holiness. Christ Jesus has brought to us the justice, truth, and righteousness of God to the full: He is the Lord our righteousness. There are no reserves of disagreeable faith in Christ. There is nothing hidden from us of truth that might alarm us, nor anything that might have shaken our confidence; nor, on the other hand, is any truth kept back which might have increased our steadfastness. He says, "If it were not so I would have told you." Admire the full-robed splendor of the Sun of Righteousness. Ask not with Pilate, "What is truth?" but behold it in God's dear Son. Oh, I know not how to speak to you upon themes so full and deep! How shall I, that am but as a twinkling dewdrop on a blade of grass, reflect the full glory of this Sun of Righteousness? But all truth and all grace dwell in Christ in all their fullness beyond conception, and the two lie in each other's bosoms forever, to bless us with boundless, endless joy and glory.

Thus have I taken the two together. Now I want to dwell briefly on each one by itself.

*Grace* is put first. "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace." Jesus Christ is the Son of God; He is His only begotten Son. Others are begotten of God, but no other was ever begotten of God as Christ was; consequently, when He came into this world the glory that was about Him was a glory as of the only begotten. A very singular, and very special, and incommunicable glory abides in the person of our Lord. Part of this was the glory of His grace. Now, in the Old Testament, in that thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus, which we read in part this morning, you notice that the glory of God lay in His being "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." The glory of the only begotten of the Father must lie in the same things as the glory of the Father, namely, in longsuffering and truth. In Christ there is a wonderful gentleness, patience, pity, mercy, and

love of God. Not merely did He teach the grace of God, and invite us to the grace of God, but in Himself He displayed the grace of God.

This is seen, first, in His incarnation, It is a wonderful instance of divine grace that the word should be made flesh and dwell among us, and reveal His glory to us. Apart from anything that springs out of the incarnation of Christ, that incarnation itself is a wondrous act of grace. There must be hope for men now that man is next akin to God through Jesus Christ. The angels were not mistaken when they not only sang, "Glory to God in the highest," but also, "on earth peace, goodwill towards men," because in Bethlehem the Son of God was born of a virgin. God in our nature must mean God with gracious thoughts towards us. If the Lord had meant to destroy the race, He never would have espoused it and taken it into union with Himself. There is fullness of grace in the fact of the Word made flesh tabernacling among us.

More than this, there is fullness of grace in the life of Christ when we consider that He lived in order to perfect Himself as our High Priest. Was He not made perfect through His sufferings, that He might sympathize with us in all our woes? He was compassed with infirmities, and bore our sorrows, and endured those crosses of the human life which press so heavily on our own shoulders; and all this to make Himself able to deal graciously with us in a tender and brotherly way. Apart from that which comes wonderful brotherhood, there is a bottomless depth of grace about the fellowship itself. The Lord Jesus cannot curse me, for He has borne my curse: He cannot be unkind to me, for He has shared my sorrows. If every pang that tends my heart has also rent His heart, and if into all my woes He has descended even deeper than I have gone, it must mean love to me, it cannot mean anything else; and it must mean truth, for Jesus did not play at fellowship, His griefs were real. I say then that this manifestation of God in the person of Christ Jesus is seen in His sorrowing life to be full of grace and truth.

Then think for a minute of what He did. He was so full of grace that when He spoke His words dropped a fatness of grace, the dew of His own love was upon all His discourses; and when He moved about and touched men here and there, virtue went out of Him, because He was so full of it. At

one time He spoke and pardoned a sinner, saying, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; at another moment He battled with the consequences of sin, raising men from sickness and from death: He again He turned Himself and fought with the prince of darkness himself, and cast him out from those whom he tormented. He went about like a cloud which is big with rain, and therefore plentifully waters waste places. His life was boundless compassion. There was a power of grace about His garments, His voice, His look; and in all He was so true that none ever thought Him capable of subterfuge. Everywhere He went He scattered grace among the children of men; and He is just the same now; fullness of grace abides in Him still.

When it came to His death, which was the pouring out of His soul, then His fullness of grace was seen. He was full of grace indeed, forasmuch as He emptied Himself to save men. He was Himself not only man's Saviour, but his salvation. He gave Himself for us. He was indeed full of grace when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. His was love at its height, since He died on the cross, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," pronounce the word "Substitution, " and you cannot help feeling that the Substitute for a guilty man was full of grace; or use that other word, " representative," and remember that whatever Jesus did, He did as the covenant Head of His people. If He died, they died in Him; if He rose again, they rose in Him; if He ascended up on high, they ascended in Him; and if He sits at the right hand of God, they also sit in the heavenly places in Him. When He shall come a second time it shall be to claim the kingdom for His chosen as well as for Himself; and all the glory of the future ages is for them, and not for Himself alone. He saith, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Oh, the richness of the grace and truth that dwell in our Lord as the representative of His people! He will enjoy nothing unless His people enjoy it with Him. "Where I am, there also shall my servant be." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in Thy throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

There is yet another word higher than "substitution," higher than "representation," and that is "union." We are one with Christ, joined to Him by a union that never can be broken. Not only does He do what He does, representing us, but we are joined unto Him in one spirit, members

of His body, and partakers of His glory. Is it not a miracle of love that worms of earth should ever be one with incarnate Deity, and so one that they never can be separated throughout the ages?

Thus I have shown you that there is in our Lord a fullness of grace. Your own thoughts will dig deeper than mine.

But then it is said there is in Him also a fullness of *truth*, by which I understand that in Christ Himself, not merely in what He said, and did, and promised, there is a fullness of truth. And this is true, first, in the fact that He is the fulfillment of all the promises that went before concerning Him. God had promised great things by His prophets concerning the coming Messiah, but all those predictions are absolutely matters of fact in the person of the Well-beloved. "All the promises of God are yea and Amen in Christ Jesus." Verily He hath bruised the serpent's head. Verily He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. Verily He hath proclaimed liberty to the captives. Verily He hath proved Himself a prophet like unto Moses.

According to my second text, in verse seventeen, I understand our Lord Jesus to be "truth" in the sense of being the substance of all the types. The law that was given by Moses was but symbolical and emblematical; but Jesus is the truth. He is really that blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel; He is in very deed the Paschal lamb of God's Passover: He is the burnt-offering, the sin-offering, and the peace-offering—all in one! He is the true scapegoat, the true morning and evening Lamb; in fact, He is in truth what all the types and figures were in pattern. Blessed by God, brethren, whenever you see great things in the Old Testament in the type, you see the real truth of those things in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jew had nothing that we have not; he had nothing even in outline and shadow which we have not obtained in substance. The covenant in its fullness is in Christ: the prophecy is in Moses, the fulfillment is in Jesus: the foreshadowing is in the law, the truth is in the Word made flesh.

Further than that, our Lord Jesus Christ is said to be grace and truth in this sense, that He truthfully deals with matters of fact in the case of our



salvation. I know the notion of the world is that the salvation of Christ is a pretty dream, a handsome piece of sentiment. But there is nothing dreamy, about it: it is no fiction; it is fact upon fact. The Lord Jesus Christ does not gloss over or conceal the condition of man in his salvation; He finds man condemned, and takes him as condemned in the very worst sense, condemned of a capital offense; and as man's substitute He endures the capital penalty, and dies in the sinner's stead. The Lord Jesus views the sinner as depraved, yea, as dead in trespasses and sins, and He quickens him by His resurrection life. He does not wink at the result of the fall and of actual sin; but He comes to the dead sinner and quickens him; He comes to the diseased heart and heals it. To me the gospel is a wonderful embodiment of omnipotent wisdom and truth. If the gospel had said to men, "The law of God is certainly righteous, but it is too stern, too, exacting, and therefore God will wink it at many sins, and make provision for salvation by omitting to punish much of human guilt," why, my brethren, we should always have been in jeopardy. If God could be unjust to save us, He could also be changeable, and cast us away. If there was anything rotten in the state of our salvation, we should fear that it would fail its at last. But our foundation is sure, for the Lord has excavated down to the rock; He has taken away every bit of mere sentiment and sham, and His salvation is real throughout. It is a glorious salvation of grace and truth, in which God takes the sinner as God is, on the principles of true righteousness; and yet saves him.

But it means more than that. The Lord deals with us in the way of grace, and that grace encourages a great many hopes, but those hopes are all realized, for He deals with us in truth. Our necessities demands great things, and grace actually supplies those great things. The old law could never make the comers thereunto perfect as pertaining to the conscience, but the grace of God makes believers perfect as pertaining to the conscience. If I were to sit down and try to imagine a flaw in the ground of my salvation by Christ, I could not do it. Believing as I do in Him who bore my sins in His own body on the tree, I feel that by no possibility can His atonement fail me. I have not imagination strong enough to feign a reason for distrust: I do not see hole or corner in which any charge could lurk against the man that believes in Jesus Christ. My conscience is satisfied, and more than satisfied. Sometimes it even seems to me that my

sins could not have deserved that the Son of God should die. The atonement is greater than the sin. Speak of the vindication of the law!—not the vindication even greater than the dishonor? Does not the law of God shine out more lustrous in its indescribable glory through the sacrifice of Christ as the penalty for sin, than it would have done had it never been broken, or had all the race of law-breakers been swept into endless destruction? O brothers in the salvation of Jesus there is a truth of grace unrivaled! There is a deep verity, a substantiality, an inward soul-satisfaction in the sacrifice of Christ, which makes us feel it is a full atonement—a fountain of "grace and truth."

Nor have I yet quite brought out all the meaning, even if I have succeeded so far. Christ has brought to us "grace and truth"; that is to say, He works in believers both grace and truth. We want grace to rescue us from sin; He has brought it: we need truth in the inward parts; He has wrought it. The system of salvation by atonement is calculated to produce truthful men. The habit of looking for salvation through the great sacrifice fosters the spirit of justice, begets in us a deep abhorrence of evil, and a love for that which is right and true. By nature we are all liars, and either love or make a lie: for this cause we are content with refuges of lies, and we compass ourselves with deceit. In our carnal state we are as full of guile as an egg is full of meat; but when the Lord comes to us in Christ, no longer imputing our trespasses to us, then He takes out of our heart that deceit and desperate wickedness which had else remained there. I say it, and dare avow it, that the system of salvation by the indwelling of God in Christ and the atonement offered by Him for men has a tendency in it to infuse grace into the soul and to produce truth in the life. The Holy Ghost employs it to that end. I pray that you and I may prove it so by the grace which causes us to love both God and man, Santa and the truthfulness with which we deal in all the affairs of life.

Thus has our Lord displayed the glory of God in the grace and truth with which He is filled. I am sorry have spoken so feebly on a theme so grand. May the Spirit bless you even through the infirmities of my speech!

II. Now I want a few minutes to say to you, Come brothers and sisters,  
LET US AVAIL OURSELVES OF THIS TABERNACLING OF GOD

## AMONG US.

First, then, if God has come to dwell among men by the Word made flesh *let us pitch our tent around this central tabernacle*; do not let us live as if God were a long way off. To the Israelites God was equally near from every near from every quarter of the camp. The tabernacle was in the center, and the center is equally near to every point of the circumference. No true Israelite could say, "I must go across the sea, or soar up into the air, or dive into the depths to find my God." Every Israelite could say "He dwelleth between the cherubim: I have but to go to His tabernacle to be in His presence and speak with Him." Our God is not far from any one of His people this day. We are made nigh by the blood of Christ. God is everywhere present, but there is a higher presence of effectual grace in the person of the only begotten. Do not let us feel as if we worshiped a far-off God. Let us not repine as if we were deserted. Let us not feel alone, for the Father is with us.

God is near thee, therefore cheer the sad soul.

Open thy window towards Jerusalem, as Daniel did; pray, with thine eye upon Christ, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead bodily the greatest nearness to us. God is never far away since Christ has come to dwell among men.

Next, *let us resort to this central tabernacle to obtain grace tto help in time of need*. Let us come to Christ without fear, for He hath grace to give, and He will give it to us abundantly whenever we need it. I like to think of the wording if my text. Leave out the parentheses, and it runs, "He dwelt among us full of grace." He could not have dwelt among such provoking ones if he had not been full of grace." But if He dwells among us full of grace, we need not fear that He will cast us away because of our sins and failings. I invite you, therefore to come boldly to Him who is full of forgiving love. I beg you to come and receive of His fullness, for grace is truly grace when it is communicated: grace which is not distributed is grace in name only. "Alas!" you say, "I want so much grace." Brother, it is treasured up in Christ for you without measure. It is placed in Him that you may have it. Do we not try to persuade the sinner that there is life in a

look? Shall I need to persuade saints that grace is equally free to them? Do we tell the sinner that God is not to be sought for as far away, but that He is waiting to be gracious? Must I tell the believer the same? You may at this moment obtain all the grace you need. The door is open; enter and take what you will. Do not stop till you reach home and go through a set of religious exercises; but here, and now, believe in Jesus to the full. In the center of the camp is the incarnate God; Israel had but to go to the central tent to find present help in time of trouble. In the person of Christ, who hath said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world," there is, in truth, all the grace you can possibly need. Come to this well and drink. Receive of His fullness, and go on your way rejoicing.

What next shall we do? Brethren, since God in Christ is in the midst of us, *let us abide in joyful, peaceful confidence in Him who is grace and truth to us.* Do not let us wander to other sources. To whom should we go? Shall we leave our God? Shall we leave His grace, His truth? Do not let us dream that He has changed, for He is God. Do not imagine that He has removed, for He hath said, "This my rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." Do not let us conceive that His grace and truth are exhausted; for His fullness is eternal. Let us receive strong consolation, and remain steadfast, unmovable. Let us quietly rest in the firm belief that all we can want between here and heaven, all that we need this moment and in all moments yet to come, is treasured up in Christ Jesus, who is abidingly the center of His church and the manifestation of God.

Once more: if this be so, and God really in Christ dwell in the midst of His people "full of grace and truth," *let us tell everybody of it.* I am sure if I had been an Israelite in the wilderness, and had met an Amalekite or an Edomite, I should have gloried in the privileges which His presence secured me. We know that Amalekites and Edomites could not have come into the house of the Lord: but nowadays, if we meet with one who is a stranger, we can tell him of our privilege, with sweet persuasion that the stranger can be brought nigh through the blood of the Lamb. Therefore let us abundantly speak of the dwelling of God with men. Let us tell to all that the Lord has come to man, not in wrath, not in judgment, but "full of grace and truth." O my unconverted hearer, come to Jesus! He is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by Him. Draw nigh to

the meek and lowly Jesus, and you draw nigh to God. He saith, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Publish the invitation of grace to the four winds. Ring out your silver trumpets, or if you have them not, sound your ram's horns; but somehow let all people know that the tabernacle of God is with men, and He doth dwell among them. Tell out his news in the far country, that the wandering prodigal son may hear it, and cry, "I will arise, and go to my Father." God has come to men' will not come to receive grace and truth?

One more lesson remains, And that is—*what manner of people ought we to be among whom Jehovah dwells?* It must have been a very solemn thing to be a member of that great camp of two million in the wilderness of Sinai. God's presence in the midst of the camp must have made every tent sacred. As we walked through the streets of that canvas city, if we had been Israelites, and in our right minds, we should have said, "These tents are none other than the house the house of God and the very gate of heaven; for see, Jehovah is in the midst of us. Mark you not the bright light that shines about His sanctuary?" We should have felt that in such in such a camp all should be holy. The pollution of sin should be unknown there. In such a camp constant prayer and praise should be presented to Him whose presence was its glory and defense. Today let our congregation be a holy convocation; and as for ourselves, let us be holiness unto the Lord. We are consecrated men and women, seeing the Lord has come so very near to us. I spoke of solemnity; I meant not dread and sorrow, but a solemnity full of joy. It is a solemn thing to have God so near, but the joy is equal to the solemnity. Glory be unto God most high, for He is here! Let us spend our days and nights in gladness and delight. God is reconciled to us in the person of His dear Son, and we have fellowship with God in Christ Jesus; Wherefore let us rejoice evermore. Amen and amen.

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**Turn Or Burn**

If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready. - Psalm 7:12

If the sinner turn not, God will whet his sword." So, then, God has a sword, and he will punish man on account of his iniquity. This evil generation hath laboured to take away from God the sword of his justice; they have endeavoured to prove themselves that God will "clear the guilty," and will by no means "punish iniquity, transgression and sin." Two hundred years ago the predominant strain of the pulpit was one of terror: it was like Mount Sinai, it thundered forth the dreadful wrath of God, and from the lips of a Baxter or a Bunyan, you heard most terrible sermons, full to the brim with warnings of judgment to come. Perhaps some of the Puritanic fathers may have gone too far, and have given too great a prominence to the terrors of the Lord in their ministry: but the age in which we live has sought to forget those terrors altogether, and if we dare to tell men that God will punish them for their sins, it is charged upon us that want to bully them into religion, and if we faithfully and honestly tell our hearers that sin must bring after it certain destruction, it is said that we are attempting to frighten them into goodness. Now we care not what men mockingly impute to us; we feel it our duty, when men sin, to tell them they shall be punished, and so long as the world will not give up its sin we feel we must not cease our warnings. But the cry of the age is, that God is merciful, that God is love. Ay; who said he was not? But remember, it is equally true, God is just, severely and inflexibly just. He were not God, if he were not just; he could not be merciful if he were not just, for punishment of the wicked is demanded by the highest mercy to the rest of mankind. Rest assured, however, that he is just, and that the words I am about to read you from God's Word are true - "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God;" "God is angry with the wicked every day;" "If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors." Forsooth, because this age is wicked it is to have no hell; and because it is hypocritical it would have but feigned punishment. This doctrine is so prevalent as to make even the ministers of the gospel flinch from their duty in declaring the day of wrath. How few there are who will

solemnly tell us of the judgment to come. They preach of God's love and mercy as they ought to do, and as God has commanded them; but of what avail is it to preach mercy unless they preach also the doom of the wicked? And how shall we hope to effect the purpose of preaching unless we warn men that if they "turn not, he will whet his sword?" I fear that in too many places the doctrine of future punishment is rejected and laughed as a fancy and a chimera; but the day will come when it shall be known to be a reality. Ahab scoffed at Micaiah, when he said he should never come home alive; the men of Noah's generation laughed at the foolish old man, (as they thought him), who bid them take heed, for the world should be drowned; but when they were climbing to the tree-tops, and the floods were following them, did they then say that the prophecy was untrue: and when the arrow was sticking in the heart of Ahab, and he said, "Take me from the battle, for I must die;" did he then think that Micaiah spoke an untruth? And so it is now. Ye tell us we speak lies, when we warn you of judgment to come; but in that day when your mischief shall fall on yourselves, and when destruction shall overwhelm you, will you say we were liars then? Will ye then turn round and scoff, and say we spake not the truth? Rather, my hearers, the highest need of honour will then be given to him who was the most faithful in warning men concerning the wrath of God. I have often trembled at the thought that, here I am standing before you, and constantly engaged in the work of the ministry, and what if, when I die, I should be found unfaithful to your souls, how doleful will be our meeting in the world of spirits. It would be a dreadful thing if you were able to say to me in the world to come, "Sir, you flattered us; you did not tell us of the solemnities of eternity; you did not rightly dwell upon the awful wrath of God; you spoke to us feebly and faintly; you were somewhat afraid of us; you knew we could not bear to hear of eternal torment, and therefore you kept it back and never mentioned it!" Why, methinks you would look me in the face and curse me throughout eternity, if that should be my conduct. But by God's help it never shall be. Come fair or foul, when I die I shall, God helping me, be able to say, "I am clear of the blood of all men." So far as I know God's truth I will endeavour to speak it; and though on my head opprobrium and scandal be poured to a ten-fold greater extent than ever, I'll hail it and welcome it, if I may but be faithful to this unstable generation, faithful to God, and faithful to my own conscience. Let me, then,

endeavour - and by God's help I will do it as solemnly and as tenderly as I can - to address such of you as have not yet repented, most affectionately reminding you of your future doom, if you should die impenitent. "If he turn not, he will whet his sword."

In the first place, *what is the turning here meant?* In the second place let us dwell on the *necessity there is for men's turning, otherwise God will punish them*; and then thirdly, let me remind you of the *means whereby men can be turned from the error of their ways, and the weakness and frailty of their nature amended by the power of divine grace.*

I. In the first place, my hearers, let me endeavour to explain to you the NATURE OF THE TURNING HERE MEANT. It says - "if he *turn* not he will whet his sword."

To commence then. The turning here meant is *actual*, not fictitious - not that which stops with promises and vows, but that which deals with the real acts life. Possible one of you will say, this morning "Lo I turn to God; from this forth I will not sin, but I will endeavour to walk in holiness; my vices shall be abandoned, my crimes shall be thrown to the winds, and I will turn unto God with full purpose of heart;" but, mayhap, to-morrow you will have forgotten this; you will weep a tear or two under the preaching of God's word, but by to-morrow every tear shall have been dried, and you will utterly forget that you ever came to the house of God at all. How many of us are like men who see their faces in a glass, and straightway go away and forget what manner of men they are! Ah! my hearer, it is not thy promise of repentance that can save thee; it is not thy vow, it is not thy solemn declaration, it is not the tear that is dried more easily than the dew-drop by the sun, it is not the transient emotion of the heart which constitutes a real turning to God. There must be a true and actual abandonment of sin, and a turning unto righteousness in real act and deed in every-day life. Do you say you are sorry, and repent, and yet go on from day to day, just as you always went? Will you now bow your heads, and say, "Lord, I repent," and in a little while commit the same deeds again? If ye do, your repentance is worse than nothing, and shall but make your destruction yet more sure; for he that voweth to his Maker, and doth not pay, hath committed another sin, in that he hath



attempted to deceive the Almighty, and lie against the God that made him. Repentance to be true, to be evangelical, must be a repentance which really affects our outward conduct.

In the next place, repentance to be sure *must be entire*. How many will say, "Sir, I will renounce this sin and the other; but there are certain darling lusts which I must keep and hold." O sirs, In God's name let me tell you, it is not the giving up of one sin, nor fifty sins, which is true repentance; it is the solemn renunciation of every sin. If thou dost harbour one of those accursed vipers in thy heart, thy repentance is but a sham. If thou dost indulge in but one lust, and dost give up every other, that one lust, like one leak in a ship, will sink thy soul. Think it not sufficient to give up thy outward vices; fancy it not enough to cut off the more corrupt sins of thy life; it is all or none which God demands. "Repent," says he; and when he bids you repent, he means repent for all thy sins, otherwise he never can accept thy repentance as being real and genuine. The true penitent hates sin in the race, not in the individual - in the mass, not in the particular. He says, "Gild thee as thou wilt, O sin, I abhor thee! Ay, cover thyself with pleasure, make thyself gaudy, like the snake with its azure scales - I hate thee still, for I know thy venom, and I flee from thee, even when thou comest to me in the most specious garb." All sin must be given up, or else you shall never have Christ: all transgression must be renounced, or else the gates of heaven must be barred against you. Let us remember, then, that for repentance to be sincere it must be entire repentance.

Again, when God says, "If he turn not, he will whet his sword," he means *immediate* repentance. Ye say, when we are nearing the last extremity of mortal life, and when we are entering the borders of the thick darkness of futurity, then we will change our ways. But, my dear hearers, do not delude yourselves. It is few who have ever changed after a long life of sin. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" If so, let him that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well. Put no faith in the repentances which you promise yourselves on your death beds. There are ten thousand arguments against one, that if you repent not in health, you will never repent in sickness. Too many have promised themselves a quiet season before they leave the world, when they could turn their face to the

wall and confess their sins; but how few have found that time of repose! Do not men drop down dead in the streets - ay, even in the house of God? Do they not expire in their business? And when death is gradual, it affords but an ill season for repentance. Many a saint has said on his death-bed, "Oh! if I had now to seek my God, if I had now to cry to him for mercy, what would become of me? These pangs are enough, without the pangs of repentance. It is enough to have the body tortured, without having the soul wrung with remorse." Sinner! God saith, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, when your fathers tempted me and proved me." When God the Holy Spirit convinces men of sin, they will never talk of delays. You may never have another to repent in. Therefore saith the voice of wisdom, "Repent now." The Jewish rabbis said, "Let every man repent one day before he dies, and since he may die to-morrow, let him take heed to turn from his evil ways to-day." Even so we say; immediate repentance is that which God demands, for he hath never promised thee that thou shalt have any hour to repent in, except the one that thou hast now.

Furthermore; the repentance here described as absolutely necessary is *heartly* repentance. It is not a mock tear; it is not hanging out the ensigns of grief, whilst you are keeping merriment in your hearts. It is not having an illumination within, and shutting up all the windows by a pretended repentance; it is the putting out of the candles of the heart; it is sorrow of soul which is true repentance. A man may renounce every outward sin, and yet not really repent. True repentance is a turning of the heart as well as of the life; it is the giving up of the whole soul to God, to be his for ever and ever; it is a renunciation of the sins of the heart, as well as the crimes of the life. Ah! dear hearers, let none of us fancy that we have repented when we have only a false and fictitious repentance; let none of us take that to be the work of the Spirit which is only the work of poor human nature; let us not dream that we have savingly turned to God, when, perhaps, we have only turned to ourselves. And let us not think it enough to have turned from one vice to another, or from vice to virtue; let us remember, it must be a turning of the whole soul, so that the old man is made anew in Christ Jesus; otherwise we have not answered the requirement of the text - we have not turned unto God.

And lastly, upon this point, this repentance must be *perpetual*. It is not my turning to God during to-day that will be a proof that I am a true convert; it is forsaking of my sin throughout the entire of my life, until I sleep in the grave. You need not fancy that to be upright for a week will be a proof that you are saved; it is a perpetual abhorrence of evil. The change which God works is neither a transitory nor a superficial change; not a cutting off the top of the weed, but an away of that which is the cause of the defilement. In old times, when rich and generous monarchs came into their cities they made the fountains run milk and wine; but the fountain was not therefore a fountain of milk and wine always; one the morrow it ran with water as before. So you may to-day go home and pretend to pray; you may to-day be serious, to-morrow you may be honest, and the next day you may pretend to be devout, but yet if thou return, as Scripture has it, "like the dog to its vomit, and like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire," your repentance shall but sink you deeper into hell, instead of being a proof of divine grace in your hearts.

It is very hard to distinguish between legal repentance and evangelical repentance; however, there are certain marks whereby they may be distinguished, and at the risk of tiring you, we will just notice one or two of them; and may God grant that you may find them in your own souls! Legal repentance is a fear of damning: evangelical repentance is a fear of sinning. Legal repentance makes us fear the wrath of God; evangelical repentance makes us fear the cause of that wrath, even sin. When a man repents with that grace of repentance which God the Spirits works in him, he repents not of the punishment which is to follow the deed, but of the deed itself; and he feels that if there were not pit digged for the wicked, if there were no ever-gnawing worm, and no fire unquenchable, he would still hate sin. It is such repentance as this which every one of you must have, or else you will be lost. It must be a hatred of sin. Do not suppose, that because when you come to die you will be afraid of eternal torment, therefore that will be repentance. Every thief is afraid of the prison; but he will steal to-morrow if you set him free. Most men who have committed murder tremble at the sight of the gallows-tree, but they would do the deed again could they live. It is not the hatred of the punishment that is repentance; it is the hatred of the deed itself. Do you feel that you have such a repentance as that? If not, these thundering

words must be preached to you again, - "If he turn not, he will whet his sword."

But one more hint here. When a man is possessed of true and evangelical repentance - I mean the gospel repentance which saves the soul - he not only hates sin for its own sake, but loathes it so extremely and utterly that he feels that no repentance of his own can avail to wash it out, and he acknowledges that it is only by an act of sovereign grace that his sin can be washed away. Now, if any of you suppose that you repent of your sins, and yet imagine that by a course of holy living you can blot them out - if you suppose that by walking uprightly in future you can obliterate your past transgressions - you have not yet truly repented; for true repentance makes a man feel, that

"Could his zeal no respite know,  
Could his tears for ever flow,  
All for sin could not atone,  
Christ must save, and Christ alone."

And if it is so killed in thee that thou hatest as a corrupt and abominable thing, and wouldst bury it out of thy sight, but that thou feelest that it will never be entombed, unless Christ shall dig the grave, then thou hast repented of sin. We must humbly confess that we deserve God's wrath, and that we cannot avert it by any deeds of our own, and we must put our trust solely and entirely in the blood and merits of Jesus Christ. If ye have not so repented, again we exclaim in the words of David, "If you turn not, he will whet his sword."

II. And now the second point; it is a yet more terrible one to dwell upon, and if I consulted my own feelings I should not mention it; but we must not consider our feelings in the work of ministry, any more than we should if we were physicians of men's bodies. We must sometimes use the knife, where we feel that mortification would ensue without it. We must frequently make sharp gashes into men's consciences, in the hope that the Holy Spirit will bring them to life. We assert, then, that there is a NECESSITY that God should whet his sword and punish men, if they will not turn. Earnest Baxter used to say, "Sinner! turn or burn; it is thine

only alternative: TURN OR BURN!" And it is so. We think we can show you why men must turn, or else they must burn.

1. First we cannot suppose the God of the Bible could suffer sin to be unpunished. Some may suppose it; they may dream their intellects into a state of intoxication, so as to suppose a God apart from justice; but no man whose reason is sound and whose mind is in a healthy condition can imagine a God without justice. Ye cannot suppose a king without it to be a good king; ye cannot dream of a good government that should exist without justice, much less of God, the Judge and King of all the earth, without justice in his bosom. To suppose him all love, and no justice, were to undeify him, and make him no longer God; he were not capable of ruling this world if he had not justice in his heart. There is in man a natural perception of the fact, that if there be a God, he must be just; and I can scarcely imagine that ye can believe in a God without believing also in the punishment of sin. It were difficult to suppose him elevated high above his creatures, beholding their disobedience, and yet looking with the same serenity upon the good and upon the evil; you cannot suppose him awarding the same need of praise to the wicked and to the righteous. The idea of God, suppose justice; and it is but to say justice when you say God.

2. But to imagine that there shall be no punishment for sin, and that man can be saved without repentance, is to fly in the face of all the Scriptures. What! Are the records of divine history nothing? And if they be anything must not God have mightily changed, if he doth not now punish sin? What! did he once blast Eden, and drive our parents out of that happy garden on account of a little theft, as man would style it? Did he drown a world with water, and inundate creation with the floods which he had buried in the bowels of this earth? And will he not punish sin? Let the burning hail which fell on Sodom tell you that God is just; let the open mouth of the earth which swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, warn you that he will not spare the guilty: let the mighty works of God which he did in the Red Sea, the wonders which he wrought on Pharaoh, and the miraculous destruction which he brought on Sennacherib, tell you that God is just. And it were perhaps out of place for me in the same argument to mention the judgments of God even in our age; but have

there never been such? This world is not the dungeon where God punishes sin, but still there are a few instances in which we cannot but believe that he actually did avenge it. I am no believer that every accident is a judgment; I am far from believing that the destruction of men and women in a theatre is a punishment upon them for their sin, since the same thing has occurred in divine service to our perpetual sorrow. I believe judgment is reserved for the next world; I could not account for providence if I believed that God punishes here. "Those men upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay." It has injured religion for men to take up every providence, and say, for instance, that because a boat was upset on the Sabbath-day it was a judgment on the persons that were in it. We assuredly believe that it was sinful to spend the day in pleasure, but we deny that it was a punishment from God. God usually reserves his punishment for a future state; but yet, we say, there have been a few instances in which we cannot but believe that men and women have been by Providence in this life punished for their guilt. I remember one which I scarcely dare relate to you. I saw the wretched creature myself. He had dared to imprecate on his head the most awful curses that man could utter. In his rage and fury he said he wished his head were twisted on one side, that his eyes were put out, and that his jaws were made fast: but a moment afterwards the lash of his whip - with which he had been cruelly treating his horse - entered his eye, brought on first inflammation, and then lock-jaw, and when I saw him he was just in the very position in which he had asked to be placed, for his head was twisted round, his eye-sight was gone, and he could not speak except through his closed teeth. You will remember a similar instance happening at Devizes, where a woman declared that she had paid her part of the price of a sack of meal, when she had it in her hand, and immediately dropped down dead on the spot. Some of these may have been singular coincidences; but I am not so credulous as to suppose that they were brought about by chance. I think the will of the Lord was in it. I believe they were some faint intimations that God was just, and that although the full shower of his wrath does not fall on men in this life, he does pour a drop or two on them, to let us see how he will one day chasten the world for its iniquity.

3. But why need I go far to bring arguments to bear on you, my hearers? Your own consciences tell you that God must punish sin. You may laugh at me, and say that you have no such *belief*. I do not say you have but I say that your conscience tells you so, and conscience has more power over men than what they think to be their belief. As John Bunyan said, Mr. Conscience had a very loud voice, and though Mr. Understanding shut himself up in a dark room, where he could not see, yet he used to thunder out so mightily in the streets, that Mr. Understanding used to shake in his house through what Mr. Conscience said. And it is often so. You say in your understanding, "I cannot believe God will punish sin;" but you know he will. You would not like to confess your secret fears, because that were to give up what you have so often most bravely asserted. But because you assert it with such boast and bombast, imagine you do not believe it, for if you did, you would not need look so big while saying it. I know that when you are dying you will believe in a hell. Conscience makes cowards of us all, and makes us believe, even when we say we do not, that God must punish sin.

Let me tell you a story; I have told it before, but it is a striking one, and sets out in a true light how easily men will be brought in times of danger to believe in God, and a God of justice too, though they have denied him before. In the backwoods of Canada there resided a good minister, who one evening, went out to meditate, as Isaac did, in the fields. He soon found himself on the borders of a forest, which he entered, and walked along a track which had been trodden before him; musing, musing still, until at last the shadows of twilight gathered around him, and he began to think how he should spend a night in the forest. He trembled at the idea of remaining there, with the poor shelter of a tree into which he would be compelled to climb. On a sudden he saw a light in the distance among the trees, and imagining that it might be from the window of some cottage where he could find a hospitable retreat, he hastened to it, and to his surprise, saw a space cleared and trees laid down to make a platform, and upon it a speaker addressing a multitude. He thought to himself, "I have stumbled on a company of people, who in this dark forest have assembled to worship God, and some minister is preaching to them, at this late hour of the evening, concerning the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;" but to his surprise and horror, when he came nearer, he found a young

man declaiming against God, daring the Almighty to do his worst upon him, speaking terrible things in wrath against the justice of the Most High, and venturing most bold and awful assertions concerning his own disbelief in a future state. It was altogether a singular scene; it was lighted up by pine-knots, which cast a glare here and there, while the thick darkness in other places still reigned. The people were intent on listening to the orator, and when he sat down thunders of applause were given to him; each one seeming to emulate the other in his praise. Thought the minister, "I must not let this pass; I must rise and speak; the honour of my God, and his cause demands it." But he feared to speak, for he knew not what to say, having come there suddenly; but he would have ventured, had not something else occurred. A man of middle age, hale and strong, rose, and leaning on his staff he said, "My friends, I have a word to speak to you to-night. I am not about to refute any of the arguments of the orator; I shall not criticise his style; I shall say nothing concerning what I believe to be the blasphemies he has uttered; but I shall simply relate to you a fact, and after I have done that you shall draw your own conclusions. Yesterday, I walked by the side of yonder river; I saw on its floods a young man in a boat. The boat was unmanageable; it was going fast towards the rapids; he could not use the oars, and I saw that he was not capable of bringing the boat to the shore. I saw that young man wring his hands in agony; by-and-bye he gave up the attempt to save his life, kneeled down and cried with desperate earnestness, "O God! save my soul! If my body cannot be saved, save my soul.' I heard him confess that he had been a blasphemer, I heard him vow that if his life were spared he would never be such again; I heard him implore the mercy of heaven for Jesus Christ's sake, and earnestly plead that he might be washed in his blood. These arms saved that young man from the flood; I plunged in, brought the boat to shore, and saved his life. That same young man has just now addressed you, and cursed his Maker. What say you to this, sirs!" The speaker sat down. You may guess what a shadow ran through the young man himself, and how the audience in one moment changed their notes, and saw that after all, whilst it was a fine thing to brag and bravado against Almighty God on dry land, and when danger was distant, it was not quite so grand to think ill of him when near the verge of the grave. We believe there is enough conscience in every man to convince him that God must punish him for his sin; therefore we



think that our text will wake an echo in every heart - "If he turn not, he will whet his sword."

I am tired of this terrible work of endeavouring to show you that God must punish sin; let me just utter a few of the declarations of his Holy Word, and then let me tell you how repentance is to be obtained. O sirs! ye may think that the fire of hell is indeed a fiction, and that the flames of the nethermost pit are but popish dreams; but if ye are believers in the Bible ye must believe that it cannot be so. Did not our Master say, "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." You say it is metaphorical fire. But what meant he by this - "He is able to cast both body and soul into hell?" Is it not written, that there is reserved for the devil and his angels fearful torment? and do you not know that our Master said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment;" "Depart, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" "Yes," you say, "but it is not philosophical to believe that there is a hell; it does not consort with reason to believe there is." However, I should like to act as if there were, even if there is no such place; for as the poor and pious man once said, "Sir, I like to have two strings to my bow. If there should be no hell I shall be as well off as you will; but if there should, it will go hard with you." But why need I say "if?" You know there is. No man has been born and educated in this land without having his conscience so far enlightened as to know that to be a truth. All I need to do is to press upon your anxious consideration this thought: - Do you feel that you are a fit subject for heaven now? Do you feel that God has changed your heart and renewed your nature? If not, I beseech you lay hold of this thought, that unless you be renewed all that can be dreadful in the torments of the future world must inevitably be yours. Dear hearer, apply it to thyself, not to thy fellow-men, but to thine own conscience, and may God Almighty make use of it to bring thee to repentance.

III. Now briefly what are the MEANS of repentance? Most seriously I say, I do not believe any man can repent with evangelical repentance of himself. You ask me then to what purpose is the sermon I have endeavoured to preach, proving the necessity of repentance? Allow me to make the sermon of some purpose, under God, by its conclusion. Sinner! thou art so desperately set on sin, that I have no hope thou wilt ever turn

from it of thyself. But listen! He who died on Calvary is exalted on high "to give repentance and remission of sin." Dost thou this morning feel that thou art a sinner? If so, ask of Christ to give thee repentance, for he can work repentance in thine heart by his Spirit, though thou canst not work it there thyself. Is thy heart like iron? he can put it into the furnace of his love and make it melt. Is thy soul like the nether millstone? His grace is able to dissolve it like the ice is melted before the sun. He can make thee repent, though thou canst not make thyself repent. If thou feelest thy need of repentance, I will not now say to thee "repent," for I believe there are certain acts that must precede a sense of repentance. I should advise you to go to your houses, and if you feel that you have sinned, and yet cannot sufficiently repent of your transgressions, bow your knees before God and confess your sins: tell him you cannot repent as you would; tell him your heart is hard; tell him it is as cold as ice. You can do that if God has made you feel your need of a Saviour. Then if it should be laid to your heart to endeavour to seek after repentance, I will tell you the best way to find it. Spend an hour first in endeavouring to remember thy sins; and when conviction has gotten a firm hold on thee, then spend another hour - where? At Calvary, my hearer. Sit down and read that chapter which contains the history and mystery of the God that loved and died; sit down and think thou seest that glorious Man, with blood dropping from his hands, and his feet gushing rivers of gore; and if that does not make thee repent, with the help of God's Spirit, then I know of nothing that can. An old divine says, "If you feel you do not love God, love him till you feel you do: if you think you cannot believe, believe till you feel you believe." Many a man says he cannot repent, while he is repenting. Keep on with that repentance, till you feel you have repented. Only acknowledge thy transgressions; confess thy guiltiness; own that he were just if he should destroy thee; and say this, solemnly -

My faith doth lay its hand  
On that dear head of thine,  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess my sin.

Oh! what would I give if one of my hearers should be blessed by God to go home and repent! If I had worlds to buy one of your souls, I would readily

give them, if I might but bring one of you to Christ. I shall never forget the hour when I hope God's mercy first looked on me. It was in a place very different from this, amongst a despised people, in an insignificant little chapel, of a peculiar sect. I went there bowed down with guilt; laden with transgression. The minister walked up the pulpit stairs, opened his Bible, and read that precious text, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and beside me there is none else;" and, as I thought, fixing his eyes on me, before he began to preach to others, he said, "Young man! look! look! look! You are one of the ends of the earth; you feel you are; you know your need of a Saviour; you are trembling because you think he will never save you. He says this morning, 'Look!'" Oh, how my soul was shaken within me then! what! thought I, does that man know me, and all about me? He seemed as if he did. And it made me "look!" Well, I thought, lost or saved, I will try; sink or swim, I will run the risk of it; and in that moment I hope by his grace I looked upon Jesus, and though desponding, downcast, and ready to despair, and feeling that I could rather die than live as I had lived, at that very moment it seemed as if a young heaven had had its birth within my conscience. I went home, no more cast down; those about me, noticing the change, asked me why I was so glad, and I told them that I had believed in Jesus, and that it was written, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Oh! if one such should be here this morning! Where art thou, thou chief of sinners, thou vilest of the vile? My dear hearer, thou hast never been in the house of God perhaps these last twenty years; but here thou art, covered with thy sins, the blackest and vilest of all! Hear God's Word. "Come, now let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool, and though they be red like crimson, they shall be white than snow." And all this for Jesus' sake; all this for his blood's sake! "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved;" for his word and mandate is, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

**SINNER! TURN OR BURN!**

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# The Turning Point

And he arose, and came to his father. - Luke 15:20

This sentence expresses the true turning point in the prodigal's life story. Many other matters led up to it, and before he came to it there was much in him that was very hopeful; but this was the point itself, and had he never reached it he would have remained a prodigal, but would never have been the prodigal restored, and his life would have been a warning rather than an instruction to us. "He arose, and came to his father." Speaking, as I do, in extreme weakness, I have no words to spare; and while my voice holds out I shall speak straight to the point, and I pray the Lord to make every syllable practical and powerful by his Holy Spirit.

I. We shall begin by noticing that **HERE WAS ACTION**—"He arose, and came to his father." He had already been in a state of thoughtfulness; he had come to himself, but now he was to go further, and come to his father. He had considered the past, and weighed it up, and seen the hollowness of all the world's pleasures; he had seen his condition in reference to his father, and his prospects if he remained in the far-off country; he had thought upon what he ought to do, and what would be the probable result of such a course; but now he passed beyond the dreaminess of thought into matter-of-fact acting and doing. How long will it be, dear hearers, before you will do the same? We are glad to have you thoughtful; we hope that a great point is gained when you are led to consider your ways, to ponder your condition, and to look earnestly into the future, for thoughtlessness is the ruin of many a traveler to eternity, and by its means the unwary fall into the deep pit of carnal security and perish therein. But some of you have been among the "thoughtful" quite long enough; it is time you passed into a more practical stage. It is high time that you came to action; it would have been better if you had acted already; for, in the matter of reconciliation to God, first thoughts are best. When a man's life hangs on a thread, and hell is just before him, his path is clear, and a second thought is superfluous. The first impulse to escape

from danger and lay hold on Christ is that which you would be wise to follow. Some of you whom I now address have been thinking, and thinking, and thinking, till I fear that you will think yourselves into perdition. May you, by divine grace, be turned from thinking to believing, or else your thoughts will become the undying worm of your torment.

The prodigal had also passed beyond mere regret. He was deeply grieved that he had left his father's house, he lamented his lavish expenditure upon wantonness and rebelling, he mourned that the son of such a father should be degraded into a swineherd in a foreign land; but he now proceeded from regret to repentance, and bestirred himself to escape from the condition over which he mourned. What is the use of regret if we continue in sin? By all means pull up the sluices of your grief if the floods will turn the wheel of action, but you may as well reserve your tears, if they mean no more than idle sentimentalism. What avails it for a man to say he repents of his misconduct if he still perseveres in it? We are glad when sinners regret their sin and mourn the condition into which sin has brought them, but if they go no further, their regrets will only prepare them for eternal remorse. Had the prodigal become inactive through despondency, or stolid through sullen grief, he must have perished, far away from his father's home, as it is to be feared many will whose sorrow for sin leads them into a proud unbelief and wilful despair of God's love; but he was wise, for he shook off the drowsiness of his despondency, and, with resolute determination, "arose and came to his father." Oh, when will you sad ones be wise enough to do the same? When will your thinking and your sorrowing give place to practical obedience to the gospel?

The prodigal also pressed beyond mere resolving. That is a sweet verse which says, "I will arise," but that is far better which says, "And he arose." Resolves are good, like blossoms, but actions are better, for they are the fruits. We are glad to hear from you the resolution, "I will turn to God," but holy angels in heaven do not rejoice over resolutions, they reserve their music for sinners who actually repent. Many of you like the son in the parable have said, "I go, sir," but you have not gone. You are as ready at forgetting as you are at resolving. Every earnest sermon, every death in your family, every funeral knell for a neighbor, every pricking of

conscience, every touch of sickness, sets you a resolving to amend, but your promissory notes are never honored, your repentance ends in words. Your goodness is as the dew, which at early dawn hangs each blade of grass with gems, but leaves the fields all parched and dry when the sun's burning heat is poured upon the pasture. You mock your friends, and trifle with your own souls. You have often in this house said, "Let me reach my chamber and I will fall upon my knees," but on the way home you have forgotten what manner of men you were, and sin has confirmed its tottering throne. Have you not dallied long enough? Have you not lied unto God sufficiently? Should you not now give over resolving and proceed to the solemn business of your souls like men of common sense? You are in a sinking vessel, and the life-boat is near, but your mere resolve to enter it will not prevent your going down with the sinking craft; as sure as you are a living man, you will drown unless you take the actual leap for life.

"He arose and came to his father." Now, observe that this action of the prodigal was immediate, and without further parley. He did not go back to the citizen of that country and say, "Will you raise my wages? If not, I must leave." Had he parleyed he had been lost; but he gave his old master no notice, he concerned his indentures by running away. I would that sinners here would break their league with death, and violate their covenant with hell, by escaping for their lives to Jesus, who receives all such runaways. We want neither leave nor licence for quitting the service of sin and Satan, neither is it a subject which demands a month's consideration: in this matter instantaneous action is the surest wisdom. Lot did not stop to consult the king of Sodom as to whether he might quit his dominions, neither did he consult the parish officers as to the propriety of speedily deserting his home; but with the angel's hand pressing them, he and his fled from the city. Nay, one fled not; she looked and lingered, and that lingering cost her her life! That pillar of salt is the eloquent monitor to us to avoid delays when we are bidden to flee for our lives. Sinner, dost thou wish to be a pillar of salt? Wilt thou halt between two opinions, until God's anger shall doom thee to final impenitence? Wilt thou trifle with mercy till justice smite thee? Up, man, and while thy day of grace continues, fly thou into the arms of love.

The text implies that the prodigal aroused himself, and put forth all his energies. It is said, "he arose;" the word suggests that he had till then been asleep upon the bed of sloth, or the couch of presumption. If like Samson in Delilah's lap, he had been supine, inactive, and unstrung, but now, startled from his lethargy, he lifts up his eyes, he girds up his loins, he shakes off the spell which had enthralled him, he puts forth every power, he arouses his whole nature, and he spares no exertion until he returns to his father.

Men are not saved between sleeping and waking. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Grace does not stupefy us, it but arouses us. Surely, sirs, it is worth while making an awful effort to escape from eternal wrath. It is worth while summoning up every faculty and power and emotion and passion of your being, and saying to yourself, "I cannot be lost; I will not be lost: I am resolved that I will find mercy through Jesus Christ." The worst of it is, O sinners, ye are so sluggish, so indifferent, so ready to let things happen as they may. Sin has bewitched and benumbed you. You sleep as on beds of down and forget that you are in danger of hell fire. You cry, "A little more rest, and a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the arms to sleep," and so you sleep on, though your damnation slumbereth not. Would to God you could be awakened. It is not in the power of my voice to arouse you; but may the Lord Himself alarm you, for never were men more in danger. Let but your breath fail, or your blood pause, and you are lost for ever. Frailer than a cobweb is that life on which your eternal destiny depends. If you were wise you would not give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you had found your God and been forgiven. Oh, when will you come to a real action? How long will it be ere you believe in Jesus? How long will you snort between the jaws of hell? How long dare you provoke the living God?

II. Secondly, HERE WAS A SOUL COMING INTO ACTUAL CONTACT WITH GOD,—"He arose and came to his father." It would have been of no avail for him to have arisen if he had not come to his father. This is what the sinner has to do, and what the Spirit enables him to do: namely, to come straight away to his God. But, alas! very commonly, when men begin to be anxious, they go round about and hasten to a friend to tell

him about it, or they even resort to a deceitful priest, and seek help from him. They fly to a saint or a virgin, and ask these to be mediators for them, instead of accepting the only Mediator Jesus Christ, and going to God at once by him. They fly to outward forms and ceremonies, or they turn to their Bibles, their prayers, their repentances, or their sermon-hearings; in fact, to anything rather than their God. But the prodigal knew better; he went to his father, and it will be a grand day for you, O sinner, when you do the same. Go straight away to your God in Christ Jesus. "Come here," says the priest. Pass that fellow by. Get away to your Father. Reject an angel from heaven if he would detain you from the Lord. Go personally, directly, and at once to God in Christ Jesus. But surely I must perform some ceremony first? Not so did the prodigal, he arose and went at once to his father. Sinner, you must come to God, and Jesus is the way. Go to him then, tell him you have done wrong, confess your sins to him, and yield yourself to him. Cry, "Father, I have sinned: forgive me, for Jesus' sake."

Alas! there are many anxious souls who do not go to others, but they look to themselves. They sit down and cry, "I want to repent; I want to feel my need; I want to be humble." O man, get up! What are you at? Leave yourself and go to your Father. "Oh, but I have so little hope; my faith is very weak, and I am full of fears." What matters your hopes or your fears while you are away from your Father? Your salvation does not lie within yourself, but in the Lord's good will to you. You will never be at peace till, leaving all your doubts and your hopes, you come to your God and rest in his bosom. "Oh, but I want to conquer my propensities to sin, I want to master my strong temptations." I know what it is you want. You want the best robe without your Father's giving it you, and shoes on your feet of your own procuring; you do not like going in a beggar's suit and receiving all from the Lord's loving hand; but this pride of yours must be given up, and you must get away to God, or perish for ever. You must forget yourself, or only remember yourself so as to feel that you are bad throughout, and no more worthy to be called God's son. Give yourself up as a sinking vessel that is not worth pumping, but must be left to go down, and get you into the life-boat of free grace. Think of God your Father—of him, I say, and of his dear Son, the one Mediator and Redeemer of the sons of men. There is your hope—to fly away from self



and to reach your Father.

Do I hear you say, "Well, I shall continue in the means of grace, and I hope there to find my God." I tell you, if you do that, and refuse to go to God, the means of grace will be the means of damnation to you. "I must wait at the pool," says one. Then I solemnly warn you that you will lie there and die; for Jesus does not command you to lie there, his bidding is, "Take up thy bed, and walk." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." You have to go unto your Father, and not to the pool of Bethesda, or any other pool of ordinances or means of grace. "But I mean to pray," says one. What would you pray for? Can you expect the Lord to hear you while you will not hear him? You will pray best with your head in your Father's bosom, but the prayers of an unyielding, disobedient, unbelieving heart are mockeries. Prayers themselves will ruin you if they are made a substitute for Doing at once to God. Suppose the prodigal had sat down at the swine trough and said, "I will pray here," what would it have availed him? or suppose he had wept there, what good would have come of it? Praying and weeping were good enough when he had come to his father, but they could not have been substituted for it. Sinner, your business is with God. Hasten to him at once. You have nothing to do with yourself, or your own doings, or what others can do for you, the turning point of salvation is, "he arose and came to his father." There must be a real, living, earnest, contact of your poor guilty soul with God, a recognition that there is a God, and that God can be spoken to, and an actual speech of your soul to him, through Jesus Christ, for it is only God in Christ Jesus that is accessible at all. Going thus to God, we tell him that we are all wrong, and walls to be set right; we tell him we wish to be reconciled to him, and are ashamed that we should have sinned against him; we then put our trust in his Son, and we are saved. O soul, go to God: it matters not though the prayer you come with may be a very broken prayer, or even if it has mistakes in it, as the prodigal's prayer had when he said, "Make me as one of thy hired servants;" the language of the prayer will not signify so long as you really approach to God. "Him that cometh to me," says Jesus, "I will in no wise cast out;" and Jesus ever liveth to make intercessions for them that come to God through him.

Here, then, is the great Protestant doctrine. The Romish doctrine says

you must go round by the back door, and half-a-dozen of the Lord's servants must knock for you, and even then you may never be heard; but the grand old Protestant doctrine is, come to God yourself; come with no other mediator than Jesus Christ; come just as you are without merits and good works; trust in Jesus and your sins will be forgiven you.

There is my second point: there was action, and that action was contact with God.

III. Now, thirdly, IN THAT ACTION THERE WAS AN ENTIRE YIELDING UP OF HIMSELF. In the prodigal's case, his proud independence and self-will were gone. In other days he demanded his portion, and resolved to spend it as he pleased, but now he is willing to be as much under rule as a hired servant, he has had enough of being his own master, and is weary of the distance from God which self-will always creates. He longs to get into a child's true place, namely, that of dependence and loving submission. The great mischief of all was his distance from his father, and he now feels it to be so. His great thought is to remove that distance by humbly returning, for then he feels that all other ills will come to an end. He yields up his cherished freedom, his boasted independence, his liberty to think and do and say whatever he chose, and he longs to come under loving rule and wise guidance. Sinner, are you ready for this? If so, come and welcome; your father longs to press you to his bosom!

He gave up all idea of self-justification, for he said, "I have sinned." Before he would have said, "I have a right to do as I like with my own; who is to dictate how I shall spend my own money. If I do sow a few wild oats, every young man does the same. I have been very generous, if nothing else, nobody can call me greedy. I am no hypocrite. Look at your canting Methodists, how they deceive people! There's nothing of that in me, I'll warrant you; I am an outspoken man of the world; and after all, a good deal better in disposition than my elder brother, fine fellow though he pretends to be." But now the prodigal boasts no longer. Not a syllable of self-praise falls from his lips; he mournfully confesses, "I have sinned against heaven and before thee." Sinner, if you would be saved you also must come down from your high places, and acknowledge your iniquity. Confess that you have done wrong, and do not try to extenuate your

offense; do not offer apologies and make your case better than it is, but humbly plead guilty and leave your soul in Jesus' hands. Of two things, to sin or to deny the sin, probably to deny the sin is the worse of the two, and shows a blacker heart. Acknowledge your fault, man, and tell your heavenly Father that if it were not for his mercy you would have been in hell, and that as it is you richly deserve to be there even now. Make your case rather blacker than it is if you can, this I say because I know you cannot do any such thing. When a man is in the hospital it cannot be of any service to him to pretend to be better than he is; he will not receive any more medical attention on that account, but rather the other way, for the worse his case the more likely is the physician to give him special notice. Oh, sinner, lay bare before God thy sores, thy putrifying sores of sin, the horrid ulcers of thy deep depravity, and cry, "O Lord, have mercy upon me? "This is the way of wisdom. Have done with pride and self-righteousness, and make thy appeal to the undeserved pity of the Lord, and thou will speed.

Observe that the prodigal yielded up himself so thoroughly that he owned his father's love to him to be an aggravation of his guilt: so I take it he means when he says, "Father, I have sinned." It adds an emphasis to the "I have sinned" when it follows after the word "father." "Thou good God, I have broken thy good laws; thou loving, tender, merciful God, I have done wrong wantonly and wickedly against thee. Thou hast been a very loving Father to me, and I have been a most ungenerous and shameless traitor to thee, rebelling without cause. I confess this frankly and humbly, and with many tears. Ah! hadst thou been a tyrant I might have gathered some apology from thy severity, but thou hast been a Father, and this makes it worse that I should sin against thee." It is sweet to hear such a confession as this poured out into the Father's bosom.

The penitent also yielded up all his supposed rights and claims upon his father, saying, "I am not worthy to be called thy son." He might have said, "I have sinned, but still I am thy child," and most of us would have thought it a very justifiable argument; but he does not say so, he is too humble for that, he owns, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." A sinner is really broken down when he acknowledges that if God would have no mercy on him, but cast him away for ever, it would be no more

than justice.

"Should saddled vengeance seize my breath,  
I must pronounce thee just in death;  
And, if my soul were sent to hell,  
Thy righteous law approves it well."

That soul is not far from peace which has ceased arguing and submits to the sentence. Oh, sinner, I urge thee, if thou wouldst find speedy rest, go and throw thyself at the foot of the cross where God meets such as thou art, and say, "Lord, here I am; do what thou wilt with me. Never a word of excuse will I offer, nor one single plea by way of extenuation. I am a mass of guilt and misery, but pity me, oh, pity me! No rights or claims have I; I have forfeited the rights of creatureship by becoming a rebel against thee. I am lost and utterly undone before the bar of thy justice. From that justice I flee and hide myself in the wounds of thy Son. According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions!"

Once again, here was such a yielding up of himself to his father that no terms or conditions are mentioned or implied. He begs to be received, but a servant's place is good enough for him; amongst the scullions of the kitchen he is content to take his place, so long as he may be forgiven. He does not ask for a little liberty to sin, or stipulate for a little self-righteousness wherein he may boast; he gives all up. He is willing to be anything or nothing, just as his father pleases, so that he may but be numbered with his household. No weapons of rebellion are in his hands now. No secret opposition to his father's rule lingers in his soul, he is completely subdued, and lies at his father's feet. Our Lord never crushed a soul yet that lay prostrate at his feet, and he never will. He will stoop down and say, "Rise, my child; rise, for I have forgiven thee. Go and sin no more. I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.

IV. Notice further, and fourthly, that IN THIS ACT THERE WAS A MEASURE OF FAITH IN HIS FATHER—a measure, I say, meaning

thereby not much faith, but some. A little faith saves the soul. There was faith in his father's power. He said, "In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare." Sinner, dost thou not believe that God is able to save thee; that through Jesus Christ he is able to supply thy soul's needs. Canst thou not get as far as this, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." The prodigal had also some faith in his father's readiness to pardon; for if he had not so hoped he would never have returned to his father at all: if he had been sure that his father would never smile upon him he would never have returned to him. Sinner, do believe that God is merciful, for so he is. Believe, through Jesus Christ, that he willeth not the death of the sinner, but had rather that he should turn to him and live; for as surely as God this is truth, and do not thou believe a lie concerning thy God. The Lord is not hard or harsh, but he rejoices to pardon great transgressions. The prodigal also believed in his father's readiness to bless him. He felt sure that his father would go as far as propriety would permit, for he said, "I am not worthy to be called thy son, but make me at least thy servant." In this also he admitted that his father was so good, that even to be his servant would be a great matter. He was contented even to get the lowest place, so long as he might be under the shade of so good a protector.

Ah, poor sinner, dost thou not believe that God will have mercy on thee if he can do so consistently with his justice? If thou believest that, I have good news to tell thee. Jesus Christ, his Son, has offered such an atonement, that God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth, he has mercy upon the vilest, and justifieth the ungodly, and accepteth the very chief of sinners through his dear Son. Oh, soul, have faith in the atonement. The atonement made by the personal sacrifice of the Son of God must be infinitely precious; believe thou that there is efficacy enough in it for thee. It is thy safety to fly to that atonement and cling to the Cross of Christ, and thou wilt honor God by so doing; is the only way in which thou canst honor him. Thou canst honor him by believing that he can save thee, even thee. The truest faith is that which believes in the mercy of God in the teeth of conscious unworthiness. The penitent in the parable went to his father too unworthy to be called his son, and yet he said, "My father." Faith has a way of seeing the blackness of sin, and yet believing that God can make the soul as white as snow. It is

not faith that says, "I am a little sinner, and therefore God can forgive me;" but that is faith which cries, "I am a great sinner, an accursed and condemned sinner, and yet, for all that, God's infinite mercy can forgive me, and the blood of Christ can make me clean." Believe in the teeth of thy feelings, and in spite of thy conscience; believe in God, though everything within thee seems to say, "He cannot save thee; he will not save thee." Believe in God, sinner, over the tops of mountain sins. Do as John Bunyan says he did, for he was so afraid of his sins and of the punishment thereof, that he could not but run into God's arms, and he said, "Though he had held a drawn sword in his hands, I would have run on the very point of it, rather than have kept away from him." So do thou, poor sinner. Believe thy God. Believe in nothing else, but trust thy God, and thou wilt get the blessing. It is wonderful the power of faith over God, it binds his justice and constrains his grace. I do not know how to illustrate it better than by a little story. When I walked down my garden some time ago I found a dog amusing himself among the flowers. I knew that he was not a good gardener, and no dog of mine, so I threw a stick at him and bade him begone. After I had done so, he conquered me, and made me ashamed of having spoken roughly to him, for he picked up my stick, and, wagging his tail right pleasantly, he brought the stick to me, and dropped it at my feet. Do you think I could strike him or drive him away after that? No, I patted him and called him good names. The dog had conquered the man. And if you, poor sinner, dog as you are, can have confidence enough in God to come to him just as you are, it is not in his heart to spurn you. There is an omnipotence in simple faith which will conquer even the divine Being himself. Only do but trust him as he reveals himself in Jesus, and you shall find salvation.

V. I have not time or strength to dwell longer here, and so I must notice, fifthly, that THIS ACT OF COMING INTO CONTACT WITH GOD IS PERFORMED BY THE SINNER JUST AS HE IS. I do not know how wretched the prodigal's appearance may have been, but I will be bound to say he had grown none the sweeter by having fed swine, nor do I suppose his garments had been very sumptuously embroidered by gathering husks for then from the trees. Yet, just as he was, he came. Surely he might have spent an hour profitably in cleansing his flesh and his clothes. But no, he said, "I will arise," and no sooner said than done! he did arise,

and he came to his father. Every moment that a sinner stops away from God in order to get better he is but adding to his sin, for the radical sin of all is his being away from God and the longer he stays in it the more he sins. The attempt to perform good works apart from God is like the effort of a thief to set his stolen goods in order, his sole duty is to return them at once. The very same pride which leads men away from God may be seen in their self-conceited notion that they can improve themselves while still they refuse to return to him. The essence of their fault is that they are far off from God, and whatever they do, so long as that distance remains, nothing is effectually done. I say the radical of the whole matter is distance from God, and therefore the commencement of setting matters right lies in arising and returning to him from whom they have departed.

The prodigal was bound to go home just as he was, for there was nothing that he could do. He was reduced to such extremities that he could not purchase a fresh piece of cloth to mend his garments, nor a farthing's worth of soap with which to cleanse his flesh; and it is a great mercy when a man is so spiritually reduced that he cannot do anything but go to his God as a beggar, when he is so bankrupt that he cannot pay a farthing in the pound, when he is so lost that he cannot even repent or believe apart from God, but feels that he is for ever undone unless the Lord shall interpose. It is our wisdom to go to God for everything.

Moreover, there was nothing needed from the prodigal but to return to his father. When a child who has done wrong comes back, the more its face is blurred with tears the better. When a beggar ask for charity, the more his clothes are in rags the better. Are not ram and sores the very livery of beggars? I once gave a man a pair of shoes because he said he was in need of them; but after he had put them on and gone a little way I overtook him in a gateway taking them off in order to go barefooted again. I think they were patent leather, and what should a beggar do in such attire? He was changing them for "old shoes and clouted," those were suitable to his business. A sinner is never so well arrayed for pleading as when he comes in rags. At his worst, the sinner, for making an appeal to mercy, is at his best. And so, sinners, there is no need for you to linger; come just as you are. "But must we not wait for the Holy Spirit?" "Ah, beloved, he who is willing to arise and go to his Father has the Holy

Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who moves us to return to God, and it is spirit of the flesh or of the devil that would bid us wait.

How now, sinners? Some of you are sitting in those pews, where are you? I cannot find you out, but my Master can, he has made this sermon on purpose for you. "Well, but I would like to get home and pray." Pray where you are, in the pew. "But I cannot speak out aloud." You may if you like, I won't stop you. "But I should not like." Well, don't, then. God can hear you without a sound, though I wish sometimes we did hear people cry out, "What must I do to be saved? "I would gladly hear the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But if men cannot hear you, the Lord can hear the cries of their hearts. Now, just sit still a minute, and say, "My God I must come to thee. Thou art in Jesus Christ, and in him thou has already come a great way to meet me. My soul wants thee; take me now and make me what I ought to be. Forgive me, and accept me." It is the turning-point of a man's life when that is done, wherever it is, whether in a workshop, or in a saw-pit, in a church, or in a tabernacle; it does not matter where. There is the point—the getting to God in Christ, giving all up, and by faith resting in the mercy of God.

VI. The last point of all is this—THAT ACT WROUGHT THE GREATEST CONCEIVABLE CHANGE IN THE MAN. He was a new man after that. Harlots, winebibbers, you have lost your old companion now! He has gone to his leather, and his Father's company and yours will never agree. A man's return to his God means his leaving the chambers of vice and the tables of riot. You may depend upon it whenever you hear of a professing Christian living in uncleanness, he has not been living anywhere near his God. He may have talked a great deal about it, but God and unchastity never agree; if you have friendship with God you will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

Now, too, the penitent has done with all degrading works to support himself. You will not find him feeding swine any more, or making a swine of himself either by trusting in priests or sacraments. He will not confess to a priest again, or pay a penny to get his mother out of purgatory; he is not such a fool as that any more. He has been to his God on his own account, and he does not want any of these shavelings to go to God for him. He has got away from that bondage. No more pig-feeding; no more



superstition for him! "Why," says he, "I have access with boldness to the mercy-seat, and what have I to do with the priests of Rome?"

There is a change in him in all ways. Now he has come to his father his pride is broken down. He no longer glories in that which he calls his own; all his glory is in his father's free pardoning love. He never boasts of what he has, for he owns that he has nothing but what his father gives him; and though he is far better off than ever he was in his spendthrift days, yet he is as unassuming as a little child. He is a gentleman-commoner upon the bounty of his God, and lives from day to day by a royal grant from the table of the King of kings. Pride is gone, but content fills its room. He would have been contented to be one of the servants of the house, much more satisfied is he to be a child. He loves his father with a new love; he cannot even mention his name without saying, "And he forgave me, he forgave me freely, he forgave me all, and he said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet." From the day of his restoration the prodigal is bound to his Father's home, and reckons it to be one of his greatest blessings that it is written in the covenant of grace, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."

This morning I believe that God in his mercy means to call many sinners to himself. I am often very much surprised to find how the Lord guides my word according to the persons before me. Last Sunday there came here a young son of a gentleman, a foreigner, from a distant land, under considerable impressions as to the truth of the Christian religion. His father is a follower of one of the ancient religions of the East, and this young gentleman naturally felt it a great difficulty that he would probably make his father angry if he became a Christian. Judge, then, how closely the message of last Sabbath came home to him, when the text was, "What if thy father answer thee roughly? "He came to tell me that he thanked God for that message, and he hoped to bear up under the trial, should persecution arise. I feel that I am with equal plainness speaking to some of you. I know I am. You are saying, "May I now go to God joist as I am, and through Jesus Christ yield myself up; and will he forgive me? "Dear brother, or dear sister, wherever you may be, try it. That is the best thing to do; try it; and, if the angels do not set the bells in heaven ringing, God

has altered from what he was last week, for I know he received poor sinners then, and he will receive them now. The worst thing I dread about you is, lest you should say, "I will think of it." Don't think of it. Do it! Concerning this no more thinking is needed; but to do it. Get away to God. Is it not according to nature that the creature should be at peace with its Creator? Is it not according to your conscience? Is there not something within you which cries, "Go to God in Christ Jesus." In the case of that poor prodigal, the famine said to him, "Go home!" Bread was dear, meat was scarce, he was hungry, and every pang of want said, "Go home! Go home!" When he went to his old friend the citizen, and he asked him for help, his scowling looks said, "Why don't you go home?" There is a time with sinners when even their old companions seem to say, "We do not want you. You are too miserable and melancholy. Why don't you go home?" They sent him to feed swine, and the very hogs grunted, "Go home?" When he picked up those carob husks and tried to eat them, they crackled, "Go home." He looked upon his rags, and they gaped at him, "Go home." His hungry belly and his faintness cried "Go home." Then he thought of his father's face, and how kindly it had looked at him, and it seemed to say, "Come home!" He remembered the bread enough and to spare, and every morsel seemed to say, "Come home!" He pictured the servants sitting down to dinner and feasting to the full, and every one of them seemed to look right away over the wilderness to him and to say, "Come home! Thy father feeds us well. Come home!" Everything said, "Come home!" Only the devil whispered, "Never go back. Fight it out! Better starve than yield! Die game!" But then he had got away from the devil this once, for he had come to himself, and he said, "No; I will arise and go to my father." Oh that you would be equally wise. Sinner, what is the use of being damned for the sake of a little pride. Yield thee, man! Down with thy pride! You will not find it so hard to submit if you remember that dear Father who loved us and gave himself for us in the person of his own dear Son. You will find it sweet to yield to such a friend. And when you get your head in his bosom, and feel his warm kisses on your cheek, you will soon feel that it is sweet to weep for sin—sweet to confess your wrong doing, and sweeter still to hear him say, "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thy transgressions." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

God Almighty grant this may be the case with hundreds of you this morning. He shall have all the glory of it, but my heart shall be very glad, for I feel nothing of the spirit of the elder brother within me, but the greatest conceivable joy at the thought of making merry with you by-and-by, when you come to own my Lord and Master, and we sit together at the sacramental feast, rejoicing in his love. God bless you, for his sake. Amen.

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## **Turning Back In The Day Of Battle**

The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. - Psalm 78:9

Do not think that it has ever been clearly ascertained to what particular historical event Asaph here refers, but I do not find that any of the commentators mention a very obscure passage in the First Book of Chronicles, which I venture to suggest may give us the explanation. In the first Book of Chronicles, the seventh chapter and the twentieth verse, you read:—"And the sons of Ephraim, Shuthelah, and Bered his son, and Tabath his son, and Eladah, and Tabath his son, and Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer, and Elead, whom the men of Gath that were born in that land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him." This event appears to have occurred while the children of Israel were still in Egypt. It has been supposed by some that these sons of Ephraim made a raid upon the promised land, and attacked the men of Gath. Believing the land to be theirs by promise they went to take it before they had divine authority so to do. They made God's decrees the rule of their life instead of God's revealed will, and so they soon fell into trouble,—as those people always do who make that mistake,—and their father Ephraim mourned over them many days. But it appears to have

been rather an attack made upon them by some men of Gath. The people seem some of them to have been of Egyptian origin, and they probably made an attack upon the cattle of the men of Ephraim. These young men defended their cattle for a time, but at last—if this be the event, which this Psalm refers to—it would appear they turned their backs and so fell slain. That may or may not be. Still there are other passages in history, which might serve to illustrate the text. You are aware that Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim, and probably on account of this, the ark of God was first placed at Shiloh. On the occasion when Hophni and Phineas were slain, the children of Israel, we are told, fled. It appears to have been the peculiar duty of the men of Ephraim, in whose tribe Shiloh was, to guard the ark. It may be possible that they were set around the ark as a body-guard to it, but fled at the approach of the Philistines, or fell slain together with Hophni and Phineas on that terrible and disastrous day. If this is the event alluded to you will find the history of it in the fourth chapter of the First Book of Samuel. Perhaps, however, reference is made to the whole history of the tribe of Ephraim, that though they were well armed and were dexterous men in the use of the bow, yet on many occasions they turned their backs in the day of battle. Whether any of these explanations interpret the historical reference or not, the subject in itself will furnish us with a theme for meditation.

#### I. We will first consider for a little while WHAT THESE MEN DID.

They turned their backs. When the time for fighting came they ought to have shown their fronts. Like bold men they should have kept their face to the foe and their breast against the adversary, but they dishonorably turned their backs and fled. This, I am sorry to say, is not an unusual thing amongst professing Christians. They turn back; they turn back in the day of battle. Some do this at the first appearance of difficulty. "There is a lion in the way," saith the slothful man, "I shall be slain in the streets." They hear that there is some trouble involved in Christian service, or that some persecution may be met with in the pursuit of truth, and straightway they look before they leap, as the world hath it, and turn back from the way which they supposed to be that of safety. Timorous and Mistrust come running down the hill crying, "The lions! the lions!" and thus may a pilgrim turn back towards the City of Destruction.

Others are somewhat braver. They bear the first brunt. When the skirmishers begin these are as bold as any; they can return blow for blow, and you bear them boast, as they buckle on their armor, at such a rate, that you would suppose, if you did not know that boasters are seldom good at fighting, that they must certainly be victorious. During the first thrust they stand like martyrs and behave like heroes, but very soon, when the armor gets a little battered, and the fine plume on their helmet a little stained, they turn back in the day of battle.

Some professors bear the fight a little longer. They are not to be laughed out of their religion; they can stand the jeers and jests of their old companions. When they find that they have got the cut direct in the society which once loved them so much they can put up with that, and they are very much complimented by themselves on having done it. "Cowards," say they, "are those who flee; but we shall never do this." But by and by the skirmishers have done their work, and it comes to a hand-to-hand fight; the struggle begins to be somewhat more arduous, and now shall we see what metal they are made of. The enemy gets hold of them, and

"That desperate tug their soul might feel  
Through bars of brass and triple steel."

Then they find that they are being hugged in the wrong place; they are touched in a tender part, and so they also turn back in the day of battle!

And, alas! sad as it is to say it—firmly as we believe that every child of God is safe, yet is it true that many who profess to be so, after having fought so long that you would suppose the next thing would be for them to rest upon their laurels and receive their crown, just at the very last they fall and turn hack! We have seen grey-headed apostates as well as juvenile ones. There have been those who seemed to wear well for a time, but at last one crushing blow came which they could not bear, and they gave way before it! Oh, brethren, it is only those who persevere to the end that will be saved, and only those who have a true faith in Jesus Christ have a sure evidence of their election of God; these be they who shall be

clothed with white raiment, and shall sit down upon his throne for ever. But, how many who bade fair to do this, after all turn back!

I may be describing—I hope I am not—some actual case here. Some of you may say as you turn the thought over in your minds, -

"My feet had almost gone;  
My steps had well nigh slipped."

That young man over yonder was so much jeered at the other day by those with whom he works, that he felt it was very unkind, and he did think something about renouncing his religion altogether. And my other brother yonder, who has had so many losses, has lately had such a time as he never had before, and he thinks nobody else ever had; and he cries, "God has forsaken me." He cannot just now say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him;" but he thinks, "Surely I had better turn to the world; I had better leave my religion and give it up, for I am encompassed about with such a terrible conflict that I shall never win the victory!" Ah! brethren, these are often the trials that God sends, and it is by these that he separates the chaff from the wheat, and lets us see who are true soldiers, and who are only the lacqueys who wear regimentals, but have not the soldier's heart pulsing beneath the scarlet. God grant us grace to be found at last men that turned not back in the day of battle.

If I take the history of the children of Ephraim, I should say that they turned their backs and failed to defend the ark. There are some who, when they are defending the truth, shun controversy. They are of such a timid disposition—a loving disposition they call it—that as soon as ever the war-trumpet sounds they find it to be their duty to attend to the baggage in the rear. They are very brave men indeed in that particular quarter of the conflict where it does not happen to rage; but there in the van, where the corpses are piled on heaps, and where the battle-axes drip with gore, they never will be found, because they have not the courage to fight and to conquer for Jesus. As far as they are concerned the ark of God may be taken by the Philistines, because they turn their backs.

These Ephraimites ought, too, as Joshua had set them the example, to

have conquered Canaan, and to have driven out the Canaanites still left. Ah! my brethren, there are some of you whose sins still live, because you have turned your backs upon them, but not in the right sense, for you have turned your backs against contending with sin. There is that bad temper of yours—you have given up trying to curb it now. You say, "Well, you know many of God's children have bad tempers," whereas you know that this is very wicked talking. You ought to slay that Agag. You have no business to tolerate a bad temper. You must never have any peace with that spiteful temper, or that hasty temper of yours; you must down with it, or else it will down with you, and if you do not overcome it, it will overcome you. Rest assured that you are guilty, and that you turn your back if you do not fight with it. So too with that worldliness of yours and that want of a prayerful spirit. If you say, "Well, I will be content to be as I am; I will not try after a high state of piety," you turn your backs, my brethren. You ought to slay all these Canaanites, and you must in Christ's name do it, and not spare so much as one of them, but say, "they compass me about, like bees, yea, they compass me about, but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them."

And then, when these people turned their backs, Canaan was not won. So it is with you. The Lord's kingdom is not yet fully extended, and just when you ought to be pushing far and wide the conquests of the cross, and be letting this great city of ours know that the King reigneth mighty to save, you turn back in the day of battle. There are some Christians here who are doing nothing. I should not say this, perhaps, if I were preaching on Sunday, for I thank God that I could not in my own heart say it of my own members; the most of them are doing, I believe, as much as lieth in them, or if not, I hope they very soon will be. But I am persuaded that there are many other Christians who are not doing what they should do, but are shrinking from practical service. They come in here, perhaps, on a Thursday night, and get a little bit, and they go elsewhere on other evenings of the week and pick up sweet morsels and crumbs. They like feeding very well, but they do not like work so much. There is a certain little company that come here on week-day evenings, into whose ears I should like to whisper, and ask them what they are doing for Christ. They are spiritual vagrants who go from one place to another, but have no settled home where they work for the Master, and they are of very little

credit to anybody. We must all of us have a sphere of labor, and though I am glad to see all of you, as many as like to come, yet I pray you do have your own place for your own work, and do not be like the children of Ephraim who "turned back in the day of battle."

II. Having thus observed what these men of Ephraim did, we come to look at the inopportune time WHEN THEY DID IT.

They turned back, and their doing so would not have mattered much had they done it in a day of feasting. They could always be spared then, but that was not when they did it. They always had their faces to the front when there was any feasting to be done. They turned back; when? On holidays, when the banners waved high and the silver trumpets sounded? No; they were in the front then! Exeter Hall! May meetings! How many people are in the front there and then? When there is something sweet to feed upon they do not think of turning back. But these people turned back on rather a different occasion; they turned back in the day of battle. They turned back, it seems then, just when they were to be tried. Ah! how much there is we do that will not stand trial! How much there is of godliness which is useful for anything excepting that which it is meant for! It is all in vain for me to say, if I have bought a water-proof coat, that it is good for everything except keeping the water out. Why, then it is good for nothing, and so there are some Christians who have got a religion that is good for every day except the day when it has to be tested, and then it is good for nothing. An anchor may be very pretty on shore, and it may be very showy as an ornament when it lies on the ship's deck or hangs from the side, but what is the good of it if it will not hold when the wind blows and the vessel needs to be held fast? So, alas! there is much of religion and of godliness, so called, that is no good when it comes to the day of trial. The soldier is truly proved to be a soldier when the war-trumpet sounds and the regiment must go up to the cannon's mouth. Then shall you know, when the bayonets begin to cross, who has the true soldier's blood in him; but ah! how many turn back when it really comes to the conflict, for then the day of trial is too much for them!

They turned back at the only time when they were of any sort of use. A man who has to fight is not of any particular use to his country, that I



know of, except when there is fighting to be done. Like a man in any other trade, there is a season when he is wanted. Now, if the Christian soldier never fights, of what good is he at all? That is a very remarkable passage in one of the prophets, where the Lord compares his people to a vine, and then he says of them, in words of which I will give the sense, "If the vine bears fruit it is very valuable, but, if it bears no fruit, then it is good for nothing at all." An oak without fruit is valuable for its timber, and even thorns are useful, for you may make a hedge of them. Smaller plants may be used for some medicinal purposes, but the vine, if it bear no fruit, is absolutely good for nothing. "Will a man even make a peg of it, whereon to hang a vessel?" saith the prophet. No, it is of no service whatever. So is it with the Christian. If he be not thorough and true he is no good at all; you can make nothing of him whatever; he is, to use Christ's expressive words, "Neither fit for the land nor even for the dunghill, and men cast him out." Who would enlist a soldier that knew he would turn back? and who amongst us would like to be in his regiment? Take off his colors, play "The Rogue's March," and turn him out of the barracks! And this is what will come to some professors who turn back in the day of battle! Their regimentals will be torn off, and they will be excluded from the church of God because they turned back in the day of trial and at the time when they were needed.

They turned their backs, too, like fools, in the day when victory was to be won. The soldier wants to distinguish himself; he wants to rise out of the ranks; he wants to be promoted. He hardly expects an opportunity of doing this in time of peace; but the officer rises when in time of war he leads a successful charge. And so it is with the Christian soldier. I make no advance while I am not fighting. I cannot win if I am not warring. My only opportunity for conquering is when I am fighting. If I run away when there is a chance of winning the crown, then I am like the ship that does not come out of harbour when there is a fair wind, or like the man who does not avail himself of the high tide to get his vessel over the bar at the harbour's mouth. I cannot win without fighting, and therefore I thank God when the trial comes, and count it a joy when I fall into manifold temptations, because now I may add to my faith one virtue after another, till my Christian character is all complete. To throw away the time of conflict is to throw away the crown. Oh simple heart! Oh silly heart! to be

afraid of suffering for Jesus! You are, in fact, afraid of reigning with him, for you must do the one if you would do the other. You, young woman, who are so alarmed at a little laughing, recollect you cannot go to heaven without being laughed at sometimes in the circle in which you move, or the family in which you live. He that will live a godly life in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. Since, then, this is the way to heaven, why do you turn from it? Be not like these children of Ephraim who turned back when there was a crown to be won.

They turned back, once more, when turning back involved the most disastrous defeat. The ark of God was taken. "Ichabod," the enemy cried, for the glory was departed from Israel, because the children of Ephraim turned back in the day of battle. And so, dear friends, unless God gives you preserving grace to stand fast to the end, do you not see that you are turning back to—what? To perdition. You do not turn back merely to the world. That is what it looks like, perhaps, to you, but you really turn back to hell. If, after having once put your hand to the plough, you look back, you are unworthy of the kingdom; but what are you worthy of? Why, those "reserved seats" in hell! Did you ever think of that? There are such, and let me quote a passage, which proves it. We are told in one place of darkness "reserved" for some who were "wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever!" When you turn back you turn back to those reserved places where the darkness is more black and the pain more terrible. Oh! may God save you from ever turning back in the day of battle! This, then, is when they did it—they turned back in the day of battle.

### III. But now let us notice, WHO THEY WERE THAT TURNED BACK.

They were "children of Ephraim," and they are described as "being armed and carrying bows," or bows throwing forth sharp arrows. They were men of a noble parentage. They were the children of Ephraim. Joshua was of that line, and he was the greatest of conquerors, who led the people into the promised land. And you professors, you profess to be descended from our Joshua,—Jesus the Conqueror, and will you turn back? Are you followers of the Savior who gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and are you afraid or ashamed of

anything? He gave his face to be spat upon, and will you hide your faces at the mention of his name, because fools choose to laugh at you? Followers of Joshua, and yet afraid? Followers of Jesus, and yet blush? God grant that we may never blush, except when we think that we ever blushed at the thought of his Son! Oh! thou dear, despised, and persecuted One, I see thee on thy way amidst the scoffers. One plucks thy beard; another pulls thy hair; a third casts his accursed spittle into thy face; another beats thee; another cries, "Let him be crucified." They mock thee with all forms of mockery. Taunt and jeer they heap upon thee. They fill thy mouth with vinegar, and give thee gall to drink. They pierce thy hands and thy feet, and yet thou goest on along thy way of kindness and of mercy! And I—what have I ever suffered compared with thee? And these thy people—what have any of these endured, or what can they endure, compared with all thy griefs? Thy martyrs follow thee. Up from their fiery stakes they mount to their thrones. Confessors follow thee; from dungeons and from racks their testimony sounds. And, shall we, upon whom the ends of the earth are come, in these softer and gentler times, shall we turn back, and say we know not the Man? O God, forbid! but do thou keep us faithful unto thee, that we, the sons of Ephraim, may not turn back in the day of battle.

Then, again, they were armed, and had proper weapons, weapons which they knew how to use, and good weapons for that period of warfare. And as Christians, what weapons have we? Here is this "Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Here is a quiver, filled with innumerable arrows, and God has put into our hands the bow of prayer, by which we may shoot them, drawing that bow by the arm of faith against our innumerable foes. What weapons of holy warfare do you want better than those which this sacred armoury supplies? Read the last chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and see how the apostle, with a triumphant glorying, takes you through God's armoury, and bids you look at the various pieces of armor, and the various weapons that are provided for you. If you lose the battle, it is not for want of being armed, and if you desert from the ranks, it is not for the want of bows.

But what is more. Another translation seems to show that these Ephraimites were very skillful in the use of the bow, and yet they turned

back. Oh! may God grant that none of us who have preached to others, and preached to others with fluency and zeal may ever have our own weapons turned against us. I may make a confession here now. I have read some of my own utterances and have trembled as I have read them, and afterwards I have wept over them, not wanting to alter them, not regretting them, but fearing and trembling lest I should have my own words used in judgment against me at the last great day, for there can be no more dreadful thing than for a man to have known and taught the Word to others, and then to hear the Master say,—just listen to it,—"Thou wicked servant! Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee!" O God! Condemn me out of anybody's mouth rather than out of my own. It will be a dreadful thing to have known how to use the bow, and yet not to win the victory one's-self; to have been a sort of drill-sergeant to God's people, showing them how to use the weapons, and then not to have fought the battle one's-self! This will be a terrible thing! Some of you know how to use this Bible. You are acquainted with it, you have studied its doctrines, you know the points of divinity and theology, you are well read up in the teachings of God's Word; you know how to use the bow. And some of you pray very sweetly at prayer-meeting. Ah! beloved, what I said about myself may well apply to you. Some of you are Sunday-school teachers and others tract distributors, and you all know how to use the bow. I hope I can say to you who sit here that I have, like Saul, taught you to use the bow. We have sought to teach you young men to use God's Word both in prayer and in other exercises of your holy faith; but, beloved, if you turn back, the art, which you have learned, shall rise up in judgment against you to condemn you! If as professors taught the use of God's Word you are marched out to fight, but have not courage enough for the conflict, and turn your backs and slink into inglorious ease or into vain-glorious self-righteousness, or into false glorious pleasure, oh! how terrible must be your ruin at the last! May you not be like the children of Ephraim, who, though skilled in the use of the bow, yet turned back in the day of battle! This, then, is who they were.

#### IV. And ask ye now—WHY DID THEY DO IT?

Why did they, indeed? We might well have been at a loss to tell, for they were armed and carried bows. What then was the reason? The Word of

God tells us and gives us three reasons. You will find them in the verses following the text. "They kept not the covenant of God and refused to walk in his law, and forgot his works, and his wonders that he had showed them."

"They kept not the covenant." Oh! that great covenant, "ordered in all things and sure," when you can fall back upon that how it strengthens you! When you can read in it eternal thoughts of divine love to you, and can hear Jesus say, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." How it encourages you to go forward! You cannot be killed, you are invulnerable, you have been dipped in the covenant stream that makes you invulnerable from head to foot. Why, then, should you fear to face the foe? If you forget that covenant you will soon turn back, and so prove that you are not in it; but the remembrance of it gives strength to God's people to persevere, since they feel that God's purpose is that they shall persevere, and so win the victory. The covenant, however, not only secures safety, but it also provides all sorts of blessings. If a Christian always had his eye on the covenant storehouse he could never desert his God for the world. Will a man leave a treasury that is full of gold to go to a beggar's cottage for money? Will a man turn from the flowing stream that comes cool and fresh from Lebanon's melting snow to go and drink of some filthy stagnant pool? No, not he, and when a man knows the treasures of grace that are in Christ Jesus, and remembers that it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell, and that he hath made him a covenant for the people, will such a man turn back? Assuredly not, but every promise of the covenant will enable him to face his foes and prevent his turning back in the day of battle. Perhaps, however, the covenant which we forget is the covenant we feel we made with Christ in the day when we said, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," when we give ourselves up in a full surrender, body, soul, and spirit, to God. Oh! let us never forget that covenant! Supposing we should lose our character for Christ's sake? Did we not give Christ our character to begin with? You are of no use in the ministry, my dear brother, if you are not quite willing to be called a fool, to be called a thief, or even to be called a devil! You will never be successful if you are afraid of being pelted. The true minister often finds his pulpit to be a place but little preferable to a pillory, and he is content

to stand there, feeling that all the abuse and blasphemy which may come upon him are only the means by which the world recognises and proves its recognition of a God-sent man. Oh! to rest upon the covenant which is made in grace, and to hold fast the covenant which Christ has compelled us to make with him, resolved that even should he take all away, our joy, our comfort, and our ease, we will still stand to it, and still keep the covenant.

Another reason why they turned back was that "they refused to walk in his law." When we get a proud heart we very soon get beaten, for with the face of a lion, but the heart of a deer, such an one is afraid of the world. If I am willing to do what God tells me, as he tells me, when he tells me, and because he tells me, I shall not turn back in the day of battle.

They also seem to have turned back because they had bad memories. "They forgot his works, and the wonders that he had showed them." My dear friends, we the members of this church have seen many of God's wonders, and have rejoiced in them, and if we were to forget these we should lack one means of comfort in our own darkness. Some of you have had very wonderful manifestations of the Lord's kindness, and if you forget all these I should not wonder if you should prove to be a mere professor and turn your back, for God's true people are like that Mary, whom all generations call "blessed," they treasure these things in their hearts. We ought to stir up our remembrances of God's loving-kindness, for if we do not it will soon be a powerful reason for our turning back in the day of battle. Oh! have we not fought in days gone by, and shall we now be afraid? Have we not slain old Giant Grim? Did we not fight with dragons and with lions? Have we not gone through the Valley of the Shadow of Death? Have we not had a conflict with Apollyon himself foot to foot, and shall Giant Despair or his wife Mrs. Diffidence make us afraid? No, in the name of God we will use the good old sword, the true Jerusalem blade that we wielded aforetime, and we shall yet again be more than conquerors through him that loved us. Let us, then, not forget God's works in the days of yore, lest we fail to trust him in the days that are to come. This was why they turned back.

V. And now the last enquiry is—WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF THEIR

## TURNING BACK?

One result of their turning back was, that their father mourned over them. We are told, in the passage I quoted first, that "Ephraim their father mourned for them many days." What a lamentation it brings into the Christian church when a professor falls! There is one heart, which feels it with peculiar poignancy—the heart of him who thought he was the spiritual father of the person so falling. There are no griefs connected with our work like the grief of mourning over fallen professors, especially if these happen to be ministers, men who are armed and carry bows, for when they turn back, well accoutred and well skilled in war, it is heart breaking work indeed! I do not exaggerate, but I know I only speak the sober truth, when I say that if I could submit to any form of corporeal torture that I have ever heard of, I would be willing to bear it sooner than submit to the torture I have sometimes felt over members of this church, or what is worse, over young men educated in our College, or what is worse still, over ministers who have been for some time settled over their flocks. If at any time you desire to be malicious towards the man whom you look upon as your spiritual father; if you would send an arrow through his very liver and smite him with a dagger in the core of his heart, you have nothing to do but I to turn back in the day of battle and you have done it. It were better that you had never been born than that you should go back to the world. It were better that you should be taken out of this house a corpse than that you should live to disgrace the profession which you have espoused, especially those of you who stand in a prominent place. O God, keep us who witness before the multitude, keep us by thine eternal power, keep us as the apple of thine eye, hide us beneath the shadow of thy wings, or else we who are chief and foremost, though armed and carrying bows, shall yet turn back in the day of battle.

Another result, which you perhaps will think more important far, was that owing to their turning back the enemy remained. Owing to many Christians not doing what they ought to do in the day of battle, Romanism is still in this land, and infidelity is rife. If in the days of Elizabeth and Cranmer men had acted up to the light they then had, we should not be as we now are, a semi-Popish nation. Had Luther himself been faithful to some of the light to which he shut his eyes, he might have

inaugurated a more perfect Reformation than that for which we are still devoutly grateful to God and for which we always cherish his memory. There was a want of thoroughness even in that day. And at the present moment, if some of our brethren were but faithful to their own convictions, they would not be bolstering up an alliance of the State with a depraved Church; they would not dare to perform some ceremonies which are atrociously bad, and many of us, if we acted according to our inward monitor, would not do many things which we are now doing. Oh! may God give us grace to smite the foe! What has sin to do in this world? Christ has bought the world with his blood, and oh! for grace to clear sin out of Christ's heritage! The earth is the Lord's, and the kingdoms thereof, the world and they that dwell therein; and if we were but faithful to God we should not turn back in the day of battle, and Rome and all our foes would be slain.

Then, again, if we did not turn our backs, the country would be conquered for Christ. I do not like the way in which some brethren say, that if we were more faithful half London would be saved. I say that I believe God's purpose is achieved, but still we are bound to speak of our sins according to their tendencies, and the tendency of our want of confidence in God, and our not boldly persevering, is to destroy souls. Paul talked once of destroying with meat him for whom Christ died, that being the tendency to destroy such souls if they could be destroyed. So humanly speaking, the darkness of the world at present is owing to the unfaithfulness of the church, and if the church had been as true to Christ as she was in the first century, long ere this there would not have been a village without the gospel, nor a single empire in the world in which the truth had not been proclaimed. It is our turning back in the day of battle that leaves Canaan unconquered for our Lord.

But, worse than this, the ark itself was actually taken. My dear friends, those of you who are armed and carry bows, men of learning, men who understand the Scriptures, I do pray you, do not turn back just now, for just now seems to be a time when the ark of God will be taken. It can never really be so, but still we must mind that it be not the tendency of our actions. We are in great danger from what some people will not believe, but what is most certainly a fact, and that is the marvellous



increase of Popery in this land. There are certain brethren who are always harping upon this one string, till we have grown sick of the theme, but, without at all endorsing their alarm, I believe there is quite enough for the most quiet and confident spirit to be alarmed at. The thing has become monstrous, and there is need to awaken the anxious care and the earnest efforts of God's church. You need not be long without good evidence of this. Every nerve is being strained by Rome to win England to itself, and, on the other hand, while we have less neology, and less of all sorts of scepticism throughout the whole country, I am afraid that we have more of it than we used to have inside the church itself. There are many doctrines that are now matters of question, which I never heard questioned ten years ago. I am not altogether sorry for this, but rather glad, because there are some doctrines which are not preached now, but which will be preached more in future in consequence of doubts being thrown upon them. But it is a very ominous sign of the times, that most of those truths which we have been accustomed to accept as being the received and orthodox faith of Christendom are now being questioned, and questioned too by men who are not to be despised, men who from their evident earnestness, from their deep knowledge, and from their close attention to the matter, deserve a hearing in the forum of common sense, even if they do not deserve it from spiritual men. We must all of us hold fast the truth now. If there is a man who has got a truth, let him draw his bow and shoot his arrows now, and not turn back in the day of battle. Now for your arrows! Now for your arrows! The more our foes shall conspire against Christ, the more do you make war against them. Give them double for their double; reward them as they reward you. Spare no arrows against Babylon. "Happy shall he be that taketh thy little ones and dasheth them against the stones." Happy shall he be who slays the little errors, who kills the minor falsehoods, who does battle against Popery in every shape and form, and against, infidelity in all its phases! If we do not come to the front now, the ark of God, as far as we are concerned, will be taken!

And then, worst of all, we shall hear the Philistines shouting while God's church is weeping! The Philistines are good hands at shouting. They shout rather loudly about nothing, but when they get a little they bark loudly enough then. If they see but one Christian turn back what rejoicing

there is! They ring the bells and make great mirth over the fall of the very least among us, but if those of us who are armed and carry bows should turn back in the day of battle, oh "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of Philistia rejoice, lest the sons of the uncircumcised triumph!" God grant that we may never make mirth for hell. If Satan must have merriment may he find it anywhere rather than in us. Oh! may we stand at last, and, having done all, may we still stand.

To conclude, brethren. If we do not stand fast, you know what will come of it. Supposing the churches of which we are members do not stand fast, what will come of you and what of me? What became of Shiloh? What became of Ephraim? Instead of the ark being any longer in the custody of Ephraim it was taken away from Shiloh, and God transferred the custody of it to Judah, and it rested upon Mount Zion under the government of King David. So, mark you, whenever a church becomes unfaithful, and turns back in the day of battle, God takes away from it the keeping of his ark and entrusts it to others. "I have looked upon a neighbor of thine," saith he, "who is better than thou," and so he takes the sword and gives it to David, and thus perhaps may he do with us. There are many churches that were once flourishing but now are deserted altogether. So it may be with us individually, and with the churches at large unless we are faithful to God.

Now, I have said nothing to the unconverted. My drift seemed to be to speak to professing believers. Some of you say you never went to this war, and therefore you will not turn back; you never made a profession. Ah! dear friends, it will be a very poor excuse at the last great day to say, "I never made a profession." Did you ever hear of a thief being brought up at the Mansion House before the Lord Mayor who said, when he was accused of being a thief, "Why, my Lord, I am not a very honest man; I never professed to be; I never professed that I would not pick people's pockets; I never professed that I would not steal a watch if I had the chance; I was regularly known as a thief; I never professed to be anything else, therefore you cannot blame me." If a man should make such a defense as that, I should think it very likely that the Lord Mayor would give him an extra six months, and I think it would serve him very well

right. You smile at this, but the very same argument may be applied to you. "Well," you say, "you know I do not make any profession of religion;" that is to say, you do not make any pretense of serving and loving the God who made you, who gave you life, and has kept and preserved you in it; you do not make any profession of being washed in the precious blood of Christ; you do not make a profession of being on the road to hell. Well, may God save you from that excuse, and may he give you grace to look it in the face and say, "Well, I do not dare even to hope that I am saved; I know I am not." Then, my brother, if you are not saved, you are lost. I would like to stop while you turn that thought over, and when you have done so I would say, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

May God's eternal mercy seek and save you, and, if it be his will, may he find you, and lead you to put your trust in Jesus Christ, and resting upon him, and looking to his cross, you shall not, as the children of Ephraim did, "turn back in the day of battle."

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## **Two Coverings And Two Consequences**

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper. - Proverbs 38:13

Thou Hast covered all their sins. - Psalm 85:2

In these two texts we have man's covering, which is worthless and culpable, and God's covering, which is profitable, and worthy of all acceptance. No sooner had man disobeyed his Maker's will in the garden of Eden than he discovered, to his surprise and dismay, that he was naked, and he set about at once to make himself a covering. It was a poor attempt which our first parents made, and it proved a miserable failure. "They sewed fig-leaves together." After that God came in, revealed to them yet more fully their nakedness, made them confess their sin,

brought their transgression home to them, and then it is written, the Lord God made them coats of skin. Probably the coats were made of the skins of animals which had been offered in sacrifice, and, if so, they were a fit type of him who has provided us with a sin-offering and a robe of perfect righteousness. Every man since the days of Adam has gone through much of the same experience, more or less relying on his own ingenuity to hide his own confusion of face. He has discovered that sin has made him naked, and he has set to work to clothe himself. As I shall have to show you presently, he has never succeeded. But God has been pleased to deal with his own people, according to the riches of his grace; he has covered their shame and put away their sins that they should not be remembered any more.

Let me now direct your attention, first, to man's covering, and its failure; and then to God's covering, and its perfection.

May the Holy Spirit be pleased to give you discernment, that you may see your destitute state in the presence of God, and understand the merciful relief that God himself has provided in the bounty of his grace!

## I. MAN'S COVERING.

There are many ways in which men try to cover their sin. Some do so by denying that they have sinned, or, admitting the fact, they deny the guilt; or else, candidly acknowledging both the sin and the guilt, they excuse and exonerate themselves on the plea of certain circumstances which rendered it, according to their showing, almost inevitable that they should act as they have done. By pretext and presence, apology and self-vindication, they acquit themselves of all criminality, and put a fine gloss upon every foul delinquency. Excuse-making is the commonest trade under heaven. The slenderest materials are put to the greatest account. A man who has no valid argument in arrest of judgment, no feasible reason why he should not be condemned, will go about and bring a thousand excuses, and ten thousand circumstances of extenuation, the whole of them weak and attenuated as a spider's web. Someone here may be saying within himself, "It may be I have broken the law of God, but it was too severe. To keep so perfect a law was impossible. I have violated it, but

then I am a man, endowed with passions that involve propensities, and inflamed with desires that need gratification. How could I do otherwise than I have done? Placed in peculiar circumstances, I am borne along with the current. Subject to special temptations, I yield to the fascination; this is natural." So you think; so you essay to exculpate yourself. But, in truth, you are now committing a fresh sin; for you are abasing God, you are inculpating the Almighty. You are impugning the law to vindicate yourself for breaking it. There is no small degree of criminality about such an unrighteous defence. The law is holy, just, and good. You are throwing the onus of your sins upon God. You are trying to mane out that, after all, you are not to blame, but the fault lies with him who gave the commandment. Do you think that this will be tolerated? Shall the prisoner at the bar bring accusations against the Judge who tries him? Or shall he challenge the equity of the statute while he is arraigned for violating it? And as for the circumstances that you plead, what valid excuse can they furnish, Has it come to this—that it was not you, but your necessities, that did the wrong and are answerable for the consequence? Not you, indeed! you are a harmless innocent victim of circumstances! I suppose, instead of being censured, you ought almost to be pitied. What is this, again, but throwing the blame upon the arrangements of Providence, and saying to God, "It is the harshness of thy discipline, not the perverseness of my actions, that involves me in sin." What, I say, is this but a high impertinence, ay, veritable treason, against the Majesty of that thrice holy God, before whom even perfect angels veil their faces, while they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts"? I pray thee resort not to such a covering as this, because, while it is utterly useless, it adds sin to sin, and exposes thee to fresh shame.

In many cases persons violating the law of God have hoped to cover their transgression by secrecy. They have done the deed in darkness. They hope that no ear of man heard their footfall, or listened to their speech. Possibly they themselves held their tongue, and flattered themselves that no observer witnessed their movements or could divulge their action. So was it with Achan. I dare say he took the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment, mid the confusion of the battle, and hid it when his comrades seemed too much engaged to notice so trivial fan affair. While they were rushing over the fallen walls of Jericho, amidst the debris and

the dust, he might be unmolested; and then, in the dead of night, while they slept, he turned the sod of his tent, dug into the earth, and buried there his coveted treasure. All looks right, to his heart's content. He has smoothed it down, and spread his carpet over the grave of his lust. Little did he reckon of the Omniscient eye. Little did he count on the unerring lot that would come home to the tribe of Judah, to the family of the Zarhites, to the house of Zabdir, and, at last, to the son of Carmi, so that Achan himself would have to stand out confessed as a traitor—a robber of his God. Men little know the ways in which the Almighty can find them out, and bring the evidence that convicts, out of the devices that were intended to cover their sin.

Do you not know that Providence is a wonderful detective? There are hounds upon the track of every thief, and murderer, and liar—in foot, upon every sinner of every kind. Each sin leaves a trail. The dogs of judgment will be sure to scent it out, and find their prey. There is no disentangling yourselves from the meshes of guilt; no possibility of evading the penalty of transgression. Very wonderful have been the ways in which persons who have committed crimes have been brought to judgment. A trifle becomes a tell-tale. The method of deceit gives a clue to the manner of discovery. Wretched the men who bury their secrets in their own bosom. Their conscience plays traitor to them. They have often been forged to betray themselves. We have read of men talking in their sleep to their fellows, and babbling out in their dreams the crime they had committed years before. God would have the secret disclosed. No eye had seen, neither could other tongue have bold, but the man turned king's evidence against himself; he has thus brought himself to judgment. It has often happened, in some form or other, that conscience has thus been witness against men. Do I address anyone who is just now practicing a secret sin? You would not have me point you out for all the world, nor shall I do so. Believe me, however, the sin is known. Dexterous though you have been in the attempt to conceal it, it has been seen. As surely as you live, it has been seen. "By whom?" say you. Ah! by One who never forgets what he sees, and will be sure to tell of it. He may commission a little bird of the air to whisper it. Certainly he will one day proclaim it by the sound of trumpet to listening worlds. You are watched, sir; you are known. You have been narrowly observed, young girl; those things you

have hidden away will be brought to light, for God is the great discoverer of sin. His eye has marked you; his providence will track you. It is vain to think that ye can conceal your transgressions. Before high heaven, disguise is futile. Yea, the darkness hideth not; the night shineth as the day. I have known persons who have harboured a sin in their breast till it has preyed upon their constitution. They have been like the Spartan boy who had stolen a fox, and was ashamed to have it known, so he kept it within his garment, till it ate through his flesh, and he fell dead. He suffered the fox to gnaw his heart ere he would betray himself. There are those who have got a sin, if not a lie in their right hand, yea, a lie in their heart, and it is eating into their very life. They dare not confess it. If they would confess it to their God, and make restitution to those whom they have offended, they would soon come to peace; but they vainly hope that they can cover the sin, and hide it from the eyes of God and man. He that covereth his sin in this fashion shall not prosper.

Again, full many a time sinners have tried to cover their sin with falsehood. Indeed, this is the usual habit—to lie—to cloak their guilt by denying it. Was not this the way with Gehazi? When the prophet said, "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" he said, "Thy servant went no whither." Then the prophet told him that the leprosy of Naaman should cleave to him all the days of his life. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira, in lying in order to hide their sin, how quickly was it discovered, and how terrible was the retribution! I wonder that men and women can lie as they do after reading that story. "Hast thou sold the land for so much?" said Peter. And Ananias said, "Yea, for so much." At that instant he fell down and gave up the ghost. Three hours after, when his wife, Sapphire, said the same, the feet of the young men who had buried her husband were at the door, ready to carry out her corpse, and bury her by his side. Oh! sirs, ye must weave a tangled web, indeed, when once ye begin to deceive; and when you have woven it you will have to add lie to lie, and lie to lie, and yet all to no purpose, for you will be surely found out. There is something about a lie that always deludes the man who utters it. Liars have need of good memories. They are sure to leave a little corner uncovered through which the truth escapes. Their story does not hang together. Discrepancies excite suspicions, and evasions furnish a clue to discoveries, till the naked truth is unveiled. Then the deeper the plot the

fouler is the shame. But to lie unto the God of truth, of what avail can that be? What advantageth it you to plead "not guilty," when he has witnessed your crime? That infallible Eye which never mistakes is never closed. He knows everything; from him no secret is hid. Why, therefore, dost thou imagine that thou canst deceive thy Maker?

There are some who try to cover their sin by prevarication. With cunning subtlety they strive to evade personal responsibility. Memorable is the instance of David. I will not dwell upon his flagrant crime; but I must remind you of his sorry subterfuge, when he tried to hide the baseness of his lust by conspiring to cause the death of Uriah. There have been those who have schemed deep and long to throw the blame on others, even to the injury of their reputation, to escape the odium of their own malpractices. Who knows but in this congregation there may be someone who affects a high social position, supported by a deep mercantile immorality? Merchants there have been that have swollen before the public as men of wealth, while they were falsifying their accounts, abstracting money, yet making the books tally, rolling in luxury, and living in jeopardy. Have they prospered? Were they to be envied? The detection that long haunted them at length overtook them; could they look it in the face? We have heard of their blank despair, their insane suicide; at any rate, a miserable exposure has been their melancholy climax. "Be sure your sin will find you out." You may run the length of your tether. It is short. The hounds of justice, swift of scent and strong of limb, are on your trail. Rest assured, you will be discovered. Could you escape the due reward in this life, yet certainly your guilt is known in heaven, and you shall be judged and condemned in that great day which shall decide your eternal destiny. Seek not, then, to cover up sin with such transparent cobwebs as these.

Some people flatter themselves that their sin has already been hidden away by the lapse of time. "It was so very long ago," says one, "I had almost forgotten it; I was a lad at the time." "Aye," says another, "I am gray-headed now. It must have been twenty or thirty years ago. Surely you do not think that the sin of my far-off days will be brought out against me? The thing is gone by. Time must have obliterated it." Not so, my friend. It may be the lapse of time will only make the discovery the more



clear. A boy once went into his father's orchard, and there in his rough play he broke a little tree which his father valued. But, rapidly putting it together again, he managed to conceal the fact, for the disunited parts of the tree took kindly to each other, and the tree stood as before. It so happened that more than forty years afterwards he went into that garden after a storm had blown across it in the night, and he found that the tree had been riven in two, and it had snapped precisely in the place where he had broken it when it was but a sapling. So there may come a crash to your character precisely in that place where you sinned when yet a lad. Ah! how often the transgressions of our youth remain within our bosoms! There lie the eggs of our young sin, and they hatch when men come into riper years. Don't be so sure that the lapse of time will consign your faults and follies to oblivion. You sowed your wild oats, sir; you have got to reap them. The time that has intervened has only operated to make that evil seed spring up, and you are so much the nearer to the harvest. Time does not change the hue of sin in the sight of God. If a man could live a thousand years, the sins of his first year would be as fresh in the memory of the Almighty as those of the last. Eternity itself will never wash out a sin. Flow on, ye ages; but the scarlet spots on the sand. Flow on still in mighty streams, but the damning spot is there still. Neither time nor eternity can cleanse it. Only one thing can remove sin. The lapse of time cannot. Let not any of you be so foolish as to hope it will.

When the trumpet of the resurrection sounds, there will be a resurrection of characters, as well as of men. The man who has been foully slandered will rejoice in the light that reflects his purity. But the man whose latent vices have been skilfully veneered will be brought to the light too. His acts and motives will be alike exposed. As he himself looks and sees the resurrection of his crimes, with what horror will he face that day of judgment! "Ah! ah!" says he, "Where am I? I had forgotten these. These are the sins of my childhood, the sins of my youth, the sins of my manhood, and the sins of my old age. I thought they were dead and buried, but they start from their tombs. My memory has been quickened. How my brain reels as I think of them all! But there they are, and, like so many wolves around me, they seem all thirsting for my destruction." Beware, oh! men. Ye have buried your sins, but they will rise up from their graves and accuse you before God. Time cannot cover them.

Or do any of you imagine that your tears can blot out transgressions? That is a gross mistake. Could your tears for ever flow; could you be transformed into a Niobe, and do nothing else but weep for aye, the whole flood could not wash out a single sin. Some have supposed that there may be efficacy in baptismal water, or in sacramental emblems, or in priestly incantations, or in confession to a priest—one who asks them to disclose their secret wickedness to him, and betrays a morbid avidity to make his breast the sewer into which all kinds of uncleanness should be emptied. Be not deceived. There is nothing in these ordinances of man, or these tricks of Romish priestcraft (I had almost said of witchcraft, the two are so much alike) to excuse the folly of those who are beguiled by them. You need not catch at straws when the rope is thrown out to you. There is pardon to be had; remission is to be found; forgiveness can be procured. Turn your back on yonder shavelings; lend not your ear to them, neither be ye the victims of their snares. In the street each day it makes one's soul sad to see them. Like the Pharisees of old, they wear their long garments to deceive. You cannot mistake them. Their silly conceit publishes their naked shame. Confide not in them for a moment. Christ can forgive you. God can blot out your sin. But they cannot ease your conscience by their penances, or remove your transgressions by their celebrations.

Thus I have gone through a rough, not very accurate, list of the ways by which men hope to cover their sin, but they "shall not prosper." None of these shall succeed.

A more joyous task devolves on me now, while I draw your attention to my second text, "Thou hast covered all their sin."

## II. GOD'S COVERING.

This fact is affirmed concerning the people of God. All who have trusted in the atoning sacrifice which was presented by the Lord Jesus Christ upon Calvary may accept this welcome assurance, "God. has covered all their sin." How this hath come to pass I will tell you. Before ever God covers a man's sins he unveils them. Did you ever see your sins unveiled? Did it ever seem as if the Lord put his hand upon you, and said, "Look,

look at them"? Have you been led to see your sins as you never saw them before? Have you felt their aggravations fit to drive you to despair? As you have looked at them, has the finger of detection seemed to point out your blackness? Have you discovered in them a depth of guilt, and iniquity, and hell—desert which never struck your mind before? I recollect a time when that was a spectacle always before the eyes of my conscience. My sin was ever before me. If God thus makes you see your sin in the light of his countenance, depend upon it he has his purposes of mercy toward you. When you see and confess it, he will blot it out. So soon as God, in infinite loving-kindness, makes the sinner know in truth that he is a sinner, and strips him of the rags of his self-righteousness, he grants him pardon and clothes his nakedness. While he stands shivering before the gaze of the Almighty, condemned, the guilt is purged from his conscience. I do not know of a more terrible position in one's experience than to stand with an angry God gazing upon you, and to know that wherever God's eye falls upon you it sees nothing but sin; sees nothing in you but what he must hate and must abhor. Yet this is the experience through which God puts those to whom he grants forgiveness. He makes them know that he sees how sinful they are, and he makes them feel how vile and leprous they are. His justice withers their pride; his judgment appals their heart. They are humbled in the very dust, and made to cry out—each man trembling for his own soul—"God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Not till this gracious work of conviction is fully wrought does the Lord appear with the glorious proclamation that whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus shall have his sins covered. That proclamation. I have now openly to publish and personally to deliver to you. With your outward ears you may have heard it hundreds of times. It is old, yet ever new. Whosoever among you, knowing himself to be guilty, will come and put his trust in Jesus Christ, shall have his sins covered. "Can God do that?" Yes, he can. He alone can cover sin: Against him the sin was committed. It is the offended person who must pardon the offender. No one else can. He is the King. He has the right to pardon. He is the Sovereign Lord, and he can blot out sin. Beside that, he can cover it lawfully, for the Lord Jesus Christ (though ye know the story, let me tell it again—the song of redemption always rings out a charming melody), Jesus Christ, the

Father's dear Son, in order that the justice of God might be vindicated, bare his breast to its dreadful hurt, and suffered in our room, and place, and stead, what we ought to have suffered as the penalty of our sin. Now the sacrifice of God covers sin—covers it right over; and he more than covers it, he makes it cease to be. Moreover, the Lord Jesus kept the law of God, and his obedience stands, instead of our obedience; and God accepts him and his righteousness on our behalf, imputing his merits to our souls.

Oh! the virtue of that atoning blood! Oh! the blessedness of that perfect righteousness of the Son of God, by which he covers our sins!

There are two features of covering I should like to recall to your recollection. The one was the mercy-seat or propitiatory, over the golden ark, wherein were the tables of stone. Those tables of stone seemed, as it were, to reflect the sins of Israel. As in a mirror they reflected the transgression of God's people. God was above, as it were, looking down between the cherubic wings. Was he to look down upon the law defied and defiled by Israel? Ah! no; there was put over the top of the ark, as a lid which covered it all, a golden lid called the mercy-seat, and when the Lord looked down he looked upon that lid which covered sin. Beloved, such is Jesus Christ, the covering for all our sins. God sees no sin in those who are hidden beneath Jesus Christ.

There was another covering at the Red Sea. On that joyous day when the Egyptians went down into the midst of the sea pursuing the Israelites, at the motion of Moses' rod the waters that stood upright like a wall leapt back into their natural bed and swallowed up the Egyptians. Great was the victory when Miriam sang, "The depths have covered them. There is not one of them left." It is even so that Jesus Christ's atonement has covered up our sins. They are sunk in his sepulchre; they are buried in his tomb. His blood, like the Red Sea, has drowned them. "The depths have covered them. There is not one of them left." Against the believer there is not a sin in God's Book recorded. He that believeth in him is perfectly absolved. "Thou hast covered all their sin." I shall not have time to dwell upon the sweetness of this fact, but I invite you that believe to consider its preciousness; and I hope you who have not believed will feel your mouth

watering after it; to know that every sin one has ever committed, known and unknown, is gone—covered by Christ. To be assured that when Jesus died he did not die for some of our sins, but for all the sins of his people; not for their sins up till now, but for all the sins they ever will commit! Well does Kent put it:—

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,  
It matters not how black they're cast  
And O, my soul, with wonder view  
For sins to come here's pardon too."

The atonement was made before the sin was committed. The righteousness was presented even before we had lived. "Thou hast covered all their sin. It seems to me as if the Lamb of God, slain from before the foundation of the world, had in the purpose of God, from the foundation of the world, covered all his people's sins. Therefore, we are accepted the Beloved, and dear to the Father's heart. Oh! what a joy it is to get a hold of something like this truth, especially when the truth gets a hold of you—when you can feel by the inwrought power and witness of the Holy Ghost that your sins are covered—that you dare stand up before a rein-trying, heart-searching God, and give thanks that every transgression you ever committed is hid from the view of those piercing eyes through Jesus Christ your Lord.

Some people think we ought not to talk thus, that it is presumptuous. But really there is more presumption in doubting than there is in believing. For a child to believe his father's word is never presumption. I like to credit my Father's word. "He that believeth in him is not condemned." Condemned I am not, for I know I do believe in him. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Beloved, the covering is as broad as the sin. The covering completely covers, and for ever covers; for as God sees to-day no sin in those who are washed in Jesus' blood, so will he never see any. You are accepted with an acceptance that nothing can change. Whom once he loves he never leaves, but loves them to the end. The reason of his love to them does not lie in

their merits nor their charms; the cause of love is in himself. The ground of his acceptance of them is in the person and work of Christ. Whatever they may be, whatever their condition of heart may be, they are accepted, because Christ lived and died. It is not a precarious or a conditional, but an eternal acceptance.

Would you enjoy the blessedness of this complete covering? Cowering down beneath the tempest of Jehovah's wrath, which you feel in your conscience, would you obtain this full remission? Behold the gates of the City of Refuge which stand wide open. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is proclaimed! to the thirsty, needy, labouring, weary soul. Not merely open are the gates, but the invitation to enter is given. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You are bidden to lay hold upon eternal life. The way of doing so is simple. No works of yours, no merits, no tears, no preparations are required, but trust—trust—that is all. Believe in Jesus. Rely upon him; depend upon him; depend upon him. I have heard of Homer's Iliad being enclosed in a nutshell, so small was it written; but here is the Plain Man's Guide to Heaven in a nutshell. Here is the essence of the whole gospel in one short sentence. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Trust him; trust him. That is the meaning of that word believe. Depend upon him, and as surely as thou doest it, nor death, nor hell, nor sin shall ever separate thee from the love of him whom thou hast embraced, from the protection of him in whose power thou hast taken shelter. The Lord lead you to cower beneath his covering wings, and grant you to be found in Christ, accepted in the Beloved. So shall your present peace be the foretaste of your eternal felicity. Amen.

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## **The Two Effects Of The Gospel**

For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and

in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? - 2 Corinthians 2:15-16

These are the words of Paul, speaking on the behalf of himself and his brethren the Apostles, and they are true concerning all those who by the Spirit are chosen, qualified, and thrust into the vineyard to preach God's gospel. I have often admired the 14th verse of this chapter, especially when I have remembered from whose lips the words fell, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." Picture Paul, the aged, the man who had been beaten five times with 'forty stripes save one,' who had been dragged forth for dead, the man of great sufferings, who had passed through whole seas of persecution only think of him saying, at the close of his ministerial career, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ!" to triumph when shiprecked, to triumph when scourged, to triumph in the stocks, to triumph under the stones, to triumph amidst the hiss of the world, to triumph when he was driven from the city and shook off the dust from his feet, to triumph at all times in Christ Jesus! Now, if some ministers of modern times should talk thus, we would think little of it, for they enjoy the world's applause They can always go to their place in ease and peace; they have an admiring people, and no open foes; against them not a dog doth move his tongue; everything is safe and pleasant, For them to say, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph" is a very little thing; but for one like Paul, so trampled on, so tried, so distressed, to say it-then, we say, outspoke a hero; here is a man who had true faith in God and in the divinity of his mission.

And, my brethren, how sweet is that consolation which Paul applied to his own heart amid all his troubles. "Notwithstanding all," he says, "God makes known the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." Ah! with this thought a minister may lay his head upon his pillow: "God makes manifest the savour of his knowledge." With this he may shut his eyes when his career is over, and with this he may open them in heaven: "God hath made known by me the savour of his knowledge in every place," Then follow the words of my text, of which I shall speak, dividing it into

three particulars. Our first remark shall be, that although the gospel is "a sweet savour" in every place, yet it produces different effects in different persons; to one it is the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life." Our second observation shall be, that ministers of the gospel are not responsible for their success, for it is said. "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." And thirdly, yet the gospel ministers place is by no means a light one: his duty is very weighty; for the Apostle himself said, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

I. Our first remark is, that THE GOSPEL PRODUCES DIFFERENT EFFECTS. It must seem a strange thing, but it is strangely true, that there is scarcely ever a good thing in the world of which some little evil is not the consequence. Let the sun shine in brilliance - it shall moisten the wax, it shall harden clay; let it pour down floods of light on the tropics - it will cause vegetation to be extremely luxuriant, the richest and choicest fruits shall ripen, and the fairest of all flowers shall bloom, but who does not know, that there the worst of reptiles and the most venomous snakes are also brought forth? So it is with the gospel. Although it is the very sun of righteousness to the world, although it is God's best gift, although nothing can be in the least comparable to the vast amount of benefit which it bestows upon the human race, yet even of that we must confess, that sometimes it is the "savour of death unto death." But then we are not to blame the gospel for this; it is not the fault of God's truth; it is the fault of those who do not receive it. It is the "savour of life unto life" to every one that listens to its sound with a heart that is open to its reception. It is only "death unto death" to the man who hates the truth, despises it, scoffs at it, and tries to oppose its progress, It is of that character we must speak first.

1. The gospel is to some men "a savour of death unto death." Now, this depends very much upon what the gospel is; because there are some things called gospel, that are "a savour of death unto death" to everybody that hears them. John Berridge says he preached morality till there was not a moral man left in the village; and there is no way of injuring morality like legal preaching. The preaching of good works, and the exhorting men to holiness, as the means of salvation, is very much



admired in theory; but when brought into practice, it is found not only ineffectual, but more than that - it becomes even "a savour of death unto death." So it has been found; and I think even the great Chalmers himself confessed, that for years and years before he knew the Lord, he preached nothing but morality and precepts, but he never found a drunkard reclaimed by shewing him merely the evils of drunkenness; nor did he find a swearer stop his swearing because he told him the heinousness of the sin; it was not until he began to preach the love of Jesus, in his great heart of mercy-it was not until he preached the gospel as it was in Christ, in some of its clearness, fulness, and power, and the doctrine, that "by grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" that he ever met with success. But when he did preach salvation by faith, by shoals the drunkards came from their cups, and swearers refrained their lips from evil speaking; thieves became honest men, and unrighteous and ungodly persons bowed to the scepter of Jesus. But ye must confess, as I said before, that though the gospel does in the main produce the best effect upon almost all who hear it either by restraining them from sin, or constraining them to Christ, yet it is a great fact, and a solemn one, upon which I hardly know how to speak this morning, that to some men the preaching of Christ's gospel is "death unto death," and produces evil instead of good.

(1.) And the first sense is this. Many men are hardened in their sins by hearing the gospel. Oh! 'tis terribly and solemnly true, that of all sinners some sanctuary sinners are the worst. Those who can dive deepest into sin, and have the most quiet consciences and hardest hearts, are some who are to be found in God's own house. I know that a faithful ministry will often prick them, and the stern denunciations of a Boanerges, will frequently make them shake. I am aware that the Word of God will sometimes make their blood curdle within them; but I know (for I have seen the men) that there are many who turn the grace of God into licentiousness, make even God's truth a stalking-horse for the devil, and abuse God's grace to pall at their sin. Such men have I found amongst those who hear the doctrines of grace in their fulness. They will say, "I am elect, therefore I may swear; I am one of those who were chosen of God before the foundation of the world, and therefore I may live as I list." I have seen the man who stood upon the table of a public house, and

grasping the glass in his hand, said, "Mates! I can say more than any of you; I am one of those who are redeemed with Jesus' precious blood:" and then he drank his tumbler of ale and danced again before them, and sang vile and blasphemous songs. Now, that is a man to whom the gospel is "a savour of death unto death." He bears the truth, but he perverts it; he takes what is intended by God for his good, and what does he do, he commits suicide therewith. That knife which was given him to open the secrets of the gospel he drives into his own heart. That which is the purest of all truth and the highest of all morality, he turns into the panderer of his vice, and makes it a scaffold to aid in building up his wickedness and sin. Are there any of you here like that man - who love to hear the gospel, as ye call it, and yet live impurely? who can sit down and say you are the children of God, and still behave like liege servants of the devil? Be it known unto you, that ye are liars and hypocrites, for the truth is not in you at all. "If any man is born of God, he cannot sin." God's elect will not be suffered to fall into continual sin; they will never "turn the grace of God into licentiousness;" but it will be their endeavour, as much as in them lies, to keep near to Jesus. Rest assured of this: "By their fruits ye shall know them." A good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit; neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit." Such men, however, are continually turning the gospel into evil, They sin with a high hand, from the very fact that they have heard what they consider excuses their vice. There is nothing under heaven, I conceive, more liable to lead men astray than a perverted gospel. A truth perverted is generally worse than a doctrine which all know to be false. As fire, one of the most useful of the elements, can also cause the fiercest of conflagrations, so the gospel, the best thing we have, can be turned to the vilest account. This is one sense in which it is "a savour of death unto death."

(2.) But another. It is a fact that the gospel of Jesus Christ will increase some mens damnation at the last great day. Again, I startle at myself when I have said it; for it seems too horrible a thought for us to venture to utter - that the gospel of Christ will make hell hotter to some men than it otherwise would have been. Men would all have sunk to hell had it not been for the gospel. The grace of God reclaims "a multitude that no man can number;" it secures a countless army who "shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation;" but, at the same time, it does to those who

reject it, make their damnation even more dreadful. And let me tell you why.

First, because men sin against greater light; and the light we have is an excellent measure of our guilt. What a Hottentot might do without a crime, would be the greatest sin to me, because I am taught better; and what some even in London might do with impunity - set down, as it might be, as a sin by God, but not so exceeding sinful-would be to me the very height of transgression, because I have from my youth up been tutored to piety. The gospel comes upon men like the light from heaven. What a wanderer must he be who strays in the light! If he who is blind falls into the ditch we can pity him, but if a man, with the light on his eyeballs dashes himself from the precipice and loses his own soul, is not pity out of the question?

"How they deserve the deepest hell,  
That slight the joys above!  
What chains of vengeance must they feel,  
Who laugh at sov'reign love!"

It will increase your condemnation, I tell you all, unless you find Jesus Christ to be your Saviour; for to have had the light and not to walk by it, shall be the condemnation, the very essence of it, This shall be the virus of the guilt - that the, "light came into the world, and the darkness comprehended it not;" for "men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

Again: it must increase your condemnation if you oppose the gospel. If God devises a scheme of mercy, and man rises up against it, how great must be his sin? Who shall tell the great guilt incurred by such men as Pilate, Herod, and the Jews? Oh! who shall picture out, or even faintly sketch, the doom of those who cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" And who shall tell what place in hell shall be hot enough for the man who slanders God's minister, who speaks against his people, who hates his truth, who would, if he could, utterly cut off the godly from the land? Ah! God help the infidel! God help the blasphemer! God save his soul: for of all men least would I choose to be that man. Think you, sirs, that God will

not take account of what men have said? One man has cursed Christ; he has called him a charlatan. Another has declared, (know that he spoke a lie) that the gospel was false. A third has proclaimed his licentious maxims, and then has pointed to God's Word and still, "There are worse things there!" A fourth has abused God's ministers and held up their imperfections to radicals. Think you God shall forget all this: it the last day? When his enemies come before him, shall he take then by the hand and say, "The other day thou didst call my servant a dog, and spit on him, and for this I will give thee heaven!" Rather, if the sin has not been cancelled by the blood of Christ, he will not say, "Depart, cursed one, into the hell which thou didst scoff at; leave that heaven which thou didst despise; and learn that though thou saidst there was no God, this right arm shall teach thee eternally the lesson that there is one; for he who discovers it not by my works of benevolence shall learn it by my deeds of vengeance: therefore depart, again, I say!" It shall increase men's hell that they have opposed God's truth. Now, is not this a very solemn view of the gospel, that it is indeed to many "a savour of death unto death?"

(3.) Yet, once more. I believe the gospel make some men in this world more miserable than they would be. The drunkard could drink, and could revel in his intoxication with greater joy, if he did not hear it said, "All drunkards shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." How jovially the Sabbath-breaker would riot through his Sabbaths, if the Bible did not say, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy!" And how happily could the libertine and licentious man drive on his mad career, if he were not told, "The wages of sin is death, and after death the judgment!" But the truth puts the bitter in his cup; the warnings of God freeze the current of his soul. The gospel is like the skeleton at the Egyptian feast. Though by day he laughed at it, by night he will quiver as the aspen leaf, and when the shades of evening gather around him, he will shake at a whisper. At the thought of a future state his joy is spoiled, and immortality instead of being a boon to him, is in its very contemplation the misery of his existence. The sweet wooings of mercy are to him no more harmonious than peals of thunder, because he knows he despises them. Yea, I have known some who have, been in such misery under the gospel, because they would not give up their sins, that they have been ready to take their own lives. Oh! terrible thought! The,

gospel is "a savour of death unto death!" Unto how many here is it so? Who are now hearing God's Word to be damned by it? Who shall retire hence to be hardened by the sound of the truth? Why, every man who does not believe it; for unto those that receive it, it is "a savour of life unto life," but to unbelievers it is a curse, and a savour of death unto death."

2. But, blessed be God, the gospel has a second power. Besides being "death unto death," it is "a savour of life unto life." Ah! my brethren, some of us could speak, if we were allowed this meaning, of the gospel as being "a savour of life" to us. We can look back to that hour when we were "dead in trespasses and sin." In vain all Sinai's thunders; in vain the rousing of the watchmen; we slept on in the death-sleep of our transgressions; nor could, an angel have aroused us. But we look back with joy to that hour when first we stepped within the walls of a sanctuary, and savingly heard the voice of mercy. With some of you it is but a few weeks. I know where ye are and who ye are. But a few weeks or months ago ye too were far from God, but now ye are brought to love him. Canst thou look back my brother Christian, to that very moment when the gospel was to thee - when thou didst cast away thy sins, renounce thy lusts, and turning to God's Word, received it with full purpose of heart? Ah! that hour - of all hours the sweetest! Nothing can be compared, therewith. I knew a person who for forty or fifty years had been completely deaf. Sitting one morning at her cottage door as some vehicle was passing, she thought she heard melodious music. It was not music; it was but the sound of the vehicle. Her ear had suddenly opened, and that rough sound seemed to her like the music of heaven, because it was the first she had heard for so many years. Even so, the first time our ears were opened to hear the words of love - the assurance of our pardon - we never heard the word so well as we did then; it never seemed so sweet; and perhaps, even now, we look back and say,

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!"

When first it was "a savour of life" unto our souls.

Then, beloved, if it ever has been "a savour of life," it will always be "of

life;" because it says it is not of savour of life unto death, but a savour of life unto life. "Now I must aim another blow at my antagonists the Arminians; I cannot help it. They will have it that sometimes the gospel is a savour of life unto death. They tell us that a man may receive spiritual life, and yet may die eternally. That is to say, a man may be forgiven, and yet be punished afterwards; he may be justified from all sin, and yet after that, his transgressions can be laid on his shoulders again. A man may be born of God, and yet die; a man may be loved of God, and yet God may hate him to-morrow. Oh! I cannot bear to speak of such doctrines of lies; let those believe them that like. As for me, I so deeply believe in the immutable love of Jesus that I suppose that if one believer were, to be in hell, Christ himself would not long stay in heaven, but would cry, "To the rescue!" Oh! if Jesus Christ were in glory with one the gems wanting in his crown, and Satan had that gem, he would say, "Aha! prince of light and glory, I have one of thy jewels!" and he would hold it up, and then he would say, "Aha! thou didst die for this man, but thou hadst not strength enough to save him; thou didst love him once - where is thy love? It is not worth having, for thou didst hate him afterwards!" And how would he chuckle over that heir of heaven, and hold him up, and say, "This man was redeemed; Jesus Christ purchased him with his blood:" and plunging him in the waves of hell, he would say, "There purchased one see how I can rob the Son of God!" And then again he would say, "This man was forgiven, behold the justice of God! He is to be punished after he is forgiven. Christ suffered for this mans sins, and yet," says Satan with a malignant joy, "I have him afterwards; for God exacted the punishment twice!" Shall that e'er be said? Ah! no. It is "a savour of life unto life," and not of life unto death. Go, with your vile gospel; preach it where you please; but my Master said, "I give unto my sheep ETERNAL life." You give to your sheep temporary life, and they lose it; but, says Jesus, "I give unto my sheep ETERNAL life, and they shall never perish, neither shall man pluck them out of my hands." I generally wax warm when I got to this subject, because I think few doctrines more vital than that of the perseverance of the saints; for if ever one child of God did perish, or if I knew it were possible that one could, I should conclude, at once that I must, and suppose each of you would do the same; and then where is the joy and happiness of the gospel? Again I tell you the Arminian gospel is the shell without the kernel; it is the husk without the fruit; and those

who love it may take it to themselves. We will not quarrel with them. Let them go and preach it. Let them go and tell poor sinners, that if they believe in Jesus they will be damned after all, that Jesus Christ will forgive them and yet the Father send them to hell. Go and preach your gospel, and who will listen to it? And if they do listen, is it worth their hearing? I say no; for if I am to stand after conversion on the same footing as I did before conversion then it is of no use for me to have been converted at all. But whom he loves he loves to the end.

"Once in Christ, in Christ for ever;  
Nothing from his love can sever."

It is "a savour of life unto life." And not only, "life unto life" in this world, but of "life unto life" eternal. Every one who has this life shall receive the next life; for "the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

I am obliged to leave this point; but if my Master will but take it up, and make his word ,a savour of "life unto life" this morning, I shall rejoice in what I have said.

II. But our second remark was, that **THE MINISTER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS SUCCESS**. He is responsible for what he preaches; he is accountable for his life and actions; but he is not responsible for other people. If I do but preach God's word, if there never were a soul saved, the King would say, "Well done, good and faithful Servant!" If I do but tell my message, if none should listen to it, he would say, "Thou hast fought the good fight: receive thy crown." You hear the words of the text: "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, as well in them that perish, as in them that are saved." This will appear, if I just tell you what a gospel minister is called in the Bible. Sometimes he is called an ambassador. Now, for what is an ambassador responsible? He goes to a country as a plenipotentiary; he carries terms of peace to the conference; he uses all his talents for his master; he tries to show that the war is inimical to the prosperity of the different countries; he endeavours to bring about peace; but the other kings haughtily refuse it. When he comes home does his master say, "Why did not you make peace?" "Why,

my Lord," he would say, "I told them the terms; but they said nothing." "Well, then," he will say, "thou hast done thy duty; I am not to condemn thee if the war continues." Again the minister of the gospel is called a fisherman. Now a fisherman is not responsible for the quantity of fish he catches, but for the way he fishes. That is a mercy for some ministers, I am sure, for they have neither caught fish, nor neither caught fish nor even attracted any round their nets. They have been spending all their life fishing with most elegant silk lines, and gold and silver hooks; they always use nicely polished phrases; but the fish will not bite for all that, whereas we of a rougher order have put the hook into the jaws of hundreds. However, if we cast the gospel net in the right place, even if we catch none, the Master will find no fault with us. He will say, "Fisherman! didst thou labour? Didst thou throw the net into the sea in the time of storms?" "Yes, my Lord, I did." "What hast thou caught?" "Only one or two." "Well, I could have sent thee a shoal, if it so pleased me; it is not thy fault; I give in my sovereignty where I please; or withhold when I choose; but as for thee, thou hast well laboured, therefore there is thy reward." Sometimes the minister is called a sower. Now, no farmer expects a sower to be responsible for the harvest; all he is responsible for is, does he sow the seed? and does he sow the right seed? If he scatters it on good soil, then he is happy; but if it falls by the way-side, and the fowls of the air devour it, who shall blame the sower? Could he help it? Nay, he did his duty; he scattered the seed broad-cast, and there he left it. Who is to blame? Certainly not the sower. So, beloved, if a minister comes to heaven with but one sheaf on his shoulder, his Master will say, "O reaper! once a sower! where didst thou gather thy sheaf?" "My Lord, I sowed upon the rock, and it would not grow; only one seed on a chance Sabbath morning was blown a little awry by the wind, and it fell on a prepared heart; and this is my one sheaf." "Hallelujah!" the angelic choirs resound, "one sheaf from a rock is more honour to God than a thousand sheaves from a good soil; therefore, let him take his seat as near the throne as yon man, who, stooping beneath his many sheaves, comes from some fertile land, bringing his sheaves with him." I believe that if there are degrees in glory, they will not be in proportion to success, but in proportion to the earnestness of our endeavours. If we mean right, and if with all our heart we strive to do the right thing as ministers if we never see any effect, still shall we receive the crown. But how much more happy is the man who



shall have it in heaven said to him, "He shines for ever, because he was wise, and won many souls unto righteousness." It is always my greatest joy to believe, that if I should enter heaven, I shall in future days see heaven's gates open, and in shall fly a cherub, who, looking me in the face, will smilingly pass along to God's throne, and there bow down before him and when has paid his homage and his adoration, he may fly to me, and though unknown, shall clasp my hand. and if there were tears in heaven, surely I should weep, and he would say, "Brother, from thy lips I heard the word; thy voice first admonished me of my sin; here I am, and thou the instrument of my salvation." And as the gates open one after another, still will they come in; souls ransomed, souls ransomed; and for each one of these a star - for each one of these another gem in the diadem of glory - for each one of them another honor, and another note in the song of praise. Blessed be that man that shall die in the Lord, and his works shall follow him; for thus saith the Spirit.

What will become of some good Christians now in Exeter Hall, if crowns in heaven are measured in value by the souls that are saved? Some of you will have a crown in heaven without a single star in it. I read a little while ago, a piece upon the starless crown in heaven - a man in heaven with a crown without a star! Not one saved by him! He will sit in heaven as happy as he can be, for sovereign mercy saved him; but oh! to be in heaven without a single star! Mother! what sayest thou to be in heaven without one of thy children to deck thy brow with a star? Minister! what wouldst thou say to be a polished preacher and yet have no star? Writer! will it well become thee to have written even as gloriously as Milton, if thou shouldst be found in heaven without a star? I am afraid we pay too little regard to this. Men will sit down and write huge folios and tomes, that they may have them put in libraries for ever, and have their names handed down by fame! but how few are looking to win stars for ever in heaven! Toil on, child of God, toil on; for if thou wishest to serve God, thy bread cast upon the waters shall be found after many days. If thou sendest in the feet of the ox or the ass, thou shalt reap a glorious harvest in that day when he comes to gather in his elect. The minister is not responsible for his success.

III. But yet, in the last place, TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IS HIGH AND

SOLEMN WORK. The ministry has been very often degraded into a trade. In these days men are taken and made into ministers who would have made good captains at sea, who could have waited well at the counter, but who were never intended for the pulpit. They are selected by man, they are crammed with literature; they are educated up to a certain point; they are turned out ready dressed; and persons call them ministers. I wish them all God-speed, every one of them; for as good Joseph Irons used to say, "God be with many of them, if it be only to make them hold their tongues." Man-made ministers are of no use in this world, and the sooner we get rid of them the better. Their way is this: they prepare their manuscripts very carefully, then read it on the Sunday most sweetly in sotto voce, and so the people go away pleased. But that is not God's way of preaching. If so, I am sufficient to preach forever. I can buy manuscript sermons for a shilling; that is to say, provided they have been preached fifty times before, but if I use them for the first time the price is a guinea, or more. But that is not the way. Preaching God's word is not what some seem to think, mere child's play - a mere business or trade to be taken up by any one. A man ought to feel first that he has a solemn call to it; next, he ought to know that he really possesses the Spirit of God, and that when he speaks there is an influence upon him that enables him to speak as God would have him, otherwise out of the pulpit he should go directly; he has no right to be there, even if the living is his own property. He has not been called to preach God's truth, and unto him God says, "What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes?"

But you say, "What is there difficult about preaching God's gospel?" Well it must be somewhat hard; for Paul said, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And first I will tell you, it is difficult because it is so hard as not to be warped by your own prejudices in preaching the word. You want to say a stern thing; and your heart says, "Master! in so doing thou wilt condemn thyself;" then the temptation is not to say it. Another trial is, you are afraid of displeasing the rich in your congregations. You think, "If I say such-and-such a thing, so-and-so will be offended; such an one does not approve of that doctrine; I had better leave it out." Or perhaps you will happen to win the applause of the multitude, and you must not say anything that will displease them, for if they cry, "Hosanna" to day, they will cry, "Crucify, crucify," to-morrow. All these things work on a

minister heart. He is a man like yourselves; and he feels it. Then comes again the sharp knife of criticism, and the arrows of those who hate him and hate his Lord; and he cannot help feeling it sometimes. He may put on his armour, and cry, "I care not for your malice;" but there were seasons when the archers sorely grieved even Joseph. Then he stands in another danger, lest he should come out and defend himself; for he is a great fool whoever tries to do it. He who lets his detractors alone, and like the eagle cares not for the chattering of the sparrows, or like the lion will not turn aside to rend the snarling jackal - he is the man, and he shall be honoured. But the danger is, we want to set ourselves right. And oh! who is sufficient to steer clear from these rocks of danger? "Who is sufficient," my brethren, "for these things?" To stand up, and to proclaim, Sabbath after Sabbath, and week-day after week-day, "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Having said thus much, I may draw the inference - to close up - which is: if the gospel is "a savour of life unto life," and if the minister's work be solemn work, how well it becomes all lovers of the truth to plead for all those who preach it, that they may be "sufficient for these things." To lose my Prayer-book, as I have often told you, is the worst thing that can happen to me. To have no one to pray for me would place me in a dreadful condition. "Perhaps," says a good poet, "the day when the world shall perish, will be the day unwhitened by a prayer;" and, perhaps, the day when a minister turned aside from truth, was the day when his people left off to pray for him, and when there was not a single voice supplicating grace on his behalf. I am sure, it must be so with me. Give me the numerous hosts of men whom it has been my pride and glory to see in my place before I came to this hall: give me those praying people, who on the Monday evening met in such a multitude to pray to God for a blessing, and we will overcome hell itself, in spite of all that may oppose us. All our perils are nothing, so long as we have prayer. But increase my congregation; give me the polite and the noble, - give me influence and understanding; and I should fail to do anything without a praying church. My people! shall I ever lose your prayers? Will ye ever cease your supplications? Our toils are nearly ended in this great place, and happy shall we be to return to our much-loved sanctuary. Will ye then ever cease to pray? I fear ye have not uttered so many prayers this morning as ye

should have done; I fear there has not been so much earnest devotion as might have been poured forth. For my own part, I have not felt the wondrous power I sometimes experience. I will not lay it at your doors; but never let it be said, "Those people, once so fervent, have become cold!" Let not Laodiceanism get into Southwark; let us leave it here in the West-end, if it is to be anywhere; let us not carry it with us. Let us "strive together for the faith once delivered unto the saints:" and knowing in what a sad position the standard bearer stands, I beseech you rally round him; for it will be ill with the army,

"If the standard bearer fall, as fall full well he may.  
For never saw I promise yet, of such a deadly fray."

Stand up my friends; grasp the banner yourselves, and maintain it erect until the day shall come, when standing on the last conquered castle of hell's domains, we shall raise the shout, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" Till that time, fight on.

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## **Two Essential Things**

Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. - Acts 20:21

This was the practical drift of Paul's teaching at Ephesus, and everywhere else. He kept back nothing which was profitable to them; and the main profit he expected them to derive from his teaching the whole counsel of God was this, that they should have "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." This was the great aim of the apostle. I pray that it may be so with all of us who are teachers of the Word: may we never be satisfied if we interest, please, or dazzle; but may we long for the immediate production, by the Spirit of God, of true repentance and faith.

Old Mr. Dodd, one of the quaintest of the Puritans, was called by some people, "Old Mr. Faith and Repentance," because he was always insisting upon these two things. Philip Henry, remarking upon his name, writes somewhat to this effect—"As for Mr. Dodd's abundant preaching repentance and faith, I admire him for it; for if I die in the pulpit, I desire to die preaching repentance and faith; and if I die out of the pulpit, I desire to die practising repentance and faith." Some one remarked to Mr. Richard Cecil, that he had preached very largely upon faith; but that good clergyman assured him that if he could rise from his dying bed, and preach again, he would dwell still more upon that subject. No themes can exceed in importance repentance and faith, and these need to be brought very frequently before the minds of our congregations.

Paul testified concerning "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"; by which I understand that, as an ambassador for Christ, he assured the people that through repentance and faith they would receive salvation. He taught in God's name mercy through the atoning sacrifice to all who would quit their sin and follow the Lord Jesus. With many tears he added his own personal testimony to his official statement. He could truly say, "I have repented, and I do repent"; and he could add, "but I believe in Jesus Christ as my Saviour; I am resting upon the one foundation, trusting alone in the Crucified." His official testimony, with its solemnity, and his personal testimony, with its pathetic earnestness, made up a very weighty witness-bearing on the behalf of these two points—repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved friends, we cannot at this time do without either of these any more than could the Greeks and Jews. They are essential to salvation. Some things may be, but these must be. Certain things are needful to the well-being of a Christian, but these things are essential to the very being of a Christian. If you have not repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, you have no part nor lot in this matter. Repentance and faith must go together to complete each other. I compare them to a door and its post. Repentance is the door which shuts out sin, but faith is the post upon which its hinges are fixed. A door without a door-post to hang upon is not a door at all; while a door-post without the

door hanging to it is of no value whatever. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder; and these two he has made inseparable—repentance and faith. I desire to preach in such a way that you shall see and feel that repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ are the two things which you must have; but even then I fail, unless you obtain them. May the Holy Spirit plant both these precious things in our hearts; and if they are already planted there, may he nourish them and bring them to much greater perfection.

I. Let me observe, in the first place, that **THERE IS A REPENTANCE WHICH IS NOT TOWARD GOD**. Discriminate this morning. Paul did not merely preach repentance, but repentance toward God; and there is a repentance which is fatally faulty, because it is not toward God.

In some there is a repentance of sin which is produced by a sense of shame. The evil-doers are found out, and indignant words are spoken about them: they are ashamed, and so far they are repentant, because they have dishonoured themselves. If they had not been found out, in all probability they would have continued comfortably in the sin, and even have gone further on in it. They are grieved at having been discovered; and they are sorry, very sorry, because they are judged and condemned by their fellows. It is not the evil which troubles them, but the dragging of it to light. It is said that among Orientals it is not considered wrong to lie, but it is considered a very great fault to lie so blunderingly as to be caught at it. Many who profess regret for having done wrong are not sorry for the sin itself, but they are affected by the opinion of their fellow-men, and by the remarks that are made concerning their offence, and so they hang their heads. Truly, it is something in their favour that they can blush; it is a mercy that they have so much sense left as to be afraid of the observation of their fellows; for some have lost even this sense of shame. But shame is not evangelical repentance; and a man may go to hell with a blush on his face as surely as if he had the brazen forehead of a shameless woman. Do not mistake a little natural fluttering of the heart and blushing of the face, on account of being found out in sin, for true repentance.

Some, again, have a repentance which consists in grief because of the

painful consequences of sin. The man has been a spendthrift, a gambler, a profligate, and his money is gone; and now he repents that he has played the fool. Another has been indulging the passions of his corrupt nature, and he finds himself suffering for it, and therefore he repents of his wickedness. There are many cases that I need not instance here, in which sin comes home very quickly to men. Certain sins bear fruit speedily: their harvest is reaped soon after the seed is sown. Then a man says he is sorry, and he gives up the sin for a time; not because he dislikes it, but because he sees that it is ruining him: as sailors in a storm cast overboard the cargo of the ship, not because they are weary of it, but because the vessel will go to the bottom if they retain it. This is regret for consequences, not sorrow for sin. Ah, look at the drunkard, how penitent he is in the morning! "Who hath woe? who hath redness of the eyes?" But he will get a hair of the dog's tail that bit him, he will be at his cups again before long. He repents of the headache, and not of the drink. The dog will return to his vomit. There is no repentance which only consists of being sorry because one is smarting under the consequences of sin. Every murderer regrets his crime when he hears the hammers going that knock the scaffold together for his hanging. This is not the repentance which the Spirit of God works in a soul; it is only such a repentance as a dog may have when he has stolen meat, and is whipped for his pains. It is repentance of so low a sort that it can never be acceptable in the sight of God.

Some, again, exhibit a repentance which consists entirely of horror at the future punishment of sin. This fear is healthful in many ways, and we can by no means dispense with it. I do not wonder that a man who has lived a liar, a forger, and a perjurer, should, in the hour of his discovery, put an end to his life. If he accepts modern theology, he has escaped, by this means, from the hand of justice: the little pretence of punishment which deceivers predict for the next world no man need be afraid to risk rather than subject himself to a felon's fate. According to current teaching, it will be all the same with all men in the long run, for there is to be a universal restitution; and therefore the suicide does but rationally leap from pursuit and punishment into a state where all will be made happy for him by-and-by, even if he does not find it altogether heaven at first. He escapes from punishment in this life, and whatever inconvenience there

may be for him in the next life he will soon get over it, for it is said to be so trivial that those who keep to Scripture lines, and speak the dread truth therein revealed, are barbarians or fools. Many men do, no doubt, repent truly through being aroused by fear of death, and judgment, and the wrath to come. But if this fear goes no further than a selfish desire to escape punishment, no reliance can be placed upon its moral effect. If they could be assured that no punishment would follow, such persons would continue in sin, and not only be content to live in it, but be delighted to have it so. Beloved, true repentance is sorrow for the sin itself: it has not only a dread of the death which is the wages of sin, but of the sin which earns the wages. If you have no repentance for the sin itself, it is in vain that you should stand and tremble because of judgment to come. If judgment to come drives you, by its terrors, to escape from sin, you will have to bless God that you ever heard of those terrors, and that there were men found honest enough to speak plainly of them; but, I pray you, do not be satisfied with the mere fear of punishment, for it is of little worth. The evil itself you must lament, and your daily cry must be, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

Another kind of repentance may be rather better than any we have spoken of, but still it is not repentance toward God. It is a very good counterfeit; but it is not the genuine article. I refer to a sense of the unworthiness of an ill life. I have known persons, upon a review of their past, rise above the grovelling level of absolute carelessness, and they have begun to enjoy some apprehension of the beauty of virtue, the nobleness of usefulness, and the meanness of a life of selfish pleasure. A few of those who have no spiritual life, have, nevertheless, keen moral perceptions, and they are repentant when they see that they have lost the opportunity of distinguishing themselves by noble lives. They regret that their story will never be quoted among the examples of good men, who have left "footprints on the sands of time." Musing upon their position in reference to society and history, they wish that they could blot out the past, and write more worthy lines upon the page of life. Now, this is hopeful; but it is not sufficient. We are glad when men are under influences which promise amendment; but if a man stops at a mere apprehension of the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice, what is there in it? This is not repentance toward God; it may not be repentance



at all in any practical sense. Men have been known to practise the vices they denounced, and avoid the virtues they admired; human sentiment has not force enough to break the fetters of evil. Repentance toward God is the only thing which can effectually cut the cable which holds a man to the fatal shores of evil.

Once more, there is a repentance which is partial. Men sometimes wake up to the notice of certain great blots in their lives. They cannot forget that black night: they dare not tell what was then done. They cannot forget the villainous act which ruined another, nor that base lie which blasted a reputation. They recall the hour when the inward fires of passion, like those of a volcano, poured the lava of sin adown their lives. At the remembrance of one gross iniquity, they feel a measure of regret when their better selves are to the front. But repentance toward God is repentance of sin as sin, and of rebellion against law as rebellion against God. The man who only repents of this and that glaring offence, has not repented of sin at all. I remember the story of Thomas Olivers, the famous cobbler convert, who was a loose-living man till he was renewed by grace through the preaching of Mr. Wesley, and became a mighty preacher, and the author of that glorious hymn, "The God of Abraham Praise." This man, before conversion, was much in the habit of contracting debts, but could not be brought to pay them. When he received grace, he was convinced that he had no right to remain in debt. He says, "I felt as great sorrow and confusion as if I had stolen every sum I owed." Now, he was not repentant for this one debt, or that other debt, but for being in debt at all, and, therefore, having a little coming to him from the estate of a relative, he bought a horse, and rode from town to town, paying everybody to whom he was indebted. Before he had finished his pilgrimage, he had paid seventy debts, principal and interest, and had been compelled to sell his horse, saddle, and bridle, to do it. During this eventful journey he rode many miles to pay a single sixpence: it was only a sixpence, but the principle was the same, whether the debt was sixpence or a hundred pounds. Now, as he that hates debt will try to clear himself of every sixpence, so he that repents of sin, repents of it in every shape. No sin is spared by the true penitent. He abhors all sin. Brethren, we must not imitate Saul, who spared Agag and the best of the sheep. He had been told to destroy all, but he must needs spare some. Agag must be

hewn in pieces, and the least objectionable of sin, if such there be, must be at once destroyed. Grace spares no sin. "Oh," saith one man, "I can give up every sin except one pleasure. This I reserve: is it not a little one?" Nay, nay; in the name of truth and sincerity, make no reserve. Repentance is a besom which sweeps the house from garret to cellar. Though no man is free from the commission of sin, yet every converted man is free from the love of sin. Every renewed heart is anxious to be free from even a speck of evil. When sin's power is felt within, we do not welcome it, but we cry out against it, as Paul did when he said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" We cannot bear sin: when it is near us, we feel like a wretch chained to a rotting carcass; we groan to be free from the hateful thing. Yes, repentance vows that the enemy shall be turned out, bag and baggage; and neither Sanballat, nor any of his trumpery, shall have a chamber or a closet within the heart which has become the temple of God.

II. I have said enough to show that there is a repentance which is not toward God; and now, secondly, let us observe that **EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE IS REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD**. Lay stress on the words, "toward God." True repentance looks toward God. When the prodigal son went back to his home, he did not say, "I will arise, and go to my brother; for I have grieved my brother by leaving him to serve alone." Neither did he say, "I will arise and go to the servants, for they were very kind to me. The dear old nurse that brought me up is broken-hearted at my conduct." "No," he said, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Our Lord's picture of a returning sinner is thus drawn in very clear colours, as a return to the Father, a repentance toward God. You are bound to make humble apology and ample compensation to everybody you have wronged; you are bound to make every acknowledgment and confession to all whom you have slandered or misrepresented: this is right and just, and must not be forgotten. Still, the essence of your repentance must be "toward God"; for the essence of your wrong is toward God. I will endeavour to show you this. A boy is rebellious against his father. The father has told him such a thing is to be done, and he determines that he will not do it. His father

has forbidden him certain things, and he therefore defiantly does them. His father is much grieved, talks with him, and endeavours to bring him to repentance. Suppose the boy were to reply, "Father, I feel sorry for what I have done, because it has vexed my brother." Such a speech would be impertinence, and not penitence. Suppose he said, "Father, I will also confess that I am sorry for what I have done, because it has deprived me of a good deal of pleasure." That also would be a selfish and impudent speech, and show great contempt for his father's authority. Before he can be forgiven and restored to favour, he must confess the wrong done in disobeying his father's law. He must lament that he has broken the rule of the household; and he must promise to do so no more. There can be no restoration of that child to his proper place in the family till he has said, "Father, I have sinned." He is stubborn, unhumbled, and rebellious till he comes to that point. All the repentance that he feels about the matter which does not go toward his father, misses the mark: in fact, it may even be an impudent aggravation of his rebellion against his father's rule that he is willing to own his wrong toward others, but will not confess the wrong he has done to the one chiefly concerned.

O sinner, you must repent before God, or you do not repent at all; for here is the essence of repentance. The man repenting sees that he has neglected God. What though I have never been a thief nor an adulterer; yet God made me, and I am his creature, and if throughout twenty, thirty, or forty years I have never served him, I have all that while robbed him of what he had a right to expect from me. Did God make you, and has he kept the breath in your nostrils, and has he kindly supplied your wants till now, and all these years has he had nothing from you? Would you have kept a horse or a cow all this time, and have had nothing from it? Would you keep a dog if it had never fawned upon you? never noticed your call? Yet all these years God has thus preserved you in being, and blessed you with great mercies, and you have made no response. Hear how the Lord cries, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!" This is where the sin lies.

Further than that, the true penitent sees that he has misrepresented God. When he has suffered a little affliction, he has thought God was cruel and unjust. The heathen misrepresent God by worshipping idols: we

misrepresent God by our murmurings, our complainings, and our thought that there is pleasure in sin, and weariness in the divine service. Have you not spoken of God as if he were the cause of your misery, when you have brought it all upon yourself? You talk about him as if he were unjust, when it is you that are unjust and evil.

The penitent man sees that the greatest offence of all his offences is that he has offended God. Many of you think nothing of merely offending God: you think much more of offending man. If I call you "sinners" you do not repel the charge; but if I called you "criminals" you would rise in indignation, and deny the accusation. A criminal, in the usual sense of the term, is one who has offended his fellow-man: a sinner is one who has wronged his God. You do not mind being called sinners, because you think little of grieving God; but to be called criminals, or offenders against the laws of man, annoys you; for you think far more of man than of God. Yet, in honest judgment, it were better, infinitely better, to break every human law, if this could be done without breaking the divine law, than to disobey the least of the commands of God. Knowest thou not, O man, that thou hast lived in rebellion against God? Thou hast done the things he bids thee not to do, and thou hast left undone the things which he commands thee to do. This is what thou hast to feel and to confess with sorrow; and without this there can be no repentance.

Near the vital heart of repentance, right in its core, is a sense of the meanness of our conduct toward God. Especially our ingratitude to him, after all his favour and mercy. This it is that troubles the truly penitent heart most: that God should love so much, and should have such a wretched return. Ingratitude, the worst of ills, makes sin exceeding sinful. Sorrow for having so ill requited the Lord is a spiritual grace. A tear of such repentance is a diamond of the first water, precious in the sight of the Lord.

True repentance is also toward God in this respect, that it judges itself by God. We do not repent because we are not so good as a friend whom we admire, but because we are not holy as the Lord. God's perfect law is the transcript of his own perfect character, and sin is any want of conformity to the law and to the character of God. Judge yourselves by your fellow-

men, and you may be self-content; but measure yourselves by the perfect holiness of the Lord God, and oh, how you must despise yourself! There is no deep repentance until our standard is the standard of perfect rectitude, till our judgment of self is formed by a comparison with the divine character. When we behold the perfection of the thrice holy Jehovah, and then look at ourselves, we cry with Job, "Mine eyes seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

To sum up: evangelical repentance is repentance of sin as sin: not of this sin nor of that, but of the whole mass. We repent of the sin of our nature as well as of the sin of our practice. We bemoan sin within us and without us. We repent of sin itself as being an insult to God. Anything short of this is a mere surface repentance, and not a repentance which reaches to the bottom of the mischief. Repentance of the evil act, and not of the evil heart, is like men pumping water out of a leaky vessel, but forgetting to stop the leak. Some would dam up the stream, but leave the fountain still flowing; they would remove the eruption from the skin, but leave the disease in the flesh. All that is done by way of amendment without a bemoaning of sin because of its being rebellion against God will fall short of the mark. When you repent of sin as against God, you have laid the axe at the root of the tree. He that repents of sin as sin against God, is no longer sporting with the evil, but has come to stern business with it; now he will be led to change his life, and to be a new man: now, also, will he be driven to cry to God for mercy, and in consequence he will be drawn to trust in Jesus. He will now feel that he cannot help himself, and he will look to the strong for strength. I can help myself toward my fellow-man, and I can improve myself up to his standard; but I cannot help myself toward God, and cannot wash myself clean before his eye; therefore I fly to him to purge me with hyssop, and make me whiter than snow. O gracious Spirit, turn our eyes Godward, and then fill them with penitential tears.

III. Thirdly, I am going to throw in a bit of my own. I confess that it does not rise to the glorious fulness of the text, but I use it as a stepping-stone for feeble footsteps. I thus apologize as I say—**THOSE WHO HAVE EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE ARE PERMITTED TO BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST.** Paul says that he testified of "repentance toward God,

and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"; and, therefore, where there is repentance, faith is allowable. O penitent sinner, you may believe in the Saviour! While you are labouring under your present sense of guilt, while you are loathing and abhorring yourself, while you are burdened and heavy laden with fears, while you are crushed with sorrow as you lie before the Lord, you may now trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Before you have any quiet of conscience, before any relief comes to your heart, before hope shines in your spirit; now in your direct distress, when you are ready to perish, you may at once exercise faith in him who came to seek and to save that which was lost. There is no law against faith. No decree of heaven forbids a sinner to believe and live.

You may pluck up courage to believe when you remember this—first, that though you have offended God (and this is the great point that troubles you) that God, whom you have offended, has himself provided an atonement. The sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ is practically a substitution presented by God himself. The Offended dies to set the offender free. God himself suffers the penalty of his law, that he may justly forgive; and that, though Judge of all, he may yet righteously exercise his fatherly love in the putting away of sin. When you are looking to God with tears in your eyes, remember it is the same God who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this offended God, "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Recollect, also, that this atonement was presented for the guilty: in fact, there could be no atonement where there was no guilt. It would be superfluous to make expiation where there had been no fault. For man, as a sinner, Christ died. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." I pray you, then, the more deeply you feel your sinnership, the more clearly perceive that the sacrifice of Calvary was for you. For sinners the cross was lifted high, and for sinners the eternal Son of God poured out his soul unto death. Oh that my hearers, who mourn over sin, could see this, and rejoice in the divine method of putting sin out of the way!

But, remember, you must, with your repentance, come to God with faith

in his dear Son. I have said that you may do so; but I apologize for so saying, for it is only half the truth. God commands you to believe. The same God that says, "Thou shalt not steal," is that God who says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This is his commandment, that you believe on Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. Faith is not left to your option, you are commanded to accept the witness of God. "Believe and live," has all the force of a divine statute. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Therefore, if thou art already a rebel, do not go on rebelling by refusing to believe in the Lord's own testimony.

Remember that there can be no reconciliation made between you and God unless you believe in Jesus Christ, whom he has given as a Saviour, and commissioned to that end. Not believing in Jesus is caviling at God's way of salvation, quarrelling with his message of love. Will you do this? You have done wrong enough by fighting against Jehovah's law, are you going to fight against his gospel? Without faith it is impossible to please him; will you continue to displease him? Disbelief in Christ is on your part casting a new dishonour upon God, and thus it is a perseverance in rebellion of the most aggravated form. By refusing his unspeakable gift, you do, as it were, put your finger into the very eye of God. To refuse the Son is to blaspheme the Father. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." Come, poor soul, be encouraged. Clearly, if you have repentance toward God, you are allowed to believe in Jesus. Upon the drops of your repentance the sun of mercy is shining; what a rainbow of hope is thus made!

Do not hesitate. You would fain be washed, for you mourn your defilement; yonder is the cleansing fount! You are pained with the malady of sin; there stands the healing Saviour, cast yourself at his feet! No embargo is laid upon your believing. God has not even in secret said to you, "Seek ye my face in vain." Come, I pray you, and fear not.

We testify to you "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." But that faith must be toward the Lord Jesus Christ. You must look to Jesus, to the substitute, to the sacrifice, to the mediator, to

the Son of God. "No man cometh unto the Father," saith Jesus, "but by me." No faith in God will save the sinner except it is faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. To attempt to come to God without the appointed Mediator, is again to insult him by refusing his method of reconciliation. Do not so, but let your repentance toward God be accompanied with faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; you are warranted in thus believing.

IV. And now I come to my last point. Oh that I might be helped by the Holy Ghost! Here I come back to the text, and get on sure ground. **EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE IS LINKED TO FAITH, AND FAITH IS LINKED TO REPENTANCE.** We testify not only of repentance toward God, but of faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance and faith are born of the same Spirit of God. I do not know which comes first; but I fall back on my well-worn image of a wheel—when the cart starts, which spoke of the wheel moves first? I do not know. Repentance and faith come together. Perhaps I may say that repentance is like Leah, for it is "tender eyed"; and faith is like Rachel, fairer to look upon. But you cannot take Rachel to yourself unless you will have Leah also; for it is according to the rule of the gospel that so it should be. The Old Testament, with its law of repentance, must be bound up in one volume with the New Testament of the gospel of faith. These two, like Naomi and Ruth, say to each other, "Where thou dwellest I will dwell." There are two stars called the Gemini, which are always together: faith and repentance are the Twins of the spiritual heavens. What if I liken them to the two valves of the heart? They must be both in action, or the soul cannot live. They are born together, and they must live together.

Repentance is the result of an unperceived faith. When a man repents of sin, he does inwardly believe, in a measure, although he may not think so. There is such a thing as latent faith: although it yields the man no conscious comfort, it may be doing something even better for him; for it may be working in him truthfulness of heart, purity of spirit, and abhorrence of evil. No true repentance is quite apart from faith. The solid of faith is held in solution in the liquid of repentance. It is clear that no man can repent toward God unless he believes in God. He could never feel grief at having offended God, if he did not believe that God is good.



To the dark cloud of repentance there is a silver lining of faith; yet, at the first, the awakened soul does not know this, and therefore laments that he cannot believe; whereas, his very repentance is grounded upon a measure of faith.

Repentance is also greatly increased as faith grows. I fear that some people fancy that they repented when they were first converted, and that, therefore, they have done with repentance. But it is not so: the higher the faith, the deeper the repentance. The saint most ripe for heaven is the most aware of his own shortcomings. As long as we are here, and grace is an active exercise, our consciousness of our unworthiness will grow upon us. When you have grown too big for repentance, depend upon it you have grown too proud for faith. They that say they have ceased to repent confess that they have departed from Christ. Repentance and faith will grow each one as the other grows: the more you know the weight of sin, the more will you lean upon Jesus, and the more will you know his power to uphold. When repentance measures a cubit, faith will measure a cubit also.

Repentance also increases faith. Beloved, we never believe in Christ to the full till we get a clear view of our need of him; and that is the fruit of repentance. When we hate sin more we shall love Christ more, and trust him more. The more self sinks, the more Christ rises: like the two scales of balance, one must go down that the other may go up: self must sink in repentance that Christ may rise by faith.

Moreover, repentance salts faith and sweetens it, and faith does the same to repentance. Faith, if there could be true faith without repentance, would be like the flowers without the dew, like the sunshine without shade, and like hills without valleys. If faith be the cluster, repentance is the juice of the grape. Faith is dry, like the fleece on the threshing-floor, receptive and retentive; but when heaven visits it with fulness, it drips with repentance. If a man professes faith, and has no sense of personal unworthiness, and no grief for sin, he becomes a man of the letter, sound in the head, and very apt to prove his doctrine orthodox by apostolic blows and knocks. But when you add to this the mollifying effects of true repentance, he becomes lowly, and humble, and easily to be entreated.

When a man repents as much as he believes, he is as patient in his own quarrel as he is valiant in "the quarrel of the covenant." He holds his own sinfulness as firmly as he holds the Lord's Saviourship, and he frequents the Valley of Humiliation as much as the hills of Assurance.

If there could be such a thing as a man who was a believer without repentance, he would be much too big for his boots, and there would be no bearing him. If he were always saying, "Yes, I know I am saved; I have a full assurance that I am saved"; and yet had no sense of personal sin, how loudly he would crow! But, O dear friends, while we mourn our sins, we are not puffed up by the privileges which faith receives. An old Puritan says, that when a saint is made beautiful with rich graces, as the peacock with many-coloured feathers, let him not be vain, but let him recollect the black feet of his inbred sin, and the harsh voice of his many shortcomings. Repentance will never allow faith to strut, even if it had a mind to do so. Faith cheers repentance, and repentance sobers faith. The two go well together. Faith looks to the throne, and repentance loves the cross. When faith looks most rightly to the Second Advent, repentance forbids its forgetting the First Advent. When faith is tempted to climb into presumption, repentance calls it back to sit at Jesus' feet. Never try to separate these dear companions, which minister more sweetly to one another than I have time to tell. That conversion which is all joy and lacks sorrow for sin, is very questionable. I will not believe in that faith which has no repentance with it, any more than I would believe in that repentance which left a man without faith in Jesus. Like the two cherubs which stood gazing down upon the mercy-seat, so stand these two inseparable graces, and none must dare to remove the one or the other.

I have almost done; but the thought strikes me, Will these good people go home, and remember about repentance and faith? Have I so talked that they will think of me rather than of the points in hand? I hope it is not so. I do pray you, throw away all that I may have said apart from the subject; cast it off as so much chaff, and keep only the wheat. Remember, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Let each one ask himself, Have I a repentance which leads to faith? Have I a faith which joins hands with repentance? This is the way to weave an ark of bulrushes for your infant assurance: twist these two together,

repentance and faith. Yet trust neither repentance nor faith; but repent toward God, and have faith toward the Lord Jesus. Mind you do this; for there is a sad aptitude in many hearers to forget the essential point, and think of our stories and illustrations rather than of the practical duty which we would enforce. A celebrated minister, who has long ago gone home, was once taken ill, and his wife requested him to go and consult an eminent physician. He went to this physician, who welcomed him very heartily. "I am right glad to see you, sir," said he; "I have heard you preach, and have been greatly profited by you, and therefore I have often wished to have half an hour's chat with you. If I can do anything for you, I am sure I will." The minister stated his case. The doctor said, "Oh, it is a very simple matter; you have only to take such and such a drug, and you will soon be right." The patient was about to go, thinking that he must not occupy the physician's time; but he pressed him to stay, and they entered into pleasant conversation. The minister went home to his wife, and told her with joy what a delightful man the doctor had proved to be. He said, "I do not know that I ever had a more delightful talk. The good man is eloquent, and witty, and gracious." The wife replied, "But what remedy did he prescribe?" "Dear!" said the minister, "I quite forget what he told me on that point." "What!" she said, "did you go to a physician for advice, and have you come away without a remedy?" "It quite slipped my mind," he said: "the doctor talked so pleasantly that his prescription has quite gone out of my head." Now, if I have talked to you so that this will happen, I shall be very sorry. Come, let my last word be a repetition of the gospel remedy for sin. Here it is. Trust in the precious blood of Christ, and make full confession of your sin, heartily forsaking it. You must receive Christ by faith, and you must loathe every evil way. Repentance and faith must look to the water and the blood from the side of Jesus for cleansing from the power and guilt of sin. Pray God that you may, by both these priceless graces, receive at once the merit of your Saviour unto eternal salvation. Amen.

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## **The Two Guards, Praying And Watching**

Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. - Nehemiah 4:9

Nehemiah, and the Jews with him, were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Sanballat and others were angry with them, and tried to stop the work. They determined to pounce upon the people on a sudden, and slay them, and so to put an end to what they were doing. Our text tells us what Nehemiah and his companions did in this emergency: "Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them."

These people had not only to build the wall of Jerusalem, but to watch against their enemies at the same time. Their case is ours. We have to work for Christ. I hope that all of us who love him are trying to do what we can to build up his kingdom; but we need also to watch against deadly foes. If they can destroy us, of course they will also destroy our work. They will do both, if they can. The powers of evil are mad against the people of God. If they can in any way injure or annoy us, you may rest assured that they will do so. They will leave no stone unturned, if it can serve their purpose. No arrows will be left in the quivers of hell while there are godly men and women at whom they can be aimed. Satan and his allies aim at our hearts every poisoned dart they have.

Nehemiah had been warned of the attack that was to be made upon the city. The Jews who lived near these Samaritans had heard their talk of what they meant to do, and they came and told Nehemiah of the plotting of the adversaries. We also have been warned. As our Lord said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat," so has he, in his word, told us that there is a great and terrible evil power which is seeking our destruction. If Satan can do it, he will not only sift us as wheat, but he will cast us into the fire that we may be

destroyed. Brethren, "we are not ignorant of his devices." You are not left in a fool's paradise, to dream of security from trial, and to fancy that you are past temptation.

It is well for these people, also, that, being in danger, and being aware of the malice of their enemies, they had a noble leader to incite them to the right course to be pursued. Nehemiah was well qualified for his work. He gave the Jews very shrewd, sensible, and yet spiritual advice, and this was a great help to them in their hour of need. Beloved, we have a better Leader than Nehemiah; we have our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and we have his Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, and shall abide with us. I beg you to listen to his wise and good advice. I think that he will give it to you through our explanation of the text. He will say to you what Nehemiah, in effect, said to these people, "Watch and pray." Although the adversaries of the Jews conspired together, and came to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder the work of rebuilding the wall, Nehemiah says, "Nevertheless, we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them."

In the text, I see two guards; first, prayer: "We made our prayer unto our God." The second guard is watchfulness: "We set a watch." When I have spoken on these two subjects, I shall take as my third topic, the two guards together. "We prayed, and we set a watch." We must have them both, if we would defeat the enemy.

I. First, then, dear friends, think of THE FIRST GUARD: "We made our prayers unto our God."

Speaking of this prayer, I would hold it up as a pattern for our prayers in a like condition. It was a prayer that meant business. Sometimes when we pray, I am afraid that we are not transacting business at the throne of grace; but Nehemiah was as practical in his prayer as he was in the setting of the watch. Some brethren get up in our prayer-meetings, and say some very good things; but what they really ask for, I am sure I do not know. I have heard prayers of which I have said, when they were over, "Well, if God answers that prayer, I have not the least idea of what he will give us." It was a very beautiful prayer, and there was a great deal of

explanation of doctrine and experience in it; but I do not think that God wants to have doctrine or experience explained to him. The fault about the prayer was, that there was not anything asked for in it. I like, when brethren are praying, that they should be as business-like as a good carpenter at his work. It is of no use to have a hammer with an ivory handle, unless you aim it at the nail you mean to drive in up to the head; and if that is your object, an ordinary hammer will do as well as a fine one, perhaps better. Now, the prayers of Nehemiah and the Jews were petitions for divine protection. They knew what they wanted, and they asked for it definitely. Oh, for more definiteness in prayer! I am afraid that our prayers are often clouds, and we get mists for answers. Nehemiah's prayer meant business. I wish we could always pray in this way. When I pray, I like to go to God just as I go to a banker when I have a cheque to be cashed. I walk in, put the cheque down on the counter, the clerk give me my money, I take it up, and go about my business. I do not know that I ever stopped in a bank five minutes to talk with the clerks; when I have received up my change, I go away and attend to other matters. That is how I like to pray; but there is a way of praying that seems like lounging near the mercy-seat, as though one had no particular reason for being found there. Let it not be so with you, brethren. Plead the promise, believe it, receive the blessing God is ready to give, and go about your business. The prayer of Nehemiah and his companions meant business.

In the next place, it was a prayer that overcame difficulties. The text begins with a long word, "nevertheless." If we pull it to pieces, we get three words, never the less; when certain things happen, we will pray never the less; on the contrary, we will cry to our God all the more. Sanballat sneered; but we prayed never the less, but all the more because of his sneers. Tobiah uttered a cutting jest; but we prayed never the less, but all the more because of his mocking taunt. If men make a jest of your religion, pray none the less. If they even become cruel and violent to you, pray none the less; never the less, not a word less, not a syllable less, not a desire less, and not any faith less. What are your difficulties, dear friend, in coming to the mercy seat? What hindrance lies in your way? Let nothing obstruct your approach to the throne of grace. Turn all stumbling-stones into stepping-stones; and come, with holy boldness,

and say, notwithstanding all opposition, "never the less, we made our prayer unto our God." Nehemiah's prayer meant business, and overcame difficulties.

Notice, next, that it was a prayer that came before anything else. It does not say that Nehemiah set a watch, and then prayed; but "nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch." Prayer must always be the fore horse of the team. Do whatever else is wise, but not until thou hast prayed. Send for the physician if thou art sick; but first pray. Take the medicine if thou hast a belief that it will do thee good; but first pray. Go and talk to the man who has slandered you, if you think you ought to do so; but first pray. "Well, I am going to do so and so," says one, "and I shall pray for a blessing on it afterwards." Do not begin it until you have prayed. Begin, continue, and end everything with prayer; but especially begin with prayer. Some people would never begin what they are going to do, if they prayed about it first, for they could not ask God's blessing upon it. Is there anybody here who is going out of this Tabernacle to a place where he should not go? Will he pray first? He knows that he cannot ask a blessing on it; and therefore he ought not to go there. Go nowhere where you cannot go after prayer. This would often be a good guide in your choice of where you should go. Nehemiah first prayed, and then set a watch.

Once more, it was a prayer that was continued. If I read the passage aright, "we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night," it means that, as long as they watched, they prayed. They did not pray their prayer, and then leave off, and go away, as naughty boys do when they give runaway knocks at a door. Having begun to pray, they continued praying. So long as there were any enemies about, the prayer and the watching were never parted. They continued still to cry to him who keepeth Israel as long as they set the watchman of the night to warn them of the foe.

When shall we leave off praying, brothers and sisters? Well, they say that we shall do so when we get to heaven. I am not clear about that. I do not believe in the intercession of saints for us; but I remember that it is written in the book of Revelation, that the souls under the altar cried,

"How long, O Lord?" Those souls were waiting for the resurrection, waiting for the coming of Christ, waiting for the triumph of his kingdom; and I cannot conceive of their waiting there without often crying, "O Lord, how long? Remember thy Son, glorify his name, accomplish the number of thine elect." But certainly, as long as we are here, we must pray. One lady. Who professed that she had long been perfect, said that her mind was in such complete conformity with the mind of God, that she need not pray any longer. Poor creature! What did she know about the matter? She needed to begin at the first letter of the alphabet of salvation; and pray, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" When people imagine they need not to pray, the Lord have mercy upon them!

"Long as they live let Christians pray,  
For only while they pray they live."

The prayer which Nehemiah offered was, next, a prayer that was home-made. There may be some of you who like prayers made for you; and it may be that, if all the congregation are to join in the supplication, and every voice is to speak, the prayer must be prepared even as the hymn is; but ready-made prayers always seem to me very much like ready-made clothes, they are meant to fit everybody, and it is very seldom that they fit anybody. For real business at the mercy-seat, give me a home-made prayer, a prayer that comes out of the deeps of my heart, not because I invented it, but because God the Holy Spirit put it there, and gave it such a living force that I could not help letting it come out. Though your words are broken, and your sentences are disconnected; if your desires are earnest, if they are like coals of juniper, burning with a vehement flame, God will not mind how they find expression. If you have no words, perhaps you will pray better without them. There are prayers that break the backs of words; they are too heavy for any human language to carry.

This prayer, then, whatever it may have been as to its words, was one the pleaders made: "We made our prayers unto our God."

It is very important to notice, that it was a prayer that went to the home of prayer: "We made our prayer unto our God." You have heard of the man who prayed at Boston, "the hub of the universe", and the report in



the paper the next morning was, that "The Rev. Dr. So-and-so prayed the finest prayer that was ever addressed to a Boston audience." I am afraid that there are some prayers of that sort, that are prayed to the congregation. That is not the kind of prayer that God loves. Forget that there is anybody present, forget that a human ear is listening to your accents; and let it be said of your prayer, "Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God."

It is a very commonplace remark to make, that prayer must go to God if it to be of any avail; but it is very necessary to make it. When prayer does not go to God, what is the good of it? When you come out of your closet, and feel that you have only gone through a form, how much are you benefited? Make your prayers unto your God. Speak in his ear, knowing that he is there; and come away knowing that he has replied to you, that he has lifted up the light of his countenance upon you. That is the kind of prayer we need for our protection against our enemies both day and night.

Only once more upon this first point. I gather from the words before me that it was a prayer saturated with faith. "We made our prayer unto—God"? No, "unto our God." They had taken Jehovah to be their God, and they prayed to him as their God. They had a full assurance that, though he was the God of the whole earth, yet he was specially their God; and so they made their prayer unto the God who had given himself to them, and to whom they belonged by covenant relationship. "We made our prayers unto our God." Those two little words carry a vast weight of meaning. The door of prayer seems to turn on those two golden hinges,— "our God." If you and I are to be delivered from the evil that is in the world, if we are to be kept building the church of God, we must have for our first guard, mighty, believing prayer, such as Nehemiah and his Jewish friends presented unto the Lord.

II. I have now to speak to you about THE SECOND GUARD: "We set a watch against them day and night, because of them."

This setting of the watch was a work appointed. "We set a watch." Nehemiah did not say, "Now, some of you fellows, go and watch," leaving

the post of watchmen open to any who chose to take it; but they "set a watch." A certain number of men had to go on duty at a certain point, at a certain hour, and remain for a certain length of time, and be on guard against the adversary. "We set a watch." Brethren, if we are to watch over ourselves, and we must do so, we must do it with a definite purpose. We must not say, "I must try to be watchful." No, no; you must be watchful; and your watchfulness must be as distinct and definite an act as your prayer. "We set a watch." Some of you have seen the guards changed in the barracks; there is a special time for each company to mount guard. When you go to bed at night, pray the Lord to guard you during the darkness. In the morning, set a watch when you go to your business. Set a watch when you go to the dinner-table; set a watch when you return home. Oh, how soon we may be betrayed into evil unless we set a watch!

It was a work carefully done; for Nehemiah says, "We set a watch against them day and night, because of them." Those three last words would be better rendered, "over against them"; that is, wherever there was an enemy, there he set a watch/ They are likely to come up this way. Very well, set a watch there. Perhaps they may shift about, and come up this way. Very well, set a watch there. Possibly they may come climbing over the wall in front here. "Well, set a watch there. "We set a watch over against them." One brother has a very hot temper. Brother, set a watch there. Another is very morose at home, critical, picking holes in other people's coats. Brother, set a watch there. One friend has a tendency to pride, another to unbelief. Set a watch wherever the foe is likely to come. "We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch over against them."

It was a work continued; Nehemiah says, "we set a watch against them day and night." What! Is there to be someone sitting up all night? Of course there is. If Sanballat had told them when he meant to attack them, they might have gone to sleep at other times; but as he did not give them that information, they had to set a watch "day and night." The devil will not give you notice when he is going to tempt you; he likes to take men by surprise; therefore, set a watch day and night.

It was a work quickened by knowledge. they knew that Sanballat would come if he could, so they set a watch. The more you know of the plague of

your own heart, the more you will set a watch against it. The more you know of the temptations that are in the world through lust, the more you should set a watch. The older you are, the more you should watch. "Oh!" says an aged friend, "you should not say that; it is the young people who go wrong." Is it? In the Old Testament or in the New, have you an instance of a young believer who went astray? The Bible tells us of many old men who were tripped up by Satan when they were not watching; so you have need to set a watch even when your hair turns grey, for you will not be out of gunshot of the devil until you have passed through the gate of pearl into the golden streets of the New Jerusalem.

You and I, dear friends, have need to set a watch against the enemies of our holy faith. Some people ask me, "Why do you talk so much about the 'Down-grade'? Let men believe what they like. Go on with your work for God, and pray to him to set them right." I believe in praying and setting a watch. We have to guard with jealous care "the faith once for all delivered to the saints." When you find, as you do find now, professing Christians and professing Christian ministers denying every article of the faith, or putting another meaning upon all the words than they must have been understood to bear, and preaching lies in the name of the Most High, it is time that somebody set a watch against them. A night-watchman's place is not an easy berth; but I am willing to take that post for my blessed Master's sake. Those professed servants of Christ who enter into an unholy alliance with men who deny the faith will have to answer for it at the last great day. As for us, brethren, when our Lord comes, let him find us watching as well as praying.

But, dear friends, to come home to ourselves, we must set a watch against our own personal adversaries. I hope that, in one sense, you have no personal enemies; that you own nobody a grudge; but that you live in peace and love towards all mankind. But there are Christian people here, who will go to homes where everybody in the house is against them. Many a godly woman goes from the sanctuary to a drunken husband; many children, converted to God, see anything but what they like to see in their homes. What are they to do in such circumstances? Set a watch. Dear woman, how do you know but that you shall be the means of saving your unconverted husband? If so, you must set a watch; do not give him a bit

of your mind; you will not convert him that way. And you, dear children, who have come to Christ, and joined the church, mind that you are dutiful and obedient, for otherwise you will destroy all hope of bringing your parents to the Saviour. Set a watch. "Oh!" say you, "if I do a little wrong, they magnify it." I know they do; therefore, set a watch; be more careful. Set a watch over your temper, set a watch over your tongue, set a watch over your actions. Be patient, be gentle, be loving. May the Spirit of God work all this in you!

But there is another set of enemies much more dreadful than these adversaries that are without us, the foes within, the evil tendencies of our corrupt nature, against which we must always set a watch. Perhaps you say, "How can I do this?" Well, first, know what they are. People who are beginning the Christian life should seek to know where their weak points are. I should not wonder, dear friend, if your weak point lies where you think that you are strong. Where you think, "Oh, I shall never go wrong there!"—that is the very place where you are likely to fall. Set a watch wherever any weakness has appeared; and if you have, in the past of your Christian life, grieved the Holy Spirit by anything wrong, set a double watch there. Where you have tripped once, you may trip again; for you are the same man. Set a watch, also, dear friend, whenever you feel quite secure. Whenever you feel certain that you cannot be tempted in a particular direction, that proves that you are already as proud as Lucifer. Set a watch, set a watch, set a watch. Avoid every occasion of sin. If any course of conduct would lead you into sin, do not go in that direction. I heard a man say, as an excuse for drinking, "You see, if ever I take a glass of beer, I seem to lose myself, and I must have two or three more." Well, then, if that is the case with you, do not take a glass of beer. "But," says one, "if I get into company, I forget myself." Then, do not go into company. Better go to heaven as a hermit, than go to hell with a multitude. Pluck out your right eye, and cut off your right hand, sooner than that these should cause you to fall into sin. Do not go where you are likely to be tempted. "Well," says one, "but my business calls me into the midst of temptation." I grant you that your business may compel you to go where there are ungodly men; for how could some live at all, if they had not to come into contact with the ungodly?—they would have to go out of the world. Well, then, if that is your case, put on the whole armour

of God, and do not go without being prepared to fight the good fight of faith. Set a watch, set a watch, set a watch.

Watch against the beginnings of sin. Remember, Satan never begins where he leaves off; he begins with a little sin, and he goes on to a greater one. When he first tempts men, he does not aim at all he hopes to accomplish; but he tries to draw them aside by little and little, and he works up by degrees to the greater sin he wants them to commit. I do not believe that, at the present time, a Christian man can be too precise. We serve a very precise God: "the Lord thy God is a jealous God." Keep out of many things in which professing Christians now indulge themselves. The question is, whether they are Christians at all. If we must not judge them, at any rate, let us judge for ourselves, and settle it, once for all, that we dare not go where they go; indeed, we have no wish to do so.

Watch for what God has to say to you. In your reading of the Bible, if the Holy Spirit applies a text of Scripture to you with special force, regard it as a hint from your heavenly Father that there is a lesson in it for you. I am often surprised at the way in which the morning text will often instruct me through the whole day. Persons who come to hear the Word of God preached, often find that, within two or three days, there is a reason why the preacher delivered that particular sermon, and a reason why they were led to hear it.

Whenever you see a professing Christian going astray from the way of holiness, do not talk about it, and so increase the mischief. "It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest." Instead of speaking of another's fall, set a watch for yourself, and say, "That is when he slipped, that is where I may stumble if the grace of God does not keep me." Remember our Saviour's words to the three disciples with him in Gethsemane, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

III. I finish by putting THE TWO GUARDS TOGETHER. "We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them."

Dear friends, neither of these two guards is sufficient alone. Prayer alone will not avail. To pray and not to watch, is presumption. You pretend to

trust in God, and yet you are throwing yourself into danger, as the devil would have had Christ do, when he tempted him to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. If you pray to be kept, then be watchful.

Prayer without watchfulness is hypocrisy. A man prays to be kept from sin, and then goes into temptation; his prayer is evidently a mere piece of mockery; for he does not carry it out in his practice.

Sometimes, however, ignorance may lead to prayer without watching. There are other things which ought not to be omitted. Let me tell you a simple story/ There was a little school-girl who did not know often her lessons, and there was another girl, who sat near her, who always said her lessons correctly. Her companions said to her, "Jane, how is it that you always know your lessons?" Jane replied, "I pray to God to help me, and so I know them." The next day, the other little girl stood up, but she did not know her lesson; and afterward she said to her friend, "I prayed to God about my lesson, but I did not know it any better than I did yesterday." Jane said, "But did you try to learn the lesson?" "No," she said; "I prayed about it, and I thought that was sufficient." Of course she did not know her lesson without learning it. In the same manner, you must watch as well as pray. There must be the daily guard put upon tongue, and thought, and hand; or else prayer will be in vain.

I have known some people run great risks, and yet say that they have prayed to the Lord to preserve them. I have heard, dozens of times, these words, "I made it a matter of prayer," and I have been ready to grow angry with the man who has uttered them. He has done a wrong thing, and he has excused himself because he says that he made it a matter of prayer. A young man married an ungodly young woman, and yet he said that he made it a matter of prayer! A Christian woman married an ungodly man, and when someone blamed her for disobeying the Word of God, she said that she made it a matter of prayer! If you had really sought divine guidance, you would not have dared to do what the Scriptures expressly forbid to a child of God. Prayer without watching is not sufficient to preserve us from evil.

On the other hand, dear friends, watching without praying is equally

futile. To say, "I will keep myself right," and never pray to God to keep you, is self-confidence, which must lead to evil. If you try to watch, and do not pray, you will go to sleep, and there will be an end to your watching. It is only by praying and watching that you will be able to keep on your guard. Besides, watching grows wearisome without prayer, and we soon give it up, unless we have a sweet interlude of prayer to give us rest, and to help us to continue watching.

I will not keep you longer when I have said this, put the two together, "Watch and pray," or, as my text has it, "Pray and watch." One will help the other. Prayer will call out the watchman, prayer will incite him to keep his eyes open, prayer will be the food to sustain him during the night, prayer will be the fire to warn him. On the other hand, watching will help prayer, for watching proves prayer to be true. Watching excites prayer, for every enemy we see will move us to pray more earnestly. Moreover, watching is prayer. If there be true watching, the watching itself is prayer. The two blend the one into the other. Beloved friends, I send you away with my text ringing in your ears, "We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night."

But I have not been speaking to all who are here. Some of you do not pray, some of you cannot set a watch. The message for you is, "Ye must be born again." You cannot attempt Christian duties till first you have the Christian life; and the only way to get the Christian life is to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Come to the fountain which he has filled with his precious blood; wash there, and be clean; and then, quickened by his Spirit, set a watch. I am looking to see some people brought to Christ at this service, for although I have been preaching to God's people, if they will watch for you, and pray for you, there will come a blessing to you through their watching and praying. The Lord grant that it may come to many of you! "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him when he is near." May many seek and find the Lord to-night; and may many call upon him in truth! "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved." God grant that it may be so to everybody here, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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## **The Two Talents**

He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. - Matthew 25:22-23

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." All that men have they must trace to the Great Fountain, the giver of all good. Hast thou talents? They were given thee by the God of talents. Hast thou time? hast thou wealth, influence, power? Hast thou powers of tongue? Hast thou powers of thought? Art thou poet, statesman, or philosopher? Whatever be thy position, and whatever be thy gifts, remember that they are not thine, but they are lent thee from on high. No man hath anything of his own, except his sins. We are but tenants at will. God hath put us into his estates, and he hath said, "Occupy till I come." Though our vineyards bear never so much fruit, yet the vineyard belongs to the King, and though we are to take the hundred for our hire, yet King Solomon must have his thousand. All the honor of our ability and the use of it must be unto God, because he is the Giver. The parable tells us this very pointedly; for it makes every person acknowledge that his talents come from the Lord. Even the man who digged in the earth and hid his Lords money, did not deny that his talent belonged to his Master; for though his reply, "Lo, there thou hast that is shine," was exceedingly impertinent, yet it was not a denial of this fact. So that even this man was ahead of those who deny their obligations to God, who superciliously toss their heads at the very mention of obedience to their Creator, and spend their time and their powers rather in rebellion against him than in his service. Oh, that we were all wise to believe and to



act upon this most evident of all truths, that everything we have, we have received from the Most High.

Now, there are some men in the world who have but few talents. Our parable says, "One had five, and another two. To them I shall address myself this morning; and I pray that the few pointed things I may say, may be blessed of God to their edification or rebuke. First, I shall notice the fact that there are many persons who have but few talents, and I will try to account for God's dispensing but few to them. Secondly, I shall remind them that even for these few talents they must be brought to account. And thirdly, I shall conclude by making the comforting observation, that if our few talents be rightly used, neither our own conscience nor our Master's judgment shall condemn us for not having more.

I. First, then, GOD HAS MADE SOME MEN WITH FEW TALENTS. You very often hear men speak of one another as if God had made no mental differences at all. One man finds himself successful, and he supposes that if every one else could have been as industrious and as persevering as himself, every one must necessarily have been as successful. You will often hear remarks against ministers who are godly and earnest men, but who do not happen to have much attracting power, and they are called drones and lazy persons, because they cannot make much of a stir in the world, whereas the reason may be, that they have but little talent, and are making the best use of what they have, and therefore ought not to be rebuked for the littleness of what they are able to accomplish. It is a fact, which every man must see, that even in our birth there is a difference. All children are not alike precocious, and all men certainly are not alike capable of learning or of teaching. God hath made eminent and marvelous differences. We are not to suppose that all the difference between a Milton and a man who lives and dies without being able to read, has been caused by education. There was doubtless a difference originally, and though education will do much, it cannot do every thing. Fertile ground, when well-tilled will necessarily bring forth more than the best tilled estate, the soil of which is hard and sterile. God has made great and decided differences; and we ought, in dealing with our fellow-men, to recollect this, lest we should say harsh things of those very men to whom

God will afterwards say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

But why is it that God has not given to all men like talents? My first answer shall be, because God is a Sovereign, and of all attributes, next to his love, God is the most fond of displaying his sovereignty. The Lord God will have men know that he has a right to do what he wills with his own. Hence it is, that in salvation he gives it to some and not to others; and his only reply to any accusation of injustice is, "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" The worm is not to murmur because God did not make it an angel, and the fish that swims the sea must not complain because it hath not wings to fly into the highest heavens. God had a right to make his creatures just what he pleased, and though men may dispute his right, he will hold and keep it inviolate against all comers. That he may hedge his right about and make vain man acknowledge it, in all his gifts he continually reminds us of his sovereignty. "I will give to this man," he says, "a mind so acute that he shall pry into all secrets; I will make another so obtuse, that none but the plainest elements of knowledge shall ever be attainable by him. I will give to one man such a wealth of imagination, that he shall pile mountain upon mountain of imagery, till his language seems to reach to celestial majesty; I will give to another man a soul so dull, that he shall never be able to originate a poetic thought." Why this, O God? The answer comes back, "Shall I not do what I will with mine own?" "So, then, the children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, it was written, the elder shall serve the younger." And so it is written concerning men, that one of them shall be greater than another; one shall bow his neck, and the other put his foot upon it, for the Lord hath a right to dispose of places and of gifts, of talents and wealth, just as seemeth good in his sight.

Now, most men quarrel with this. But mark, the thing that you complain of in God, is the very thing that you love in yourselves. Every man likes to feel that he has a right to do with his own as he pleases. We all like to be little sovereigns. You will give your money freely and liberally to the poor; but if any man should impertinently urge that he had a claim upon your charity, would you give unto him? Certainly not; and who shall impeach

the greatness of your generosity in so doing? It is even as that parable, that we have in one of the Evangelists, where, after the men had toiled, some of them twelve hours, some of them six, and some of them but one, the Lord gave every man a penny. Oh! I would meekly bow my head, and say, "My Lord, hast thou given me one talent? then I bless thee for it, and I pray thee bestow upon me grace to use it rightly. Hast thou given to my brother ten talents? I thank thee for the greatness of thy kindness towards him; but I neither envy him, nor complain of thee." Oh! for a spirit that bows always before the sovereignty of God.

Again: God gives to one five, and to another two talents, because the Creator is a lover of variety. It was said that order is heaven's first law; surely variety is the second; for in all God's works, there is the most beautiful diversity. Look ye towards the heavens at night: all the stars shine not with the same brilliance, nor are they placed in straight lines, like the lamps of our streets. Then turn your eyes below; see in the vegetable world, how many great distinctions there are, ranging from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, or the moss that is smaller still. See, how from the huge mammoth tree, that seems as if beneath its branches it might shade an army, down to the tiny lichen, God hath made everything beautiful, but everything full of variety. Look on any one tree, if you please: see how every leaf differs from its fellow—how even the little tiny buds that are at this hour bursting at the scent of the approaching perfume of spring, differ from each other—not two of them alike. Look again, upon the animated world: God hath made every creature like unto another. How wide the range—from the colossal elephant, to the coney that burrows in the rock—from the whale, that makes the deep hoary with its lashings, to the tiny minnow that skims the brook; God hath made all things different, and we see variety everywhere. I doubt not it is the same, even in heaven, for there there are "thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers"—different ranks of angels, perhaps, rising tier upon tier. "One star differeth from another star in glory." And why should not the same rule stand good in manhood? Doth God cast us all in the same mold? It seems not so; for he hath not made our faces alike; no two countenances can be said to be exactly the same, for if there be some likeness, yet is there a manifest diversity. Should minds, then, be alike? Should souls all be cast in the same

fashion? Should God's creation dwindle down into a great manufactory, in which everything is melted in the same fire and poured into the same mould? No, for variety's sake, he will have one man a renowned David, and another David's unknown armor bearer; he will have one man a Jeremy, who shall prophesy, and another a Baruch, who shall only read the prophesy; one shall be rich as Dives, another poor as Lazarus; one shall speak with a voice loud as thunder, another shall be dumb; one shall be mighty in word and doctrine, another shall be feeble in speech and slow in words. God will have variety, and the day will come when, looking down upon the world we shall see the beauty of its history to be mightily indebted to the variety of the characters that entered into it.

But a little further. God hath a deeper reason than this. God gives to some men but few talents, because he has many small spheres, and he would have these filled. There is a great ocean, and it needs inhabitants. O Lord, thou hast made Leviathan to swim therein. There is a secret grotto, a hidden cavern, far away in the depths of the sea; its entrance is but small; if there were naught but a Leviathan, it must remain untenanted for ever: a little fish is made, and that small place becomes an ocean unto it. There are a thousand sprays and twigs upon the trees of the forest; were all eagles, how would the forests be made glad with song, and how could each twig bear its songster? But because God would have each twig have its own music, he has made the little songster to sit upon it. Each sphere must have the creature to occupy it adapted to the size of the sphere. God always acts economically. Does he intend a man to be the pastor of some small parish with four or five hundred inhabitants? Of what use is it giving to that man the abilities of an apostle? Does he intend a woman to be a humble teacher of her own children at home, a quiet trainer of her own family? Would it not even disturb her and injure her if God should make her a poetess, and give her gifts that might electrify a nation? The littleness of her talents will to a degree fit her for the littleness of her sphere. There is some youth who is quite capable of assisting in a Ragged School: perhaps if he had a higher genius he might disdain the work, and so the Ragged School would be without its excellent teacher. There are little spheres, and God will have little men to occupy them. There are posts of important duty, and men shall be found with nerve and muscle fitted for the labor. He has made a statue for every niche, and a picture

for every portion of the gallery; none shall be left vacant; but since some niches are small, so shall be the statuettes that occupy them. To some he gives two talents, because two are enough, and five would be too many.

Once more: God gives to men two talents, because in them very often he displays the greatness of his grace in saving souls. You have heard a minister who was deeply read in sacred lore; his wisdom was profound, and his speech graceful. Under his preaching many were converted. Have you never heard it not quite said, but almost hinted, that much of his success was traceable to his learning and to his graceful oratory? But, on the other hand, you have met with a man, rough in his dialect, uncouth in his manners, evidently without any great literary attainments; nevertheless, God has given that man the one talent of an earnest heart; he speaks like a son of thunder; with rough, stern language, he denounces and proclaims the gospel; under him hundreds are converted. The world sneers at him. "I can see no reason for all this," says the scholar; "it is all rubbish—cant; the man knows nothing." The critic takes up his pen, nibs it afresh, dips it in the bitterest ink he can find, and writes a most delightful history of the man in which he goes so far as to say, not that he sees horns on his head, but almost everything but that. He is everything that is bad, and nothing that is good. He utterly denounces him. He is foolish, he is vain, he is base, he is proud, he is illiterate, he is vulgar. There was no word in the English language that was bad enough for him, but one must be coined. And now what says the church? What says the man himself? "Even so, O Lord; now must the glory be unto thee for ever, inasmuch as thou hast chosen the base things of this world, and the things that are not, to bring to naught the things that are." So it seemeth that out of the little God sometimes winneth more glory than he doth out of the great; and I doubt not that he has made some of you with little power to do good, with little influence, and with a narrow sphere, that he may, in the last great day, manifest to angels how much he can do in a little space. You know, dear friends, there are two things that always will attract our attention. One is skill embodied in a stupendous mass. We see the huge ship, the Leviathan, and we wonder that man could have made it; at another time we see an elegant piece of workmanship that will stand upon less than a square inch, and we say, "Well, I can understand how men can make a great ship, but I can not comprehend how an artist could

have the patience and the skill to make so minute a thing as this." And ah! my friends, it seems to me that God is not a greater God to our apprehension, when we see the boundless fields of ether and the unnumbered orbs swimming therein, than when we see a humble cottager, and behold Godly perfect work carried out in her soul, and God's highest glory wrought from her little talent. Surely if in the little, man can honor himself as well as in the great, the Infinite, and the Eternal, can most of all glorify himself when he stoopeth to the littleness of mankind.

II. Our second proposition was, that even A FEW TALENTS MUST BE ACCOUNTED FOR. We are very apt when we think of the day of judgment, to imagine that certain characters will undergo a more trying process than others. I know I have often involuntarily said, when reading the history of Napoleon, "Here is a man of tremendous ability, the world's master; a dozen centuries might be required to produce such another man; but here is a man who prostitutes all his ability to ambition, carries his armies like a destroying deluge across every country, widows wives, and renders children fatherless, not by hundreds but by thousands, if not by millions. What must be his solemn account when he stands before the throne of God? Shall not the witnesses rise up from the fields of Spain, of Russia, of Italy, of Egypt, of Palestine, and accuse the man who, to gratify his own bold ambition, led them to death?" But will you please to remember that though Napoleon must be a prisoner at the bar, each of us must stand there also. And though our position is not very high, and we have not stood upon the pinnacle of fame, yet we have stood quite high enough to be borne under the observation of the Most High, and we have had just ability enough and power enough to have done mischief in the world, and to be accountable for it. "Oh!" said one, "I thought that surely in the day of judgment he would pass me by; I have been no Tom Paine; I have not been a leader among low and vulgar infidels; I have not been a murderer; I have not been a prince among sinners; I have not been a disturber of the public peace; what few sins I have committed have taken place quietly; nobody has heard of them; I don't think my bad example has gone far; perhaps my children have not been much blessed by my behavior, but, nevertheless, mine has been a very small quantum of mischief, too small to have poisoned any one beside myself. I have been,

on the whole, so tolerably moral, that though I cannot say I have served God, yet my defalcations from the path of duty have been slight indeed!" Ah! truly friends! you may think yourselves never so little, but your making yourselves insignificant will not excuse you. You have had but little entrusted to you! Then the less trouble for you to make use of your talents. The man who has many talents requires much hard labor to use them all. He might make the excuse that he found five talents too many to put out in the market at once; you have only one; anybody can lend out his one talent to interest—it will cost you but little trouble to supply that; and inasmuch as you live, and inasmuch as you die, without having improved the one talent, your guilt will be exceedingly increased by the very fact that your talent was but little, and, consequently, the trouble of using it would have been but little too. If you had but little, God required but little of you; why, then, did you not render that? If any man holds a house at a rental of a pound a year, let it be never so small a house for the money, if he brings not his rent there is not one half the excuse for him that there would be if his rent had been a hundred pounds, and he had failed to bring it. You shall be the more inexcusable on account of the little that was required of you. Let me, then, address you, and remind you that you must be brought to account.

Remember, my hearer, that in the day of judgment thy account must be personal; God will not ask you what your church did—he will ask you what you did yourself. Now there is a Sunday-school. If God should try all members of the church in a body, they would each of them say, O Lord, as a body we had an excellent Sunday-school, and had many teachers, and so they would excuse themselves. But no; one by one, all professors must come before him. "What did you do for the Sabbath-school? I gave you a gift for teaching children—what did you do?" "O Lord, there was a Sabbath-school." That has nothing to do with it? What did you do? You are not to account now for the company with which you were united, but for yourself as an individual. "O," says one, "there were a number of poor ministers; I was at the Surrey Hall, and so much was done for them." No; what did you do? You must be held personally responsible for your own wealth, for your own ability. "Well, says one, "I am happy to say there is a great deal more preaching now than there used to be; the churches seem to be roused." Yes, sir, and you seem to take part of the credit to yourself.

Do you preach more than you used to? You are a minister; do you make any greater efforts? Remember, it is not what your brethren are doing, but it is what you do that you will be called to account for at the bar of God; and each one of you will be asked this question, "What hast thou done with thy talent?" All your connection with churches will avail you nothing; it is your personal doings—your personal service towards God that is demanded of you as an evidence of saving grace. And if others are idle—if others pay not God his due—so much the more reason why you should have been more exceedingly diligent in doing so yourself.

Recollect, again, that your account will have to be particular. God will go into all the items of it. At the day of judgment you will not have to cast up a hurried account in the gross, but every item shall be read. Can you prove that? Yes. "For every idle word that man shall speak, he shall be brought unto account at the day of judgment." Now, it is in the items that men go astray. "Well," says one, "If I look at my life in the bulk, I am not very much ashamed, but it is those items, those little items—they are the troublesome part of the account, that one does not care to meddle with." Do you know that all yesterday was made up of littles? And the things of to-day are all little, and what you do to-morrow will all be little things. Just as the tiny shells make up the chalk hills, and the chalk hills together make up the range, so the trifling actions make up the whole account, and each of these must be pulled asunder separately. You had an hour to spare the other day—what did you do? You had a voice—how did you use it? You had a pen—you could use that—how did you employ it? Each particular shall be brought out, and there shall be demanded an account for each one. Oh, that you were wise, that ye did not slur this matter, but would take every note in the music of your behavior, and seek to make each note in harmony with its fellow, lest, after all, the psalm of your life may prove to be a hideous discord. Oh, that ye who are without God would remember that your life is assuredly such, that the trial of the last great day must end in your condemnation.

Again, that account will be very exact, and there will be no getting off without those little things. "Oh! there were a few pécadillos, and very small matters indeed; I never took stock of them at all." But they will all be taken stock of then. When God comes to look into our hearts at last, he



will not only look at the great but at the little; every thing will be seen into, the pence sins as well as the pound iniquities—all must be brought against us, and an exact account given.

Again, remember, in the last place, upon this point, that the account will be very impartial at the day of judgment, when all will be tried without any reference to their station. The prince will be summoned to give an account of his talents, and side by side must stand his courtier and his slave. The mightiest emperor must stand at God's bar, as well as the meanest cottager. And all must appear and be tried according to the deeds they have done in the body. As to our professions, they will avail us nothing. We may have been the proudest hypocrites that ever made the world sick with our pride, but we must be searched and examined, as much as if we had been the vilest sinners. We must take our own trial before God's eternal tribunal, and nothing can bias our judge, or give him an opinion for or against us, apart from the evidence. Oh, how solemn this will make the trial, especially if we have no blood of Christ to plead! The great Advocate will get his people an acquittal, through his imputed merits, even though our sin in itself would condemn them. But remember, that without him we shall never be able to stand the fiery ordeal of that last dread assize. "Well," said an old preacher, "when the law was given, Sinai was on a smoke, and it melted like wax; but when the punishment of the law is given, the whole earth will quake and quail. For who shall be able to endure the day of the Lord, the day of God's fierce anger?"

III. The last point is, IF BY DIVINE GRACE (and it is only by divine grace that this can ever be accomplished)—OUR TWO TALENTS BE RIGHTLY USED, THE FACT THAT WE HAD NOT FIVE, WILL BE NO INJURY TO US.

You say, when such a man dies, who stood in the midst of the church, a triumphant for the truth, the angels will crowd to heaven's gates to see him, for he has been a mighty hero, and done much for his Master. A Calvin or a Luther, with what plaudits shall they be received!—men with talents, who have been faithful to their trust. Yes, but know ye not, that there is many a humble village pastor whose flock scarcely numbers fifty,

who toils for them as for his life, who spends hours in praying for their welfare, who uses all the little ability he has in his endeavor to win them to Christ; and do ye imagine that his entry into heaven shall be less triumphant than the entry of such a man as Luther? If so, ye know not how God dealeth with his people. He giveth them rewards, not according to the greatness of the goods with which they were entrusted, but according to their fidelity thereunto, and he that hath been faithful to the least, shall be as much rewarded, as he that hath been faithful in much. I want you briefly to turn to the chapter, to see this. You will note first, that the man with two talents came to his Lord with as great a confidence as the man that had five. "And he said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents; behold, I have gained two talents beside them." I will be bound to say, that while that poor man with the two talents was trading with them, he frequently looked upon his neighbor with the five talents, and said, "Oh, I wish I could do as much as he is doing! See now, he has five talents to put out, and how much interest he has coming every year; Oh, that I could do as much!" And as he went on he often prayed, "O my Lord, give me greater ability, and greater grace to serve thee, for I long to do more." And when he sat down to read his diary, he thought, "Ah, this diary does not tell much. There is no account of my journey through fifty counties; I can not tell how I have travelled from land to land, as Paul did, to preach the truth. No; I have just had to keep in this parish, and been pretty well starved to death, toiling for this people, and if I have added some ten or a dozen to the church, that has been a very great deal to me. Why, I hear that Mr. So-and-so, was privileged to add two or three hundred in a year, Oh, that I could do that! Surely when I go to heaven, I shall creep in at the door somehow, while he by grace will be enabled to go boldly in, bringing his sheaves with him." Now stop, poor little faith, stop; thy Master will not deal thus with thee. When thou shalt come to die, thou wilt through his grace feel as much confidence in dying with thy two well-used talents, as thy brother with his ten, for thou wilt, when thou comest there, have thy Lords sweet presence, and thou wilt say, "I am complete in Christ. Christ's righteousness covers me from head to foot, and now in looking back upon my past life, I can say, Blessed be his holy name. It is little that I could do, but I have done as much as I could for him. I know that he will pardon my defects, and forgive my miscarriages, and I shall never look back upon my humble village charge without much joy, that the Lord

allowed me to labor there." And, Oh, methinks, that man will have even a richer commendation in his own conscience, than the man who has been more publicly applauded, for he can say to himself, after putting all his trust in Christ, "Well, I am sure I did not do all this for fame, for I blushed unseen—I have lost my sweetness on the desert air. No one has ever read my deeds; what I did was between myself and my God, and I can render up my account to him and say, 'Lord, I did it for thee, and not to honor myself.'" Yes, friends, I might tell you now of many a score of earnest evangelists in this our land who are working harder than any one of us, and yet win far less honor. Yes, and I could bring you up many a score of city missionaries whose toil for Christ is beyond all measure of praise, who never got much reward here, nay, rather meet with slights and disrespect. You see the poor man start as soon as he goes from his place of worship to-day. He has got three hours this afternoon to go and spend among the sick, and then you will see him on Monday morning. He has to go from house to house, often with the door slammed in his face, often exposed to mobs and drunken men, sometimes jeered and scoffed at, meeting with persons of all religious persuasions and of no persuasion. He toils on; he has his little evening meeting, and there he gets a little flock together and tries to pray with them, and he gets now and then a man or a woman converted; but he has no honor. He just takes him off to the minister, and he says, "Sir, here is a good man; I think he is impressed; will you baptize him and receive him into your church?" The minister gets all the credit of that, but as for the poor city missionary, there is little or nothing said of him. There is, perhaps, just his name, Mr. Brown, or Mr. Smith, mentioned sometimes in the report, but people do not think much of him, except, perhaps, as an object of charity they have to keep, whereas he is the man that gives them charity, giving all the sap and blood and marrow of his life for some poor sixty pounds a year, hardly enough to keep his family above want. But he, when he dies, my friend, shall have no less the approval of his conscience than the man who was permitted to stand before the multitudes and raised the nation into excitement on account of religion. He shall come before the Master clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and with unblushing face shall say, "I have received two talents; I have gained beside them two talents more."

Furthermore, and to conclude, you will notice there was no difference in

his Master's commendation—none in the reward. In both cases, it was "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Here comes Whitfield, the man who stood before twenty thousand at a time to preach the gospel, who in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America has testified the truth of God, and who could count his converts by thousands, even under one sermon! Here he comes, the man that endured persecution and scorn, and yet was not moved—the man of whom the world was not worthy, who lived for his fellow men, and died at last for their cause; stand by angels and admire, while the Master takes him by the hand and says, "Well done, well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" See how free grace honors the man whom it enabled to do valiantly. Hark! Who is this that comes there? a poor thin-looking creature, that on earth was a consumptive; there was a hectic flush now and then upon her cheek, and she lay three long years upon her bed of sickness. Was she a prince's daughter, for it seems heaven is making much stir about her? No, she was a poor girl that earned her living by her needle, and she worked herself to death!—stitch, stitch, stitch, from morning to night! and here she comes. She went prematurely to her grave, but she is coming, like a shock of corn fully ripe, into heaven; and her Master says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." She takes her place by the side of Whitfield. Ask what she ever did, and you find out that she used to live in some back garret down some dark alley in London; and there used to be another poor girl come to work with her, and that poor girl, when she first came to work with her, was a gay and volatile creature, and this consumptive child told her about Christ; and they used, when she was well enough, to creep out of an evening to go to chapel or to church together. It was hard at first to get the other one to go, but she used to press her lovingly; and when the girl went wild a little, she never gave her up. She used to say, "O Jane, I wish you loved the Saviour;" and when Jane was not there she used to pray for her, and when she was there she prayed with her: and now and then when she was stitching away, read a page out of the Bible to her, for poor Jane could not read. And with many tears she tried to tell her about the Saviour who loved her and gave himself for her. At last, after many a day of hard

persuasion, and many an hour of sad disappointment, and many a night of sleepless tearful prayer, at last she lived to see the girl profess her love to Christ; and she left her and took sick, and there she lay till she was taken to the hospital, where she died. When she was in the hospital she used to have a few tracts, and she used to give them to those who came to see her; she would try, if she could, to get the women to come round, and she would give them a tract. When she first went into the hospital, if she could creep out of bed, she used to get by the side of one who was dying, and the nurse used to let her do it; till at last she got too ill, and then she used to ask a poor woman on the other side of the ward, who was getting better, and was going out, if she would come and read a chapter to her; not that she wanted her to read to her on her own account, but for her sake, for she thought it might strike her heart while she was reading it. At last this poor girl died and fell asleep in Jesus; and the poor consumptive needle-woman had said to her, "Well done"—and what more could an archangel have said to her?—"she hath done what she could."

See, then, the Master's commendation, and the last reward will be equal to all men who have used their talents well. Ah! if there be degrees in glory, they will not be distributed according to our talents, but according to our faithfulness in using them. As to whether there are degrees or not, I know not; but this I know, he that doeth his Lord's will, shall have said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

And now, friends, this one word only. I have told you that there are many in our denomination who are preaching the gospel continually. I should bring some few of the letters, written by the poor ministers to us to read, but sometimes I think this a violation of delicacy, and I do not like to do it. But when I did that one year, the collection was almost twice as good; so I think I might almost commit a breach of etiquette in order to help them. However, I can solemnly assure you, that if there is poverty anywhere, it is to be found among the ministers in the Baptist churches, and I am sorry to say that one cause of it is the fault of the people themselves; they are so little in the habit of giving, that their ministers are starved. Now, if Christ will say, "Well done," hereafter, to many a humble preacher, do you think he intends the church to starve them while they are here on \$30 or \$40 a year? Now, brethren, if Christ will say, "Well

done," at last, we may anticipate his verdict and say "Well done to-day." And can we better say, "well done" than by unmuzzling the ox that treadeth out the corn, and give these poor ministers something out of our own wealth, as God may help us, that their necessities may be supplied? There will be pretty well a score of persons who will be dependent next year on what you give this year; perhaps you will remember that and assist them. One kind gentleman, who usually comes here, says, "I could not come to-day, so I forward my pound to be put in the box by the minister." And I trust, if there are any not here to-day who will be here next Sabbath, that they will not forget this collection. It is always very dear to the heart of my church.

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## **The Two Yokes**

Thus saith the Lord; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. - Jeremiah 28:13

ALL THROUGH THE BOOK of Jeremiah you will observe that the prophet taught the people not only by words, but by symbols. At one time he took his mantle and hid it in the earth till it was soiled and worn, and then taught them something by wearing it. At another time he took an earthen pot and broke it in their presence. And on this occasion he put a yoke about his own neck as the token that Israel should be subdued beneath the power of Nebuchadnezzar. This was a strange method of teaching. I have sometimes heard complaints made by those who are fond of criticizing things they know nothing about—when a teacher puts a truth very plainly, if he shall, as it were, act what he says, he is upbraided at once as being histrionic. I know not what ungenerous words are hurled at him. Yet after all, this was what Jeremiah did. He taught the people by

signs and symbols. So, too, our Lord himself. I doubt not, that when he uttered those words, "Consider the lilies," he stooped down and plucked a lily; and when he said, "Consider the ravens," he pointed to the ravens flying overhead, in the sky. At any rate, we know that once he took a little child, and set it in the midst of them. What an outcry there would be if I were to take a little child and set him here and preach about him! Did we use any kind of symbol, to what ridicule we should expose ourselves! The fact is, we might do much more good if we did less regard the general current of public opinion, and ventured to do strange things, that anyhow the truth of God might come home to a slumbering generation, and the Word of God, which must be learnt by them or they must perish, were made to tell upon their minds. The prophet Jeremiah, though exceedingly faithful in his mission, which he discharged as God would have him discharge it, with many tears in great love and deep anxiety, nevertheless had a great obstacle in his way. He was met by false prophets who withstood and contradicted him to his face. Not so very surprising either. It must ever be expected that it will be so. If God shall speak by any man, there shall be some other who protests that God speaks by him to the contrary. If there be a Christ, there will be an Antichrist; if there be a Simon Peter, there will be a Simon Marcus, if there shall be raised up by God a Luther, there shall be an Eckius, or some other controversialist who shall seek to resist and overthrow him. Let no man's heart then fail him if he be flatly contradicted when he bears testimony for God. Let him rather expect it, and go on never caring, for the fact is, the truth will outlive error, and in the long run that Word of God before which all things else are as grass and as the flower, the perishing flower of the field—the Word of God shall endure for ever and triumph over the ruin of all the words of men. Tremble not, ye feeble adherents of the truth, who fear lest your weakness should make the truth itself weak, and the strong logic and the powerful rhetoric of its adversaries should overturn the oracles of God. It cannot be. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the gospel, mighty though they be both in power and in sophistry. The truth shall abide; the right shall prevail; for God is faithful, and Christ must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

With this, by way of preliminary observation, we will now come to the text, and endeavor to make some use of it for ourselves. Hananiah took

off the symbolic yoke, the wooden yoke, from Jeremiah's neck and broke it. Jeremiah comes again, and says, "You have broken the yoke of wood, but God has commanded that ye shall now wear yokes of iron." They were not benefited, therefore, by the change, but the reverse. This is suggestive of a broad principle. From the symbol, which was applicable in one case, we draw a general truth. Whenever men say of God, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from us," they may do so if they will; but instead of the yokes of wood they will be sure to get yokes of iron. If they will not submit to the government of Christ, they will have to submit to the tyranny of Satan. Some yoke they will have to wear, and if they reject the easy yoke of the Christ of God, the wooden yoke as it were which he puts on men, there shall be made for them yokes of iron, which they shall neither be able to break off nor yet to support.

So our thought will run this way. First, that men must wear some yoke or other; and, secondly, that the yoke of Christ is a very easy one; and, thirdly, that when it is refused, it is inevitable that men should wear a heavier one.

I. MEN MUST WEAR SOME YOKE. It is so naturally. There is no stage of life in which this is not the case. The child must bear the yoke in his youth. He is an unhappy child that is under no control. Probably there is nothing so ruinous to a man as to be allowed to have his own way, while yet his judgment is not ripe enough to guide him. And when we advance into youth, we are usually placed in some position of life where we are under obligations to some superior, be he parent, or guardian, or employer. Nor if we become what is called our own masters, does it make much difference. As things go now, I think there are no people that are their own masters, for the masters are bound to yield to the terms which the servants dictate; and this condition of things is getting more and more rife. I shall not discuss the right or wrong of this, where questions arise between capitalists and skillful laborers, but I will say that if the employed claim liberty, the masters might very well be allowed a portion of that choice prerogative. As it is now, I am sure he that says, "I am a master," is as much under the yoke to his servants as the servant is under the yoke to his master. That a man who lives in the midst of society should hold some relationship to all around him is indispensable. But



men are always for changing their forms of government. Some nations have a revolution almost with every moon, but for all that there is still a yoke upon them; and if it were ever to come to anarchy, to mob rule—ah, I warrant you, it would be a yoke of iron, and of red hot iron too. God save us from it. No yoke is so hard to bear as that yoke which a people put upon themselves when they reject all order, break through all law, and will not submit to any principle or any government, however just or righteous. You cannot get on in this world without a yoke of some sort. We are not going to wear a tyrant's yoke any of us. Let lords and lands have what masters they will: in this land of ours we will be free, and our own masters still; but the selfishness of individuals or of classes must never determine the boundary lines of power or of privilege; for we can only maintain our freedom by everyone of us paying that right obedience to the law which is due from every citizen, if we would promote alike his own comfort and the common weal.

Away from those lower grounds into higher spheres—it is certainly true that we must wear the yoke. God has made us, and not we ourselves; and God has made us to be his servants. We are daily in dependence on him for the bread we eat. If any man shall say he is not dependent upon God, I will at least reply to him, "You are dependent for the air you breathe and the power to breathe it. The life that is within you hangs upon a thread, and that thread is in the hand of the Most High." Every moment each one of us is most certainly sustained by God. And in return for this support, there is something asked, namely, that we would submit to his will; that we would obey his law, which is perfect, and just, and right, and that having sinned against him we should rebel no longer or continue his enemies, but be reconciled to him. We are made dependent creatures, and from that very fact we must wear a yoke unto God.

Moreover, dear friends, we are all so constituted as creatures, with such passions and propensities, that when we break one yoke, the yoke which it is meet we should wear, and do not serve God, we at once bend our necks to another yoke and begin to serve something else—we serve ourselves, and oh, the slavery of serving one's self! He that makes his belly his god, and bows down to the lusts of the flesh, serves a tyrant indeed. Something or other we must serve, not only because we are

dependent creatures, but also it seems to be stamped upon us that we must follow some great principle, and must yield ourselves to some spiritual influence. A yoke of some kind or another we must submit to. The man who shall say, "I am perfectly free, and I live for nothing but myself," is so mean an animal, that he is hardly worthy to be called a man. In his boasted exemption from all regard to his fellow creatures and to his God, he sets himself up, in his own esteem, and that after a diabolical model, alone and apart in his awful selfishness, like an iceberg to melt away, and may be to crush others as he moves along his course. What is he but a beacon, against which all are to be warned? Sir, the yoke fits the human neck, and the human neck was made to wear it. We must have some God, we must have some ruler, we must have some principle, which shall master us, and be it ours in God's name to choose the right and the best master, or else, woe be unto us.

II. Not to dwell longer upon our first point, I proceed to notice **THAT THE YOKE OF CHRIST IS AN EASY YOKE**. It is, as it were, a yoke of wood. Let us dwell upon this awhile. God grant that some who have never worn that yoke may, by the Holy Spirit's power, be led to carry it.

If you become a servant of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the man of Nazareth, he asks of you nothing but what is absolutely right. His life, which is the Christian's law written out in living characters, is perfection itself. His precepts which distil like dew from his lips, are all pure and good, just and kind. It ought to be enough for a man, and would be enough for him if he were not fallen, to know that all rule is right, and to submit to it at once. When God gives a man a noble spirit, he pants to enlist in honorable service. He craves a post in the council or the camp. His heart's enquiry is, "Where can I find a leader who will always lead me aright? Where shall I discover a law which will never lead me into evil, if I obey it? Where can I discover an example, which I may imitate in its very jots and tittles, and yet never be found any other than I ought to be?" I commend to such spirits, Jesus the Christ of God, for there is nothing in his precepts or his practices, in his profession or his life, that is not consonant with righteousness of the highest order, majestic in its compass, and scrupulously minute in its obedience.

The yoke of Christ is framed in our interest. The law of Christ is drawn up and dictated by our Councillor for our welfare. If man were infinitely wise, and could draw up a code for himself, which would involve no hardship, and entail all that was happy, he could devise no regulations more healthful, more profitable, or more pleasant than those of the Savior; he would discover that to believe in Jesus was the highest wisdom; to repent of sin, the most delightful necessity; to follow after holiness the most blissful pursuit, and to serve God the greatest delight. Service and sovereignty blend here, as when Joseph became Prime Minister of Pharaoh he was lord over all the land of Egypt. To serve God in very truth is to reign, and to become a servant of Christ, is to be made a king and a priest unto God—to be ennobled with as much dignity as human nature can bear. Jesus Christ, if he forbids you anything, only forbids you what would harm you. Say any of you of sin—"Tis sweet"? Ah! and so are many I poisoned things. Your nature goes after it. Yes, and many a sick man's nature craves for that which would be his poison. The Lord Jesus denies to those who take his yoke nothing but that which would be injurious to them. His is a blessed yoke, because it is the yoke of righteousness, and it is the yoke of personal benefit.

Moreover, Christ's yoke is not exacting. If he assesses us with one hand, he more richly endows us with the other hand. He in his grace always gives to us of his bounty what he asks of us as our duty. Under one view of divine truth, faith is man's act. The Holy Ghost never believes for anybody. A sinner must believe himself. It is a personal act. But yet in another phase of it, it is the Holy Spirit's work in the man—he gives the faith which the man exercises towards God. If then faith in Jesus be required, it is not a hard thing, because the Spirit works in men the very faith which Jesus seeks of them. If to repent of sin be thought difficult—how shall we get tears out of a rock?—the reply is, true repentance is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and when it is sought of the Lord, it is never denied. Christ is exalted on high to give not only the pardon of sin, but to give the repentance which comes before the pardon. To give repentance and remission of sins is the very office of Christ. If, then, the precepts should seem difficult, the difficulty is removed, because the virtues and graces which are a matter of precept are also a matter of promise. What is commanded in one Scripture, is conceded in another as an absolute gift

of God according to the covenant of his grace. It is an easy yoke, then, sinner. Dost thou say: "I cannot believe"? Hast thou asked for faith? Is thy heart hard? Hast thou asked to have it softened? If ye cannot come to Christ with broken hearts, come for broken hearts, for they are his gift. He will give you all—all that his gospel demands, for he is Alpha and Omega, the author and the finisher of our faith. It is an easy yoke, then, since he gives what he requires.

That the yoke of Christ is easy, I might call to witness all those who have ever proved it. Never did a man wear it but he always loved to wear it. I think I have heard that Queen Elizabeth carried the crown in the procession of her sister Mary at the coronation, and she remarked that it was very heavy, but some one standing by told her it would not be heavy when she had to wear it herself. So the precepts which some men do but carry in their hands seem very heavy; but when a man comes to know Christ and to love him, those very precepts become light and easy. "I could not," says one, "be a Christian as I am: it would be very hurtful to me: I should have to give up much that I have learned to prize." Ah! but suppose you were made a new man in Christ Jesus, there would be nothing irksome at all about renouncing old habits. Here is a raven, to tutor it into cleanly living, it must forego all carrion, it must feed upon these grains sweet and pure. The raven might pine and repine at this as a hardship, unless by some transmuting influence the raven were turned into a dove. Then it would be no hardship to forsake the carrion, which its new nature would loathe; nor would it be grievous to feed upon the clean winnowed grain, for its appetite would crave it. And, O beloved, the life of the true Christian is not a life chafed and galled with vexatious prohibitions, because pursuits which, to the non-Christian heart are distasteful and repulsive, to the renewed heart are a matter of intense delight. A man shall carry a bucket of water on his head and be very tired with the burden, but that same man when he dives into the sea shall have a thousand buckets on his head without perceiving their weight, because he is in the element and it entirely surrounds him. The duties of holiness are very irksome to men who are not in the element of holiness; but when once those men are cast into the element of grace, then they bear ten times more and feel no weight, but are refreshed thereby with joy unspeakable. Christ's yoke is easy, for the new heart rejoices in it.

The yoke of Christ is rendered easy by the bright example of Christ, and by the blessed fellowship with him to which his people are called. Christ himself carried it. Have you never read in Grecian story—I think there are one or two cases to the point—how the Grecian soldiers on their long marches grew exceedingly weary, and wished that the war were closed: they felt so dispirited. But there was a man whom they almost adored as a god—Alexander himself—and they saw him always sharing their toil. If the road was rough, the monarch walked with them: if they were short of a draught of water, Alexander would share their thirst. At the sight of him every man grew strong. Oh! it is grand to the believer to feel that, if there be a trial or a difficulty in the Christianity, Christ has borne it, and Christ is with us, bearing it still. Not like the scribes and Pharisees, who laid heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, upon men's shoulders, and they themselves would not touch them with one of their fingers; our Lord has taken the load himself and carried it, and he now says to the disciples, "Take my yoke upon you—the very yoke I carried—and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: I have borne the trial which you have to bear and endured to the end, as you shall do through my grace."

There is one remarkable fact about the yoke of Christ which I should like to mention. All who have borne it have always had grace given equal to the weight of the burden. I have never, yet discovered one cross-bearer among the children of God who ever expressed regret that to become a Christian and took upon himself the yoke. I have been familiar with death-beds: I have witnessed strange scenes, for the bony hand of death pulls back many curtains and plucks off many masks from faces that were accustomed to wear them. One thing however, I can solemnly say I have never scene. I have never seen a Christian weary of His Master's service. I have never heard from an aged pilgrim a word of complaint against Christ, or against his yoke. There have been a great many Christians beyond all suspicion of fanaticism, of whom none would suppose that they strove to act a part inconsistent with their true character, yet not one has had to regret that he served Christ. You know the words so often quoted of him who regretted that he had not served his God with half the zeal that he had served his kind; but I never remember, nor do any of you ever remember having heard of one who, in life's latest hour, bemoaned

his allegiance to God, or bewailed the ardor with which he followed Christ. Surely, if remorse had ever begotten such a thought, some one would have been bold to utter it. And, verily, verily, if such an incident had ever occurred, there would have been no lack of historians to record it.

Another thing I think tells strongly in favor of this yoke of Christ. The servants of Christ are always anxious to get their children into the same service. Often do I hear men say, "I don't want to bring my boy up to my trade; the work is dirty, the hours long, and the pay small." I have heard them say, "I should not like to see my boy in our office; there are so many temptations," and so on. Did you ever hear a pious man say, "I should not like my boy to be a Christian"? Did you ever hear a godly matron say, "I should deeply regret to see my daughter become a follower of Christ"? No, but what they have possessed for themselves they have longed to have for their children. I remember well hearing my grandfather's earnest prayer for all his household. It always lay near his heart that his children and his children's children might fear the Lord. I have lively recollections of his devotions. My father, whose prayer you heard just now—how often have I heard him pray for his children; and I can truly say the prayer that is nearest to my heart is for my sons, that they may serve the Lord. There is nothing I desire so much beneath the skies. Now if Christ's yoke were hard, we could not wish to bring our children under it. We have natural affections and common sense as well as you, and having tried Christ so long ourselves, that is our desire for our posterity. I have tried him now (what shall I say?) these twenty years. Had I found him a hard master I would not beguile you or belie my own conscience. I speak the truth, there is no lord like Christ, and no service like Christ's. I would that every young man and every young woman here believed in his name and submitted to his authority, and that they would take upon themselves, through his grace, his easy peace-giving yoke.

**III. If not, what then? THOSE WHO REFUSE TO WEAR THE EASY YOKE OF CHRIST WILL HAVE TO WEAR A WORSE ONE. "Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron."**

Observe! Adam wore an easy yoke in Paradise: he broke it. Himself and

his posterity have had to wear yokes of iron ever since. Death has come into the world with all its train of woes. I need not enlarge enough that it is a case in point. Whenever a child of God, a true child of God, under pressure of temptation, turns aside from the right path, he is always made to feel that after he has broken the yoke of wood, he must wear a yoke of iron. John Bunyan's illustration will serve me well here. The two pilgrims, Christian and Hopeful, when they went on their way, came to a place where the road was full of flints that cut their feet, and there were thorns and briars in the way; and by-and-by one of them said, "Here is a meadow on the other side of the hedge, and if we were just to pass through the gap we might save a corner: it would be sure to come out in the way again, and so we should be certain to avoid the rough places." Bunyan well describes how, when they got into By-path Meadow the night overtook them and the flood, and they wished to find the road again—longing for it, rough as it had been. But Giant Despair laid hold of them, took them to his dungeon, and beat them within an inch or their lives, and it was only by mighty grace that they escaped. Take care, Christian, take care, though you shall not utterly perish, you may often have to go with broken bones through a sin. David—ah, you recollect his sin, his repentance, and his life of sorrow—how he went to his grave halting still, as a consequence, an entail of his crimes. Do not, therefore, shrink from Christian duty because it is onerous. Never, O Christian, turn aside from the straight road, the highway of rectitude, because it threatens you with shame or loss. That first loss will be vastly less than the after-losses you will incur by seeking to avoid it. Jonah would resist the word of the Lord that came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh," but he had to endure the perils of a voyage, to encounter the fury of the tempest, and at length to sink to the bottom of the sea, and yet to Nineveh after all he must go. If you shirk a duty you will be brought up to it yet, but it will be with bitter pain. Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

The principle of our text is very applicable to all backsliders. We have known men that set out apparently on the road to heaven—made a profession of being Christians, but after awhile they tired and fainted, and walked no more with us. Christianity was to them a yoke, and they

put it off. I wonder whether they have improved their condition. I believe not. I will single out a person here—may his conscience single him out. When you lived in the country, every Sabbath you went with your wife and family to the house of God. Were you a Methodist then? Never mind: you were very earnest, whatever place it was you attended. And you and your little family were very happy too. But you came to London, and after awhile the general idle habits of our London people in the morning came over you. You were content with one service a day. You did not seek Church-membership, nor cast yourself in the way of God's people. By-and-by it was not one service a day you attended, it was none at all; or else you called it religion to go and hear the music and see the religious theatricals in certain great houses in London. I know not if you called that worshipping God when you were only whiling away the hour with sensual gratifications. And at last you gave up all presence of being a Christian or of frequenting places of worship. Now I will ask you a question. You have got rid of the yoke of wood: how about your shoulders now? Your Sundays, are they very pleasant? Your family, is it very happy? Your mind, is it very much at ease? Oh, no! I know while I am talking to you you wish yourself back in the little village again listening to the minister's voice once more; for your Sundays are distasteful and comfortless, and your week days, when you think about your condition, are wretched and reproachful, and your children are not growing up in the way you could wish. Ah, sir! I pray God to make that yoke of iron very heavy to you. Do you long to get rid of that and come back and take the yoke of wood again? God of his infinite mercy, bring you back if you are his child, or if you are not of his family may he put you among his children and teach you to walk worthily.

We have known those who have backslidden in another way. Here you are now. Perhaps you used to be a professor of religion, but the little shop was situated in a neighborhood where a good deal of trade was done on Sunday; you heard it said by the neighbors: "I do not know how it is you can shut up as you do." The wife did not like it, nor the husband either: it was, however, done by slow degrees, and now it is always done, and you cannot both come together: there is only one can come, and the other must stop at home. Well, you have given up Christ's yoke; and Sabbath keeping seems to be too hard a thing for you. Are you better off? Are you



really better off? Are you happier? Are you really happier? Something in your soul answers my question; you know you have a yoke of iron now, instead of a yoke of wood. May God help you to break away from your present slavery; and may you become a true heir of heaven.

It may be, I have here before me, one who was led into backsliding by a very common occurrence. Young woman, knew you once, when your face was radiant with happiness, while we preached Christ, and sung the hymns of Zion, but you married, and your marriage was not in the Lord. An unbelieving husband was your choice. You thought the yoke of Christ was hard when we reminded you of the precept, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." You rejected the yoke of Christ. How have you found it since? I have seen a great many such marriages, and I have only seen one—I have seen one, it is fair to say that, but I assert I never saw but one—in which I could get anything like an acknowledgement of happiness from the ill assorted pair. Here and there it has happened perhaps, that God has forgiven the fault, but not seldom it leads to alienation of heart, and to utter departure from the living God, and often too, to disappointment and heart-breaking, and to wretchedness such as I shall not attempt to describe. Those that break Christ's yoke and become backsliders, shall find an iron yoke given in its stead.

To take another class of illustrations. There are those in the world who will not have the yoke of Christ in the matter of religion—they prefer another. For instance, there are superstitious persons who are not satisfied with the Bible, they want tradition. They are not content with the teaching of the ancient church of Christ, as we find it in the Acts of the Apostles, but they hanker after those modern upstart churches, that call themselves catholic and apostolic, and amuse themselves by raking up the grotesque fashions of the middle ages. What is the consequence? Do these perverts, who cast off the yoke of the true Christian religion, get an easier yoke? Ask them. Their penances and their mortifications; their fast days and their festivals; their comminations, and their celebrations—oh, what do they get for them all? Is there one of them who can say he is saved? It is usually one of their cardinal doctrines, that no man can know he is saved, so that the only position they get in this life, is to slave on

with a dim hope and to die with a grim rite, and according to one faith to go—even if it were the best man in the church—to go to purgatory. Ah, cheerless prospect! If I were a Roman Catholic, I should turn a heretic, in sheer desperation, because I would rather go to heaven than go to purgatory. I cannot see any advantage that is offered to a man: if he gets all he can get, it is not worth having. Who among you would slave his life away in voluntary humiliations, buoyed up with the cheering faith of purgatorial fires at the goal of your days? Where is the gain of it? And there is no church under heaven, except the true church of Christ, that says to men, "Believe, and live: lay hold on Christ, and you are saved." We present to you in Christ's name the greatest boon beneath the sky, and other churches dare not pretend to offer it. They will only tell you that you may get into a state in which you may be saved perhaps, but they do not know quite certainly: it may be you shall fall away and perish after all, but as to an absolute certain salvation in perpetuity, received by an act of faith, they know not what it is. They put upon a yoke of iron grievous to their necks.

And look at self-righteous men and women who try to work their own way to heaven. The Pharisees of old—what a slavery their life was! Any man who is seeking to be saved by his good works makes himself a slave. He must know in his conscience that his good works are imperfect, and therefore he has no title, no sure, clear title to heaven. Only the man who takes Christ to be his wisdom, his righteousness, his justification, his redemption, his all and in all—knows that he is saved; but he that getteth Christ hath all that God asks of him, he hath his sins punished in his Savior, he hath had the law fulfilled by his Savior, and he is thus saved. Those who will not have Christ, put upon their necks a horrible yoke. Oh, beware of superstition; beware of self-righteousness! These are iron yokes indeed.

But what remonstrance shall I address to the unbeliever, who says: "I shall believe nothing: I am a skeptic. I will not bow my neck to revelation"? Well, sir, you will be sure before long to bow your neck to some tremendous absurdity. If you can once get a skeptic to tell you what he does believe, you will generally find that his credulity is on a par with his infidelity. What he relishes he feeds on without question; what he

dislikes he rejects, because somebody shrugged his shoulders at it. I have sometimes tried to muddle my way through chapters of German neology. Thank God I have felt this is not the way of life, or else certainly I should never find it, though I had a doctor of divinity on either side to assist me. It is too hard and difficult for any intellects, except they happen to be of the German type, to be able to find a way through its labyrinths, and they miss it I am afraid. The men who do not believe in God, believe that this world was not made at all, but grew. If you were to sow some mustard and cress in your garden, in the form of the initials of your boy, and it came up as A or B, and you took him into the garden and said: "Now, nobody ever sowed that seed; it grew there in that way," you could not make him believe it. But these philosophical speculators believe that this big world, and sun, and moon, and stars, came forth without a creator. They can believe anything. You cannot convince the simplest boy in the street that somehow or other he was developed from an oyster, or some creature inferior to that, and yet these profound thinkers bow themselves down to such a belief as this. Verily, it is fulfilled in these days as of old, professing themselves to be wise, they become fools. He that will not believe the simple revelation of God, will presently find himself committed to systematic misbeliefs which distract reason, oppress the heart, and trammel the conscience. He wears a yoke of iron instead of a yoke of wood.

Still giving but a word to each case, we have hearers who, when they listen to the word, are haunted with reproach, but never softened with repentance, because of their sins. They go on hardening their necks and persevering in their iniquities. Impenitent sinner, mark this word. The day will come when inasmuch as thou hast rejected the easy yoke of repentance, thou wilt have to bear the iron yoke of remorse. A man under remorse in this world is a dreadful sight. Horrified with the past and alarmed with the future, yet having knees so stubborn that they will not bow, and blood-shot eyes that will not weep; because, alas! his heart is like to adamant that cannot feel. Of all the pangs convinced and repentant sinners bear, there are none so dreadful as the gloomy torment of remorse. I could unfold scenes that I have witnessed with my own eyes, paint the visage, and repeat the expressions of men dying in fell despair, but I will spare you. God grant that you may never have to endure that

foretaste of hell upon earth, for such it is.

And what shall I say to the lover of pleasure? There are those who say, "I shall not bear the yoke of Christ: I shall live in pleasure." Pleasure in some instances means lust, and gaiety means crime. Have you never seen the young man who was respectably brought up in his youth, after leading a life of pleasure shivering at your door in rags? One I knew whom I had often clothed; I supposed that he was dead. But I saw him return loathsome in his filthiness, squalid and tremulous, he came begging yet again, stranger still to virtue and to shame. The poor soul still lives—a life more like death than life—a prodigal whom none can help because he does not return unto himself, nor desire to return unto his Father. London dens have in them many hapless profligates that are terrible warnings that men who seek their own pleasure put upon themselves a yoke of iron.

Oh, what revelations the infirmaries of our hospitals, and the wards of our lunatic asylums might disclose of men who have played the wanton and rioted in sin, and have worse than a yoke of iron upon their necks now! Oh, if there should have come into this house some fallen woman, about whose neck there is that yoke of iron, that she rejected a mother's precepts and disdained a father's counsel—sister, that yoke of iron from thy neck may yet be taken; but beware lest it grow heavier still! There are those who would help thee escape from thy sin in the Christian church. Arise, and flee from this evil that hath made thee captive, for there is hope yet. The Christ of God is willing to receive the foulest of the foul. Persevere not in your criminal course, or that yoke of iron will grow heavier and heavier and heavier, and be riveted to thee, till at last thou shalt perish in it—perish, and that for ever.

All unholy persons who break the law of God, and break away From the gospel's holiness, in the long run get a yoke of iron about their necks. There are those in this place, perhaps, who once used to sit with us at the Lord's table, having made a profession of religion, but they gave way to drink. I know that if they could break away from that habit now they would. If it could be done with a resolution they would do it at once, for somehow they love this house, and slink in still; and when they pass me

in the streets, half-ashamed, they still remember him for whom they yet retain a love, and who retains a love for them, and would fain see them back again. But ah! ye drunkards, when ye once fall into this sin, how seldom are ye restored! May God help you! May the eternal God deliver you; for this, this iron yoke, is often hard to break. Resolve now, and pray also in God's name that you may be free. Have done with the accursed thing. God can enable you to come clear of it. May he do so now!

Another form of the same evil not often spoken of, but quite as bad, is that of avarice. We have known those who professed to be Christians, who succeeded in business and from that time they grew greedy. The gold they had stuck to their fingers burned into their flesh, yea, into their very souls and turned their hearts to steel. They have no pity now for the poor, and little care for the church of God. Ah, sirs; what an iron yoke avarice puts upon a man's neck! You see a man grown old still keep scraping, yearning still for more, afraid that he shall lose what he has, trembling in the night lest the burglars should make a forcible entrance, and fearing we know not what. His heart is in his iron safe, and is as hard as the iron of which it is made. O God, forgive! for the covetous man can no more enter heaven than the drunkard. The covetous have no place in the kingdom of God. There is a mark set upon the covetous man. Covetousness is idolatry. It is a heavy burden—the burden of avarice. Happy they who wear the yoke of Christ, for all their givings are a delight, and what they sacrifice is no loss to them, but becomes true storing—the laying up of treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt.

Enough of this. The general principle running through every case is, that he who rejects the yoke of Christ bows his neck to something worse by far. Mark ye! The day cometh—I know not how soon—perhaps as here I stand and rudely talk of these mysterious things. Soon may this hand be stretched? and dumb the mouth that lisps this faltering strain. Ere this service is over, the sight of the Son of Man may be seen in the clouds of heaven, and the trumpet may ring out loud as that of Sinai of old, "Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment. And ye living sinners, come ye also; for the great white throne is set." And in that day the yoke of Christ will be a chain of gold about each believer's neck. To have served Christ

will be our honor and our delight; but ah? the sin that once was pleasure —how it will turn to misery? How the rod of your joy will become a serpent and seek to devour you! How will you flee away from yourselves, and that which ye courted and ye loved, to ask the hills to hide you, and the rocks to engulf you, that you may not see the face of the Redeemer. Come to him now, ere yet that last tremendous day dawns. I lift him up to you now. Whosoever looks to Christ shall live Jesus the Son of God has died, and he that trusts him shall not die. There is life in a look at the crucified One. Pardon and peace come at once to the soul that trusts the Savior. May ye now trust him, ere ye leave this house, and God shall have the glory of it, both now and evermore. Amen.

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## **An Unalterable Law**

Without shedding of blood there is no remission. - Hebrews 9:22

Everywhere under the old figurative dispensation, blood was sure to greet your eyes. It was the one most prominent thing under the Jewish economy, scarcely a ceremony was observed without it. You could not enter into any part of the tabernacle, but you saw traces of the blood-sprinkling. Sometimes there were bowls of blood cast at the foot of the altar. The place looked so like a shambles, that to visit it must have been far from attractive to the natural taste, and to delight in it, a man had need of a spiritual understanding and a lively faith. The slaughter of animals was the manner of worship; the effusion of blood was the appointed rite, and the diffusion of that blood on the floor, on the curtains, and on the vestments of the priests, was the constant memorial. When Paul says that almost all things were, under the law, purged with blood, he alludes to a few things that were exempted. Thus you will find in several passages the people were exhorted to wash their clothes, and certain persons who had been unclean from physical causes were bidden to wash their clothes with water. Garments worn by men were usually

cleansed with water. After the defeat of the Midianites, of which you read in the book of Numbers, the spoil, which had been polluted, had to be purified before it was claimed by the victorious Israelites. According to the ordinance of the law, which the Lord commanded Moses, some of the goods, such as raiment and articles made of skins or goat's hair, were purified with water, while other things that were of metal that could abide the fire, were purified by fire. Still, the apostle refers to a literal fact, when he says that almost all things, garments being the only exception, were purged, under the law, with blood. Then he refers to it as a general truth, under the old legal dispensation, that there was never any pardoning of sin, except by blood. In one case only was there an apparent exception, and even that goes to prove the universality of the rule, because the reason for the exception is so fully given. The trespass offering, referred to as an alternative, in Lev 5:11, might, in extreme cases of excessive poverty, be a bloodless offering. If a man was too poor to bring an offering from the flock, he was to bring two turtle-doves or young pigeons; but if he was too poor even for that, he might offer the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering, without oil or frankincense, and it was cast upon the fire. That is the one solitary exception through all the types. In every place, at every time, in every instance where sin had to be removed, blood must flow, life must be given. The one exception we have noticed gives emphasis to the statute that, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission." Under the gospel there is no exception, not such an isolated one as there was under the law; no, not even for the extremely poor. Such we all are spiritually. Since we have not any of us to bring an offering, any more than an offering to bring; but we have all of us to take the offering which has already been presented, and to accept the sacrifice which Christ has, of himself, made in our stead; there is now no cause or ground for exemption to any man or woman born, nor ever shall there be, either in this world or in that which is to come,— "Without shedding of blood, there is no remission." With great simplicity, then, as it concerns our salvation, may I ask the attention of each one here present, to this great matter which intimately concerns our everlasting interests? I gather from the text, first of all, the encouraging fact that:—

I. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS REMISSION—that is to say, the remission of sins. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission."

Blood has been shed, and there is, therefore, hope concerning such a thing. Remission, notwithstanding the stern requirements of the law, is not to be abandoned in sheer despair. The word remission means the putting away of debts. Just as sin may be regarded as a debt incurred to God, so that debt may be blotted out, cancelled, and obliterated. The sinner, God's debtor, may cease to be in debt by compensation, by full acquittance, and may be set free by virtue of such remission. Such a thing is possible. Glory be to God, the remission of all sin, of which it is possible to repent, is possible to be obtained. Whatever the transgression of any man may be, pardon is possible to him if repentance be possible to him. Unrepented sin is unforgivable sin. If he confess his sin and forsake it, then shall he find mercy. God hath so declared it, and he will not be unfaithful to his word. "But is there not," saith one, "a sin which is unto death?" Yea, verily, though I know not what it is; nor do we think that any who have enquired into the subject have been able to discover what that sin is; this much seems clear, that practically the sin is unforgivable because it is never repented of. The man who commits it becomes, to all intents and purposes, dead in sin in a more deep and lasting sense even than the human race is as a whole, and he is given up case-hardened—his conscience seared, as it were, with a hot iron, and henceforth he will seek no mercy. But all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. For lust, for robbery, for adultery—yea, for murder, there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared. He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin.

And this forgiveness which is possible is, according to the Scriptures, complete; that is to say, when God forgives a man his sin, he does it outright. He blots out the debt without any back reckoning. He does not put away a part of the man's sin, and have him accountable for the rest; but in the moment in which a sin is forgiven, his iniquity is as though it had never been committed; he is received in the Father's house and embraced with the Father's love as if he had never erred; he is made to stand before God as accepted, and in the same condition as though he had never transgressed. Blessed be God, believer, there is no sin in God's Book against thee. If thou hast believed, thou art forgiven— forgiven not partially, but altogether. The handwriting that was against thee is blotted out, nailed to the cross of Christ, and can never be pleaded against thee



any more for ever. The pardon is complete.

Moreover, this is a present pardon. It is an imagination of some (very derogatory to the gospel) that you cannot get pardon till you come to die, and, perhaps, then in some mysterious way, in the last few minutes, you may be absolved; but we preach to you, in the name of Jesus, immediate and present pardon for all transgressions—a pardon given in an instant—the moment that a sinner believes in Jesus; not as though a disease were healed gradually and required months and long years of progress. True, the corruption of our nature is such a disease, and the sin that dwelleth in us must be daily and hourly mortified; but as for the guilt of our transgressions before God, and the debt incurred to his justice, the remission thereof is not a thing of progress and degree. The pardon of a sinner is granted at once; it will be given to any of you tonight who accept it—yea, and given you in such a way that you shall never lose it. Once forgiven, you shall be forgiven for ever, and none of the consequences of sin shall be visited upon you. You shall be absolved unreservedly and eternally, so that when the heavens are on a blaze, and the great white throne is set up, and the last great assize is held, you may stand boldly before the judgment-seat and fear no accusation, for the forgiveness which God himself vouchsafes he will never revoke.

I will add to this one other remark. The man who gets this pardon may know he has it. Did he merely hope he had it, that hope might often struggle with fear. Did he merely trust he had it, many a qualm might startle him; but to know that he has it is a sure ground of peace to the heart. Glory be to God, the privileges of the covenant of grace are not only matters of hope and surmise, but they are matters of faith, conviction, and assurance. Count it not presumption for a man to believe God's Word. God's own Word it is that says, "Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ is not condemned." If I believe in Jesus Christ, then I am not condemned. What right have I to think I am? If God says I am not, it would be presumption on my part to think I am condemned. It cannot be presumption to take God's Word just as he gives it to me. "Oh!" saith one, "how happy should I be if this might be my case." Thou hast well spoken, for blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord doth not impute iniquity.

"But," saith another, "I should hardly think such a great thing could be possible to such an one as I am." Thou reasonest after the manner of the sons of men. Know then that as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God's ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts. It is yours to err; it is God's to forgive. You err like a man, but God does not pardon like a man; he pardons like a God, so that we burst forth with wonder, and sing, "Who is a God like unto thee, that passeth by transgression, iniquity, and sin?" When you make anything, it is some little work suitable to your abilities, but our God made the heavens. When you forgive, it is some forgiveness suitable to your nature and circumstances; but when he forgives, he displays the riches of his grace on a grander scale than your finite mind can comprehend. Ten thousand sins of blackest dye, sins of a hellish hue he doth in a moment put away, for he delighteth in mercy; and judgment is his strange work. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he turn unto me and live." This is a joyful note with which my text furnishes me. There is no remission, except with blood; but there is remission, for the blood has been shed.

Coming more closely to the text, we have now to insist on its great lesson, that:—

## II. THOUGH THERE BE PARDON OF SIN, IT IS NEVER WITHOUT BLOOD.

That is a sweeping sentence, for there are some in this world that are trusting for the pardon of sin to their repentance. It, beyond question, is your duty to repent of your sin. If you have disobeyed God, you should be sorry for it. To cease from sin is but the duty of the creature, else sin is not the violation of God's holy law. But be it known unto you, that all the repentance in the world cannot blot out the smallest sin. If you had only one sinful thought cross your mind, and you should grieve over that all the days of your life, yet the stain of that sin could not be removed even by the anguish it cost you. Where repentance is the work of the Spirit of God, it is a very precious gift, and is a sign of grace; but there is no atoning power in repentance. In a sea full of penitential tears, there is not the power or the virtue to wash out one spot of this hideous uncleanness.

Without the blood-shedding, there is no remission. But others suppose that, at any rate, active reformation growing out of repentance may achieve the task. What if drunkenness be given up, and temperance become the rule? What if licentiousness be abandoned, and chastity adorn the character? What if dishonest dealing be relinquished, and integrity be scrupulously maintained in every action? I say, 'tis well; I would to God such reformations took place everywhere—yet for all that, debts already incurred are not paid by our not getting into debt further, and past delinquencies are not condoned by future good behaviour. So sin is not remitted by reformation. Though you should suddenly become immaculate as angels (not that such a thing is possible to you, for the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots), your reformations could make no atonement to God for the sins that are past in the days that you have transgressed against him. "What then," saith the man, "shall I do?" There are those who think that now their prayers and their humblings of soul may, perhaps, effect something for them. Your prayers, if they be sincere, I would not stay; rather do I hope they may be such prayers as betoken spiritual life. But oh! dear hearer, there is no efficacy in prayer to blot out sin. I will put it strongly. All the prayers of all the saints on earth, and, if the saints in heaven could all join, all their prayers could not blot out through their own natural efficacy the sin of a single evil word. No, there is no deterrent power in prayer. God has never set it to be a cleanser. It has its uses, and its valuable uses. It is one of the privileges of the man who prays, that he prays acceptably, but prayer itself can never blot out the sin without the blood. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission," pray as you may.

There are persons who have thought that self-denial and mortifications of an extraordinary kind might rid them of their guilt. We do not often come across such people in our circle, yet there be those who, in order to purge themselves of sin, flagellate their bodies, observe protracted fasts, wear sackcloth and hair shirts next to their skin, and even some have gone so far as to imagine that to refrain from ablutions, and to allow their body to be filthy, was the readiest mode of purifying their soul. A strange infatuation certainly! Yet today, in Hindostan, you shall find the fakir passing his body through marvellous sufferings and distortions, in the hope of getting rid of sin. To what purpose is it all? Methinks I hear the

Lord say, "What is this to me that thou didst bow thy head like a bulrush, and wrapt thyself in sackcloth, and eat ashes with thy bread, and mingle wormwood with thy drink? Thou hast broken my law; these things cannot repair it; thou hast done injury to my honour by thy sin; but where is the righteousness that reflects honour upon my name?" The old cry in the olden days was, "Wherewithal shall we come before God?" and they said, "Shall we give our firstborn for our transgression, the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul?" Alas! it was all in vain. Here stands the sentence. Here for ever must it stand, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." It is the life God demands as the penalty due for sin, and nothing but the life indicated in the blood-shedding will ever satisfy him.

Observe, again, how this sweeping text puts away all confidence in ceremony, even the ceremonies of God's own ordinance. There are some who suppose that sin can be washed away in baptism. Ah! futile fancy! The expression where it is once used in Scripture implies nothing of the kind—it has no such meaning as some attach to it, for that very apostle, of whom it was said, gloried that he had not baptized many persons lest they should suppose there was some efficacy in his administration of the rite. Baptism is an admirable ordinance, in which the believer holds fellowship with Christ in his death. It is a symbol; it is nothing more. Tens of thousands and millions have been baptized and have died in their sins. Or what profit is there in the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass, as Antichrist puts it? Do any say it is "an unbloody sacrifice," yet at the same time offer it for a propitiation for sin—we fling this text in their faces, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Do they reply that the blood is there in the body of Christ? We answer that even were it so, that would not meet the case, for it is without the shedding of blood—without the blood-shedding; the blood as distinct from the flesh; without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

And here I must pass on to make a distinction that will go deeper still. Jesus Christ himself cannot save us, apart from his blood. It is a supposition which only folly has ever made, but we must refute even the hypothesis of folly, when it affirms that the example of Christ can put away human sin, that the holy life of Jesus Christ has put the race on such a good footing with God that now he can forgive its faults and its

transgression. Not so; not the holiness of Jesus, not the life of Jesus, not the death of Jesus, but the blood of Jesus only; for "Without shedding of blood there is no remission."

And I have met with some who think so much of the second coming of Christ, that they seem to have fixed their entire faith upon Christ in his glory. I believe this to be the fault of Irvingism—that, too much it holds before the sinner's eye Christ on the throne, whereas, though Christ on the throne is ever the loved and adorable, yet we must see Christ upon the cross, or we never can be saved. Thy faith must not be placed merely in Christ glorified, but in Christ crucified. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." I remember one person who was united with this church (the dear sister may be present now), that had been for some years a professor, and had never enjoyed peace with God, nor produced any of the fruits of the Spirit. She said, "I have been in a church where I was taught to rest upon Christ glorified, and I did so fix my confidence, such as it was, upon him, that I neither had a sense of sin, nor a sense of pardon, from Christ crucified! I did not know, and until I had seen him as shedding his blood and making a propitiation, I never entered into rest." Yes, we will say it again, for the text is vitally important: "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission," not even with Christ himself. It is the sacrifice that he has offered for us, that is the means of putting away our sin—this, and nothing else. Let us pass on a little further with the same truth:—

### III. THIS REMISSION OF SIN IS TO BE FOUND AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

There is remission to be had through Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed. The hymn we sang at the commencement of the service gave you the marrow of the doctrine. We owe to God a debt of punishment for sin. Was that debt due or not? If the law was right, the penalty ought to be exacted. If the penalty was too severe, and the law inaccurate, then God made a mistake. But it is blasphemy to suppose that. The law, then, being a righteous law, and the penalty just, shall God do an unjust thing? It will be an unjust thing for him not to carry out the penalty. Would you have

him to be unjust? He had declared that the soul that sinned should die; would you have God to be a liar? Shall he eat his words to save his creatures? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." The law's sentence must be carried out. It was inevitable that if God maintained the prerogative of his holiness, he must punish the sins that men have committed. How, then, should he save us? Behold the plan! His dear Son, the Lord of glory, takes upon himself human nature, comes into the place of as many as the Father gave him, stands in their standing, and when the sentence of justice has been proclaimed, and the sword of vengeance has leaped out of its scabbard, behold the glorious Substitute bares his arm, and he says, "Strike, O sword, but strike me, and let my people go." Into the very soul of Jesus the sword of the law pierced, and his blood was shed, the blood, not of one who was man only, but of One who, by his being an eternal Spirit was able to offer up himself without spot unto God, in a way which gave infinite efficacy to his sufferings. He, through the eternal Spirit, we are told, offered himself without spot to God. Being in his own nature infinitely beyond the nature of man, comprehending all the natures of man, as it were, within himself, by reason of the majesty of his person, he was able to offer an atonement to God of infinite, boundless, inconceivable sufficiency.

What our Lord suffered none of us can tell. I am sure of this: I would not disparage or under-estimate his physical sufferings—the tortures he endured in his body—but I am equally sure that we can none of us exaggerate or over-value the sufferings of such a soul as his; they are beyond all conception. So pure and so perfect, so exquisitely sensitive, and so immaculately holy was he, that to be numbered with transgressors, to be smitten by his Father, to die (shall I say it?) the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers, was the very essence of bitterness, the consummation of anguish. "Yet it pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." His sorrows in themselves were what the Greek liturgy well calls them, "unknown sufferings, great griefs." Hence, too, their efficacy is boundless, without limit. Now, therefore, God is able to forgive sin. He has punished the sin on Christ; it becomes justice, as well as mercy, that God should blot out those debts which have been paid. It were unjust—I speak with reverence, but yet with holy boldness—it were unjust on the part of the infinite Majesty, to lay to my

charge a single sin which was laid to the charge of my Substitute. If my Surety took my sin, he released me, and I am clear. Who shall resuscitate judgment against me when I have been condemned in the person of my Saviour? Who shall commit me to the flames of Gehenna, when Christ, my Substitute, has suffered the tantamount of hell for me? Who shall lay anything to my charge when Christ has had all my crimes laid to his charge, answered for them, expiated them, and received the token of quittance from them, in that he was raised from the dead that he might openly vindicate that justification in which by grace I am called and privileged to share? This is all very simple, it lies in a nutshell, but do we all receive it—have we all accepted it? Oh! my dear hearers, the text is full of warning to some of you. You may have an amiable disposition, an excellent character, a serious turn of mind, but you scruple at accepting Christ; you stumble at this stumbling-stone; you split on this rock. How can I meet your hapless case? I shall not reason with you. I forbear to enter into any argument. I ask you one question. Do you believe this Bible to be inspired of God? Look, then, at that passage, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." What say you? Is it not plain, absolute, conclusive? Allow me to draw the inference. If you have not an interest in the blood-shedding, which I have briefly endeavoured to describe, is there any remission for you? Can there be? Your own sins are on your head now. Of your hand shall they be demanded at the coming of the great Judge. You may labour, you may toil, you may be sincere in your convictions, and quiet in your conscience, or you may be tossed about with your scruples; but as the Lord liveth, there is no pardon for you, except through this shedding of blood. Do you reject it? On your own head will lie the peril! God has spoken. It cannot be said that your ruin is designed by him when your own remedy is revealed by him.

He bids you take the way which he appoints, and if you reject it, you must die. Your death is suicide, be it deliberate, accidental, or through error of judgment. Your blood be on your own head. You are warned.

On the other hand, what a far-reaching consolation the text gives us! "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," but where there is the blood-shedding, there is remission. If thou hast come to Christ, thou art saved. If thou canst say from thy very heart:—

"My faith doth lay her hand  
On that dear head of thine,  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And here confess my sin."

Then, your sin is gone. Where is that young man? where is that young woman? where are those anxious hearts that have been saying, "We would be pardoned now"? Oh! look, look, look, look to the crucified Saviour, and you are pardoned. Ye may go your way, inasmuch as you have accepted God's atonement. Daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee. Son, rejoice, for thy transgressions are blotted out.

My last word shall be this. You that are teachers of others and trying to do good, cleave fast to this doctrine. Let this be the front, the centre, the pith, and the marrow of all you have to testify. I often preach it, but there is never a Sabbath in which I go to my bed with such inward content as when I have preached the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. Then I feel, "If sinners are lost, I have none of their blood upon me." This is the soul-saving doctrine; grip it, and you shall have laid hold of eternal life; reject it, and you reject it to your confusion. Oh! keep to this. Martin Luther used to say that every sermon ought to have the doctrine of justification by faith in it. True; but let it have the doctrine of atonement in it. He says he could not get the doctrine of justification by faith in to the Wurtembergers' heads, and he felt half inclined to take the book into the pulpit and fling it at their heads, in order to get it in. I am afraid he would not have succeeded if he had. But oh! how would I try to hammer again, and again, and again upon this one nail, "The blood is the life thereof." "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

Christ giving up his life in pouring out his blood—it is this that gives pardon and peace to every one of you, if you will but look to him— pardon now, complete pardon; pardon for ever. Look away from all other confidences, and rely upon the sufferings and the death of the Incarnate God, who has gone into the heavens, and who lives today to plead before his Father's throne, the merit of the blood which, on Calvary, he poured



forth for sinners. As I shall meet you all in that great day, when the crucified One shall come as the King and Lord of all, which day is hastening on apace, as I shall meet you then, I pray you bear me witness that I have striven to tell you in all simplicity what is the way of salvation; and if you reject it, do me this favour, to say that at least I have proffered to you in Jehovah's name this, his gospel, and have earnestly urged you to accept it, that you may be saved. But the rather I would God that I might meet you there, all covered in the one atonement, clothed in the one righteousness, and accepted in the one Saviour, and then together will we sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood to receive honour, and power, and dominion for ever and ever." Amen.

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## **The Unbeliever's Unhappy Condition**

He that believed, not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. - John 3:36

This is a part of a discourse by John the Baptist. We have not many sermons by that mighty preacher, but we have just sufficient to prove that he knew how to lay the axe at the root of the tree by preaching the law of God most unflinchingly; and also that he knew how to declare the gospel, for no one could have uttered sentences which more clearly contain the way of salvation than those in the text before us. Indeed, this third chapter of the gospel according to the evangelist John is notable among clear and plain Scriptures—notable for being yet clearer and plainer than almost any other. John the Baptist was evidently a preacher who knew how to discriminate—a point in which so many fail—he separated between the precious and the vile, and therefore he was as God's mouth

to the people. He does not address them as all lost nor as all saved, but he shows the two classes, he keeps up the line of demarcation between him that feareth God and him that feareth him not. He plainly declares the privileges of the believer, he saith he hath even now eternal life; and with equal decision he testifies to the sad state of the unbeliever—"he shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John the Baptist might usefully instruct many professedly Christian preachers. Although he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist, and ought, therefore, more clearly to bear witness to the truth; yet, there are many who muddle the gospel, who teach philosophy, who preach a mingle-mangle, which is neither law nor gospel; and these might well go to school to this rough preacher of the wilderness, and learn from him how to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." I desire this morning to take a leaf out of the Baptist's lesson book; I would preach as he did the gospel of the Lord Jesus, "whose shoes I am not worthy to bear." It is my earnest desire to enjoy the delight of expounding to you the deep things of God; I feel a profound pleasure in opening up the blessings of the covenant of grace, and bringing forth out of its treasury things new and old. I should be happy to dwell upon the types of the Old Testament, and even to touch upon the prophecies of the New; but, while so many yet remain unsaved, my heart is never content except when I am preaching simply the gospel of Jesus Christ. My dear unconverted hearers, when I see you brought to Christ, I will then advance beyond the rudiments of the gospel; but, meanwhile, while hell is gaping wide, and many of you will certainly help to fill it, I cannot turn aside from warning you. I dare not resist the sacred impulse which constrains me to preach over and over again to you the glad tidings of salvation. I shall, like John, continue laying the axe at the root of the trees, and shall not go beyond crying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." As he did, we shall now declare the sad estate of him who believeth not the Son of God.

This morning, with the burden of the Lord upon us, we shall speak upon the words of the text. Our first point shall be a discovery of the guilty one, "he that believeth not the Son." Next, we shall consider his offense; it lies in "not believing the Son;" thirdly, we shall lay bare the sinful causes which create this unbelief; and, fourthly, we shall show the terrible result

of not believing in the Son: "he shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." May the Spirit help us in all.

I. To begin, then, who is THE GUILTY ONE? Who is then unhappy man here spoken of? Is he a person to be met with only once in a century? Must we search the crowds through and through to find out an individual in this miserable plight? Ah! no; the persons who are here spoken of are common; they abound even in our holy assemblies; they are to be met with by thousands in our streets. Alas, alas! they form the vast majority of the world's population. Jesus hath come unto his own and his own have not received him, the Jewish race remain unbelieving; while the Gentiles, to whom he was to be a light, prefer to sit in darkness and reject his brightness. We shall not be talking this morning upon a recondite theme, with only a remote relation to ourselves, but there are many here of whom we shall be speaking, and we devoutly pray that the word of God may come with power to their souls.

The persons here spoken of are those who believe not the Son of God. Jesus Christ, out of infinite mercy, has come into the world, has taken upon himself our nature, and in that nature has suffered the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. By reason of his sufferings, the gospel message is now proclaimed to all men, and they are honestly assured that "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." The unhappy persons in this text will not believe in Jesus Christ, they reject God's way of mercy; they hear the gospel, but refuse obedience to its command. Let it not be imagined that these individuals are necessarily avowed sceptics, for many of them believe much of revealed truth. They believe the Bible to be the word of God; they believe there is a God; they believe that Jesus Christ is come into the world as a Savior; they believe most of the doctrines which cluster around the cross. Alas! they may do this, but yet the wrath of God abideth on them, if they believe not the Son of God. It may surprise you to learn that many of these persons are very much interested in orthodoxy. They believe that they have discovered the truth, and they exceedingly value those discoveries, so that they frequently grow very warm in temper with those who differ from them. They have read much, and they are matters of argument in the defense of what they consider to be sound doctrine. They cannot endure heresy, and

yet sad is the fact, that believing what they do, and knowing so much, they have not believed the Son of God. They believe the doctrine of election, but they have not the faith of God's elect: they swear by final perseverance, but persevere in unbelief. They confess all the five points of Calvinism, but they have not come to the one most needful point of looking unto Jesus, that they may be saved. They accept in creed the truths that are assuredly believed among us, but they have not received that faithful saying, worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; at any rate, they have not received it personally and practically for their souls' salvation.

It must be admitted that not a few of these persons are blameless as to their morals. You could not, with the closest observation, find either dishonesty, falsehood, uncleanness, or malice in their outward life; they are not only free from these blots, but they manifest positive excellences. Much of their character is commendable. They frequently are courteous and compassionate, generous and gentle-minded. Often times, they are so amiable and admirable that, while looking upon them, we understand how our Lord, in a similar case, loved the young man who asked "what lack I yet?" The one thing needful they are destitute of, they have not believed in Christ Jesus, and loath as the Savior was to see them perish, yet it cannot be helped, one doom is common to all who believe not; they shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on them.

In many cases these persons are, in addition to their morality, religious persons after a fashion. They would not absent themselves from the usual service of the place of worship. They are most careful to respect the Sabbath, they venerate the Book of God, they use a form of prayer, they join in the songs of the Sanctuary, they sit as God's people sit, and stand as God's people stand, but, alas, there is a worm in the center of that fair fruit, they have missed the one essential thing, which, being omitted, brings certain ruin; they have not believed on the Son of God. Ah, how far a man may go, and yet, for lack of this one thing the wrath of God may still abide upon him. Beloved of parents who are hopeful of the conversion of their boy, esteemed by Christians who cannot but admire his outward conversation, yet for all that, the young man may be under the frown of God, for "God is angry with the wicked every day." The wrath

of God abideth on the man, whoever he may be, that hath not believed in Jesus.

Now, if our text showed that the wrath of God was resting on the culprits in our jails, most persons would assent to the statement, and none would wonder at it. If our text declared that the wrath of God abides upon persons who live in habitual unchastity and constant violation of all the laws of order and respectability, most men would say "Amen;" but the text is aimed at another character. It is true that God's wrath does rest upon open sinners; but, oh sirs, this too is true, the wrath of God abideth upon those who boast of their virtues but have not believed in Jesus his Son. They may dwell in palaces; but, if they are not believers, the wrath of God abideth on them. They may sit in the senate house and enjoy the acclamations of the nation; but, if they believe not on the Son, the wrath of God abideth on them. Their names may be enrolled in the peerage, all they may possess countless wealth, but the wrath of God abideth on them. They may be habitual in their charities, and abundant in external acts of devotion; but, if they have not accepted the appointed Savior, the word of God bears witness, that "the wrath of God abideth on them."

II. Now let us, with our hearts awakened by God's Spirit, try to think upon THEIR OFFENCE.

What is this peculiar sin which entails the wrath of God upon these people? It is that they have not believed the Son of God. What does that amount to? It amounts to this, first of all, that they refuse to accept the mercy of God. God made a law, and his creatures were bound to respect and obey it. We rejected it, and turned aside from it. It was a great display of the heart's hatred, but it was not in some respects so thoroughly and intensely wicked a manifestation of enmity to God as when we reject the gospel of grace. God has now presented not the law but the gospel to us, and he has said: "My creatures, you have broken my law, you have acted very vilely towards me. I must punish for sin, else I were not God, and I cannot lay aside my justice; but I have devised a way by which, without any injury to any of my attributes, I can have mercy upon you. I am ready to forgive the past, and to restore you to more than your lost position, so that you shall be my sons and my daughters. My only command to you is,

believe in my Son. If this command be obeyed, all the blessings of my new covenant shall be yours. Trust him, and follow him; for, behold, I give him as a leader and commander to the people. Accept him as making atonement by his substitution, and obey him." Now, to reject the law of God shows an evil heart of unbelief; but who shall say what a depth of rebellion must dwell in that heart which refuses not only the yoke of God but even the gift of God. The provision of a Savior for lost men is the free gift of God, by it all our wants are supplied, all our evils are removed, peace on earth is secured to us, and glory for ever with God: the rejection of this gift cannot be a small sin. The all-seeing One, when he beholds men spurning the supreme gift of his love, cannot but regard such rejection as the worst proof of the hatred of their hearts against himself. When the Holy Spirit comes to convince men of sin, the especial sin which he brings to light is thus described: "Of sin, because they believed not on me." Not because the heathen were licentious in their habits, barbarians in their ways, and bloodthirsty in their spirit. No: "Of sin, because they believe not on me." Condemnation has come upon men, but what is the condemnation? "That light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Remember, also, that expressive text: "He that believeth not is condemned already;" and what is he condemned for! "Because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."

Let me remark, further, that in the rejection of divine mercy as presented in Christ, the unbeliever has displayed an intense venom against God, for observe how it is. He must either receive the mercy of God in Christ, or he must be condemned—there is no other alternative. He must trust Christ whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin, or else he must be driven from the presence of God into eternal punishment. The unbeliever in effect says, "I had sooner be damned than I would accept God's mercy in Christ." Can we conceive a grosser insult to the infinite compassion of the great Father? Suppose a man has injured another, grossly insulted him, and that repeatedly, and yet the injured person, finding the man at last brought into a wretched and miserable state, goes to him, and simply out of kindness to him, says, "I freely forgive you all the wrong you ever did me, and I am ready to relieve your poverty, and to succor you in your distress." Suppose the other replies, "No, I would sooner rot than take

anything from you;" would not you have in such a resolve a clear proof of the intense enmity that existed in his heart? And so when a man saith, and everyone of you unbelievers do practically say so, "I would sooner lie for ever in hell than honor Christ by trusting him," this is a very plain proof of his hatred of God and his Christ. Unbelievers hate God. Let me ask for what do you hate him? He keeps the breath within your nostrils; he it is that gives you food and raiment, and sends fruitful seasons. For which of these good things do you hate him? You hate him because he is good. Ah, then, it must be because you yourself are evil, and your heart very far removed from righteousness. May God grant that this great and crying sin may be clearly set before your eyes by the light of the Eternal Spirit, and may you repent of it, and turn from your unbelief, and live this day.

But yet further, the unbeliever touches God in a very tender place by his unbelief. No doubt, it was to the great Maker a joyous thing to fashion this world, but there are no expressions of joy concerning it at all equal to the joy of God in the matter of human redemption. We would be guarded when we speak of him; but, as far as we can tell, the gift of his dear Son to men, and the whole scheme of redemption, is the master work even of God himself. He is infinite in POWER, and wisdom, and love; his ways are as high above our ways as the heavens are above the earth; but Scripture, I think, will warrant me in saying -

"That in the grace which rescued man  
His brightest form of glory shines;  
Here on the cross 'tis fairest writ,  
In precious blood and crimson lines."

Now, the man who saith, "There is no God" is a fool, but he who denies God the glory of redemption, in addition to his folly, has robbed the Lord of the choicest jewel of his regalia, and aimed a deadly blow at the divine honor. I may say of him who despises the great salvation, that, in despising Christ, he touches the apple of God's eye. "This is my beloved Son," saith God, "hear ye him." Out of heaven he saith it, and yet men stop their ears and say, "We will not have him." Nay, they wax wrath against the cross, and turn away from God's salvation. Do you think that God will always bear this? The times of your ignorance he hath winked at,

but "now commandeth all men every where to repent." Will ye stand out against his love? His love that has been so inventive in ingenious plans by which to bless the sons of men? Shall his choicest work be utterly contemned by you? If so, it is little wonder that it is written, "The wrath of God abideth on him."

I must, still further, unveil this matter by saying that the unbeliever perpetrates an offense against every person of the blessed Trinity. He may think that his not believing is a very small business, but, indeed, it is a barbed shaft shot against the Deity. Take the Persons of the blessed Trinity, beginning with the Son of God who comes to us most nearly. It is to me the most surprising thing I ever heard of that "the word was made flesh and dwelt among us." I do not wonder that in Hindostan the missionaries are often met with this remark: "It is too good to be true that God ever took upon himself the nature of such a thing as man!" Yet, more wonderful does it seem to be that, when Christ became man, he took all the sorrows and infirmity of man, and, in addition, was made to bear the sin of many. The most extraordinary of all facts is this: that the infinitely Holy should be "numbered with the transgressors," and, in the words of Esaias, should "bear their iniquities." The Lord hath made him, who knew no sin, to be made sin for us. Wonder of wonders! It is beyond all degree amazing that he who distributes crowns and thrones should hang on a tree and die, the just for the unjust, bearing the punishment due to sinners for guilt. Now, knowing this, as most of you do, and yet refusing to believe, you do, in effect, say, "I do not believe that the incarnate God can save." "Oh no," you reply, "we sincerely believe that he can save." Then, it must be that you feel, "I believe he can, but I will not have him to save me." Wherein I excuse you in the first place, I must bring the accusation more heavily in the second. You answer that "you do not say you will not believe him." Why do you then remain in unbelief? The fact is you do not trust him; you do not obey him. I pray you account for the fact. "May I believe him?" saith one. Have we not told you ten thousand times over that whosoever will may take the water of life freely. If there be any barrier it is not with God, it is not with Christ, it is with your own sinful heart. You are welcome to the Savior now, and if you trust him now he is yours for ever. But oh, unbeliever, it appears to be nothing to you that Christ has died. His wounds attract you not. His groans for his



enemies have no music in them to you. You turn your back upon the incarnate God who bleeds for men, and in so doing you shut yourselves out of hope, judging yourselves unworthy of eternal life.

Furthermore, the wilful rejection of Christ is also an insult to God the Father. "He that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he hath not believed the record that God gave of his Son." God has himself often borne testimony to his dear Son. "Him hath God the Father set forth to be a propitiation for our Sins." In rejecting Christ, you reject God's testimony and God's gift. It is a direct assault upon the truthfulness and lovingkindness of the gracious Father, when you trample on or cast aside his priceless, peerless gift of love.

And, as for the blessed Spirit, it is his office here below to bear witness to Christ. In the Christian ministry, daily the Holy Spirit cries to the sons of men to come to Jesus. He has striven in the hearts of many of you, given you a measure of conviction of sin, and a degree of knowledge of the glory of Christ, but you have repressed it, you have labored to your utmost to do despite to the Spirit of God. Believe me, this is no slight sin. An unbeliever is an enemy to God the Father, to God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Against the blessed Trinity in Unity, O unbeliever, your sin is a standing insult: you are now to God's face insulting him, by continuing an unbeliever.

And, I must add, that there is also in unbelief an insult against every attribute of God. The unbeliever in effect declares, "If the justice of God is seen in laying the punishment of sin upon Christ—I do not care for his justice, I will bear my own punishment." The sinner seems to say, "God is merciful in the gift of Christ to suffer in our stead—I do not want his mercy, I can do without it. Others may be guilty, and they may trust in the Redeemer, but I do not feel such guilt and I will not sue for pardon." Unbelievers attack the wisdom of God, for, whereas the wisdom of God is in its fullness revealed in the gift of Jesus, they say, "It is a dogma, unphilosophical, and worn-out." They count the wisdom of God to be foolishness, and thus cast a slight upon another of the divine attributes. I might in detail mention every one of the attributes and prerogatives of God, and prove that your nonacceptance of the Savior is an insult to every

one of them, and to God himself: but the theme is too sad for us to continue upon it, and, therefore, let us pass to another phase of the subject, though I fear it will be equally grievous.

### III. Thirdly, let us consider THE CAUSES OF THIS UNBELIEF.

In a great many, unbelief may be ascribed to a careless ignorance of the way of salvation. Now, I should not wonder if many of you imagine that, if you do not understand the gospel, you are therefore quite excused for not believing it. But, sirs, it is not so. You are placed in this world, not as heathens in the center of Africa, but in enlightened England, where you live in the full blaze of gospel day. There are places of worship all around you, which you can without difficulty attend. The book of God is very cheap; you have it in your houses; you can all read it or hear it read. Is it so, then, that the king has been pleased to reveal himself to you, and tell you the way to salvation, and yet you, at the age of twenty, thirty, or forty, do not know the way of salvation? What, do you mean, sir? What can you mean? Has God been pleased to reveal himself in Scripture, and tell you how to escape from hell and fly to heaven, and yet have you been too idle to inquire into that way? Dare you say to God, "I do not think it worth my while to learn what thou hast revealed, neither do I care to know of the gift which thou hast bestowed on men." How can you think that such ignorance is an excuse for your sin? What could be a more gross aggravation of it? If you do not know, you ought to know; if you have not learned the gospel message, you might have learned it, for there are, some of us whose language it is not difficult for even the most illiterate to understand, and who would, if we caught ourselves using a hard word, retract it, and put it into little syllables, so that not even a child's intellect need be perplexed by our language. Salvation's way is plain in the book; those words, "Believe and live," are in this Christian England almost as legible and as universally to be seen as though they were printed on the sky. That trust in the Lord Jesus saves the soul is well-known news. But, if you still say you have not known all this, then I reply, "Dear sir, do try to know it. Go to the Scriptures, study them, see what is there. Hear, also, the gospel, for it is written, "Incline your ear to come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." For your soul's sake I charge you, be no longer ignorant of that

which you must know, or else must perish.

In some others, the cause is indifference. They do not think the matter to be of any very great consequence. They are aware that they are not quite right, but they have a notion that somehow or other they will get right at last; and, meanwhile, it does not trouble them. Oh man, I pray thee as thy fellow creature let me speak with thee a word of expostulation. God declares that his wrath abides upon you as an unbeliever, and do you call that nothing? God says, "I am angry with you," and you say to him, "I do not care, it is of very small importance to me. The rise or fall of the consols is of much more consequence than whether God is angry with me or not. My dinner being done to a turn concerns me a great deal more than whether the infinite God loves me or hates me." That is the English of your conduct, and I put it to you whether there can be a higher impertinence against your Creator, or a direr form of arrogant revolt against the eternal Ruler. If it does not trouble you that God is angry with you, it ought to trouble you; and it troubles me that it does not trouble you. We have heard of persons guilty of murder, whose behavior during the trial has been cool and self-possessed. The coolness with which they pleaded "not guilty" has been all of a piece with the hardness of tears which led them to the bloody deed. He who is capable of great crime is also incapable of shame concerning it. A man who is able to take pleasure and be at ease while God is angry with him shows that his heart is harder than steel.

In certain cases, the root of this unbelief lies in another direction. It is fed by pride. The person who is guilty of it does not believe that he needs a Savior. His notion is that he will do his very best, attend the church or the meeting-house very regularly, subscribe occasionally or frequently, and go to heaven partly by what he does, and partly by the merits of Christ. So that not believing in Christ is not a matter of any great consequence with him, because he is not naked, and poor, and miserable; but he is rich, and increased in goods in spiritual things. To be saved by faith is a religion for harlots, and drunkards, and thieves; but for respectable persons such as he is, who have kept the law from their youth up, he does not see any particular need of laying hold upon Christ. Such conduct reminds me of the words of Cowper: -

"Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorr'd,  
And the fool with it that insults his Lord."

God believed it needful, in order to save man, that the Redeemer should die; yet you self-righteous ones evidently think that death a superfluity: for if a man could save himself, why did the Lord descend and die to save him? If there be a way to heaven by respectability and morality without Christ, what is the good of Christ? It is utterly useless to have an expiator and a mediator, if men are so good that they do not require them. You tell God to his face that he lies unto you, that you are not so sinful as he would persuade you, that you do not need a substitute and sacrifice as he says you do. Oh, sirs, this pride of yours is an arrogant rebellion against God. Look at your fine actions, you that are so good—your motives are base, your pride over what you have done has defiled, with black fingers, all your acts. In as much as you prefer your way to God's way, and prefer your righteousness to God's righteousness, the wrath of God abideth on you.

Perhaps I have not hit the reason of your unbelief, therefore let me speak once more. In many love of sin rather than any boasted self-righteousness keeps them from the Savior. They do not believe in Jesus, not because they have any doubt about the truths of Christianity, but because they have an enslaving love for their favourite sin. "Why," saith one, "if I were to believe in Christ, of course, I must obey him—to trust and to obey go together. Then I could not be the drunkard I am, I could not trade as I do, I could not practice secret licentiousness, I could not frequent the haunts of the ungodly, where laughter is occasioned by sin, and mirth by blasphemy. I cannot give up these my darling sins." Perhaps, this sinner hopes that one day, when he cannot any longer enjoy his sin, he will meanly sneak out of it, and try to cheat the devil of his soul; but, meanwhile, he prefers the pleasures of sin to obedience to God, and unbelief to acceptance of his salvation. O sweet sin! O bitter sin! How art thou murdering the souls of men! As certain serpents before they strike their prey fix their eyes upon it and fascinate it, and then at last devour it, so does sin fascinate the foolish sons of Adam; they are charmed with it, and perish for it. It yields but a momentary joy, and the

wage thereof is eternal misery, yet are men enamoured of it. The ways of the strange woman, and the paths of uncleanness lead most plainly to the chambers of death, yet are men attracted thereto as moths by the blaze of the candle, and so are they destroyed. Alas! that men wantonly dash against the rocks of dangerous lasts, and perish wilfully beneath the enchantment of sin. Sad pity it is to prefer a harlot to the eternal God, to prefer a few pence made by dishonesty to heaven itself, to prefer the gratification of the belly to the love of the Creator, and the joy of being reconciled and saved. It was a dire insult to God when Israel set up a golden calf, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel." Shall the image of an ox that eateth grass supplant the living God! He that had strewn the earth with manna, had made Sinai to smoke with his presence, and the whole wilderness to tremble beneath his marchings, is he to be thrust aside by the image of a bullock that hath horns and hoofs? Will men prefer molten metal to the infinitely holy and glorious Jehovah? But, surely, the preference of a lust to God is a greater insult still: to obey our passions rather than his will, and to prefer sin to his mercy; this is the crime of crimes. May God deliver us from it, for his mercy's sake.

IV. We have heavy tidings in the last head of my discourse, THE TERRIBLE RESULT of unbelief. "He shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "The wrath of God!" No words can ever fully explain this expression. Holy Whitfield, when he was preaching, would often hold up his hands, and, with tears streaming down his eyes, would exclaim, "Oh, the wrath to come! the wrath to come!" Then would he pause because his emotions checked his utterance. The wrath of God! I confess I feel uneasy if anybody is angry with me, and yet one can bear the auger of foolish, hot-tempered persons with some equanimity. But the wrath of God is the anger of one who is never angry without a cause, one who is very patient and long suffering. It takes much to bring the choler into Jehovah's face, yet is he wroth with unbelievers. He is never wroth with anything because it is feeble and little, but only because it is wrong. His anger is only his holiness set on fire. He cannot bear sin; who would wish that he should? What right-minded man would desire God to be pleased with evil? That were to make a devil of God. Because he is God, he must be angry with sin wherever it is. This makes the sting of it, that his wrath is just and holy anger. It is the anger, remember, of an

Omnipotent Being, who can crush us as easily as a moth. It is the anger of an Infinite Being, and therefore infinite anger, the heights and depths and breadths and lengths of which no man can measure. Only the incarnate God ever fully knew the power of God's anger. It is beyond all conception, yet the anger rests on you my hearer. Alas, for you, if you are an unbeliever, for this is your state before God. It is no fiction of mine, but the word of inspired truth: "the wrath of God abideth on him."

Then notice the next word, it "abideth," this is to say, it is upon you now. He is angry with you at this moment,—and always. You go to sleep with an angry God gazing into your face, you wake in the morning, and if your eye were not dim, you would perceive his frowning countenance. He is angry with you, even when you are singing his praises, for you mock him with solemn sounds, upon a thoughtless tongue; angry with you on your knees, for you only pretend to pray, you utter words without heart. As long as you are not a believer, he must be angry with you every moment. "God is angry with the wicked every day."

That the text saith it abideth, and the present tense takes a long sweep, for it always will abide on you. But may you not, perhaps, escape from it, by ceasing to exist? The text precludes such an idea. Although it says, that you "shall not see life," it teaches that God's wrath is upon you, so that the absence of life is not annihilation. Spiritual life belongs only to believers; you are now without that life, yet you exist, and wrath abides on you, and so it ever must be. While you shall not see life, you shall exist in eternal death, for the wrath of God cannot abide on a non-existent creature. You shall not see life, but you shall feel wrath to the uttermost. It is horror enough that wrath should be on you now, it is horror upon horrors, and hell upon hell, that it shall be upon you for ever.

And notice that it must be so, because you reject the only thing that can heal you. As George Herbert says, "Whom oils and balsams kill, what salve can cure?" If Christ himself has become a savor of death unto death unto you, because you reject him, how can you be saved? There is but one door, and if you close it by your unbelief, how can you enter heaven? There is one healing medicine, and, if you refuse to take it, what remains but death? There is one water of life, but you refuse to drink it; then must

you thirst for ever. You put from you, voluntarily, the one only Redeemer; how then shall you be ransomed? Shall Christ die again, and in another state be offered to you once more? O sirs, you would reject him then as you reject him now. But there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. On the cross, God's mercy to the sons of men was fully revealed, and will you reject God's ultimatum of grace; his last appeal to you. If so, it is at your own peril: Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; he shall come again, but without a sin offering unto the salvation of his people.

Remember, sirs, that the wrath of God will produce no saving or softening effect. It has been suggested that a sinner, after suffering God's wrath awhile, may repent, and so escape from it. But our observation and experience prove that the wrath of God never softened anybody's heart yet, and we believe it never will: those who are suffering divine wrath will go on to harden, and harden, and harden, the more they suffer, the more they will hate: the more they are punished, the more will they sin. The wrath of God abiding on you will produce no good results to you, but rather you shall go from evil to evil, further and further from the presence of God.

The reason why the wrath of God abides on an unbeliever is partly because all his other sins remain on him. There is no sin that shall damn the man who believes, and nothing can save the man who will not believe. God removes all sin the moment we believe; but while we believe not, fresh cords fasten upon us our transgressions. The sin of Judah is written as with an iron pen, and graven with a point of a diamond. Nothing can release you from guilt while your heart remains at enmity with Jesus Christ your Lord.

Remember that God has never taken an oath, that I know of, against any class of persons, except unbelievers. "To whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" Continued unbelief God never will forgive, because his word binds him not to do so. Doth he swear an oath, and shall he go back from it? It cannot be. O that you might have grace to relinquish your unbelief, and close in with the gospel, and be saved.

Now, I hear some one object, "You tell us that certain people are under the wrath of God, but they are very prosperous." I reply, that yonder bullock will be slaughtered. Yet it is being fattened. And your prosperity, O ungodly man, is but a fattening of you for the slaughter of justice. Ay, but you say, "They are very merry, and some of those who are forgiven are very sad." Mercy lets them be merry while they may. We have heard of men who, when driven to Tyburn in a cart, could drink and laugh as they went to the gallows. It only proved what bad men they were. And so, whereas the guilty can yet take comfort, it only proves their guiltiness.

Let me ask what ought to be your thoughts concerning these solemn truths which I have delivered to you? I know what my thoughts were; they made me go to my bed unhappy. They made me very grateful because I hope I have believed in Jesus Christ; yet they made me start in the night, and wake this morning with a load upon me. I come here to say to you, must it be so that you will always remain unbelievers, and abide under the wrath of God? If it must be so, and the dread conclusion seems forced upon me, at any rate, do look it in the face, do consider it. If you are resolved to be damned, know what you are at. Take advise and consider. O sirs, it cannot need an argument to convince you that it is a most wretched thing to be now under the wrath of God. You cannot want any argument to show that it must be a blessed thing to be forgiven—you must see that. It is not your reason that wants convincing, it is, your heart that wants renewing.

The whole gospel lies in this nutshell. Come, thou guilty one, just as thou art, and rest thyself upon the finished work of the Savior, and take him to be thine for ever. Trust Jesus now. In your present position it may be done. God's Holy Spirit blessing your mind, you may at this moment say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." You may now confide in Jesus, and some who came in here unforgiven, may make the angels sing because they go down yonder steps saved souls, whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. God knoweth one thing, that if I knew by what study and what art I could learn to preach the gospel so as to affect your hearts I would spare no cost or pains. For the present, I have aimed simply to warn you, not with adornment of speech, lest the power should be the power of man; and now I leave my message, and



commit it to him who shall judge the quick and the dead. But this know, if ye receive not the Son, I shall be a swift witness against you. God grant it be not so, for his mercy's sake. Amen.

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## **Unbelievers Upbraided**

He . . . upbraided them with their unbelief. - Mark 16:14

I shall not dwell so much upon this particular instance of the disciples' unbelief as upon the fact that the Lord Jesus upbraided them because of it. This action of his shows us the way in which unbelief is to be treated by us. As our loving Saviour felt it to be right rather to upbraid than to console, he taught us that on some occasions, unbelief should be treated with severity rather than with condolence.

Beloved friends, let us never look upon our own unbelief as an excusable infirmity, but let us always regard it as a sin, and as a great sin, too. Whatever excuse you may at any time make for others,—and I pray you to make excuses for them whenever you can rightly do so,—never make any for yourself. In that case, be swift to condemn. I am not at all afraid that, as a general rule, we shall err on the side of harshness to ourselves. No; we are far too ready to palliate our own wrong-doing, to cover up our own faults and to belittle our own offenses. I very specially urge every believer in Jesus to deal most sternly with himself in this matter of unbelief. If he turns the back of the judicial knife towards others, let him always turn the keen edge of it towards himself. In that direction use your sharpest eye and your most severely critical judgment. If you see any fault in yourself, you may depend upon it that the fault is far greater than it appears to be; therefore, deal more sternly with it. It is a very easy thing for us to get

into a desponding state of heart, and to mistrust the promises and faithfulness of God, and yet, all the while, to look upon ourselves as the subjects of a disease which we cannot help, and even to claim pity at the hands of our fellow-men, and to think that they should condole with us, and try to cheer us. Perhaps they should; but, at any rate, we must not think that they should. It will be far wiser for each one of us to feel, "This unbelief of mine is a great wrong in the sight of God. He has never given me any occasion for it, and I am doing him a cruel injustice by thus doubting him. I must not idly sit down, and say, This has come upon me like a fever, or a paralysis, which I cannot help; but I must rather say, 'This is a great sin, in which I must no longer indulge; but I must confess my unbelief, with shame and self-abasement, to think that there should be in me this evil heart of unbelief.'"

Notwithstanding what I said, just now, concerning our dealings with others, I must give very much the same advice with regard to them as to ourselves, though in a somewhat mitigated form. When we see any of our friends falling into sin and unbelief, we must seek to deal wisely with them,—always kindly,—never harshly. Let us reserve all our severity for ourselves, as I have already urged upon you. Still, I am sure that it is quite possible for us to be doing our fellow-Christians serious harm by excusing their unbelief, and by pitying them for it, instead of pointing out to them, tenderly, yet faithfully, the great sin they are committing by this doubting.

Have you never seen a "coddled" lad? I have seen one, who ought to be in the open air at play, shut in a close room because his parents were fearful that he was delicate, and unable to do as other lads do. He ought to have been taking part in various healthy exercises that would have developed and strengthened every muscle in his body; but, instead of that, he was sitting down, tied to his mother's apron strings, and so was being made weaker than he was before. He was kept in an atmosphere which was not fit for him to breathe because his foolish parents were afraid the fresh air might be too trying for him; and long before he was ill, he was dosed and physicked until he really became ill. Many a child has been murdered by being thus coddled; or, if he has lived to grow up to manhood, he has been a poor, feeble, effeminate creature, because the abundant love,

which has been lavished upon him, has been linked with equally abundant folly. You can easily treat Christians, and especially young converts, in the same senseless fashion. If they are unbelieving, you can keep back from them the stern truth about the sinfulness of such a state of heart and mind, because you fear that they will be discouraged if you deal faithfully with them. That is quite as wrong as saying to the unconverted, over and over again, "Only believe," without ever mentioning the need of repentance and regeneration. There is a way of misapplying even the promises of God to unbelieving hearts, and of giving the consolations of the gospel to those who are not in a condition to receive them, as one might give sweetmeats to sick children, and so do them harm. People, who are thus unwisely treated, are apt to remain in the same sad state until their unbelief becomes chronic, and their unhappiness becomes a lifelong burden to them. Sometimes, when a man is in great pain, it is wise to give him something that will afford him even temporary relief; but the better course is, if possible, to strike at the root of his disease, and eradicate it once for all. That should be our method of dealing with the unbelief of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We must make it clear to them that unbelief is no trifle, and that it is a thing for which its owner is not to be pitied, but to be blamed, and to be severely blamed, for it is a most grievous fault and sin. Our Saviour dealt thus with the eleven when he upbraided them because of their unbelief. He did not excuse them, or comfort them, but he upbraided them. Upbraiding does not seem to be in harmony with the usual character of Jesus, does it! Yet, you may depend upon it that it was the right thing for him to do, and the kind thing, too; otherwise, he would not have done it.

Jesus upbraided these disciples of his because of their unbelief upon a very special point on which they ought to have been the first to believe. Many persons had seen their Lord after he had risen from the dead; and the eleven apostles, who ought, by reason of their greater spiritual advantages, and their more intimate companionship with Christ, to have been the readiest to believe the good tidings, were not so; and, therefore, Christ "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he had risen." Yet these eye-witnesses Peter and John, Cleopas and his companion, and Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the other Mary, and the rest of the holy

women,—who had come to the eleven, were their own brethren and sisters in the faith; so Christ might well say to them,—and I daresay he did,—"Why did you doubt their testimony? You did them an injustice by acting in such a manner. They are honest and truthful, and they have told you the truth. You have not been accustomed to doubt their word; so, as you have believed their witness concerning other matters, why did you not believe them in this instance! "Moreover," our Lord might well say, "there were many of them; it was not merely one, who might have been mistaken; but a considerable number saw me, and I spake with them; and they came and told you that it was even so, yet you did not believe them. The number of the witnesses, and their well-known character, are sure signs that you must have been in a wrong state of heart and mind, not to be able to receive such clear evidence as theirs; and, therefore, you are blameworthy for your unbelief."

In the case of these apostles, unbelief was peculiarly sinful, for they had the promise of their Lord to back up the testimony of his disciples. He had often told them that he would rise again from the dead, and had even foretold the very day of his resurrection, so that the unbelief of the apostles was altogether inexcusable. Yet this very fact, which was a cause of stumbling to the apostles, appears to me to give point and power to the appeal which I make to myself, and to you, against our unbelief. We all believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead; we have no difficulty in accepting that great fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith; all of us, who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, fully endorse Paul's words to the saints in Rome, and say that our Lord "was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." Well, then, brethren and sisters in Christ, if we believe that Jesus rose from the dead, the ground is completely cut from under the feet of unbelief, for his promise is, "Because I live, ye shall live also." If he lives, then the gospel is true, and the promises of the gospel are sure to all who believe in him. If he lives, then he lives to intercede for us; and, through his intercession, every covenant blessing is certain to come to us. Therefore, if we harbour unbelief in our hearts, we are doubly guilty; and if the Saviour were here in bodily presence, though his face would still beam with infinite love to us, I am quite sure that he would, even in sterner tones than he used towards those eleven apostles, upbraid us because of our unbelief. If

Thomas will not believe that Christ is risen until he has put his finger into the print of the nails in his hands, and thrust his hand into his Saviour's wounded side, that is bad enough; but it is worse if you, who do believe that he is risen, and who do not doubt any one of the doctrines that he has taught you, still have unbelief mingled with the faith which you do possess. Whether that supposed faith is all true, or not, is more than I can say; but, with so much faith as you profess to have, how can you still continue to doubt?

I want, in this discourse, to upbraid myself, and you also, for any unbelief that we may have harboured, by noticing, first, the evil of unbelief in itself; and, then, the evils that surely flow out of unbelief.

I. First, then, I have to say to any of God's children who have given way to unbelief in any degree,—YOUR UNBELIEF IS AN EVIL THING IN ITSELF.

This truth will come very closely home to you if you will just think how you would feel if others disbelieved you. If anyone were to question your veracity, you would be very vexed; and if you made a promise to any man, and he expressed a doubt as to the fulfillment of it, you would feel hurt; but if those, with whom you are most closely connected, were to disbelieve you, you would feel still more grieved, for you expect absolute confidence from them. If mutual trust were taken away from any family, how unhappy the members of that family would be;—the children suspecting the sincerity of their parents' love,—the wife doubting the reality of her husband's affection,—the husband dubious of his wife's faithfulness! Try to conceive, if you can, what it would be if those, who now call you friend, or child, or husband, or wife, or brother, or sister, should no longer accept what you say as being true. Suppose, also, that you were perfectly conscious that you had never broken your word to them,—that you had faithfully kept every promise that you had made to them, and had been in all things honest, and true, and sincere, would you not feel their doubts and suspicions most, acutely? I am sure you would; they would touch the very apple of your eye, and cut you to the quick; you could not endure such treatment from them. Then, how can you mete out to the Lord Jesus Christ such treatment as would be so painful to

yourself? And, further, how can you expect your child to trust you when you doubt your Saviour? How can you look even to your wife for confidence in you when, if there be some little trouble, or things go somewhat awkwardly, you straightway begin to mistrust your God and Saviour?

Remember, too, that the sin of your unbelief may be measured by the excellence of the person whom you mistrust. I said, just now, that, if you were conscious of your absolute sincerity, you would be the more deeply wounded by the suspicion of those who doubted you. What think you then, of the sin of doubting Christ, who cannot lie, who is "the Truth" itself? I know, beloved, that you have a very high opinion of your Lord and Saviour; do you not worship him as Divine? Do you not also feel his truly human sympathy? You know that there is no clause in his everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, which he has not already fulfilled or which he will not fulfill at the appointed time. His incarnation, his life here below, his shameful sufferings, his vicarious death;—all these he promised to undergo, and all these he performed in due season, and he will go right through, to the end, with the great work of your eternal salvation. By the mouth of his servant Jeremiah, the Lord asked, long ago, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" And the Lord Jesus might well say to his professed followers, "Have I been as the barren fig tree was to me when I found on it nothing but leaves?" As he points to the long list of his favors to us, he may well ask, "For which of them do you thus misjudge and mistrust me?" And when he spreads out the whole roll of his life and work before you, he may well enquire, "Upon which part of my life or work do you base your suspicions? What is there in my nature, as Divine and human,—what is there in my character,—what is there in my life below, or in my life above,—that should lead you to question my faithfulness to you, my power to help you, my readiness to sympathize with you, my willingness to bless you!" Why, you are doubting him whom the angels adore and worship! You have felt, sometimes, as if you would like to wash his feet with your tears. How, then, can you ever insult him with your doubts? You have even said that you could die for him; and it has been your great ambition to live for him; yet you cannot trust him! If you have run with the footmen in the matter of these minor trials of your faith, and they have

wearied you, what would you do if you had to contend with horsemen as many others have had to do in the day of martyrdom? And if, in the favorable circumstances in which you have been placed, you have doubted your Saviour, what are you likely to do when you are in the swellings of Jordan? Ah, my brethren, when you think of unbelief as aiming her darts at Jesus Christ, the Well-beloved of our soul, surely you will say that it is a shameful sin, and a disgraceful crime against infinite love!

Then, remember, beloved in the Lord, the relationship in which Jesus Christ stands to you. You know that, the more closely we are allied to a person, the more painful any suspicion on the part of that person becomes. I have repeatedly used, in this connection, the figure of a child's trust in a parent, a husband's trust in his wife, and the wife's trust in her husband; and you have readily accepted the comparisons because you have felt that the nearness of the relationship would involve a corresponding degree of trust. How near—how very near—we are in kinship to Christ! Are we not married to him? Has he not espoused us unto himself for ever? There is a conjugal union between Christ and his Church of which the marriage bond on earth is but a feeble type. Then, can you who have been renewed in heart by the Holy Spirit, and washed in the blood of the Lamb, doubt him whom your soul loveth? Can you distrust him to whom you are so closely allied? Oh, shame, shame, shame, that want of confidence should come in to mar such a wondrous union as that!

But we are even more closely knit to Christ than the marriage union implies, for "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." I cannot explain that secret, mystical union of which the Scripture speaks; but it is a true union, whatever mystery there may be about it. Then, shall there be such disunion amongst the members of the body that the eye shall begin to doubt the heart, and the hand to mistrust the foot? It would be pitiful if such a state of things could prevail in our bodies; then, what must it be if such a state of things prevails among the members of the mystical body of Christ? Beloved, may God render this unbelief impossible by sending such life floods of grace through all the members of Christ's body that never more shall a single thought of mistrust of our

glorious covenant Head enter our minds even for a single instant!

Consider next, I pray you, dear friends, how many times some of us have doubted our Lord. The sin of unbelief becomes all the greater because it is so frequently committed. God be thanked that it is not so with all Christians: for there are some who walk in faith and dwell in faith. I suppose that, as birds fly over everybody's head, as doubts fly around all good men's minds; but our old proverb says, "You need not let birds build in your hair," although there are some people, who let doubts come and lodge in their minds, and even dwell in their hearts. We know some persons of this kind, who seem to be very easily led into despondency, and doubt, and mistrust of Christ. Well now, if a man has done this only once, I think he might well say to himself, "I did once question everlasting truth. I did once stain the spotless robe of infinite veracity with a dark blot of suspicion;" and I think that he might find it difficult to forgive himself for having done a thing so vile even once. But when it comes to many times, and when it comes to long periods of doubt and mistrust, it is still worse. I want to press this point home upon all whom it concerns, and I want your consciences to be wide awake, so that, as you recall the many times in which you have thus sinned against your Heavenly Father, and against his blessed Spirit, and against his Divine Son you may recollect that each distinct act of unbelief is a sin,—each act of mistrust is another wounding of the Lord. God grant that we may truly repent as we think of the many times in which we have been thus guilty!

Then there is this further point—some of these actions have been repetitions of former ones. For instance, a man is in trouble, and he has doubts concerning the providence of God; but he is delivered, God is gracious to him, and helps him out of his difficulty. Well, now if he falls into a similar trouble, and if he is again guilty of harbouring doubt, this is far worse. If a man should doubt your word the first time you speak to him, you might say, "Well, he does not know me." The second time, you might say, "When he has proved me more, he will trust me." But what shall I say of those, whose hair has a sprinkling of grey in it, and whose Christian experience extends to a score of years, or more,—perhaps, two score,—possibly, three scores. Oh, if you doubt the Lord now, it will be a crying shame! It will not to surprising if some of us act thus, for so did



Israel for forty years in the wilderness; but that does not mitigate the evil in our case. It is a desperately evil thing that God should be mistrusted over and over again, and that he should have to say, "How long will it be ere ye believe me?"

I scarcely like to linger on such a sad theme; yet it does our hearts good to be thus upbraided; so, recollect that, oftentimes our unbelief has come in the teeth of our own assurance to the contrary. Do you not sometimes catch yourself saying, after a very great mercy, "Well, I never can doubt the Lord again"? When you have had an answer to prayer of a very memorable kind, you have said, "Oh, I must believe in the power of prayer now! For me ever to think that the Lord will deny me, must be impossible." Yes, in that respect also, we are just like the Israelites, who promised to keep the covenant, yet speedily broke it.

There is also this aggravation of your sin; although you do not trust the Lord as you should, you do trust your fellow-creatures. You can believe that lie of the old serpent,—

"The Lord hath forsaken thee quite;  
Thy God will be gracious no more;"—

yet you cannot so readily believe the oath and promise of God. If an earthly friend were to say to you, "I will help you," how readily you would jump at his offer! If there be an arm of flesh near, how cheerfully you lean upon it; and, though, perhaps, there be nothing for you to stay yourself upon but a broken reed, you think it is a strong staff, and throw all your weight upon it. It is quite true that ungodly men, who have no faith, generally have any amount of credulity. They cannot believe the truth, but they can believe lies to any extent. So is it, alas! with God's own people when they get off the track of faith. They seem to become credulous concerning the things seen, which are temporal, in proportion as they become dubious of the things unseen, which are eternal. Is not this a sin of the greatest blackness? Thou canst not trust thy husband, but thou canst trust a flatterer who deceives thee! Thou canst not trust thy God, but thou makest idol gods unto thyself, and trustest to them. Thou canst not stay thyself on Jehovah, but thou canst stay thyself on Egypt.

Thou canst stay thyself on the promise of man who is but as a moth which is soon crushed; but as for him who made the heavens and the earth, and all things that are, thou canst not rely upon him. I feel as if I could sit down and cover my face for shame, when I think of those occasions wherein I have been guilty of this sin. Perhaps the best thing we could all do would be to go home, and fall on our knees, and ask our blessed Saviour to wash away all this unbelief, and not to believe us when we talk about doubting, but only to believe that, as he knows all things, he knows that, after all, we do trust him.

II. Now, with great brevity, I have to speak upon the second point, which is, **THE MANY EVILS WHICH COME OUT OF UNBELIEF TO THOSE OF US WHO LOVE THE LORD.**

Brethren and sisters, it is enough of evil—if there were no more,—that unbelief is so cruel to Christ and grieves his Holy Spirit so much. I should but repeat myself if I reminded you how mistrust grieves you; and, speaking after the manner of men, in the same fashion it grieves the Holy Spirit. He dwells in you; shall he dwell in you to be grieved by you? He assuages your grief; will you cause him grief? Your vexations vanish because he is the Comforter; will you vex the Comforter? And what can vex him more than suspecting the ever-faithful heart of Christ? That is evil enough,—to wound Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Next, remember,—though this is a more selfish argument,—how much unrest and misery unbelief has caused to yourself. You have never had half as many trials from God as you have manufactured for yourself. Death, which you so much dread, is nothing compared with the thousand deaths that you have died through the fear of death. You make a whip for yourself, and you mix bitter cups for yourself, by your unbelief. There is quite enough trial for you to bear, and God will help you to bear it; but you put away the helping hand when you are unbelieving, and then you increase your own burden. Oh, you can sing, even by the rivers of Babylon, if you have but faith! you may lie on your sick bed, and feel great pain; yet your spirit shall not smart, but shall dance away your pangs, if your heart be but looking in simple confidence to Christ; and you shall die, as the negro said his master died,—"full of life,"—if you have true

faith in Jesus. But if faith shall fail you, oh then you are distressed when there is no cause for distress, and full of fear where no fear is!

And, then, how much you lose, in other things, besides happiness! A thousand promises are missed because there is not the faith to claim them. There are the caskets, and you have the keys; yet you do not put the keys into the locks to open them. There are Joseph's granaries, and you are hungry; but you do not go unto Joseph, and show your confidence in him by asking for what you need. Ye are not straitened in God, but in yourselves. If you believe not, you shall not be established, neither shall your prayers prevail, nor shall you grow in grace. If you believe not, your experience shall not be of that high and lofty kind that otherwise it might have been. We live down here in the marsh and the mist, when, had we faith, we might live in the everlasting sunshine. We are down below in the dungeons, fretting under imaginary chains, when the key of promise is in our bosom, which will open every door in Doubting Castle. If we will but use it, we may get away to the tops of the mountains, and see the New Jerusalem, and the land which is very far off.

Further, unbelief weakens us for all practical purposes. What can the man who is unbelieving do? O brothers and sisters in Christ, it is a terrible thing to think how much work there is that falls flat because it is not done in faith. You saw the trees when they were covered with bloom; there seemed to be a promise of much fruit; but there were chilling winds, and sharp frosts, and so, perhaps, only one in a hundred of the blossoms ever turned to fruit. The tree of the Church seems, at times, covered with beautiful blossoms; what can be more lovely to the sight? But the blossoms do not knit—faith is the bee that carries the pollen, it is faith that fructifies the whole, and makes it truly fruitful unto God. What might my sermons not have done had I believed my Master more? You, Sunday-school teacher, may say, "Had I taught in greater faith, I might have won my scholars." Or you may say, "Had I gone to my visitings of the poor and the sick in the strength of the Lord, who knows what I might have done for him?" Faith is the Nazarite lock of Samson; if it be shorn away, Samson is weak as other men. Then, as to suffering, wonderful is the power of faith there. If you are trusting your Heavenly Father, believing that all is right that seems most wrong, that everything that happens is

ordered or permitted by him, and that his grace will sweeten every bitter cup, you can suffer patiently; and, as your tribulations abound, so will your consolations abound in Christ Jesus. Like the ark of Noah, as the waters deepen, you will rise upon them, and get nearer to heaven in proportion as the great floods increase.

Unbelief, in any Christian, no doubt has a very injurious effect upon other Christians. There are some, who are like sickly sheep, which—

"Infect the flock,  
And poison all the rest."

Especially is it so, dear brethren, if you happen to be in office in the church, or to be doing any prominent work for Christ. If the commander-in-chief trembles, the army is already conquered; if the captain begins to fear, fear will take possession of every soldier's heart in his company. Was it not grand of Paul, in the shipwreck, when all others were dismayed, and thought they should go to the bottom, but he said, "Have no fear, sirs," and he bade them eat, as he ate,—calmly giving thanks to God before them all? Why, Paul saved them all by his calm confidence in God. If we have but faith, we shall strengthen our brethren; and if we have it not, we shall weaken them. I am sure, too, that the influence of unbelief in Christians, upon the unconverted, is very serious indeed. If we do not play the man in times of trial,—if we do not show them what faith in God can do,—they will think that there is nothing in it. And suppose, brethren, you should make anyone think there is nothing in religion, how sad that would be! When the devil wants a friend, surely he could not find one more able to do him service than a child of God who is full of mistrust. The children say, "Our father only trusts God for bread when there is plenty in the cupboard." And the servants say, "The master is only happy in the Lord when he is in good health." And those who know our business affairs say, "Oh, yes! So-and-so is a great believer; but, then, he has a big balance at his banker's; you should see him when trade is bad; you should see him when there are bad debts; and you will find that he is not a bit more a believer in Jesus Christ than any of the rest of us. He is a fair-weather Christian; he is like the flowers that open when the sun shines; but take away the summer prosperity, and you will see but little of his

religion." Let it not be so with any of us, but may God deliver us from this tremendous evil of unbelief!

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## **Unchangeable Christ**

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. - Hebrews 13:8

Let me read to you the verse that comes before our text. It is a good habit always to look at texts in their connection. It is wrong, I think, to lay hold of small portions of God's Word, and take them out of their connection as you might pluck feathers from a bird; it is an injury to the Word; and, sometimes, a passage of Scripture loses much of its beauty, its true teaching, and its real meaning, by being taken from the context. Nobody would think of mutilating Milton's poems so, taking a few lines out of Paradise Lost, and then imagining that he could really get at the heart of the poet's power. So, always look at texts in the connection in which they stand. The verse before our text is this, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

Observe, then, that God's people are a thoughtful people. If they are what they ought to be, they do a great deal of remembering and considering; that is the gist of this verse. If they are to remember and to consider their earthly leaders, much more are they to recollect that great Leader, the Lord Jesus, and all those matchless truths which fell from his blessed lips. I wish, in these days, that professing Christians did remember and did consider a great deal more; but we live in such a flurry, and hurry, and worry, that we do not get time for thought. Our noble forefathers of the Puritanic sort were men with backbone, men of solid tread,

independent and self-contained men, who could hold their own in the day of conflict; and the reason was because they took time to meditate, time to keep a diary of their daily experiences, time to commune with God in secret. Take the hint, and try and do a little more thinking; in this busy London, and in these trying days, remember and consider.

My next remark is, that God's people are an imitative people, for we are told here that they are to remember them who are their leaders, those who have spoken to them the Word of God, "whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." There is an itching, nowadays, after originality, striking out a path for yourself. When sheep do that, they are bad sheep. Sheep follow the shepherd; and, in a measure, they follow one another when they are all together following the shepherd. Our Great Master never aimed at originality; he said that he did not even speak his own words, but the words that he had heard of his Father. He was docile and teachable; as the Son of God, and the servant of God, his ear was open to hear the instructions of the Father, and he could say, "I do always those things that please him." Now, that is the true path for a Christian to take, to follow Jesus, and, in consequence, to follow all such true saints as may be worthy of being followed, imitating the godly so far as they imitate Christ. The apostle puts it, "whose faith follow." Many young Christians, if they were to pretend to strike out a path for themselves, must infallibly fall into many sorrows, whereas by taking some note of the way in which more experienced and more instructed Christians have gone, they will keep by the way of the footsteps of the flock, and they will also follow the footprints of the Shepherd. God's people are a thoughtful people, and they are an imitative and humble people, willing to be instructed, and willing to follow holy and godly examples.

One good reason, however, for imitating saints is given in our text; it is because our Lord and his faith are always the same: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." You see, if the old foundation shifted, if our faith was always changing, then we could not follow any of the saints who have gone before us. If we have a religion specially for the nineteenth century, it is ridiculous for us to imitate the men of the first century, and Paul and the apostles are just old fogies who are left behind in the far-distant ages. If we are to go on improving from century to

century, I cannot point you to any of the reformers, or the confessors, or the saints in the brave days of old, and say to you, "Learn from their example," because, if religion has altogether changed and improved, it is a curious thing to say, but we ought to set an example to our ancestors. Of course, they cannot follow it because they have gone from the earth; but as we know so much better than our fathers, we cannot think of learning anything from them. As we have left the apostles all behind, and gone in for something quite new, it is a pity that we should not forget what they did, and what they suffered, and think that they were just a set of simpletons who acted up to their own light, but then they had not the light we have in this wonderful nineteenth century! O beloved, it almost makes my lips blister to talk after the present evil fashion, for grosser falsehood never could be uttered than the insinuation that we have shifted the everlasting foundations of our faith. Verily, if these foundations were removed, we might ask in many sense, "What shall the righteous do? Whom shall they copy? Whom shall they follow? The landmarks having gone, what remains to us of the holy treasury of example with which the Lord enriches those who follow Christ?"

I. Coming to our text, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever," my first observation is, that JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF IS ALWAYS THE SAME. He is, was, and will be always the same.

Changes of position and of circumstances there have been in our Lord, but he is always the same in his great love to his people, whom he loved or ever the earth was. Before the first star was kindled, before the first living creature began to sing the praise of its Creator, he loved his Church with an everlasting love. He spied her in the glass of predestination, pictured her by his divine foreknowledge, and loved her with all his heart; and it was for this cause that he left his Father, and became one with her, that he might redeem her. It was for this cause that he went with her through all this vale of tears, discharged her debts, and bore her sins in his own body on the tree. For her sake he slept in the tomb, and with the same love that brought him down he has gone up again, and with the same heart beating true to the same blessed betrothment he has gone into the glory, waiting for the marriage-day when he shall come again, to receive his perfected spouse, who shall have made herself ready by his

grace. Never for a moment, whether as God over all, blessed for ever, or as God and man in one divine person, or as dead and buried, or as risen and ascended, never has he changed in the love he bears to his chosen. He is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

Therefore, beloved brethren, he has never changed in his divine purpose towards his beloved Church. He resolved in eternity to become one with her, that she might become one with him; and, having determined upon this, when the fulness of time had come, he was born of a woman, made under the law, he took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh, "and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Yet he never abandoned his purpose, he set his face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem; even when the bitter cup was put to his lips, and he seemed to stagger for a moment, he returned to it with a strong resolve, saying to his Father, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." That purpose is strong upon him now; for Zion's sake he will not hold his peace, and for Jerusalem's sake he will not rest, until her righteousness goeth forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth. Jesus is still pressing on with his great work, and he will not fail nor be discouraged in it. He will never be content till all whom he has bought with blood shall become also glorified by his power. He will gather all his sheep in the heavenly fold, and they shall pass again under the hand of him that telleth them, every one of them being brought there by the great Shepherd who laid down his life for them. Beloved, he cannot turn from his purpose; it is not according to his nature that he should, for he is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

He is also "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever," in the holding of his offices for the carrying out of his purpose, and giving effect to his love. He is a Prophet still. Men try to set him on one side. Science, falsely so-called, comes forward, and bids him hold his tongue; but "the sheep follow him, for they know his voice; and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." The teachings of the New Testament are as sound and true to-day as they were eighteen hundred years ago; they have lost none of their value, none of their absolute certainty; they stand fast like the everlasting hills. Jesus



Christ was a Prophet, and he is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

He is the same, too, as a Priest. Some now sneer at his precious blood; alas, that it should be so! But, to his elect, his blood is still their purchase-price, by this they overcome, through the blood of the Lamb they win the victory; and they know that they shall praise it in heaven, when they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They never turn away from this great Priest of theirs, and his wondrous sacrifice, once offered for the sins of men, and perpetually efficacious for all the blood-bought race; they glory in his everlasting priesthood before the Father's throne. In this we do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice, that Jesus Christ is our Priest, "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

And as King he is ever the same. He is supreme in the Church. Before thee, O Jesus, all thy loyal subjects bow! All the sheaves make obeisance to thy sheaf; the sun and moon and all the stars obey and serve thee, thou King of kings, and Lord of lords. Thou art Head over all things to thy Church, which is thy body. Beloved, if there be any other office which our Lord has assumed for the accomplishment of his divine purposes, we may say of him, concerning every position, that he is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

So also, once more, he is the same in his relationship to all his people. I like to think that, as Jesus was the Husband of his Church ages ago, he is her Husband still, for he hateth putting away. As he was the Brother born for adversity to his first disciples, he is our faithful Brother still. As he was a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother to those who were sorely tried in the medieval times, he is equally a Friend to us upon whom the ends of the earth have come. There is no difference whatever in the relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ to his people at any time. He is just as ready to comfort us to-night as he was to comfort those with whom he dwelt when here below. Sister Mary, he is as willing to come down to your Bethany, and help you in your sorrow about Lazarus, as he was when he came to Martha and Mary whom he loved. Jesus Christ is just as ready to wash your feet, my brother, after another day's weary travel through the foul ways of this world; he is as willing to take the basin, and the pitcher, and

the towel, and to give us a loving cleansing, as he was when he washed his disciples' feet. Just what he was to them he is to us. Happy is it if you and I can truly say, "What he was to Peter, what he was to John, what he was to the Magdalen, that is Jesus Christ to me, 'the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.'"

Beloved, I have seen men change; oh, how they change! A little frost turns the green forest to bronze, and every leaf forsakes its hold, and yields to the winter's blast. So fade our friends, and the most attached adherents drop away from us in the time of trial; but Jesus is to us what he always was. When we get old and grey-headed, and others shut the door on men who have lost their former strength, and can serve their turn no longer, then will he say, "Even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you," for he is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Thus much, beloved, with regard to Jesus himself; he is ever the same.

II. Now let us go a step farther. JESUS CHRIST IS ALWAYS THE SAME IN HIS DOCTRINE.

This text must refer to the doctrine of Christ, since it is connected with imitating the saints' faith: "Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." From the connection it is evident that our text refers to the teaching of Christ, who is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." This is not according to the "development" folly. Theology, like every other science, is to grow, watered by the splendid wisdom of this enlightened age, fostered by the superlative ability of the gentlemen of light and leading of the present time, so much superior to all who came before them!

We think not so, brethren; for the Lord Jesus Christ was the perfect revelation of God. He was the express image of the Father's person, and the brightness of his glory. In previous ages, God had spoken to us by his prophets but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son. Now as to that which was a complete revelation, it is blasphemous to suppose that

there can be any more revealed than has been made known in the person and work of Jesus Christ the Son of God. He is God's ultimatum; last of all, he sends his Son. If you can conceive a brighter display of God than is to be seen in the Only-begotten, I thank God that I am unable to follow you in any such imagination. To me, he is the last, the highest, the grandest revelation of God; and as he shuts up the Book that contains the written revelation, he bids you never dare to take from it, lest he should take your name out of the Book of life, and never dare to add to it, lest he should add unto you the plagues that are written in this Book.

At this time, the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ is the same as it was in all ages. Jesus Christ still saves sinners from the guilt, the power, the punishment, and the defilement of sin. Still, "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Jesus Christ still makes all things new; he creates new hearts and right spirits in the sons of men, and engraves his law upon the tablets which once were stone, but which he has turned into flesh. There is no new salvation; some may talk as if there were, but there is not. Salvation means to you to-day just what it meant to Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus; if you think it has another meaning, you have missed it altogether.

And, again, salvation by Jesus Christ comes to men in the same way as ever it did. They have to receive it now by faith; in Paul's day, men were saved by faith, and they are not now saved by works. They began in the Spirit in the apostolic age, and we are not now to begin in the flesh. There is no indication in the Book, and there is no indication in the experiences of God's children, that there is ever to be any alteration as to the way in which we receive Christ, and live by him. "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God," the gift of God to-day as much as ever it was, for Jesus Christ "is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

Once more, this salvation is just the same as to the persons to whom it is sent. It is to be preached now, as ever, to every creature under heaven; but it appeals with a peculiar power to those who are guilty, and who confess their guilt, to hearts that are broken, to men who are weary and heavy laden. It is to these that the gospel comes with great sweetness. I

have quoted to you before those strange words of Joseph Hart, -

"A sinner is a sacred thing,  
The Holy Ghost hath made him so."

He is; the Saviour is only for sinners. He did not come to save the righteous, he came to seek and to save the lost, and still "to you is the word of this salvation sent;" and this declaration still stands true, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." There is no change in this statement, "the poor have the gospel preached to them," and it comes to those who are farthest off from God and hope, and inspires them with divine power and energy.

Beloved, I can bear witness that the gospel is the same in its effects upon the hearts of men. Still it breaks, and still it makes whole; still it wounds, and still it heals; still it kills, and still it quickens; still it seems to hurl men down to hell in their terrible experience of the evil of sin, but still it lifts them up into an ecstatic joy, till they are exalted almost to heaven when they lay hold upon it, and feel its power in their souls. The gospel that was a gospel of births and deaths, of killing and making alive, in the days of John Bunyan, has just the same effect upon our hearts to this day, when it comes with the power that God has put into it by his Spirit. It produces the same results, and has the same sanctifying influence as it ever had.

Looking beyond the narrow stream of death, we can say that the eternal results produced by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ are the same as they ever were. The promise is this day fulfilled to those who receive him as much as to any who went before; life eternal is their inheritance, they shall sit with him upon his throne; and, on the other hand, the threatening is equally sure of fulfilment: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." "He that believeth not shall be damned." Christ has made no change in his words of promise or of threatening, nor will his followers dare to do so, for his doctrine is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

If you were to try to think over this matter, and imagine for a minute that

the gospel really did shift and change with the times, it would be very extraordinary. See, here is the gospel for the first century; make a mark, and note how far it goes. Then there is a gospel for the second century; make another mark, but then remember that you must change the colour to another shade. Either these people must have altered, or else a very different effect must have been produced in the same kind of minds. In eternity, when they all get to heaven by these nineteen gospels, in the nineteen centuries, there will be nineteen sets of people, and they will sing nineteen different songs, depend upon it, and their music will not blend. Some will sing of "free grace and dying love", while others will sing of "evolution." What a discord it would be, and what a heaven it would be, too! I should decline to be a candidate for such a place. No, let me go where they praise Jesus Christ and him alone, singing, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." That is what the first-century saints sing; ay, and it is what the saints of every century will sing, without any exception; and there will be no change in this song for ever. The same results will flow from the same gospel till heaven and earth shall pass away, for Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

III. We may sound the same note again, for a moment, because JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME AS TO HIS MODES OF WORKING: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

How did Jesus Christ save souls in the olden time? "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe;" and if you will look down through church history, you will find that, wherever there has been a great revival of religion, it has been linked with the preaching of the gospel. When the Methodists began to do so much good, what did they call the men who made such a stir? "Methodist preachers", did they not say? That was always the name, "Here comes a Methodist preacher." Ah, my dear friends, the world will never be saved by Methodist doctors, or by Baptist doctors, or anything of the sort; but multitudes will be saved, by God's grace, through preachers. It is the preacher to whom God has entrusted this great work. Jesus said, "Preach the gospel to every creature." But men are getting tired of the divine plan; they are going to be saved by the priest, going to be saved by the music, going to be saved

by theatricals, and nobody knows what! Well, they may try these things as long as ever they like; but nothing can ever come of the whole thing but utter disappointment and confusion, God dishonoured, the gospel travestied, hypocrites manufactured by thousands, and the church dragged down to the level of the world. Stand to your guns, brethren, and go on preaching and teaching nothing but the Word of God, for it pleases God still, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe; and this text still stands true, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

But remember that there must always be the prayers of the saints with the preaching of the gospel. You must have often noticed that passage in the Acts concerning the new converts on the Day of Pentecost, "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine": they thought a great deal about doctrine in those days. "And fellowship": they thought a good deal of being in church-fellowship in those days. "And in breaking of bread": they did not neglect the blessed ordinance of the Lord's supper in those days: "In breaking of bread." And then what follows? "And in prayers." Some say nowadays, that prayer-meetings are religious expedients pretty well worn out. Ah, dear me! What a religious expedient that was that brought about Pentecost, when they were assembled with one accord in one place, and when the whole church prayed, and suddenly the place was shaken, and they heard the sound as of a rushing mighty wind, that betokened the presence of the Holy Ghost! Well, you may try to do without prayer-meetings if you like; but my solemn conviction is that, as these decline, the Spirit of God will depart from you, and the preaching of the gospel will be of small account. The Lord will have the prayers of His people to go with the proclamation of his gospel if it is to be the power of God unto salvation, and there is no change in this matter since Paul's day, Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." God is still to be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them, and he still grants blessings in answer to believing prayer.

Remember, too, that the Lord Jesus Christ has always been inclined to work by the spiritual power of his servants. Nothing comes out of a man that is not first in him. You will not find God's servants doing great things for him, unless God works mightily in them, as well as by them. You must

first yourself be endued with power from on high, or else the power will not manifest itself in what you do. Beloved, we want our church members to be better men and better women; we want baby-Christians to become men-Christians; and we want the men-Christians among us to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." God will work by his servants when they are adapted to his service; and he will make his instruments fit for his work. It is not in themselves that they have any strength; their weakness becomes the reason why his strength is seen in them. Still, there is an adaptation, there is a fitness for his service, there is a cleanness that God puts upon his instruments before he works mighty things by them; and Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever," in this matter, too.

All the good that is ever done in the world is wrought by the Holy Ghost; and as the Holy Spirit honours Jesus Christ, so he puts great honour upon the Holy Spirit. If you and I try, either as a church or as individuals, to do without the Holy Spirit, God will soon do without us. Unless we reverently worship him, and believingly trust in him, we shall find that we shall be like Samson when his locks were shorn. He shook himself as he had done aforetime; but when the Philistines were upon him, he could do nothing against them. Our prayer must ever be, "Holy Spirit, dwell with me! Holy Spirit, dwell with thy servants!" We know that we are utterly dependent upon him. Such is the teaching of our Master, and Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

IV. I do not want to weary you, my dear brethren; but may I be helped, just for a few moments, to speak on a fourth point! JESUS CHRIST HAS EVER THE SAME RESOURCES, for he is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

I will repeat what I said, Jesus Christ has ever the same resources. We sit down, sometimes, very sorrowful, and we say, "The times are very dark." I do not think that we can very well exaggerate their darkness; and they are full of threatening omens, and I do not think that any of us can really exaggerate those omens, they are so terrible. But still is it true, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock."

Does the Church feel her need of faithful men? The Lord can send us as many as ever. When the Pope ruled everywhere, nobody thought, I should imagine, that the first man to speak out for the old faith would be a monk; they thought they had taken stock of all the men that God had at his command, and they certainly did not think that he had one of the leaders of the Reformation in a monastery; but there was Martin Luther, "the monk that shook the world," and though men dreamed not what he would do, God knew all about him. There was Calvin, also, writing that famous book of his Institutes. He was a man full of disease, I think he had sixty diseases at once in his body, and he suffered greatly. Look at his portrait, pale and wan; and as a young man he was very timid. He went to Geneva, and he thought he was called to write books; but Farel said to him, "You are called to lead us in preaching the gospel here in Geneva." "No," said Calvin, for he shrank from the task; but Farel said, "The blast of the Almighty God will rest upon you unless you come out, and take your proper place." Beneath the threat of that brave old man, John Calvin took his place, prompt and sincere in the work of God, in life and in death never faltering. Then there was Zwingli over there at Zurich, he had come out, too, and Oecolampadius, and Melancthon, and their fellows, - who ever expected them to do what they did? Nobody. "The Lord gave the word, great was the company of them that published it." And so, to-day, he has only to give the word, and you shall see starting up all over the world earnest preachers of the everlasting gospel, for he has the same resources as ever. He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

He has also the same resources of grace. The Holy Spirit is quite as able to convert men, to quicken, enlighten, sanctify, and instruct. There is nothing which he has done which he cannot do again; the treasures of God are as full and as running over now as they were in the beginning of the Christian age. If we do not see such great things, where lies the restraining force? It is in our unbelief. "If thou believest, all things are possible to him that believeth." Ere this year has gone, God can make a wave of revival break over England, Scotland, and Ireland, from one end to the other, ay, and he can deluge the whole world with the gospel if we will but cry to him for it, and he wills to do it, for he is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever," in the resources of his grace.



V. So I close my sermon with this fifth head, on which I will be very short indeed, JESUS CHRIST IS EVER THE SAME TO ME: "yesterday, and to day, and for ever." I will not talk about myself except to help you to think about yourselves. How long have you known the Lord Jesus Christ? Perhaps, only a short time; possibly, many years. Do you remember when you first knew him? Can you point out the spot of ground where Jesus met you? Now, what was he to you at first? I will tell you what he was to me.

Jesus was to me at first my only trust. I leaned on him very hard then, for I had such a load to carry. I laid myself and my load down at his feet; he was all in all to me. I had not a shred of hope outside of him, nor any trust beyond himself, crucified and risen for me. Now, dear brothers and sisters, have you got any further than that? I hope not; I know that I have not. I have not a shadow of a shade of confidence anywhere but in Christ's blood and righteousness. I leaned on him very hard at the first; but I lean harder now. Sometimes, I faint away into his arms; I have died into his life; I am lost in his fulness, he is all my salvation and all my desire. I am speaking for myself; but I think that I am speaking for many of you, too, when I say that Jesus Christ is to me "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." His cross, before my failing eyes, shall be my dying comfort as it is my living strength.

What was Jesus Christ to me at the first? He was the object of my warmest love; was it not so with you also? Was he not chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely? What charms, what beauties, were there in that dear face of his! And what a freshness, what a novelty, what a delight, which set all our passions on a flame! It was so in those early days when we went after him into the wilderness. Though all the world around was barren, he was all in all to us. Very well, what is he to-day? He is fairer to us now than ever he was. He is the one gem that we possess; our other jewels have all turned out to be but glass, and we have flung them from the casket, but he is the Koh-i-noor that our souls delights in; all perfections joined together to make one absolute perfection; all the graces adorning him, and overflowing to us. Is not that what we say of him? "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for

ever."

What was Jesus Christ to me at the first? Well, he was my highest joy. In my young days, how my heart did dance at the sound of his name! Was it not so with many of you? We may be huskier in voice, and heavier in body, and slower in moving our limbs, but his name has as much charm for us as ever it had. There was a trumpet that nobody could blow but one who was the true heir, and there is nobody who can ever fetch the true music out of us but our Lord to whom we belong. When he sets me to his lips, you would think that I was one of the trumpets of the seven angels; but there is no one else who can make me sound like that. I cannot produce such music as that by myself; and there is no theme that can ravish my heart, there is no subject that can stir my soul, until I get to him. I think it is with me as it was with Rutherford, when the Duke of Argyle called out, as he began to preach about Christ, "Now, man, you are on the right string, keep to that." The Lord Jesus Christ knows every key in our souls, and he can wake up our whole being to harmonies of music which shall set the world ringing with his praises. Yes, he is our joy, our everything, "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

Let us go forward, then, to the unchanging Saviour, through the changing things of time and sense; and we shall meet him soon in the glory, and he will be unchanged even there, as compassionate and loving to us when we shall get home to him, and see him in his splendour, as he was to his poor disciples when he himself had not where to lay his head, and was a sufferer amongst them.

Oh, do you know him? Do you know him? Do you know him? If not, may he this night reveal himself to you, for his sweet mercy's sake! Amen.

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# Unconditional Surrender

Submit yourselves therefore to God. - James 4:7

This advise should not need much pressing. "Submit yourselves unto God"—is it not right upon the very face of it? Is it not wise? Does not conscience tell us that we ought to submit? Does not reason bear witness that it must be best to do so? "Submit yourselves unto God." Should not the creature be submissive to the Creator, to whom it owes its existence, without whom it had never been, and without whose continuous good pleasure it would at once cease to be? Our Creator is infinitely good, and his will is love: to submit to one who is "too wise to err, too good to be unkind," should not be hard. If he were a tyrant it might be courageous to resist, but since he is a Father it is ungrateful to rebel. He cannot do anything which is not perfectly just, nor will he do aught which is inconsistent with the best interests of our race; therefore to resist him is to contend against one's own advantage, and, like the untamed bullock, to kick against the pricks to our own hurt. "Submit yourselves unto God"—it is what angels do, what kings and prophets have done, what the best of men delight in—there is therefore no dishonor nor sorrow in so doing. All nature is submissive to his laws; suns and stars yield to his behests, we shall but be in harmony with the universe in willingly bowing to his sway. "Submit yourselves unto God"—you must do it whether you are willing to do so or not. Who can stand out against the Almighty? For puny man to oppose the Lord is for the chaff to set itself in battle array with the wind, or for the tow to make war with the flame. As well might man attempt to turn back the tide of ocean, or check the march of the hosts of heaven as dream of overcoming the Omnipotent. The Eternal God is irresistible, and any rebellion against his government must soon end in total defeat. By the mouth of his servant Isaiah the Lord challenges his enemies, saying, "Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together." God will be sure to overthrow his adversaries: he may in his infinite patience permit the rebel to continue for a while in his revolt, but as surely as the Lord liveth

he will compel every knee to bow before him, and every tongue to confess that he is the living God. "Submit yourselves unto God." Who would do otherwise, since not to submit is injurious now, and will be fatal in the end? If we oppose the Most High, our opposition must lead on to defeat and destruction, for the adversaries of the Lord shall be as the fat of rams, into smoke shall they consume away. For the man who strives with his Maker there remains a fearful looking for of judgment and the dread reward of everlasting punishment. Who will be so foolhardy as to provoke such a result?

"Submit yourselves unto God" is a precept which to thoughtful men is a plain dictate of reason, and it needs few arguments to support it. Yet because of our foolishness the text enforces it by a "Therefore," which "Therefore" is to be found in the previous verse,— "He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God." His wrath and his mercy both argue for submission. We are both driven and drawn to it. The Romans were wont to say of their empire that its motto was to spare the vanquished, but to war continually against the proud. This saying aptly sets forth the procedure of the Most High. He aims all his arrows at the lofty, and turns the edge of his sword against the stubborn; but the moment he sees signs of submission his pity comes to the front, and through the merits of his Son his abounding mercy forgives the fault. Is not this an excellent reason for submission? Who can refuse to be vanquished by love? Who will not say as our hymn puts it -

"Lord, thou hast won, at length I yield;  
My heart, by mighty grace compell'd,  
Surrenders all to thee;  
Against thy terrors long I strove,  
But who can stand against thy love?  
Love conquers even me."

If resistance will only call forth the omnipotent wrath of God, but true submission will lead to the obtaining of his plenteous grace, who will continue in arms? I shall not tarry to carry the argument further, but aim at once to press home this precept upon you as God the Holy Ghost may enable me. I believe it to be addressed both to saint and sinner, and

therefore I shall urge it home first upon the child of God, and say to all of you who love the Lord, "Submit yourselves to God;" and then we shall take a little longer time to say in deep solemnity to those who are not reconciled to God by the death of his Son, "Submit yourselves to God" if ye would be saved.

I. To THE PEOPLE OF GOD, "Submit yourselves unto God." He is your God, your Father, your friend, yield yourselves to him. What does this counsel mean? It means, first exercise humility. We do well to interpret a text by its connection: now the connection here is "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble," and therefore the submission here meant must include humility, even if it be not the chief thing intended. Brothers and sisters, let us take our right place before God. And what is that? Is it the highest seat in the synagogue? Is it the place of those who thank God that they are not as other men are? I scarcely need reply, you who are the children of God will not dream of occupying such a position. If by reason of temporary foolishness you ever boast, I am sure, my dear friends, when you think over it in the watches of the night you are very much ashamed of yourselves, and would be glad to eat your own words. A pardoned sinner boasting! A debtor to sovereign grace extolling himself! It is horrible. Nothing can be more out of place than boasting upon the lips of a child of God. If I heard Balaam's ass speak I should impute it to a miracle that it should use the language of man, but that a man of God should use the braying of vanity is a miracle another way, not of God but of Satan. Is it not one of the fundamental truths of our faith that we are saved by grace? And what says the apostle? "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." The word "excluded" means shut out. Boasting comes to the door, it knocks, it pleads for admission, but it is excluded. Possibly through our unwatchfulness it gains a momentary entrance, but as soon as ever the grace of God within us ascertains that the intruder is within our gates it ejects him, shuts the door in his face, and bars him out, and in answer to the question "Where is boasting then?" free grace replies, "It is excluded, by the law of grace." If all the good we have has been given to us freely by divine favor, in what can we glory? If we possess the highest degree of spirituality, if our life be perfectly clear from any open fault, and if our hearts be wholly consecrated unto the Lord, yet we are unprofitable servants; we have

done no more than it was our duty to have done. But, alas, we fall far short of this, for we have not done what it was our duty to have done, and in many things we fail and come short of the glory of God. The right position of a Christian is to walk with lowly humility before God, and with meekness towards his fellow Christians. The lowest room becomes us most, and the lowest seat in that room. Look at Paul, who knew far more of Christ than we do, and who served him far better. It is edifying to notice his expressions. He is an apostle, and he will by no means allow any one to question his calling, for he has received it of the Lord; but what does he say? "Not meet to be called an apostle." What can be lowlier than this? But we shall see him descending far below it. He takes his place among the ordinary saints, and he will not give up his claim to be numbered with them, for he has made his calling and election sure; but where does he sit among the people of God? He styles himself "less than the least of all saints." There is no small a descent from "not meet to be called an apostle" to "less than the least of all saints;" but he went lower yet, for at another time he confessed himself to be still a sinner, and coming into the assembly of sinners where does he take his position? He writes himself down as "the chief of sinners." This is submission to God, the true surrender of every proud pretension or conceited claim. If, my brethren, the Lord has called us to be ministers, let us ever feel that we are not worthy of so great a grace: since he has made us saints, let us confess that the very least of our brethren is more esteemed by us than we dare to esteem ourselves, and since we know that we are sinners let us look at our sins under that aspect which most reveals their heinousness, for in some respects and under certain lights there are evils in our character which make us guiltier than the rest of our fellow sinners. The stool of repentance and the foot of the cross are the favourite positions of instructed Christians.

Such humility is not at all inconsistent with believing that we are saved, nor with the fullest assurance of faith, nay, not at all inconsistent with the nearest familiarity with God. Listen to Abraham: "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, I that am but dust and ashes." He has drawn very near to the Lord, and speaks with him as a man speaketh with his friend, and yet he says "I am but dust and ashes." His boldness did not destroy his humbleness, nor his sense of nothingness hinder his near approach to

the Lord. My dear brethren, we know that in Christ we are accepted, we know that we are dear to God and loved with an everlasting love, we know that he hears our prayers and answers us continually, we know that we walk in the light of his countenance; but still our posture should always be that of deep humiliation before the Lord, and in the attitude of complete submission we should sit at the Master's feet and say, "By the grace of God I am what I am." May the Holy Spirit work this gracious submission in every regenerated soul.

Let us next observe that our text bears a second meaning, namely, that of submission to the divine will: that of course would strike you in the wording of the verse—"Submit yourselves therefore to God." Beloved Christian friends, be willing to accept whatever God appoints. Let us each pray to be

"Simple, teachable and mild,  
Awed into a little child;  
Pleased with all the Lord provides,  
Wean'd from all the world besides."

Is it indeed so with us? Are you not some of you very far from it? Are you quite sure that you are submissive to the divine will as to your rank in society? Have you accepted your position in the scale of worldly wealth? Are you satisfied to be sickly, obscure, or of small ability? Are God's appointments your contentments? Too many professors are quarrelling with God that they are not other than they are. This is evil, and shows that pride is still in their hearts, for were they conscious of their own deserts they would know that anything short of hell is more than we deserve, and as long as we are not in the pit of torment gratitude becomes us. It is a happy thing when the mind is brought to submit to all the chastisements of God, and to acquiesce in all the trials of his providence. Knowing as we do that all these things work together for our good, and that we never endure a smart more than our heavenly Father knows to be needful, we are bound to submit ourselves cheerfully to all that he appoints. Though no trial for the present is joyous, but grievous, yet ought we to resign ourselves to it because of its after results. Even the beasts of the field may teach us this. I read the other day of an elephant

which had lost its sight: it was brought to the surgeon, and he placed some powerful substance upon the eye, which caused it great pain, and of course the huge creature was very restless during the operation. After a while it began to see a little, and when it was brought the next day to the operator it was as docile as a lamb, for it evidently perceived that benefit had resulted from the painful application. If such a creature has enough intelligence to perceive the benefit, and to accept the pain, how much more should we! Since we know that we owe infinite blessings to the rod of the covenant we ought to be willing to bare our own back to the scourge, and let the Lord do as he wills with us. Yea, I go beyond this, even if we did not know that good would come of it, we ought to submit because it is the Lord's will, for he has a right to do whatever he wills with us. Can you subscribe to this? As a true child can you make a complete surrender to your Father's good pleasure? If not, you have not fairly learned the mind of Christ. It is a great thing to have the soul entirely submitted to God about everything, so that we never wish to have anything in providence other than God would have it to be, nor desire to have anything in his Word altered: not one ordinance of the church of God, not one doctrine of revelation, not one precept or warning other than it is. We shall never be at rest till we come to this. It is essential to our happiness to say at all times, "Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt." Brothers and sisters, ought it not so to be? Who ought to rule in the house but the Father? Who should govern in the body but the Head? Who should lead the flock but the Shepherd? We owe so much to Jesus, and so entirely belong to him, that even were it put to the vote, all of us would give our suffrages so that the Lord Jesus should be King, Head and Chief among us; for is he not the Firstborn among many brethren? Submit, then, my brethren. Beseech the Holy Spirit to bow your wills to complete subjection. You will never be happy till self is dethroned. I know some of God's children who are in great trouble only because they will not yield to the divine will. I met with one, I believe a good sister, who said she could not forgive God for taking away her mother; and another friend said he could not see God to be a good God for he had made him suffer such terrible afflictions. Their furnace was heated seven times hotter by the fuel of rebellion which they threw into it. So long as we blame the Lord and challenge his rights, our self-tortured minds will be tossed to and fro. No father can let his boy bend his little fist in defiance, and yet treat that



child with the same love and fondness as his other children, who submit themselves to him. You cannot enjoy your heavenly Father's smile, my dear brother or sister, till you cease from being in opposition to him, and yield the point in debate; for he has said that if we walk contrary to him he will walk contrary to us. It will be wise for you to cry, "My Father, my naughty spirit has rebelled against thee, my wicked heart has dared to question thee; but I cease from it now: let it be even as thou wilt, for I know that thou doest right." So the text means first humility, and then submission to the Lord's will. Lord, teach us both.

It means also obedience. Do not merely passively lie back and yield to the necessities of the position, but gird up the loins of your mind, and manifest a voluntary and active submission to your great Lord. The position of a Christian should be that of a soldier to whom the centurion saith "Go," and he goeth, and "Do this," and he doeth it. It is not ours to question, that were to become masters; but ours it is to obey without questioning, even as soldiers do. Submission to our Lord and Savior will be manifested by ready obedience: delays are essentially insubordinations, and neglects are a form of rebellion. I fear that there are some Christians whose disobedience to Christ is a proof of their pride. It may be said that they do not know such and such a duty to be incumbent upon them. Ay, but there is a proud ignorance which does not care to know, a pride which despises the commandment of the Lord, and counts it non-essential and unimportant. Can such scorn be justifiable? Is that a right temper for the Lord's servant to indulge? Can any point in our Lord's will be unimportant to us? Can the wish of a dear friend be trivial to those who love him? Has Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," and shall I treat them as matters of no moment? No, my Lord, if it were the lifting of a stone from the road, if it were the moving of a sere leaf, or the brushing away of a cobweb, if thou ordainest it, then it becomes important straightway,—important to my loving allegiance, that I may by my prompt obedience show how fully I submit myself to thee. Love is often more seen in little things than in great things. You may have in your house a servant who is disaffected, and yet she will perform all the necessary operations of the household, but the loving child attends to the little details which make up the comfort of life, and are the tests of affection. Let your love be shown by a childlike

obedience, which studies to do all the Master's will in all points.

I am afraid there are some who do not obey the Master because they are proud enough to think that they know better than he does; they judge the Lord's will instead of obeying it. Art thou a judge of the law, my brother? Art thou to sit on the judgment-seat and say of this or that statute of the law, "This does not signify," or, "That may be set aside without any loss to me"? This is not according to the mind of Christ, who did his Father's will and asked no questions. When next you pray, "Thy will be done in earth, even as it is in heaven," remember how they do that will before the throne of God, without hesitation, demur, or debate, being wholly subservient to every wish of the Most High. Thus, dear brethren, "Submit yourselves to God."

The expression, however, is not well worked out unless I add another explanation, and perhaps even then I have not brought out its meaning fully. "Submit yourselves to God" by yielding your hearts to the motions of the divine Spirit: by being impressible, sensitive, and easily affected. The Spirit of God has hard work with many Christians to lead them in the right way, they are as the horse and the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle. There is the stout oak in the forest, and a hurricane howls through it, and it is not moved, but the rush by the river yields to the faintest breath of the gale. Now, though in many things ye should be as the oak and not as the rush, yet in this thing be ye as the bulrush and be moved by the slightest breathing of the Spirit of God. The photographer's plates are rendered sensitive by a peculiar process: you shall take another sheet of glass and your friend shall stand before it as long as ever he likes, and there will be no impression produced, at least none which will be visible to the eye; but the sensitive plate will reveal every little wrinkle of the face and perpetuate every hair of the head. Oh, to be rendered sensitive by the Spirit of God, and we can be made so by submitting ourselves entirely to his will. Is there not a promise to that effect?—"I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh."

Sometimes the Spirit of God whispers to you, "Retire to pray." At such times enter your closet at once. Remember how David said, "When thou

saidst unto me, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face Lord will I seek." The Spirit of God will sometimes impel you to a duty which involves self-denial, which will take up much of your leisure, and will bring you no very great honor as a reward. Be not disobedient to his call, but go about your work speedily. Say with the Psalmist, "I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments." The Spirit will at times urge us to deep repentance on account of faults in which we have been living, he will rebuke us for some ugly temper which we have indulged, or for some hard word which we have spoken against a brother, or because of the worldliness of mind into which we have fallen. Oh, brother, bestir thyself at such times, and examine and purge thy soul. Let a hint from the Holy Spirit be enough for thee. As the eyes of the handmaiden are towards her mistress, so let your eyes be to your Lord. The handmaid does not require the mistress to speak: it will often happen when she is waiting at table, and there are friends, the mistress nods or puts her finger up, and that is enough. She does not call out "Mary, do this or that," or speak to her loudly a dozen times, as the Lord has to do to us, but a wink suffices. So it ought to be with us; half a word from the divine Spirit, the very gentlest motion from him, should be enough guidance, and straightway we should be ready to do his bidding. In this matter it is not so much your activity as your submission to the Holy Spirit which is needed; it is not so much your running as your willing to be drawn by him. There is to be an activity in religion: we are to wrestle and to fight, but side by side with that we are to yield ourselves to the Spirit's impulse, for it is he that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure; he striveth in us mightily, and if we will but resign ourselves, and no longer be obstacles in his divine way, he will carry us to greater heights of grace, and create in us more fully the likeness of Christ. "Submit yourselves unto God." Learn the sweetness of lying passive in his hand, and knowing no will but his: learn the blessedness of giving yourselves up entirely to his divine sway, for in so doing you will enter into heaven below.

II. Now we come to that part of our discourse in which we must earnestly pray God the Holy Spirit to help us doubly. I desire now to address myself TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT SAVED, but have some desire to be so. I am thankful to God that there should be even the faintest wish of the kind.

May it grow at once into an impetuous longing; yea, may that longing be fulfilled this very morning, and may you go out of this house saved. You tell me that you have been anxious about your soul for some time, but have made no headway. You have been putting forth great efforts, you have been very diligent in attending the means of grace, in searching the Scriptures, and in private prayer, but you cannot get on. It is very possible, my dear friend, that the reason is this, that you have not submitted yourself to God; you are trying to do when the best thing would be to cease from yourself, and drop into the hand of the Savior who is able to save you though you cannot save yourself: For a proud heart the very hardest thing is to submit. Do you find it so? "No surrender" is the stubborn sinner's motto. I have known men who would give their bodies to be burned sooner than yield to God. Their high stomach has stood out long against the Most High, and they have been little Pharaohs till the Lord has brought them to their senses. "Must I yield, must I bow at his feet?"—they could not brook such humiliation. If the gospel had tolerated their pride and given them a little credit they would have rejoiced in it; but to be tumbled in the dust, and made to confess their own nothingness they could not bear. "Submit" is wormwood and gall to haughty sinners, yet must they drink the cup or die. Hear then, ye stout-hearted, you can never be saved unless you submit, and when you are saved one of the main points in your salvation will be that you have submitted. I desire to whisper one little truth in your ear, and I pray that it may startle you: You are submitting even now. You say, "Not I; am lord of myself." I know you think so, but all the while you are submitting to the devil. The verse before us hints at this. "Submit yourselves unto God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." If you do not submit to God you never will resist the devil, and you will remain constantly under his tyrannical power. Which shall be your master, God or devil, for one of these must? No man is without a master: some power or other is paramount within us, either good or evil is supreme in our hearts; and if we will not be mastered by the good, the evil has already gained the sway.

"How then am I to submit?" says one: "To what shall I submit, and in what respects?" Well, first, submit thyself, if thou wouldest be saved, to the Word of God. Believe it to be true. Believing it to be true, yield thyself to its force. Does it accuse thee? Confess the accusation. Does it condemn

thee? Plead guilty. Does it hold out hope to thee? Grasp it. Does it command thee? Obey it Does it guide thee? Follow it. Does it cheer thee? Believe it. Submit thyself to him who in this blessed page proclaims himself the Savior of all such as will throw down the weapons of their rebellion and end their futile war by relying upon his power to save them.

Yield thyself, next, to thy conscience. Thou hast quarelled with thy conscience, and thy conscience with thee. It persists in speaking, and thou desirest it to be quiet. After dissipation, in the lull which comes after a storm of evil pleasure, a voice is heard saying, "Is this right? Is this safe? Will this last? What will the end of this be? Would it not be better to seek some better and nobler thing than this?" God speaks often to men through the still small voice of conscience. Open thine ear, then, and listen. Thy conscience can do thee no hurt; it may disturb thee, but it is well to be disturbed when peace leads on to death. He was a fool who killed the watch dog because it alarmed him when thieves were breaking into his house. If conscience upbraid thee, feel its upbraiding and heed its rebuke. It is thy best friend; faithful are its friendly wounds, but the kisses of a flattering enemy are deceitful.

God also sends many messengers. To some of you he has sent the tenderest of monitors. Hearken to their admonitions and regard their kind warnings, for they mean good to thy souls. Is it hard, O son, is it hard to submit when the message comes by a mother's loving lips, when her tears bedew each word she speaks? It must have been difficult for some of you in your young days to stand out against a mother's entreaties when she not only pointed you to heaven, but led the way; not only spoke of Jesus, but reflected his love in her daily walk and conversation. You have a sister, young man, whom you love and respect: you could hardly tell how much an object of admiration she is to you. Now, that letter of hers, which you turned into a joke; you did feel it, after all. Yield to its pathetic pleadings, yield to its tender entreaties. Remember, God has other messengers whom he will send if these loving ones do not suffice. He will soon send thee a sterner summons. If thou listen not to the gentle word, the still, small voice, he can send to thee by the rougher messengers of disease and death. Be not so foolish as to provoke him so to do.

Moreover, submit yourselves to God, since he has, perhaps, already sent his messengers in sterner shapes to you. It was but a few days ago that you lost your old friend. Many a merry day you have spent together, and many a jovial night too; he was in as good health as yourself, apparently, but he was struck down, and you have followed him to the tomb. Is there no voice from that new made grave to you? Methinks your friend in his sudden end was a warning to you to be ready for the like departure! You have also yourself suffered from premonitory symptoms of sickness; perhaps you have actually been sick, and been made to lie where your only prospect was eternity; a dread eternity, how surely yours. You trembled to gaze into it, but the very tones of the surgeon's voice compelled you to do so. You feared that you would have to leave this body, and you could not help saying to yourself, "Whither shall I fly? My naked spirit, whither must it go when once it leaves the warm precincts of this house of clay?" It is not my business one-tenth as much as it is yours—but I charge you, hear the voice of these providences, listen to these solemn calls. The angel of death has stood at your bedside and pointed to you and said, "Young man, it is the fever this time and you may recover, but the next time you will never rise from the bed on which you lie: or, you have been rescued now from a dreadful accident, but the next time there will be no escape for you. Because I will do this, prepare to meet thy God."

Above all, I pray you submit yourselves, if you are conscious of such things, to the whispers of God's Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit does not strive with every man alike. Some have so grieved him that he has ceased to strive with them, or does so very occasionally and then they so resist his strivings that they are never very long continued. The worst man that lives has his better moments, the most careless has some serious thoughts; there are lucid intervals in the madness of carnal pleasure. At such times men hear what they call "their better selves." It is hardly so. I prefer to call it the general reprovings of God's Spirit in their souls. He says to them, Is this right? Is this wise? This trifling, this time-killing, this depraving of the soul by allowing the bodily appetites to rule, this lowering of the man to the level of the brute, can this be right? Is there no eternity? Is there no immortality, no God, no judgment to come?" The Holy Spirit sometimes opens the man's eyes as he did the eyes of Balaam,

and makes him see the certainty of the judgment day and the nearness of its approach. The man is led to anticipate the trumpet's sound which heralds the assize, the coming of the Judge upon his great white throne, the gathering of the multitudes of quick and dead, the opening of the books, the dividing of the throng, the driving away of the goats to their everlasting punishment, and the reception of the righteous to their everlasting joy. Oh, when you are made to feel all this, I pray you submit yourself to it. It costs some men a great deal of trouble to be damned. Many a man who blasphemes and talks infidelity, merely does so to conceal his inward struggles. Like the boy who whistles as he goes through the churchyard to keep his courage up, they talk blasphemy to divert their mind from its own fears. He who is most fierce in the utterance of his disbelief is not the greatest disbeliever. When the heathen offered children to Moloch they beat their drums to drown the cries of the victims, and even so these men make a great noise to drown the voice of conscience. The man knows better, and I charge him to let that better knowledge come to the front and lead him to his God and Father. It will be a blessed thing for him if it shall be so even this day. "Submit yourselves to God."

If you ask me again, "In what respect am I to submit myself?" I answer as briefly as I can, first submit yourself by confessing your sin. Cry peccavi. Do not brazen it out and say "I have not sinned." You will never be pardoned while that is the case. "He that confesseth his sin shall find mercy." Sinner, choose between one of two things; judge yourself, or be judged of God. If you will judge yourself and put in a plea of guilty, then will the Great Judge grant you forgiveness, but not else. Condemn yourself and you shall not be condemned. Confess the indictment to be true, for true it is, and to deny it is to seal your doom.

Next, honor the law which condemns you. Do not persevere in picking holes in it and saying that it is too severe, and requires too much of a poor fallible creature. The law is holy, and just, and good. Put thy lips down and kiss it, though it condemn thee, and say, "though it charges me with guilt and convicts me of deadly sin, yet it is a good law, and ought not to be altered, even to save me."

Next, own the justice of the penalty. Thy sins condemn thee to hell: do not say "God is too severe; this is a punishment disproportionate to the offense." Thou wilt never be pardoned if thou thinkest so, but God will be justified in thy condemnation: the pride of thy heart will be a swift witness against thee. Confess with thy heart, "If my soul were sent to hell it is no more than I deserve." When thou hast confessed the guilt, and honored the law, and acknowledged the justice of the penalty, then thou art nearing the position in which God can be merciful to thee.

Submit yourself, sinner—I pray you do it now—submit yourself to God as your king. Throw down your weapons; lower your crest and cast away those robes of pride. Surrender unconditionally and say, "Lord God, I own thee now to be king, no longer like stout-hearted Pharaoh will I ask, 'Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?' but like one brought to his senses I yield as reason and grace suggest." It will go well with you when you make a full capitulation, an unconditional surrender. Fling wide the gates of the city of Mansoul, and admit the prince Emanuel to rule as sole sovereign in every street in the city. Dispute no longer his sovereignty, but pray to be made a loyal subject, obedient in all things. Thou shalt find grace in the sight of the Lord if thou wilt do this.

Furthermore, submit yourself to God's way of saving you. Now God's way of saving you is by his grace, not by your merits; by the blood of Jesus, not by your tears and sufferings. He will justify you by your simply trusting Jesus now. Your proud heart does not admire the Lord's way of salvation; you stand up and say, "How is this consistent with morality?" As if you were the guardian of morality, as if the King of Heaven and earth could not take care of the moralities without assistance from you. Who are you to be all of a sudden the champion of morality? How dare you dream that the thrice holy God will not take care of that? He bids you trust his Son Jesus; will you do so or not? If you will not, there is no hope for you; if you will, you are saved the moment that you believe,—saved from the guilt of sin by trusting Jesus.

You must also surrender yourself at discretion to his method of operating upon you. One says, "I would believe in Jesus, sir, if I felt the horror and terror which some have experienced on account of sin." What do you



demand of God that he should drag you through horrors and terrors before you will believe? Submit yourself to be saved in a gentler way. "But I read of one," says another, "who had a dream: I would believe if I saw a vision too." Must God give thee dreams? Must he play lackey to thee, and save thee in thy way? He tells thee plainly, "If thou believest on the Lord Jesus Christ thou shalt be saved." Wilt thou believe or no? For if thou dost not, neither dreams, nor visions, nor terrors, nor anything else can save thee. There is God's way, sinner: I ask thee, and perhaps thy answer will settle thy fate for ever, wilt thou follow that way or not? If thou wilt not, thou hast chosen thine own destruction; but if thou wilt have it, and wilt submit thyself to be saved by believing in Jesus Christ, it is well with thee. I know there are some in this place who feel ready to burst, for their broken hearts are saying, "I yield at once. Oh, if he would but save me." How glad I am to hear you say so, for "he giveth grace unto the humble." I recollect the time when I have stood and cried to God, "O God, if I must lie on a sick bed till I die, I care not if thou wilt but have mercy on me; if thou wilt but conquer my proud will, and make a new man of me, thou mayst do whatever thou pleasest with me; only save me from the guilt, the power of sin." It was when the Lord brought me down there that he enabled me to see life and salvation in Jesus Christ; and if he has brought you down to that point, sinner, then you have nothing to do but simply trust the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are assuredly saved.

When he brings you to submit he has given you his grace. Submission to his divine will is the essence of salvation. Now, who will yield? Who will yield at once? The Master has come among us, the King himself is here, your Maker, your Redeemer: see the marks of his wounds, see the scars in his hands and feet and side! He asks of you, "Will you yield to me? Will you throw down your weapons? Will you end the war? Will you surrender at discretion?" If so, he gives you his hand and says, "Go in peace; there is peace between me and thee." Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, while his wrath is kindled but a little. I prayed the Lord to give me many souls, and I believe I shall have them this morning. I feel sure of it. Grant me this favor: if you submit yourselves to Christ let me hear of it, and do not delay to unite yourselves with those who rejoice to be led in triumph as the captives of his grace.

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## **Under Constraint**

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. - 2 Corinthians 5:14

The apostle and his brethren were unselfish in all that they did. He could say of himself and of his brethren that when they varied their modes of action they had ever the same object in view; they lived only to promote the cause of Christ, and to bless the souls of men. He says, "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause." Some may have said that Paul was too excitable, and expressed himself too strongly. "Well," said he, "if it be so, it is to God." Others may have noticed the reasoning faculty to be exceedingly strong in Paul, and may perhaps have thought him to be too coolly argumentative. "But," said Paul, "if we be sober, it is for your cause."

Viewed from some points the apostle and his co-laborers must have appeared to be raving fanatics, engaged upon a Quixotic enterprise, and almost if not quite out of their minds. One who had heard the apostle tell the story of his conversion exclaimed, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad;" and no doubt many who saw the singular change in his conduct, and knew what he had given up and what he endured for his new faith, had come to the same conclusion. Paul would not be at all offended by this judgment, for he would remember that his Lord and Master had been charged with madness, and that even our Lord's relatives had said, "He is beside himself." To Festus he had replied, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness"; and to Corinthian objectors he gave a still fuller reply. Blessed are they who are charged with being out of their mind through zeal for the cause of Jesus, they have a more than sufficient answer when they can say, "If we be beside ourselves, it is to God." It is no unusual thing for madmen to think others mad, and no strange thing for a mad world to accuse the only morally sane among men of being

fools and lunatics: but wisdom is justified of her children. If others assailed the apostle with another charge, and insinuated that there was a method in his madness, that his being all things to all men showed an excess of prudence, and was no doubt a means to an end, which end it is possible they hinted at was a desire for power, he could reply most conclusively, "If we be sober, it is for your cause." Paul had acted so unselfishly that he could appeal to the Corinthian church and ask them to bear him witness that he sought not theirs but them, and that if he had judged their disorders with great sobriety it was for their cause. Whatever he did, or felt, or suffered, or spake, he had but one design in it, and that was the glory of God in the perfecting of believers and the salvation of sinners.

Every Christian minister ought to be able to use the apostle's words without the slightest reserve; yea, and every Christian man should also be able to say the same: "If I be excited, it is in defense of the truth; if I be sober, it is for the maintenance of holiness: if I seem extravagant, it is because the name of Jesus stirs my inmost soul; and if I am moderate in spirit and thoughtful in mood, it is that I may in the wisest manner subserve the interests of my Redeemer's kingdom." God grant that weeping or singing, anxious or hopeful, victorious or defeated, increasing or decreasing, elevated or depressed, we may still follow our one design, and devote ourselves to the holy cause. May we live to see churches made up of people who are all set on one thing, and may those churches have ministers who are fit to lead such a people, because they also are mastered by the same sacred purpose. May the fire which fell of old on Carmel fall on our altar, whereon lieth the sacrifice, wetted a second and a third time from the salt sea of the world, until it shall consume the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and lick up the water that is in the trench. Then will all the people see it, and fall upon their faces, and cry, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God."

The apostle now goes on to tell us why it was that the whole conduct of himself and his co-laborers tended to one end and object. He says, "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then the all died." I give you here as exact a translation as I can. Two

things I shall note in the text: first, under constraint; secondly, under constraint which his understanding justified.

I. Our main point will come under the head "UNDER CONSTRAINT . Here is the apostle, a man who was born free, a man who beyond all others enjoyed the greatest spiritual liberty, glorying that he is under constraint, He was under constraint because a great force held him under its power. "The love of Christ constraineth us." I suppose "constraineth us" is about the best rendering of the passage that could be given; but it might be translated "restraineth." The love of Christ restrains true believers from self-seeking, and forbids them to pursue any object but the highest. Whether they were beside themselves or sober, the early saints yielded to divine restraint, even as a good ship answers to her helm or as a horse obeys the rein. They were not without a restraining force to prevent the slightest subjection to impure motives. The love of Christ controlled them, and held them under its power. But the word "restrained" only expresses a part of the sense, for it means that he was "coerced or pressed," and so impelled forward as one carried along by pressure. All around him the love of Christ pressed upon him as the water in a river presses upon a swimmer and bears him onward with its stream. Bengel, who is a great authority, reads it, "Keeps us employed": for we are led to diligence, urged to zeal, maintained in perseverance, and carried forward and onward by the love of Jesus Christ. The apostles labored much, but all their labor sprang from the impulse of the love of Jesus Christ. Just as Jacob toiled for Rachel solely out of love to her, so do true saints serve the Lord Jesus under the omnipotent constraint of love. One eminent expositor reads the word, "containeth us," as though it signified that the Lord's servants were kept together and held as a band under a banner or standard; and he very appropriately refers to the words of the church in the Song, "His banner over me was love." As soldiers are held together by rallying to the standard, so are the saints kept to the work and service of their Lord by the love of Christ, which constrains them to endure all things for the elect's sake, and for the glory of God, and like an ensign is uplifted high as the center and loadstone of all their energies. In our Lord's love we have the best motive for loyalty, the best reason for energy, and the best argument for perseverance.

The word may also signify "compressed," and then it would mean that all their energies were pressed into one channel, and made to move by the love of Christ. Can I put restraint and constraint, and all the rest, into one by grouping them in a figure? I think I can. When a flood is spread over an expanse of meadow land, and stands in shallow pools, men restrain it by damming it up, and they constrain it to keep to one channel by banking it in. Thus compressed it becomes a stream, and moves with force in one direction. See how it quickens its pace, see what strength it gathers; it turns yonder wheel of the mill, makes a sheep wash, leaps as a waterfall, runs laughing through a village as a brook wherein the cattle stand in the summer's sun. Growing all the while it developes into a river, bearing boats and little ships; and this done, it still increases, and stays not till it flows with mighty flood into the great sea. The love of Christ had pressed Paul's energies into one force, turned them into one channel, and then driven them forward with a wonderful force, till he and his fellows had become a mighty power for good, ever active and energetic. "The love of Christ," saith he, "constraineth us."

All great lives have been under the constraint of some mastering principle. A man who is everything by turns and nothing long is a nobody: a man who wastes life on whims and fancies, leisures and pleasures, never achieves anything: he flits over the surface of life and leaves no more trace upon his age than a bird upon the sky; but a man, even for mischief, becomes great when he becomes concentrated. What made the young prince of Macedon Alexander the Great but the absorption of his whole mind in the desire for conquest. The man was never happy when he was at ease and in peace. His best days were spent on the battle field or on the march. Let him rush to the forefront of the battle and make the commonest soldier grow into a hero by observing the desperate valor of his king, and then you see the greatness of the man. He could never have been the conqueror of the world if the insatiable greed of conquest had not constrained him. Hence come your Caesars and your Napoleons—they are whole men in their ambition, subject to the lust of dominion. When you carry this thought into a better and holier sphere the same fact is clear. Howard could never have been the great philanthropist if he had not been strangely under the witchery of love to prisoners. He was more happy in an hospital or in a prison than he would

have been at Court or on the sofa of the drawing room. The man could not help visiting the gaols, he was a captive to his sympathy for men in bondage, and so he spent his life in seeking their good. Look at such a man as Whitfield or his compeer Wesley. Those men had but one thought, and that was to win souls for Christ; their whole being ran into the one riverbed of zeal for God, and made them full and strong as the rushing Rhone. It was their rest to labor for Christ: it was their honor to be pelted while preaching and to be calumniated for the name of Jesus; a bishopric and a seat in the House of Lords would have been the death of them; even a throne would have been a rack if they must have ceased hunting for souls. The men were under the dominion of a passion which they could not withstand, and did not wish to weaken. They could sing-

"The love of Christ doth me constrain  
To seek the wandering souls of men;  
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,  
To snatch them from the fiery wave."

Their whole life, being, thought, faculty, spirit, soul, and body became one and indivisible in purpose, and their sanctified manhood was driven forward irresistibly, so that they might be likened to thunderbolts flung from the eternal hand, which must go forward till their end is reached. They could no more cease to preach than the sun could cease shining or reverse his course in the heavens.

Now, this kind of constraint implies no compulsion, and involves no bondage. It is the highest order of freedom; for when a man does exactly what he likes to do, if he wants to express the enthusiastic joy and delight with which he follows his pursuit, he generally uses language similar to that of my text. "Why," saith he, "I am engrossed by my favourite study; it quite enthrals me; I cannot resist its charms, it holds me beneath its spell." Is the man any the less free? If a man gives himself up to a science, or to some other object of pursuit, though he is perfectly free to leave it whenever he likes, he will commonly declare that he cannot leave it; it has such a hold upon him that he must addict himself to it. You must not think, therefore, that when we speak of being under constraint from the love of Christ we mean by it that we have ceased to exercise our wills, or

to be voluntary agents in our service. Far from it, we own that we are never so free as when we are under bonds to Christ. No, our God does not constrain us by physical force; his cords are those of love, and his bands are those of a man. The constraint is that which we are glad to feel; we give a full assent to its pressure, and therein lies its power. We rejoice to admit that "The love of Christ constraineth us," we only wish the constraint would increase every day.

We have seen that Paul had a great force holding him: we advance a step further and note that the constraining force was the love of Christ. He does not speak of his love to Christ: that was a great power too, though secondary to the first; but he is content to mention the greater, for it includes the less: "The love of Christ constraineth us," that is, Christ's love to us is the master force. And O, brethren, this is a power to which it is joy to submit: this is a force worthy to command the greatest minds. "The love of Christ." Who shall measure this omnipotent force? That love, according to our text, is strongest when seen in his dying for men. Mark the context "because we thus judge, that if one died for all." The peculiar display of the love of Christ which had supreme sway over Paul was the love revealed in his substitutionary death. Think of it a moment. Christ the ever blessed, to whom no pain, nor suffering, nor shame could come, loved men. O singularity of love! He loves guilty men, yea, loves his enemies! Loving poor fallen men, he took their nature and became a man. Marvellous condescension! The Son of God is also Son of Mary, and being found in fashion as a man he humbles himself, and is made of no reputation. See him taken before human judges and unjustly condemned; seized by Roman lictors and lashed with the scourge! Gazing a little longer, you see him nailed to a gibbet, hung up for a felon, left and jeer and jibe and cruel glance and malicious speech to bleed away his life, till he is actually dead, and laid in the grave. At the back of all this there is the mystery that he was not only dying, but dying in the stead of others, bearing almighty wrath, enduring that dread sentence of death which is attached to human sin. Herein is love indeed, that the infinitely pure should suffer for the sinful, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Love did never climb to so sublime a height as when it brought Jesus to the bloody tree to bear the dread sentence of inexorable law. Think of this love, beloved, till you feel its constraining influence. It was love eternal,

for long before the earth was fashioned the eternal Word had set his eye upon his people, and their names were graven on his heart. It was love unselfish, for he had nothing to gain from his redeemed; there were harps enough in heaven and songs enough in the celestial city without their music. It was love most free and spontaneous, for no man sought it or so much as dreamed thereof. It was love most persevering, for when man was born into the world and sinned, and rejected Christ, and he came to his own and his own received him not, he loved them still, loved them even to the end. It was love,-what shall I say of it? If I were to multiply words I might rather sink your thoughts than raise them: it was love infinite, immeasurable, inconceivable! It passeth the love of women, though the love of mothers is strong as death, .and jealousy is cruel as the grave. It passes the love of martyrs, though that love has triumphed over the fury of the flame. All other lights of love pale their ineffectual brightness before this blazing sun of love, whose warmth a man may feel but upon whose utmost light no eye can gaze. He loved us like a God. It was nothing less than God's own love which burned within that breast, which was bared to the spear that it might redeem us from going down into the pit. It is this force, then, which has taken possession of the Christian's mind, and as Paul says, "constraineth us."

Now we may advance another step and say that the love of Christ operates upon us by begetting in us love to him. Brethren beloved, I know you love our Lord Jesus Christ, for all his people love him. "We love him because he first loved us." But what shall I say? There are scarcely any themes upon which I feel less able to speak than these two the love of Christ to us and our love to him, because somehow love wanteth a tongue elsewhere than this which dwells in the mouth. This tongue is in the head, and it can therefore tell out our thoughts; but we need a tongue in the heart to tell out our emotions, which have now to borrow utterance from the brain's defective orator. There is a long space between the cool brain and the blazing heart, and matters cool on the road to the tongue, so that the burning heart grows weary of chill words. But oh, we love Jesus; brothers and sisters, we truly love him. His name is sweet as the honeycomb, and his word is precious as the gold of Ophir. His person is very dear to us: from his head to his foot he is altogether lovely. When we get near him and see him at the last, methinks we shall swoon away with excess of joy



at the sight of him, and I for one ask no heaven beyond a sight of him and a sense of his love. I do not doubt that we shall enjoy all the harmonies, and all the honors, and all the fellowships of heaven, but if they were all blotted out I do not know that they would make any considerable difference to us, if we may but see our Lord upon his throne, and have his own prayer fulfilled, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." He is happiness to us, yea, he is all in all. Do you not feel that the sweetest sermons you ever hear are those which are fullest of him? When I can sometimes hear a sermon it sickens me to listen to fine attempts to philosophise away the gospel, or to pretty essays which are best described as a jingle of elegant words: but I can hear with rapture the most illiterate and blundering brother if his heart burns within him, and he heartily speaks of my Lord, the Well-beloved of my soul. We are glad to be in the place of assembly when Jesus is within; for whether on Tabor with two or three, or in the congregation of the faithful, when Jesus is present it is good to be there. This joyful feeling when you hear about Jesus shows that you love his person; and your endeavors to spread the gospel show that you love his cause. The love of Christ to you has moved you to desire the coming of his kingdom, and you feel that you could give your life to extend the borders of his dominions, for he is a glorious King, and all the world should know it, Oh that we could see all the nations bowing before his scepter of peace. We love him so much that till the whole earth smiles in the light of his throne we can never rest.

As to his truth, a very great part of our love to Christ will show itself by attachment to the pure gospel. I have not much patience with a certain class of Christians nowadays who will hear anybody preach so long as they can say, "He is very clever, a fine preacher, a man of genius, a born orator." Is cleverness to make false doctrine palatable? Why, sirs, to me the ability of a man who preaches error is my sorrow rather than my admiration. I cannot endure false doctrine, however neatly it may be put before me. Would you have me eat poisoned meat because the dish is of the choicest ware? It makes me indignant when I hear another gospel put before the people with enticing words, by men who would fain make merchandise of souls; and I marvel at those who have soft words for such deceivers. "That is your bigotry," says one. Call it so if you like, but it is

the bigotry of the loving John who wrote- " If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." I would to God we had all more of such decision, for the lack of it is depriving our religious life of its backbone and substituting for honest manliness a mass of the tremulous jelly of mutual flattery. He who does not hate the false does not love the true; and he to whom it is all the same whether it be God's word or man's, is himself unrenewed at heart. Oh, if some of you were like your fathers you would not have tolerated in this age the wagon loads of trash under which the gospel has been of late buried by ministers of your own choosing. You would have hurled out of your pulpits the men who are enemies to the fundamental doctrines of your churches, and yet are crafty enough to become your pastors and undermine the faith of a fickle and superficial generation. These men steal the pulpits of once orthodox churches, because otherwise they would have none at all. Their powerless theology cannot of itself arouse sufficient enthusiasm to enable them to build a mousetrap at the expense of their admirers, and therefore they profane the houses which your sires have built for the preaching of the gospel, and turn aside the organisations of once orthodox communities to help their infidelity: I call it by that name in plain English, for "modern thought" is not one whit better, and of the two evils I give infidelity the palm, for it is less deceptive. I beg the Lord to give back to the churches such a love to his truth that they may discern the spirits, and cast out those which are not of God. I feel sometimes like John, of whom it is said that, though the most loving of all spirits, yet he was the most decided of all men for the truth; and when he went to the bath and found that the heretic, Cerinthus, was there, he hurried out of the building, and would not tarry in the same place with him. There are some with whom we should have no fellowship, nay, not so much as to eat bread; for though this conduct looks stern and hard, it is after the mind of Christ, for the apostle spake by inspiration when he said, "If we or an angel from heaven preach to you any other gospel than that ye have received, let him be accursed." According to modern efficiency he ought to have said, "Let him be kindly spoken with in private, but pray make no stir. No doubt the thought was original, and we must not question his liberty. Doubtless, he believes the same as we do, only there is some little difference as to terms." This is treason to

Christ, treachery to truth, and cruelty to souls. If we love our Lord we shall keep his words, and stand fast in the faith, coming out from among the false teachers; nor is this inconsistent with charity, for the truest love to those who err is not to fraternise with them in their error, but to be faithful to Jesus in all things.

The love of Jesus Christ creates in men a deep attachment to the gospel, especially to the doctrines which cluster around the person of our Lord; and I think more especially to that doctrine which is the corner stone of all, namely, that Christ died in the stead of men. He who toucheth the doctrine of substitution toucheth the apple of our eye: he who denies it robs our soul of her only hope, for thence we gather all our consolation for the present and our expectation for days to come. A great force, then, held the apostle: that force was the love of Christ, and it wrought in him love to Christ in return.

Now, this force acts proportionately in believers. It acts in every Christian more or less, but it differs in degree. We are all of us alive, but the vigor of life differs greatly in the consumptive and the athletic, and so the love of Jesus acts upon all regenerate men, but not to the same extent. When a man is perfectly swayed by the love of Christ he will be a perfect Christian: when a man is growingly under its influence he is a growing Christian; when a man is sincerely affected by the love of Christ he is a sincere Christian; but he in whom the love of Christ has no power whatever is not a Christian at all. "I thought," says one, "that believing was the main point." True, but faith worketh by love, and if your faith does not work by love it is not the faith which will save the soul. Love never fails to bloom where faith has taken root.

Beloved, you will feel the power of the love of Christ in your soul in proportion to the following points. In proportion as you know it. Study, then, the love of Christ: search deep and learn its secrets. Angels desire to look into it. Observe its eternity-without beginning, its immutability-without change, its infinity-without measure, its eternity-without end. Think much of the love of Christ, till you comprehend with all saints what are its breadths and lengths, and as you know it you will begin to feel its power. Its power will also be in proportion to your sense of it. Do you feel

the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost? Knowing is well, but enjoyment as the result of believing is better. Does it not sometimes force the tears from your eyes to think that Jesus loved you and gave himself for you? On the other hand does it not at times make you feel as if, like David, you could dance before the ark of the Lord, to think that the love of God should ever have been set on you, that Christ should die for you? Ah, think and think again: for you the bloody sweat, for you the crown of thorns, for you the nails, the spear, the wounds, the broken heart,-all, all for love of you who were his enemy! In proportion as your heart is tender and is sensitive to this love it will become a constraining influence to your whole life. The force of this influence will also depend very much upon the grace which dwells within you. You may measure your grace by the power which the love of Christ has over you. Those who dwell near their Lord are so conscious of his power over them that the very glances of his eyes fill them with holy ardor. If you have much grace you will be greatly moved by the love which gave you that grace, and wondrously sensitive to it, but he who hath little grace, as is the case with not a few, can read the story of the cross without emotion, and can contemplate Jesus' death without feeling. God deliver us from a marble heart, cold and hard. Character also has much to do with the measure in which we feel the constraint of Jesus' love: the more Christlike the more Christ-constrained. You must get, dear brother and sister, by prayer, through the Holy Spirit, to be like Jesus Christ, and when you do, his love will take fuller possession of you than it does at this moment, and you will be more manifestly under its constraining power.

Our last point upon this head is that wherever its energy is felt it will operate after its kind. Forces work according to their nature: the force of love creates love, and the love of Christ begets a kindred love. He who feels Christ's love acts as Christ acted. If thou dost really feel the love of Christ in making a sacrifice of himself thou wilt make a sacrifice of thyself. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." We shall for our Lord's sake count all things but dross for the excellency of his knowledge. O soul, thou wilt have no choice left after thou hast once known and chosen thy Lord. That road leads to wealth, but if it does not glorify Christ thou wilt at once say, "Farewell wealth." That road leads to

honor; thou wilt be famous if thou wilt take that path; but if it will bring no glory to Christ, if thou feelest the power of his love in thy soul, thou wilt say, "Farewell honor: I will embrace shame for Christ, for my one thought is to sacrifice myself for him who sacrificed himself for me."

If the love of Christ constrain you it will make you love others, for his was love to others, love to those who could do him no service, who deserved nothing at his hands. If the love of Christ constrain you, you will specially love those who have no apparent claim upon you, and cannot justly expect anything from you, but on the contrary deserve your censure. You will say, "I love them because the love of Christ constraineth me." Dirty little creatures in the gutter, filthy women polluting the streets, base men who come out of jail merely to repeat their crimes,-these are the fallen humanities whom we learn to love when the love of Christ constraineth us. I do not know how else we could care for some poor creatures, if it were not that Jesus teaches us to despise none and despair of none. Those ungrateful creatures, those malicious creatures, those abominably blasphemous and profane creatures whom you sometimes meet with and shrink from, you are to love them because Christ loved the very chief of sinners. His love to you must be reflected in your love to the lowest and vilest. He is your sun, be you as the moon to the world's night.

The love of Jesus Christ was a practical love. He did not love in thought only and in word, but in deed and in truth, and if the love of Christ constraineth us we shall throw our souls into the work and service of love; we shall be really at work for men, giving alms of our substance, enduring our measure of suffering, and making it clear that our Christianity is not mere talk, but downright work; we shall be like the bullock of the burnt offering, laid upon the altar wholly to be consumed; we shall consider nothing but how we can most completely be eaten up with the zeal of God's house, how without the reserve of one single faculty we may be entirely consumed in the service of our Lord and Master. May the Lord bring us to this.

II. THE CONSTRAINT OF WHICH WE HAVE SPOKEN WAS JUSTIFIED BY THE APOSTLE'S UNDERSTANDING . "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge." Love is blind. A man may

say that in the affairs of love he exercises a calm discretion, but I take leave to doubt it. In love to Christ however you may be carried right away and be as blind as you like, and yet you shall act according to the soundest judgment. The apostle saith warmly, "The love of Christ constraineth us," and yet he adds with all coolness, "because we thus judge." When understanding is the basis of affection, then a man's heart is fixed and his conduct becomes in a high degree exemplary. So it is here. There is a firm basis of judgment,-the man has weighed and judged the matter as much as if the heart were out of the question; but the logical conclusion is one of all-absorbing emotion and mastering affection as much as if the understanding had been left out of the question. His judgment was as the brazen altar, cold and hard, but on it he laid the coals of burning affection, vehement enough in their flame to consume everything. So it ought to be with us. Religion should be with a man a matter of intellect as well as of affection, and his understanding should always be able to justify the strongest possible passion of his soul, as the apostle says it did in the case of himself and brethren. They had reasons for all that they did. For, first, he recognized substitution: "We thus judge, that if one died for all." O brethren, this is the very sinew of Christian effort-Christ died in the sinner's stead. Christ is the surety, the sacrifice, the substitute, for men. If you take the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice out of the Christian religion I protest that nothing is left worth calling a revelation. It is the heart, the head, the bowels, the soul, the essence of our holy faith,-that the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all, and with his stripes we are healed. The apostle firmly believed this to be a matter of fact, and then out of his belief there grew an intense love to Jesus, as well there might. Did Jesus stand in my stead? Oh, how I love him. Did he die for me? Then his love hath mastered me, and henceforth it holds me as its willing captive. O sacred Substitute, I am thine, and all that I have.

In the next place he recognised union to Christ, for, said he, "If one died for all, then the all died," for so it runs, that is to say the all for whom Christ died, died in his death. His dying in their stead was their dying; he dies for them, they die in him; he rises, they rise in him; he lives, they live in him. Now if it be really so, that you and I who have believed in Christ are one with Christ, and members of his body, that truth may be stated

coolly, but like the flint it conceals a fire within it; for if we died in Jesus, we are henceforth dead to the world, to self, to everything but our Lord. O Holy Spirit, work in us this death even to the full. The apostle recognises the natural consequence of union. with the dying Lord, and resolves to carry it out. Brethren, when Adam sinned we sinned, and we have felt the result of that fact; we were constituted sinners by the act of our first representative, and every day we see it to be so: every little child that is carried to the grave bears witness that death passeth upon all men, for that all have sinned in Adam, even though they have not personally sinned after the similitude of his transgression. Now, just as our sin in Adam effectively operates upon us for evil, so must our death with Christ effectively operate upon our lives for good. It ought to do so. How can I live for myself? I died more than eighteen centuries ago. I died and was buried, how can I live to the world? Eighteen hundred years ago and more the world hung me up as a malefactor; ay, and in my heart of hearts I have also crucified the world, and henceforth regard it as a dead malefactor. How shall I fall in love with a crucified world, or follow after its delights? We thus died with Christ. "Now," saith the apostle, "the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then the all died." All who were in Christ, for whom he died, died when he died, and what follows from it, but that henceforth they should not live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again? We are one with Christ, and what he did for us we did in him, and therefore we are dead because he died; hence we ought no longer to live in the old selfish way, but should live to the Lord alone. There is the basis upon which the intellect rests, and then the affections yield themselves to the sacred force of Jesus's dying love.

I close with the following reflections, putting them very briefly.

The first reflection is,-how different is the inference of the apostle from that of many professors. They say, "If Christ died once for all, and so finished the work of my salvation, then I am saved, and may sit down in comfort and enjoy myself, for there is no need for effort or thought." Ah, what a mercy to feel that you are saved, and then to go to sleep in the corner of your pew. A converted man, and therefore curled up upon the bed of sloth! A pretty sight surely, but a very common one. Such people

have but little or no feeling for others who remain unconverted. "The Lord will save his own," say they, and they little care whether he does so or not. They appear to be dreadfully afraid of doing God's work, though there is not the slightest need for such a fear, since they will not even do their own work. These are presumptuous persons, strangers to the grace of God, who know not that a main part of salvation lies in our being saved from selfishness and hardness of heart. It is the devil's inference, that because Christ did so much for me I am now to do nothing for him; I must even beg the devil's pardon, for I scarcely think that even he is base enough to draw such an inference from the grace of God. Assuredly he has never been in a position to attempt so detestable a crime. It is to the last degree unutterably contemptible that a man who is indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ for so much should then make the only consequence of his indebtedness to be a selfish indolence. Never will a true child of God say, "Soul, take thine ease: thou art all right: what matters anything else?" Oh no, "The love of Christ constraineth us."

How much more ennobling, again, is such conduct as that of the apostle than that of many professed Christians? I am not about to judge any one, but I would beg you to judge yourselves. There are some, and I would try to hope that they may be Christians-the Lord knoweth them that are his-who do give to the cause of God, who do serve God after a fashion; but still the main thought of their life is not Christ nor his service, but the gaining of wealth. That is their chief object, and towards it all their faculties are bent. There are other church members-God forbid we should judge them-whose great thought is success in their profession. I am not condemning their having such a thought, but the chief ambition of the apostle and of those like him was not this, but something higher. The chief aim of all of us should be nothing of self, but serving Christ. We are to be dead to everything but our Lord's glory, living with this mark before us, this prize to be strained after, that Christ shall be glorified in our mortal bodies. In our business, in our studies, in everything, our motto must be, Christ, Christ, Christ. Now, is it not a far more noble thing for a man to have lived wholly unto Christ than for mammon, or honor, or for himself in any shape? I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say.

Do you not think also that such a pursuit as this is much more peace



giving to the spirit? People will judge our conduct, and they are sure to judge as severely as they can: if they see us zealous and self-denying they will say of us, "Why, the man is beside himself." This will not matter much to us if we can reply, "It is for God"; or if they say, "Oh, you old sobersides; how grave you are," we shall not be offended, if we can reply, "Ah, but it is for the good of others I am sober." You will be very little distressed by sharp criticisms if you know that your motive is wholly unselfish. If you live for Christ, and for Christ alone, all the carpings of men or devils will never cast you down. Do you not think that a life spent for Jesus only is far more worth looking back upon at the last than any other? If you call yourselves Christians how will you judge a life spent in money-making? It cannot be very much longer before you must gather up your feet in the bed and resign your soul to God. Now, suppose yourself sitting in your chamber all alone, making out the final balance-sheet of your stewardship, how will it look if you have to confess, "I have been a Christian professor; my conduct has been outwardly decent and respectable, but my chief purpose was not my Master's glory. I have lived with the view of scraping together so many thousands, and I have done it." Would you like to fall asleep and die with that as the consummation of your life? Or shall it be, "I have lived to hold up my head in society and pay my way and leave a little for my family"? Will that satisfy you as your last reflection? Brethren, we are not saved by our works, but I am speaking now upon the consolation which a man can derive from looking back upon his life. Suppose he shall have felt the power of my text, and shall be able to say, "I have been enabled by the grace of God, to which I give all the glory, to consecrate my entire being to the entire glorification of my Lord and Master; and whatever my mistakes, and they are many, and my wanderings and failures, and they are countless, yet the love of Christ has constrained me, for I judged myself to have died in him, and henceforth I have lived to him. I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith." Why, methinks it were worth while so to die. To be constrained by the love of Christ creates a life heroic, exalted, illustrious: no, I must come down from such lofty words-it is such a life as every Christian ought to live; it is such a life as every Christian must live if he is really constrained by the love of Christ, for the text does not say the love of Christ ought to constrain us, it declares that it does constrain us. Men and brethren, if it does not constrain you, judge yourselves, that ye be not

judged and found wanting at the last. God grant we may feel the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Amen.

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## Underneath

Underneath are the everlasting arms. - Deuteronomy 33:27

God surrounds his children on all sides: they dwell in him. The passage before us shows that the Lord is above, for we read, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky." Assuredly he is around them, for "The eternal God is thy refuge;" and he is before them, for "He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them." Here according to the text the Lord is also under his saints, for "Underneath are the everlasting arms." "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations," and by thee we are everywhere surrounded as the earth by the atmosphere.

"Within Thy circling power I stand;  
On every side I find thy hand;  
Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,  
I am surrounded still with God."

The verse which contains our text should be interpreted somewhat after this fashion: "The eternal God is thy dwelling-place, or thy rest, and underneath are the everlasting arms." The parallel passage is that verse in the Song wherein the bride exclaims, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." The soul hath come to its resting-place in God, and feels itself to be supported by the divine strength. The

heart has learned to abide in Christ Jesus to go no more out for ever, but to lean on his bosom both day and night. It is somewhat in the condition of Noah's dove which, when weary, was about to drop into the all-destroying waters, but Noah put out his hand and plucked her in unto him into the ark; and when she was all safe, in the hollow of his hands, held by her preserver with a firm but tender grasp, she found in that place a refuge which surrounded her and upheld her from below. The hands covered her on all sides and came beneath her too. Even thus the hand of God sustains all those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I am going, however, to take the words just as they stand in our own authorized version, and to consider them apart from the context. I ask your most careful consideration of them, for they must be very full of meaning, and very emphatic in their force. The words are placed at the end of Moses' song, and they are its crown and climax. He had wound himself up to the highest pitch of poetic excitement and spiritual fervor, and this passage is the result. He had spoken grandly before concerning the separate tribes, and the words which fell from his lips are unspeakably rich; but now he is about to close, and therefore he pours forth his loftiest strains and utters full and deep meanings, the ripest and choicest fruit of a lifetime of communion with God. As our Lord ascended to heaven blessing his disciples, so did his servant Moses before climbing to Pisgah pour out a torrent of benedictions full and deep, inspired by the divine Spirit. It is not possible, therefore, that the language can be too greatly prized. The words mean all that we can make them mean, the nectar of their consolation is altogether inexhaustible; may God the Holy Spirit help us to weigh and measure them, and then to distil their inner sense and drink of the spiced wine of his pomegranate.

"Underneath are the everlasting arms." I shall handle the text in this fashion. Where? "Underneath:" What? "The everlasting arms:" When? They are underneath us now and evermore: and if it be so, what then?

I. First let us attend to the question:- WHERE? "Underneath." Now, "underneath,, is a region into which we cannot see. We glance downwards, and the dead cold earth stops our gaze. When we are heavy

in spirit we fix our eyes upon the ground and look, and look, and look, but even an eagle's glance cannot see far below. Scarce can we peer beneath the thin green sod, the bottom of a grave is well nigh the full range of mortal vision. The under world is mysterious, we associate the subterranean with all that is dark and hidden, and because of this it is often regarded as terrible. A man scarcely ever fears that which he can see in proportion to his dread of what he cannot see. Hence our alarm at the "underneath." What may be underneath us when we leave this sunlit region for the grave's o'ershadowing vault? What will happen to us in eternity? Life will soon end: what is death? What is the immediate result of death? What shall we feel when we are traversing those tracks unknown, and finding our way to the judgment seat of God? Not knowing, except that little which has been revealed to us, we are all too apt to conjecture terrors and invent horrors, and so to begin trembling concerning that which we do not understand. What a comfort it is to be told by the voice of inspiration that "Underneath are the everlasting arms!" Poets have usually been in a gloomy humor when picturing the under-world, and imagination is very apt to spin a black and tangled thread. You have read of caverns dark, where the bodies of men are fast detained, of which caverns death has the key. Of this the grim Anglo-Saxon poet wailed the warning note -

"Loathsome is that earth-house,  
And grim within to dwell;  
There thou shalt dwell,  
And worms shall divide thee."

You have heard of gloomy ruins where the night-raven for ever sits and croaks; of corridors where prisoners incessantly rattle their chains to the dolorous music of sullen groans and hollow moans. We have been afraid of death because of the horrors with which our ignorance has surrounded it, and dismayed at the future because of the mysteries which darken it. Be comforted. Our text, like a lamp, reveals the abyss of death and uplifts the veil of the future; follow its gleam, and you will see how it dispels the darkness. If you are a child of God you may descend without fear into the lowest depths: even if like Jonah you had to cry, "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for

ever," yet you need not be dismayed, for "Underneath are the everlasting arms." If you were called to take some such awful journey as Virgil and Dante have fabled in their poems, when their heroes descended into the dread Avernus, you need not tremble, though it were said of you as of them,

"Along the illuminated shade  
Darkening and lone their way they made."

If, I say, you were bound to traverse the sepulchral vaults, and all the gloomy dungeons of Hades, yet you need not fear, for "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Mystery of mysteries! thou art no longer terrible to us, because the light of lights is shining upon thee. Depths unfathomable, we no longer fear to pass through you, for there is One whose love is deeper than the depths beneath as it is higher than the heights above, and he hath said, "I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring them up from the depths of the sea." We gladly take our journey downward at the call of God, and without fear we pass through the gates of the tomb, and enter the doors of the shadow of death, for "Underneath are the everlasting arms." "Underneath"-the word arouses thought and enquiry. Everything ought to be sound, solid, and substantial there. "Underneath" must be firm, for if that fails we fail indeed. We have been building, and our eyes have been gladdened with the rising walk, and with the towering pinnacles; but what if something should be rotten "underneath"? Great will be the fall thereof, if we have built as high as heaven, if the sand lie underneath, yielding and shifting in the day of flood.

"Underneath" is the great matter to which the architect, if he be wise, will give his best attention. And truly, brethren, when you and I begin to examine into our graces and our professions, that word "underneath" suggests many a testing question. Is it all right with us as to the root of the matter- "underneath"? If not, the fair flower above ground will wither very speedily. The seed has sprung up hastily, but how is the soil underneath? for if there be no depth of earth the scorching sun will soon dry up the superficial harvest. "Underneath," though it be mysterious, is also intensely important, and hence the great joy of being able to say by faith, "Yes, 'underneath' is well secured; we have trusted in God and we

shall not be confounded; we have relied upon the eternal promises and they cannot fail; we have rested on the infinite merits of the atoning sacrifice of God's dear Son, and we shall never be ashamed of our hope." Happy is he who rests upon the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, for with him all is safe underneath; and, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, he need not fear, but may patiently hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God.

For a period we may be content with superficial pleasures, but there are times of trial when we have to fall back upon something deeper and more reliable: earthly props give way in their season, and we need superior sustaining power. The carnal mind meets with an hour when "the proud helpers do stoop under him "; and believers too, in proportion as they foolishly lean upon an arm of flesh, find their confidences departing; then it is that we feel the value of divine upholdings, and rejoice that "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Let us look more closely into this most important matter.

"Underneath are the everlasting arms." That is, first, as the foundation of everything. If you go down, down, to discover the basement upon which all things rest you come ere long to "the everlasting arms." The things which are seen are stayed up by the invisible God. This outward visible universe has no power to stand for a single instant if he does not keep it in being. By him all things consist. There are no forces apart from God's power, no existences apart from his will. He bears up the pillars of the universe. He alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. He maketh Arcturus, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. Foolish are those philosophers who think that they can reach the essence and soul from which visible things were evolved, unless they bow before the invisible God. He is the foundation of creation, the fountain and source of being, the root and basement of existence. "Underneath" everything "are the everlasting arms."

Most true is this with regard to his church. He chose her and redeemed her to himself: the very idea of a church is from the Lord alone. As a temple he devised her architecture, saying, "I will lay thy foundations with sapphires"; and he hath built up her every stone by his own power;

her walls he sustains against her enemies, so that the gates of hell cannot prevail against her, for the foundation of God standeth sure. The foundation of every true church is the Lord himself, the Highest himself doth establish her. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved. "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Blessed be God, what is true of the church as a corporate body is true of every member of the church. There abides no spiritual life in the world which is not founded upon the everlasting arms. Beloved, if the life of God be in you, if you search deep and go to the basis of it, you will find that your life is staying itself and drawing its constant nurture, yea, deriving its very existence, from the life of the eternal God. Jesus says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Your life is the life of God in you; for the divine seed is the foundation of all spiritual life. Beware, then, of harbouring in your heart anything which hath not underneath it the everlasting arms. If there be any hope let it be founded on the everlasting covenant of God; if there be any joy let it well up from the everlasting love of God; if there be any confidence let it be stayed upon the everlasting strength of Jehovah; if there be any service rendered, let it be according to the everlasting commandment. If in your soul there be any grace, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, suffer none of these matters to be superficial or pretentious, the creation of your own native strength, but let them be all founded upon the work of the Holy Ghost in your soul; in fact, let it be said of each of them, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Nothing will serve our turn in the trials of life, the terrors of death, or the solemnities of the last great day, except that which hath underneath it the everlasting arms. See how the nations reel when God no longer sustains them: "he removeth the mountains and they know not, he overturneth them in his anger." See how those churches fly into apostasy which have not underneath them the everlasting arms, they are quenched as the fire of thorns, and only a smoke remaineth. Did not Jesus say, "Every plant that my Father hath not planted shall be rooted up"? See how hypocritical professors disappear like the morning mist when the sun ariseth. Nothing will abide the day of the Lord's coming unless its foundation be laid in the eternal God. The Lord help us to know what this meaneth, so that we may be like the wise man who digged deep and built his house upon a rock.

Again we may read the words, "Underneath are the everlasting arms," in the sense of being the bottom and end and object of everything. If in faith you search into divine providence, however dark and trying it may appear, you will soon find that underneath it are the everlasting arms. Satan may be mining, but God is undermining; even under the deep devices of hell the everlasting arms are to be found. Satan's craft is deep to us, but it is very shallow to the Lord, whose wisdom goes far deeper than all the cunning of the prince of darkness. The evils and errors which are in the world should not cause us to despair of the ultimate victory of the truth, for beneath them still there is the immutable decree of the Ever-living and the Ever-blessed; and that decree shall be accomplished whoever may oppose it; hath he not said, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear"? His purpose shall stand, he will do all his pleasure. He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. Trace your present trials below their surface, trace them to the deeps instead of groaning over their outward appearance, and you will find that underneath each trouble there is a faithful purpose and a kind intent; yea, beneath the utmost depths of distress and grief God is still at work in love to your soul," From seeming evil still educing good, and better still, and better still, in infinite progression." Underneath the best events are the arms of love to make them good, and underneath the worst that can happen are the selfsame everlasting arms to moderate and overrule them. As the design, and object of all, "underneath are the everlasting arms."

I take the text, "Underneath are the everlasting arms," to mean next that the arms of God are there as the preservation of his people. His people sometimes appear to themselves to be in very great danger, but it is written, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Certain of the saints are set in very high places, and their brain might well be turned, so that they would fall; but they shall not slip with their feet, for God upholdeth the righteous. If under deep depression of spirit and sore travail of heart their feet should be almost gone, what a blessing it is to think that "underneath are the everlasting arms."



Sometimes faith walks upon a very slender thread high up above the ways of common men; poising her balancing pole of experience, she tries to keep her feet, but her satisfaction is that even if she should slip for awhile, and her joy should fail, yet there is a net beneath her which will receive her in her fall, so that she shall not be utterly dashed in pieces. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" is the gracious safeguard of those who fall, as Peter did, when Satan has them in his sieve. The people of God must and shall be safe. Satan may cast them down, but God shall save them ere they fall into perdition. Let us walk carefully none the less because of this. Let us watch well our footsteps as much as if our preservation entirely depended upon ourselves, but let us ever look alone to our Lord, knowing that he alone keepeth the feet of his saints. Holiness, strength of faith, and ultimate perfection are the things which we must daily aim at, but it is a blessed consolation that when through infirmity or carelessness we do not fully maintain our consecrated walk we are not therefore cast away for ever, for it is written, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

That leads me to read my text in the fourth sense as teaching us that the everlasting arms are the rest of his people. If these everlasting arms are always outstretched to preserve me lest I totter in weakness and fall into destruction, then on those arms let me lean my whole weight for time and for eternity. That is the practical lesson of this choice word. Keep yourselves, beloved, in those arms which even now are embracing you. Wherefore vex your heart when you may be free from care? Underneath everything your Father's arms are placed-what, then, can fret you? Why are you disquieted when you might dwell at ease and inherit the earth? Are you afraid to rest where the universe resteth? Are not your Father's arms a sufficient pillow for you? Do you think that it is not safe to be at peace when the love and might of God, like two strong arms, are stretched out for your upholding, and the divine voice whispers to you "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him"? His own word to his prophets is, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem." Will you not accept the comfort which he sends by his Spirit, and bids his servants impart to you? When God himself doth rest in his love will not you rest in it, and shall it not again

be proven that "we that have believed do enter into rest"? Is not the Lord Jesus our peace? Why, then, are we troubled? Well may you lie down to sleep in peace when underneath you are the everlasting arms. Well may your spirit be filled with composure and become indifferent to outward trials when you are thus upborne. Blow ye winds and toss ye waves, the barque cannot sink, or if it did sink it could not sink to our destruction, we should only drop into the great Father's hand, for underneath even the sinking vessel are the everlasting arms. Now, let the earth reel with earthquake, or open wide her mouth to swallow us up quick, we need not fear to descend into her dreariest gulf, since underneath us still would be the everlasting arms. What a fullness of rest this secures to the believing people of God!

I will fetch from the text one more meaning while I am speaking upon the position of these arms. The text seems to give us a promise of exaltation and uplifting. We may be very low and greatly cast down, but "underneath are the everlasting arms." The merciful God is great at a dead lift. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people." Who can tell how high a man may be lifted up-to what sublime elevations he may safely ascend when the Lord makes his feet like hind's feet that he may stand upon his high places? If still underneath him are the everlasting arms he may safely obey the word, "Get thee up into the high mountains." He may outsoar the eagle, mounting higher and higher till he has left the sun like a speck beneath his feet, and still underneath him shall be the everlasting arms. Therefore higher, and yet higher may we hourly ascend in thought, in joy, in holiness, in likeness to our God; this is meant to encourage us to rise, since there can be no danger while the arms of God are underneath. This then, my brethren, is where we may expect to find the strength and power of God: it is underneath us, bearing us up. We may not always see it, for the underneath is hidden from our sight, but surely as in secret the Lord upholds the huge columns of the universe so he upbeareth all his own servants, and their concerns. "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

II. Secondly let us meditate upon WHAT is it which is beneath us. The everlasting arms. What is meant by this? I hope the gentlemen who are so

ingenious in toning down the word "everlasting" will not meddle with my text. A new way of reading the Bible has been invented in these highly enlightened days. I used to get on exceedingly well with the book years ago, for it seemed clear and plain enough, but modern interpreters would puzzle us out of our wits and out of our souls, if they could, by their vile habit of giving new meanings to plain words. Thank God, I keep to the old simple way; but I am informed that the inventors of the new minimizing glasses manage to read the big words small, and they have even read down the word "everlasting" into a little space of time. Everlasting may be six weeks or six months according to them. I use no such glasses; my eyes remain the same, and "everlasting" is "everlasting" to me whether I read of everlasting life or everlasting punishment. If I clip the word in one place I must do so in another, and it will never do to have a terminable heaven. I cannot afford to give it up here when its meaning is joyous to the saint, and therefore not there when its sound is terrible to the sinner. What, then, are "the everlasting arms"? They are arms which always were, and always will be: arms which always were strong, and never will grow faint or weary; arms which once outstretched will never be drawn back again; arms which once engaged for the defense of the chosen people shall never cease to work for their good world without end. Not failing arms, nor dying arms, but everlasting arms, are underneath the saints of God.

I understand the words to mean, first, the arms of everlasting purpose, "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." His purpose may be called his arms, by which he stretches out his hands to do his work, and these can never fail: for "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." "He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth even that he doeth." We have to deal with One whose gifts and calling are without repentance. In the book of his purpose is it written, and his providence and grace shall tally with the secret decree, "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion," and the everlasting purpose of sovereign grace shall be carried out to the end. O my soul, when thy poor purposes shift and vanish, and thou hast to

change them twenty times a day, what a blessing it is to think that the purpose of thy God standeth fast, and he himself is without the shadow of a turning. He has declared that he that believeth in Christ shall be saved, and so thou shalt be, though all hell assail thee. Come what may, the eternal purpose lies at the bottom of all, and will be the end and result of all, and so all Israel shall be saved; for "underneath are the everlasting arms" of unchanging purpose.

But next we see here the arms everlasting of love. I do no violence to Scripture when I compare love to arms, for is it not written, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"? Love has hands and arms with which it draws us, and these are at this moment underlying all the dealings of God with us. This love is everlasting love: without beginning, without variation, without end. Underneath thee, child of God, is the infinite affection of the omnipotent God; what, then, can harm thee? Thy love! Ah, how it flames forth at times, and then how dull it becomes; but thy safety comes from a love which never varies, which many waters cannot quench, and which the floods cannot drown. Look beneath thee, and thou mayest see a depth of love, fathomless and eternal, which may well remind thee of what Moses said when he spake of "the deep which lieth under." The strength of love which abides in God, who is love itself, no mind can conceive, but all this is placed under thee, O believer, for thy succor, support, and security. Immovable arches of immortal love sustain thy soul from fear of ruin. Rest thou there and sing unto the Lord thy song upon thy stringed instrument as long as thou hast any being.

But next, these arms may be described as the arms of power. And what saith Isaiah the prophet? "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength." What said Jeremiah? "Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee." Strength is needed to uphold the people of God lest they fall to their confusion, and that strength is always ready, nay, it is always in exercise. Believer, thou hast been able to stand because the arm of divine strength has never been withdrawn. He is able to keep thee from falling and to present thee faultless, and he will do it. "O bless our God, ye people, and make the

voice of his praise to be heard: which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved."

These are the arms of immutability, for God abideth for ever the same. "I am God; I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." He saved his people "with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, for his mercy endureth for ever." They are the arms of everlasting blessing, for God has determined to make his people happy, and happy they shall be. "Surely," saith he "in blessing I will bless thee." "Thy blessing is upon thy people." He giveth liberally unto them, and that liberality is never diminished, nor can it be stayed. Underneath thee, believer, are the everlasting arms, for ever carrying thee as a nurse carries her child, for ever gathering up for thee innumerable blessings, and carrying them for thy provision. He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and with that same arm will he show strength unto his people. How blest are they who have such arms beneath them. I heard of a man who was spending a great deal of money, living in grand style, and launching out in business, and certain of his fellow tradesmen told me that they could not see a reason for his cutting such a figure. But said one, "There is somebody at his back; we are quite sure of that." And so it is with us: we may well be strong, we may well be happy, for there is a power unseen of men which is at our back: the everlasting arms are underneath us, and we cannot fail. Let us be joyous and confident, and praise the right hand of the Lord. Yea, though our conflicts should multiply let us not fear, but let us sing unto the Lord, "Thy right hand, o Lord, is become glorious in power. The right hand of the Lord is exalted. The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." For this right hand upholdeth the cause of his servants.

III. Now, in the third place, let us consider WHEN are the everlasting arms underneath us? The only answer is now and for evermore.

Now; at this moment, beloved, the everlasting arms are underneath us. The life of a Christian is described as walking by faith, and to my mind walking by faith is the most extraordinary miracle ever beheld beneath the sun. Walking on the waves, as Peter did, is a type of the life of every Christian. I have sometimes likened it to ascending an invisible staircase far up into the clouds. You cannot see a step before you, but you wind up

towards the light. When you look downward all is dark, and before you lies nothing visible but cloud, while beneath you yawns a fathomless abyss. Yet we have climbed, some of us, now for years up this perpetually ascending stair, never seeing an inch before us. We have often paused almost in horror, and asked in wonder, "What next, and what next?" Yet what we thought was cloud has proved to be solid rock; darkness has been light before us, and slippery places have been safe. Every now and then, when the darkness has been denser than usual, a darkness which might be felt, when all the past behind us has vanished, and nothing has been seen but the one step we stood on, we have said, "How did I come here? What a strange, mysterious life mine has been!" We have almost wished ourselves down on the level among the worldlings, who can always see their way and know what is underneath them, but faith has come to our help again; we have believed, and believing we have seen the invisible and grasped the eternal; and then we have gone on, have put our foot down again, and anon have run up with joy the shining way. What an ascent we have sometimes made upon that ladder of light, so that we have companied with angels and left the world far down beneath our feet! Now and then we have enjoyed a glimpse through the thick darkness of the jewelled walls of the eternal city, which needeth no candle, neither light of the sun; we have seen, I say, its brightness, and determined still to climb the mysterious way. Well, believer, at this moment, though thou canst not see thy way, yet since thou art walking by faith "underneath are the everlasting arms."

It is so, though at this moment you fear that you are going down into a gloomy glen. You have lost a great deal of money lately, and the friend who so kindly helped you is taken away, so that you are going down in the world: yes, but underneath are the everlasting arms. You are getting nearer to those arms now. Friends and wealth came between you and the almighty arms: but now you must lean on them alone. The creature fails, and you must rest on the Creator. You will have sweeter fellowship now than ever you had, since there is nothing to come between you and your Lord. "Ah," saith one, "but I am sinking in spirit; I am greatly depressed." Still underneath are the everlasting arms. Thy soul is sinking, like Peter and the waves, but a hand is outstretched to save thee: thou canst not sink while thy heavenly Father's hand is near. Go on sinking, if the Lord

so will it. Sometimes the greatest sweetness in life is found and intense bitterness. I never have in my soul a more solid and real joy than when I have been cast into the dust with fearful depression of spirit. I stay myself upon my God, and him only, and then I touch the confines of bliss, though trembling all the while. I hardly know how to express the unrivalled sweetness of resting upon the Lord alone. When you are flung upon God altogether, then does your soul enter into the divinest peace. The natural spirits have gone, everything that sprang from the vigor of youth and the natural elasticity of the mind has departed: now you come right upon God, and lie naked in his hands; and then there is cast into your cup a foretaste of heaven which the soul sits down and humbly sips to herself, for the secret she can never tell; no ear would understand her if she did. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." And so, dear friends, if you should sink both in circumstances and in spirits, and your experience should happen to be a very downcast one, it will still be well. If now you have to discover the corruption of your nature, which you knew little of before; if now your experience, instead of being that of the brethren of the higher life, should be one of humiliation, of prostration of spirit, of deep self-loathing, still underneath thee are the everlasting arms. If you are not to climb to Pisgah with Moses, but must dive to the bottom of the mountains like Jonah, still underneath are the everlasting arms, even at the lowest point of your going down.

So it shall be for ever and for ever, for the arms are everlasting in their position as well as their power. Now thou hast come to die; thou hast gathered up thy feet in the bed; the death sweat stands upon thy brow: thou art sinking so far as this life is concerned among the sons of men, but underneath thee shall then be the everlasting arms. Beautifully has Bunyan described confidence in death, when he pictures the pilgrims passing the river. Christian cried out to young Hopeful, "I sink in deep waters, the billows go over my head, all his waves go over me." Then said Hopeful, "Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good." Thus, beloved, shall it be with you. You shall feel the bottom of death's chill river, but you shall say "it is good"; for underneath are the everlasting arms. Then comes the last plunge, and we shall be as when a man stands on the edge of a precipice and leaps over into the clouds below him. You need not fear to take your last farewell and drop into your

Father's arms, for underneath you shall be the everlasting arms; and oh, how sweetly shall you be caught up together with the Lord in the air, pressed to the bosom of the great Father, and borne upward into the heaven of heavens, where you shall behold the face of the Well Beloved, and find yourselves entranced in his company for ever and for ever. O heir of glory, underneath thee there is no hell: underneath thee there is no annihilation: underneath thee are the everlasting arms; therefore commit thy spirit unto thy faithful Creator, and then welcome life or death, for all is well with thee.

IV. Lastly, let us reply to the query, WHAT THEN? If underneath us are the everlasting arms, what then?

First, let us look underneath. My brother, you have been going on with great discomfort, sighing and crying because your way is rough, and because sometimes you think it dangerous, and fear that you will slip into a chasm and perish. Now, instead of complaining after this fashion, and fearing the road, stop a little and begin to examine- "What is underneath me? What is the bottom of my hope?" You hypocrites dare not examine; you formalists dare not search. You are afraid to ask questions and to open your eyes, lest you should see too much; but those who are honest and sincere in the way of our Lord are not afraid to be tested. You who are under any anxiety will do well to pull right up and say, "I have been troubled with doubts and fears, and I will no longer endure it. I will know the end of this; I will search myself and know my ways, and pray the Lord to let me see the worst of my case; for I long to know what there is underneath." If you are believing in Jesus Christ with a sincere heart, and resting in the atoning sacrifice, and the covenant of which his blood is the seal, you can afford to search underneath; for you will find all things solid and eternal. It is well to look underneath an outward providence when it frowns darkly upon you, for it conceals the eternal purpose of love. The sorrows which you see are but, as it were, a napkin hiding the precious treasure of eternal grace, hence you can say to yourself in all ill weathers, "All is well, for all is well underneath. The eternal purpose is working out my lasting good." Do not be afraid to search underneath, my trembling brothers and sisters; but when you do so and find the everlasting arms to be there, then sing unto the Lord with all your might.



The next inference is, if underneath us are the everlasting arms, let us lean heavily. We are afraid to lean too hard on God. To be careful not to encroach on a friend is a very proper disposition. Do not spoil a generous friend by drawing upon him so heavily that he will dread to see you again. I wish some people had a little more of that disposition, as far as I am concerned; but this is not a right feeling when you have to deal with the Lord. Never fear that you will weary your God; never say to yourself, "I will ask as little as I can." Why, he says, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." Never say "I will trust him a little, take him a part of my cares and rest a portion of my trials upon him." No, lean with your whole weight. Do not keep a spare ounce for your own carrying. That will break your back. Bring all the tons and the pounds and the ounces and the pennyweights, and cast them all on God. He loves his children to treat him with entire confidence. All your weight will not trouble him. You know Aesop's fable of the polite little gnat which apologised to the ox for burdening him when he alighted on his horn, and the ox replied that he really did not know he was there. Your God will not tell you that, for he counts the very hairs of your head, but he will tell you that your load is no burden to him. Why, if you had fifty kingdoms burdening your brain and if you carried the politics of a hundred nations in your mind, or were loaded with all the cares of a thousand worlds, you might safely leave them with the Wonderful Counsellor and go your way rejoicing. Lean hard, brothers, lean hard, sisters, for underneath you are the everlasting arms.

The next thing is then, let us rise confidently. Do not be afraid of ascending to heights of love: do not be afraid of having a high ambition for a wholly consecrated life. Be not afraid of high doctrines, or high enjoyments, or high attainments in holiness. Go as high as you like, for underneath you are the everlasting arms. It would be dangerous to speculate, but it is safe to believe. Some men are always going downward, turning diamonds into gas and hallelujahs into howlings; they are trying to get rid of precious truth, and to substitute for it some new theory or the other. Let us be brave in the other direction, and seek to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. You may climb, my dear young brother,

nor fear to fall even if you reach the masthead of truth, for underneath are the everlasting arms.

Once more, let us dare unhesitatingly, and be very courageous for the Lord our God.

"Through floods or flames, if Jesus leads,  
I'll follow where he goes."

for underneath are the everlasting arms. Are you called upon to lose everything for Christ? Go on and leap like Curtius into the gulf for your Lord Jesus, for underneath you are the everlasting arms. Does your Master call you to an enterprise which seems impossible? Nevertheless, if God has called you to it, attempt it, for he rendereth to every man according to his work. Remember what the negro said: "If Massa Jesus say to me, `Sam. you jump through that brick wall,' I jump. It is Sam's business to jump: it is Massa's work to make me go through the wall." So it is with you. It is yours to leap forward when the captain gives the watchword, and in confidence to attempt what mere nature cannot achieve, for the supernatural is still with us. The best of all is, God is with us. Underneath us are the everlasting arms. Less reliance upon self and more reliance upon God; less counting of the barley loaves and fishes, and a greater readiness to bring them to his hands who can multiply them till they shall feed the thousands, this is what we want. God grant us grace to trust in his almighty power and sing henceforth and for ever "underneath are the everlasting arms."

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**Understandest Thou What Thou Readest?**

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

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

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

Having become a proselyte to the faith of Israel, the eunuch made a long and perilous journey to Jerusalem. After he had enjoyed the solemn feast he returned; and while he traveled along, he read the word of God. The book of the prophet Isaiah was the portion chosen for his meditation. Does it not strike you as being remarkable that he should be reading at that moment the best text that Philip could have selected? He had reached a portion of Scripture from which, without the slightest

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

This eminent nobleman is reading. That is a commendable occupation: reading is in itself somewhat of a hopeful sign. In these days we need hardly exhort young men to read. "Give attendance to reading," said the wise apostle Paul, and that was excellent advice for Timothy. Let all Christian men be reading men. But, then, Philips question contains these words, "what thou readest," and that suggests a necessary enquiry. I am afraid much that is read nowadays had far better be left unread. Multitudes of books are fruits of an accursed tree—the tree of evil knowledge, which is watered by the rivers of perdition. The fruits of this upas-tree will yield no benefit to the minds that feed thereon, but much of solemn damage; by perverting the judgment, or polluting the imagination. Souls have been ruined to all eternity by reading a vile book. Count it no trifle to have heard bad language; but count it a more serious evil to have read a bad book which has wounded your soul, and left a scar upon your conscience. The writer of an evil book is a deliberate poisoner, secretly pouring death into the wells from which men drink. The printers and publishers of such works are accomplices in the crime. Young men, you will read—who among us would wish you to do otherwise?—but take heed what you read! As one who has read more greedily than most men all sorts of books, I bear my testimony that the best of reading is the reading of the best of books. The more we read the Bible and volumes that lead up to the understanding of it, the better for us. I do not like to

see in a lending-library all the works of fiction needing to be bound two or three times over, while the books of sober fact and solid teaching, and the works that speak of eternal things, have never been read, since they have not even been cut. I fear that this is the general if not the universal rule. "Understandest thou what thou readest?" is a question I should hardly put until a man has made up his mind that he will not read mere rubbish and falsehood, but will with deep attention read that which is accurate, truthful, devout, and ennobling. Read; take heed what you read; and then seek to understand what you read.

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

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

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

"Understandest thou what thou readest?" that is the question. "I read a chapter every morning," says one. Quite right; keep that up, but "Understandest thou what thou readest?" "Well, I learn the daily text." Yes, but "Understandest thou what thou readest?" That is the main point. The butterflies flit over the garden, and nothing comes of their flitting;

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

I. WHAT, THEN, IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO BE UNDERSTOOD IN THIS BOOK? I do verily believe that it is contained in the passage which the eunuch was reading. It is a very singular passage. A section of the Bible begins at Isaiah 53., and goes onward through several chapters. I will read you a verse or two out of that part which the eunuch would soon have read had he continued to peruse the words of the prophet. Already he had noted the words,—"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." There was something for him, for he had gone astray, and knew his lost estate. Go on to chapter 54., verse 3, and

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

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

The passage from which Philip's text was taken contains the most essential thing for every young man to know. Let him know and understand the sixth verse of the fifty-third of Isaiah; it begins with "all" and ends with "all;" therefore carry it in your memories—"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." What is wanted is that we first understand that we have all gone astray. He who does not know that he has gone astray will not care for the Shepherd who comes to fetch him back again. A humbling, heart-breaking sense of our personal wanderings from the Lord is a main force by which the heavenly Father leads us to the Lord Jesus and his salvation. I want every young man here to know and understand the truth, that salvation is the gift of divine mercy to



those who are guilty, and is never the reward of human merit. Christ did not come to save you because you are good, for you are not good; nor because you have merit, for you have no merit. He would not have come to save you if you had possessed merit. Why should he? There would have been no need. I hear the doctor's brougham rattling down the street at a great pace, and I wonder where he is going. It never occurs to me that he is rushing to call upon a hale and hearty man. I am persuaded that he is hastening to see one who is very ill, perhaps one in dying circumstances, otherwise he would not drive so fast. It is just so with Jesus Christ. When he is hurrying on the wings of the wind to rescue a child of man, I am sure that the soul he visits is sick with the malady of sin, and that the Physician is making haste because the disease is developing into corruption and death. He came not "to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

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

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

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

penalties for the same offense: if he accepted Christ Jesus as my substitute, then he cannot punish me. God's justice cannot twice demand the penalty—

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

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

heart, and turn out his enemy and yours, and he will reign in you from this time forth and for ever, until he has made you perfect, and fit to dwell with himself in glory. Oh, that you understood this vital point; "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"!

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

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

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

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

altogether different business. If you want ironmongery you may go to them, but if you want the bread of heaven you must look to the Lord Jesus, the Son of the Highest." So if you want to understand the Scripture, test yourself by this: Is Jesus Christ everything to you?

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

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

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

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

The next thing is, if you have read the Scriptures with a clear understanding, they have made you glad, for this eunuch "went on his way rejoicing." The man who gets up from reading his Bible, and says, "I am a believer in Jesus; what a solemn thing it is!" and then goes forth with a pious resolution that he will make everybody as miserable as he can all the day long, wants converting again. The faith of the Scriptures leads joy by the hand, and chases away despair. When true religion comes, its tendency is to make us rejoice in the Lord always; and though we are not as happy as we ought to be, that is not the fault of our faith, but of our unbelief. Fair flowers of Paradise spring up where Faith plants her feet; but thistles grow where doubt abides. Our indigestion, or some other malady may depress us; but faith should make our songs abound even while we are travelling through the wilderness. Joys unspeakable may be ours before we

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

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

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

rescue the perishing? I put it to you from the deeps of my soul, will you not cry, "Here am I, send me!"?

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

word which every man needs who is in fear of divine wrath, and he may be sitting next to you at this moment, or he is in the same house of business with you, and needs that you should tell him about Christ. Do that, and bless his soul. May you all understand the Scriptures in this way, and may God make you a great blessing to those around you.

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

light of God.

The next bit of advice I would give is, always read with a desire to understand: always have the crackers with you to crack the nuts, that you may feed upon their kernels. Some may say, when reading the Bible, "That may be a very blessed passage, but I don't in the least know what it means." Be not content to leave the text in that condition. Weep much because no man can open the book, and loose its seven seals. Pray over the words, and study them again and again, till at last you come at the essence of the text. Reading with that view, it is wonderful how soon you will obtain the understanding you seek after.

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

Remember that you can also go to the Maker of your mind, and he can open it to receive the truth. Your mind is out of order, and it is no wonder, considering its serious damage by the Fall, and the atmosphere of sin which surrounds it in this present evil world. My mind, I know, is very likely to be in a disorderly state; it has for fifty years been always at work, and I think it must by this time be like an old clock that has grown rusty or dusty. I find my brains want clearing out a bit; and I believe that this is the case with you young men, too. You are either very busy, or else very careless, and the dust of care or neglect spreads over your brain. Who can set the brain right? The Creator who made the brain. The Holy Spirit has a wonderful power in clearing the intellect. You shall study for



a month and make no headway; but you shall pray to God about a spiritual truth, and it shall be clear to you in a minute. There are multitudes of instances in which men have turned dark problems over and over again in their minds, and have never solved them by their own mental efforts, but one flash of Divine light has made everything bright as noonday. Wait, then, upon the Author of the Book, and then wait upon the author of yourself, and say, "Lord, as thou openest the Scriptures, so open my understanding that I may perceive their meaning."

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

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

When you are about it, dear young friend, I beseech you to trust Christ

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

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

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## **Unimpeachable Justice**

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. - Psalm 51:4

Yesterday was to me a day of deep solemnity; a pressure rested on my mind throughout the whole of it, which I could not by any possibility remove, for at every hour I remembered that during that day one of the most fallen of my fellow-creatures was launched into an unknown world, and made to stand before his Maker. Some might have witnessed his execution without tears; I think I could not even have thought of it for long together without weeping, at the terrible idea of a man so guilty, about to commence that endless period of unmingled misery, which is the horrible doom of the impenitent, which God hath prepared for sinners. Yesterday morning the sun saw a sigh which sickened it - the sight of a man launched, by a judicial process, into eternity, for guilt which has rendered him infamous, and which will stamp his name with disgrace as long as it shall be remembered.

There is now agitating the public mind something which I thought I might improve this day, and turn to very excellent purpose. There are only two things concerning which the public have any suspicion. The verdict of the jury was the verdict of the whole of England; we were unanimous as to the high probability, the well-nigh absolute certainty of his guilt; but there were two doubts in our minds - one of them but small, we grant you, but if both could have been resolved we should have felt more easy than we do now. The one was concerning the criminal's guilt, and the other was concerning his punishment. At least some few of our

fellow-countrymen have been afraid, lest we may not have been justified when we spoke against him, and quite clear when he was judged. Two things were wanted: we should have liked to have had his own confession, and certainly we should have preferred something more than circumstantial evidence; we desired to have had the testimony of an eye-witness, who could swear to the deed of murder done. But, moreover, there is also a strong feeling in the mind of many, that the severity of the punishment is questionable. There are some who pronounce authoritatively, that the murderer's blood must be shed for murder; but there are some who think the Christian dispensation has ameliorated the law, and that now it is no longer "eye for eye, tooth for tooth." Many persons in England have shuddered at the thought of executing a penalty so fearful, on any man, however great his crime, seeing that it puts him beyond the pale of hope. I shall not enter into the question of the rightness of capital punishment; I have my opinion upon it, but this is not exactly the place to state it: I only wish to use these facts as an illustration of the text. David says, "O Lord, hear my own confession: 'against thee, thee only, have I sinned,' and by my own confession thou wouldst 'be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.' And, Lord, there is something else besides my own confession. Thou, thyself, wast eye-witness of my deed. 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight;' and now thou art, indeed, 'justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.' And as to the severity of my punishment, there can be no doubt of that." There may be doubt of the severity, when man executes punishment for a crime against man, but there can be no doubt when God himself executes vengeance for a crime that is committed against himself. "Thou art justified when thou speakest; thou art clear when thou judgest."

Our subject this morning, then, will be, both in the condemnation and in the punishment of every sinner, God will be justified: and he will be made most openly clear, from the two facts of the sinner's own confession, and God himself having been an eye-witness of the deed. And as for the severity of it, there shall be no doubt upon the mind of any man who shall receive it, for God shall prove to him in his own soul, that damnation is nothing more nor less than the legitimate reward of sin.

There are two kinds of condemnation: the one is *the condemnation of the elect*, which takes place in their hearts and consciences, when they have the sentence of death in themselves, that they should not trust in themselves - a condemnation which is invariably followed by peace with God, because after that there is no further condemnation, for they are then in Christ Jesus, and they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The second condemnation is that of *the finally impenitent*, who, when they die, are most righteously and justly condemned by God for the sins they have committed - a condemnation not followed by pardon, as in the present case, but followed by inevitable damnation from the presence of God. On both these condemnations we will discourse this morning. God is clear when he speaks, and he is just when he condemns, whether it be the condemnation which he passes on Christian hearts, or the condemnation which he pronounces from his throne, when the wicked are dragged before him to receive their final doom.

I. In the first place, CONCERNING THE CHRISTIAN, when he feels himself condemned by conscience and by God's Holy Spirit, and when he hears the thunders of God's law proclaiming against him a sentence which, if it had not been already executed on his Saviour, would have been fulfilled on him, the man has no grounds whatever at that time to plead any excuse; but he will say in the words of the Psalmist, "Thou art justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest." Let me show you how.

1. In the first place, *there is a confession*. With regard to the man who was executed yesterday, there was no confession; we could not have expected it; such crimes could not have been committed by a man capable of confessing them. The fact that he died hardened in his guilt is proof well-nigh conclusive that he was guilty; for had he betrayed any emotion, or had he bowed his knees and cried for mercy, we might then have suspected that he had not been guilty of so dark a deed of blood; but from the very fact that he hardened his heart, we infer that he was capable of committing crimes, the infamy of which point them out as the offspring of a seared and torpid conscience. The Christian, when he is condemned by the Holy Law, makes a confession, a full and free confession. He feels, when God records the sentence against him, that the execution of it

would be just, for his now honest heart compels him to confess the whole story of his guilt. Allow me to make some remarks on the confession which is followed by pardon.

First, such a confession is a *sincere one*. It is not the prattling confession used by the mere formalist, when he bends his knee and exclaims that he is a sinner; but it is a confession which is undoubtedly sincere, because it is attended by awful agonies of mind, and usually by tears, and sighs, and groans. There is something about the penitent's demeanour which puts it beyond the possibility of a fear that he is a deceiver when he is confessing his sin. There is an outward emotion, manifesting the inward anguish of the spirit. He stands before God, and does not merely turn king's evidence against himself, as the means of saving himself, but with tears in his eyes he cries, "O God, I am guilty;" and then he begins to recount the circumstances of his crime, even as if God had never seen him. He tells to God what God already knows, and then the Gracious One proves the truth of the promise, "He that confesseth his sin shall find mercy."

In the next place, that confession is *always abundantly sufficient* for our own condemnation. The Christian feels that if he had only half the sin to confess that he is obliged to tell out to God, it would be enough to damn his soul for ever - that if he had only one crime to acknowledge, it would be like a millstone round his neck, to sink him for ever in the bottomless pit. He feels that his confession is superabundantly enough to condemn him - that is almost a work of supererogation to confess all, for there is enough in one tenth of it to send his soul to hell, and make it abide there for ever. Have you ever confessed your sins like this? If not, as God liveth, you have never known what it is to make a true confession of your sin; you have never had the sentence of condemnation passed on you, in that way which is succeeded by mercy; but you are yet awaiting that terrible sentence which shall be succeeded by no words of love, but by the execution of the sentence of infinite indignation and displeasure.

This confession is attended with *no apology on account of sin*. We have heard of men who have confessed their guilt, and afterwards tried to extenuate their crime, and shew some reasons why they were not so guilty as apparently they would seem to be; but when the Christian confesses

his guilt, you never hear a word of extenuation or apology from him. He says, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight:" and in saying this, he makes God just when he condemns him, and clear when he sentences him for ever. Have you ever made such a confession? Have you ever thus bowed yourselves before God? Or have you tried to palliate your guilt, and call your sins by little names, and speak of your crimes as if they were but light offences? If you have not, then you have not felt the sentence of death in yourselves, and you are still waiting till the solemn death-knell shall toll the hour of your doom, and you shall be dragged out, amidst the universal hiss of the execration of the world, to be condemned for ever to flames which shall never know abatement.

Again: after the Christian confesses his sin, *he offers no promise that he will of himself behave better*. Some, when they make confessions to God, say, "Lord, if thou forgive me I will not sin again;" but God's penitents never say that. When they come before him they say, "Lord, once I promised, once I made resolves, but I dare not make them now, for they would be so soon broken, that they would but increase my guilt; and my promises would be so soon violated, that they would but sink my soul deeper in hell. I can only say, if thou wilt create in me a clean heart, I will be thankful for it, and will sing to thy praise for ever; but I cannot promise that I will live without sin, or work out a righteousness of my own. I dare not promise, my Father, that I will never go astray again;

'Unless thou hold me fast,  
I feel I must, I shall decline,  
And prove like them at last.'

Lord, if thou dost damn me, I cannot murmur; if thou dost cast me into perdition, I cannot complain; but have mercy upon me, a sinner, for Jesus Christ's sake." In that case, you see, God is justified when he condemns, and he is clear when he judges, even clearer than any earthly judge can be, because it is seldom that such a confession as that is ever made before the bar.

2. Again: when the Christian is condemned by the law in his conscience,

there is something else which makes God just in condemning him beside his confession, and that is the fact, that *God himself*, the Judge, comes forward as *a witness* to the crime. The convinced sinner feels in his own soul that his sins were committed to the face of God, in the teeth of his mercy, and that God was an exact and minute observer of every part and particle of the crime for which he is now to be condemned, and the sin which has brought him to the bar. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil *in thy sight*: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."

The convinced sinner who has just become a Christian feels at that time that God was a witness, and that he was a most *veracious* witness - that he saw, and saw most clearly; and when God, by his law, says to him, "Sinner, you did such-and-such a thing, and such-and-such a thing," the awakened conscience says, "Lord, that is true; it is true in every circumstance." And when God goes on to say, "Your motives were vile, your objects were sinful," conscience says, "Ay, Lord, that is true; I know that thou didst see it, and that thou art a sure observer; thou art no false witness, but all that thou sayest in thy law about me is true." When God says, "The poison of asps is under thy lips, thy throat is an open sepulchre, thou dost flatter with thy tongue," conscience says, "It is all true;" and when he says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," conscience says, "It is all true;" and the sinner has this awful thought, that every sin he ever sinned is written in heaven, and God records it there; he feels, therefore, that God is just when he condemns, and clear when he judges.

And, moreover, God is not simply a veracious witness, but the testimony God gives is *an abundant one*. You know that in some cases which are brought before our courts, the witness swears that he saw the man do so-and-so; but then he may be mistaken as to the identity of the person; perhaps he did not see the whole transaction; and then he has not pried into the man's heart to see what was the man's reasons, which may make the crime lighter or greater, as the case may be. But here we have a witness who can say, "I saw all the crime; I saw the lust when it was conceived; I saw the sin when it was brought forth; I saw the sin when it was finished, bringing forth death; I saw the motive; I beheld the first



imagination; I saw the sin when, as a black rivulet, it started on its way, when it suddenly began to increase by contributions of evil, and I saw it when it became at last a broad ocean of unfathomable depth - an ocean of guilt which human foot could not pass, and over which the ship of mercy could not have sailed, unless some mighty pilot had steered it by shedding his own blood." Then the Christian feels that God having seen it all, is justified when he speaks, and clear when he condemns. I should feel a solemn responsibility, if I were a judge, in putting on the black cap, to condemn a man to death; because, however carefully I may have weighed the evidence, and however clear the guilt of the prisoner may have seemed, there is possibility of mistake, and it seems a solemn thing to have consigned a fellow-creature's soul to a future world, even with a possibility of an error in that judgment; but if I had myself beheld the bloody act, with what ease of mind might I then put on the black cap, and condemn the man as being guilty, for I should know, and the world would know, that having been a witness I should be just when I spake, and clear when I condemned. Now, that is just what the Christian feels when God condemns him in his conscience, he puts his hand upon his mouth, and yields without a word to the justness of the sentence. Conscience tells him he was guilty, because God himself was a witness.

3. The other question which I hinted at as being on the public mind, is *the severity of the punishment*. In the case of a believer, when he is condemned, there is no doubt about the justice of the punishment. When God the Holy Ghost in the soul passes sentence on the old man, and condemns it for its sins, there is felt most solemnly in the heart the great truth, that hell itself is but a rightful punishment for sin. I have heard some men dispute whether the torments of hell were not too great for the sins which men can commit. We have heard men say that hell was not a right place to send such sinners to as they were; but we have always found that such men found fault with hell because they knew right well they were going there. As every man finds fault with the gallows who is going to be hung, so do many men find fault with hell because they fear that they are in danger of it. The opinion of a man about to be executed must not be taken with regard to the propriety of capital punishment, nor must we take the opinion of a man who is himself marching to hell concerning the justice of hell, for he is not an impartial judge. But the

convinced sinner is a fair witness; God has made him so, for he feels in his soul that there will be pardon given to him, and that God, by grace, will never condemn him there; but at the same time he feels that he deserves it, and he confesses that hell is not too great a punishment, and that the eternity of it is not too long a duration of punishment for the sin which he has committed. I appeal to you, my beloved brethren and sisters. You may have had doubts as to the propriety of your being sent to hell before you knew your sins; but I ask you, when you were convinced of God, whether you did not solemnly feel that he would be unjust if he did not damn your soul for ever. Did you not say in your prayer, "Lord, if thou shouldst now command the earth to open and swallow me up quick, I could not lift up my finger to murmur against thee; and if thou wert now to roll o'er my head the billows of eternal fire, I could not, in the midst of my howlings in misery, utter one single word of complaint about thy justice?" And did you not feel that if you were to be ten thousand, thousand years in perdition, you would not have been there long enough? You felt you deserved it all; and if you had been asked what was the right punishment for sin, you dare not, even if your own soul had been at stake, have written anything except that sentence, "everlasting fire." You would have been obliged to have written that, for you felt it was but deserved doom. Now, was not God just then when he condemned, and clear when he judged? and did he not come off clear from the judgment seat? because you, yourself, said the sentence would not have been one whit too severe if it had been fulfilled instead of being simply recorded, and then you, yourself, set at liberty. Ah! my dear friends, there may be some who rail at God's justice; but no convinced sinner ever will. He sees God's law in all its glorious holiness, and he smites his hand upon his breast, and he says, "O sinner that I am! that I ever could have sinned against such a reasonable law and such perfect commandments!" He sees God's love towards him, and that cuts him to the very quick. He says, "Oh! that I should ever have spit on the face of that Christ who died for me! Wretch that I am, that I could ever have crowned that bleeding head with the thorns of my sins, which gave itself to slumber in the grave for my redemption!" Nothing cuts the sinner to the quick more than the fact, that he has sinned against a great amount of mercy. This indeed, makes him weep; and he says, "O Lord, seeing I have been so ungrateful, the direst doom thou canst ever sentence me to, or the fiercest punishment

thou canst ever execute upon my head, would not be too heavy for the sins I have committed against thee."

And then the Christian feels too, what a deal of mischief he has done in the world by sin. Ah! if he has been spared to middle age before he is converted, he looks back and says, "Ah! I cannot tell how many have been damned by my sins; I cannot tell how many have been sent down to perdition by words which I have used, or deeds which I have committed." I confess, before you all, that one of the greatest sorrows I had, when first I knew the Lord, was to think about certain persons with whom I knew right well that I had held ungodly conversations, and sundry others that I had tempted to sin; and one of the prayers that I always offered, when I prayed for myself, was that such an one might not be damned through sins to which I had tempted him. And I dare say this will be the case with some of you when you look back. Your dear child has been a sad reprobate; and you think, "Did not I teach him very much that was wrong?" and you hear your neighbours swear, and you think, "I cannot tell how many I taught to blaspheme." Then you will recollect your boon companions, those you used to play cards or dance with, and you will think, "Ah! poor souls, I have damned them." And then you will say, "Lord, thou art just, if thou damnest me." When you reflect what a deal of mischief you have done by your sin, you will then say, "Lord, thou art clear when thou judgest; thou art justified when thou condemnest." I warn you who are going on in your sins, that one of the most fearful things you have to expect is, to meet those in another world who perished through being led astray by you. Think of that, O man! thou who hast been an universal tempter! There is a man now in perdition, who was taught to drink his first glass through you. There lies a soul on his death-bed, and he says, "Ah! John, I had not been here, as I now am, if you had not led me into evil courses which have weakened my body, and brought me to death's door." Oh! what a horrible fate will yours be, when, as you walk into the mouth of hell, you will see eyes staring at you, and hear a voice saying, "Here he comes! here comes the man that helped to damn my soul!" And what must be your fate, when you must lie for ever tossed on the bed of pain with that man whom you were the means of damning? As those who are saved will make jewels in the crowns of glory to the righteous, sure those whom you helped to damn will forge fresh fetters

for you and furnish fearful faggots, to increase the flames of torment which shall blaze around your spirits. Mark that, and be you warned. The Christian feels this terrible fact, when he is convinced of sin, and that makes him feel that God would be clear if he judged him, and would be justified if he condemned him. So much concerning this first condemnation.

II. But now a little concerning THE SECOND CONDEMNATION, which is the more fearful of the two. Some of you have never been condemned by God's law in your conscience. Now, as I stated at first, that every man must be condemned once, so I beg to repeat it. You must either have the sentence of condemnation passed on you by the law in your conscience, and then find mercy in Christ Jesus, or else you must be condemned to another world, when you shall stand with all the human race before God's throne. The first condemnation to the Christian, though exceedingly merciful, is terrible to bear. It is a wounded spirit, which none can endure. But, as for the second condemnation, if I could preach with sighs and tears, I could not tell you how horrible that must be. Ah, my friends, could some sheeted ghost start from its tomb, and be re-united to the spirit which has been for years in perdition, possibly such a man might preach to you, and let you know what a fearful thing it will be to be condemned at last. But as for my poor words, they are but air; for I have not heard the *miserere* of the condemned, nor have I listened to the sighs, and groans, and moans of lost spirits. If I had ever been permitted to gaze within the sheet of fire which walls the Gulf of Despair - if I had ever been allowed to walk for one moment o'er that burning marl whereon is built the dreadful dungeon of eternal vengeance, then I might tell you somewhat of its misery; but I cannot now, for I have not seen those doleful sights which might fright out eyes from their sockets, and make each individual hair stand upon your heads. I have not seen such things; yet, though I have not seen them, nor you either, we know sufficient of them to understand that God will be just when he condemns, and that he will be clear when he judges. And, now, I must go over the three points again; but I must be very brief about them.

1. God will be clear when he condemns a sinner, from this fact, that the sinner when he stands before God's bar, will either have made a

*confession*, or else such will be his terror, that he will scarce be able to brazen it out before the Almighty. Look at Judas. When he comes before God's bar, will not God be clear in condemning him? for he himself confessed, "I have sinned against innocent blood," and he cast down the money in the temple. And few men are so hardened as to restrain themselves from acknowledging their guilt. How many of you, when you thought you were dying, made a confession upon your death-beds to you God! And mark you, there will be many of you, who, when you come to die, though you have never confessed, yet will lie there, and confess before God in your moments of wakefulness during the night, the sins of your youth, and your former transgressions; and it may be, that when you are laying there, God's vengeance will be heavy on your conscience, that you will be obliged to tell those who stand about your bed, that you have been guilty of notorious sins. Ah! will not God be just when you shall go straight from your death-bed to his bar, and he shall say, "Sinner, thou art condemned on thine own confession; there is no need for me to open the book, no need for me to pronounce the sentence; thou hast thyself pronounced thine own guilt; ere thou didst die, thou didst stamp thyself with condemnation; 'depart ye cursed!'" And though there will be many die who never made a confession in this world, and perhaps there will be some professors so brazen-faced that they will even stand before God's throne, and say, "When saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee not? When saw we thee naked, and clothed thee not?" yet I cannot believe that most of them will be able to plead any excuse. I find Christ saying of one that he stood speechless when he was asked how he got in, not having on a wedding garment; and so it may be with you, sirs. You may brazen it out when here, you may scorn the law and despise the thunders of Sinai; but it will be different with you then. You may sit up in your bed, and rail against Christ, even when death is staring you in the face; but you will not do it then. Those bones of yours which you thought were of iron, will suddenly be melted; that heart of yours, which was like steel or the nether millstone, will be dissolved like wax in the midst of your bowels; you will begin to cry before God, and weep, and howl: you yourself will testify to your own guilt, when you say, "Rocks! hide me; mountains! on me fall;" for you would need no mountains and no rocks to fall upon you, if you were not guilty. You will be justly condemned, for you will make your own confession when you stand before God's bar. Ah! if you could see the

criminal then, what a difference there is in him! Where now are those eyes that stared so impiously at the Bible? Where now are those lips which said, "I curse God and die!" Where now is that heart which once so stout, that spirit once so valiant, as to laugh at hell and talk familiarly with death? Ah! where is it? Is that the selfsame creature - he whose knees are knocking together, whose hair is standing up on end, whose blanched cheek displays the terror of his soul? Is that the selfsame man who just now was burning with impudent rage against his Maker? Yes, it is he; hear what he has to say, "O God, I hate thee; I confess it; I was unjust in the world that has gone by, and I am unjust now; wreck thy vengeance on me; I dare ask no mercy, and no pardon, for fixed is my heart still to rebel against thee; indissoluble are the bonds of my guilt: I am damned, I am damned, and I ought to be." Such will be the confession of every man, when he shall stand before his God at last, if he is out of Christ, and unwashed in the Saviour's blood. Sinners! can ye hear that and not tremble? Then I have a wonder before me this day - a wonder of conscience, a wonder of hardness of heart, a wonder of impenitency.

2. But in the second place, God will be just, because *there will be witnesses* there to prove it. There will be none of you my dear friends, if you are ever condemned, who will be condemned on circumstantial evidence: there will be no necessity for the deliberation of a jury; there will be no conflicting evidence concerning your crimes; there will be no doubts to testify in your favour. In fact, if God himself should ask for witnesses in your case, all the witnesses would be against you. But there will be no need of witnesses; God himself will open his Book; and how astonished will you be, when all your crimes are announced, with every individual circumstance connected with them - all the minuteness of your motives, and an exact description of your designs! Suppose I should be allowed to open one of the books of God, and read that description, how astonished you would be! But what will be your astonishment, when God shall open his great book and say, "Sinner, here is thy case," and begin to read! Ah! mark how the tears run down the sinner's cheek; the sweat of blood comes from every pore; and the loud thundering voice still reads on, while the righteous execrate the man who could commit such acts as are recorded in that book. There may be no murder staining the page, but there may be the filthy imagination, and God reads what a man imagines;

for to imagine sin is vile, though to do it is viler still. I know I should not like to have my thoughts read over for a single day. Oh! when you stand before God's bar, and hear all this, wilt thou not say, "Lord, thou wilt condemn me, but I cannot help saying thou art just when thou condemnest, and clear when thou judgest." There will be eye-witnesses there.

3. But lastly, in the sinner's heart there will be no doubt at last as to *the righteousness of his punishment*. The sinner may in this world think that he can never by his sins by any possibility deserve hell; but he will not indulge that thought when he gets there. One of the miseries of hell will be that the sinner will feel that he deserves it all. Tossed on a wave of fire he will see written in every spark that emanates therefrom, "Thou knewest thy duty, and thou didst it not." Tossed back again by another wave of flame, he hears a voice saying, "Remember, you were warned!" He is hurled upon a rock, and whilst he is being wrecked there, a voice says, "I told thee it would be better for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for thee." Again he plunged under another wave of brimstone, and a voice says, "He that believeth not shall be damned; thou didst not believe, and thou art here." And when again he is hurled up and down on some wave of torture, each wave shall bear to him some dreadful sentence, which he read in God's Word, in a tract, or in a sermon. Yes, it may be, my friends, that I shall be one of your tormentors in hell, if you should be damned. I trust in God that I myself shall be in heaven; and perhaps, if ye are lost, one of the most powerful things that shall tend to increase your misery will be the fact that I have always tried to warn you, and warn you as earnestly as possible; and when you lift up your eyes to heaven, you will shriek, and say, "O God! there is my minister looking down reprovngly on me, and saying, 'Sinner, I warned thee.'" If thou art lost, it is not for want of preaching; if thou art damned, it is not because I did not tell thee how thou mightest be saved; if thou art in hell, it is not because I did not weep over thee, and urge thee to flee from the wrath to come, for I did warn thee, and that will be the terror of thy doom - that thou hast despised warnings and invitations, and hast destroyed thyself. God is not accountable for thy damnation, and man is not accountable for it; but thou thyself hast done it. And thou wilt say, "O Lord, it is true I am now tossed in fire, but I myself lit the flame; it is true

that I am tormented, but I forged the irons which now confine my limbs; I burned the brick that hath built my dungeon; I myself didst bring myself here; I walked to hell, even as a fool goeth to the stocks, or an ox to the slaughter; I sharpened the knife which is now cutting my vitals; I nursed the viper which is now devouring my heart; I sinned, which is the same as saying that I damned myself; for to sin is to damn myself - the two words are synonymous." Sin is damnation's sire; it is the root, and damnation is the horrible flower which must inevitably spring from it. Ay, my dear friends, I tell you yet again, there will be nothing more patent before the throne of God than the fact, that God will be just when he sends you to hell. You will feel that then, even though you do not feel it now.

I thought within myself just this minute, that I heard the whisper of some one saying, "Well, sir, I feel that such men as Palmer, a murderer, will feel that God is just in damning them; but I have not sinned as they have done." It is true; but if thy sins be less, remember that thy conscience is more tender, for according to the amount of guilt, men's consciences generally begin to get harder, and because thy conscience is more tender, thy little sin is a great sin, because it is committed against greater light and greater tenderness of heart; and I tell you - that a little sin against great light may be greater than a great sin against little light. You must measure your sins not by their apparent heinousness, but by the light against which you sinned. No crime could be much worse than the crime of Sodom; but even Sodom, filthy Sodom, shall not have so hot a place as a moral young lady, one who has fed the poor and clothed the naked, and done all she could, except loving Christ. What say you to that? Is it unjust? No. If I be a less sinner than another, I all the more deserve to be damned, if I do not come to Christ for mercy. Oh! my dear hearers, my beloved hearers, I cannot bring you to Christ. Christ has brought some of you himself, but I cannot bring you to Christ. How often have I tried to do it! I have tried to preach my Saviour's love, and this day I have preached my Father's wrath; but I feel I cannot bring you to Christ. I may preach God's law; but that will not affright you, unless God sends it home to your heart; I may preach my Saviour's love, but that will not woo you, unless my Father draw you. I am sometimes tempted to wish that I could draw you myself - that I could save you. Sure, if I could, ye should soon be



saved! But ah! remember, your minister can do but little; he can do nothing else but preach to you. Do pray that God would bless that little, I beseech you, ye who can pray. If I could do more, I would do it; but it is very little I can do for a sinner's salvation. Do, I beseech you, my dear people, pray to God to bless the feeble means that I use. It is his work and his salvation; but he *can* do it. O poor trembling sinner, dost thou now weep? Then come to Christ! O poor haggard sinner, haggard in thy soul! come to Christ! O poor sin-bitten sinner! look to Christ! O poor worthless sinner! come to Christ! O poor trembling, fearing, hungering, thirsting sinner! come to Christ! "Ho! everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come, buy wine and milk; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Come! Come! Come! God help you to come! for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **The Unknown Giver and the Misused Gifts**

For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax. - Hosea 2:8-9

In reading any of the records concerning the people of Israel and the people of Judah, one stands amazed at two things, and scarcely knows which to wonder at most. The first thing which causes astonishment is the great sin of the people; and the next thing, which is even more marvellous, is the great patience of God. I scarcely know which of the two things causes me greater surprise, that men should be so guilty, or that God should be so gracious. On every page of Israel's history, the kindness and forbearance of Jehovah are manifested towards the people whom he had betrothed unto himself. Even in the midst of their backsliding and idolatry, he did not forget the covenant which he had made with their

fathers. Yet, in spite of all this goodness, the people sinned times without number, and grieved his Spirit again and again; instead of being led to repentance, they sinned yet more and more.

Their iniquity, and the forbearance of God, stand like two mountain summits of the history of the chosen yet wayward people.

Let us just transfer these thoughts to ourselves, and see if we can, with any justice, cast a stone at the people who, in spite of such love, went so far astray. Alas, we are condemned by the comparison! We are nothing better than they were. Our case is, perhaps, fuller of contradictions and inconsistencies, if that is possible. Is it not wonderful, first of all, that we should have been so guilty, that we should have persevered in sin so many years, that even after we have known God we should have been so unfaithful to him, so unfaithful to our own convictions, and to our own conscience? Is it not this awful fact amazing? But that God should love us still, that he should follow us with warning and invitation, that his Holy Spirit should strive with us, and continue to strive until he wins the day, and that despite our shortcomings and our transgressions, he should have remained faithful to us, even to this very hour, is more amazing still. O my soul, sink low in deep humiliation because of thy sinfulness! But, rise higher and yet higher in adoration of the unutterable love, the boundless mercy of God to thee in spite of thine iniquity. Beloved brethren, if it were possible for us to only know adequately these two things, man's sin and God's love, we should have learned more than the greatest scientists of this world ever knew, and we should have attained to more true wisdom than all earth's philosophers ever possessed. There be some that, in their search for knowledge, have almost seemed to walk the heavens in order to tread the stars, and to dive into the depths to arrange the rocks and all their ancient life; but there are two things that none of the wise amongst men have ever been able to compass--two things which unaided reason has ever failed to grasp, and ever will--sin and love; sin for its thunder, and love for its music: sin for its hell and love for its heaven. But we, who have been taught by the grace of God, do know something of sin: may we know increasingly what an evil it is! I trust we also know something of divine love; may we be filled with it, even to overflowing!

But, coming now close to our text, I am going to make four observances upon it.

The first will be one that seems self-evident, yet is often forgotten, namely, that God is the Giver of every good gift. "I gave her corn, and wine and oil." In the second place, I will dwell upon the sad fact that many seem not to know this. "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil." My third observation will be, that this ignorance leads to perversion of God's gifts: the gifts of God were profaned by being "prepared for Baal." In the last place, the solemn truth will demand our attention, that this ill use of God's gifts causes God to withdraw them. "Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and I will recover my wool and my flax." We lose what we are determined to put to improper use. So, you see that my discourse promises to be a very practical one.

I. The first thought in the text which claims our attention will be, that **GOD IS THE GIVER OF EVERY GOOD GIFT.** "I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold."

Whether we know it, or not, it is true that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Do not, then, exult over thy brother if thou art more richly endowed with God's gifts than he is: "For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" All things that we possess have been bestowed upon us; for it is as certain that we brought nothing into the world, and that we shall take nothing out of the world. We receive everything from the great Distributor, who openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. Though used with reference to a higher gift than any of those mentioned in the text, the words of John the Baptist are true concerning all God's gifts, "a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven."

But someone may say, "Corn and wine are here mentioned first of all; surely these are the fruit of tillage. Men sow, and reap. Men plant, and gather grapes. How, then, can these things be the gift of God?" Why, the

moment we think seriously of this matter, we perceive that no husbandman can command a harvest! No vine-dresser can be sure of fruit, unless he that rules the heavens, and sendeth the dews, the rains, the snow, and the frosts, shall take care both of the budding vine and of the ripening clusters. All that springs from the earth comes by a miracle of God's benevolence. If God withheld his hand, you might plough your land, but you would wait in vain for the harvest; an unfruitful season would not return to you even so much as the seed which you had sown. When famines come upon the nations, because of blighted harvests, then men ought to understand that the corn, and the wine, and the oil are God's gifts; but, alas, many are very slow to learn even that elementary lesson!

Perhaps others say, "Our share of these things comes to us as the earnings of labour. Of course, in some form or other that must be true. Ever since man fell, that word of God to Adam, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," has been the rule of life for his sons. If men do not till the soil, but dwell in cities, they must still work; but in less pleasant ways than the farmer knows. They may have to toil in murky workshops, where they would be glad to catch a breath of fresh breezes that come over the fields. I know we get our bread by our work; but then, who finds us work? Who gives us strength to do it? Let God but withdraw from us his gracious power, and our hands would hang feebly at our side. You know how true this is. When you have been laid aside upon the bed of sickness, then have you understood that, unless God gave health, the breadwinner could not go forth to his service, and there would be nothing on the table for the wife and children. It is God that gives us our bread, however hard we work in order to earn it. Still have we need to present the petition that our Lord taught his disciples, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Besides this, the text also mentions the gain of commerce. "I multiplied her silver and her gold." Here, also, God's hand is plainly seen. I admit, of course, that men gain their silver and their gold by trading; but will the ship come home again in safety unless God watches over it? Will the men that go into the bowels of the earth, to dig for minerals, come up alive unless still the providence of God preserves them? Is not the benediction

of heaven needed in every enterprise to which men can put their hand? "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain." The success of business is based upon a thousand conditions, and surrounded by many risks, as every merchant knows. How easily God can lay his finger upon my human scheme, and bring to nought all our plans! They used to call those who engaged in commerce "merchant venturers", and they were rightly named. There is many a "peradventure" about business-life in these days of cruel competition, even in our home-trade; and it is even more at a venture that a man goes to a far-off land for a gain. God must give him success, if he is to get it. In our bills of lading we even now insert a clause, by which the shipowner disclaims responsibility in certain contingencies, amongst which is mentioned "the act of God"; and when men despatch a vessel, they often pray, and they always ought to pray, "God speed this ship," for God-speed is needed if it is to reach its destination safely.

But some come in by their own corn, and their own wine, and their silver, and their gold, by the legacies of their friends. In such a case, you may easily trace the gifts of God. If your parents have left you sufficient for your maintenance, who gave you those parents? Who placed them in a position to be so generous to you? Who arranged the place and manner of your birth but the great Lord of providence? If you are living in specially favourable circumstances, and are able to obtain food, and the other necessaries of life, with a good share of its luxuries, which others can only gain by long labour, if at all, ascribe to it, I beseech you, to the bountiful providence of the Most High. If you do not give all the glory to the Giver of these gifts, surely you are forgetting your God.

And yet, perhaps, another says, "I have not laboured with my hands, but I am a man of resources. What I possess is the result of thought. I have carefully elaborated an invention, and in a few months I have been able to get for myself what others cannot get with a whole life of toil. Surely I may trace my prosperity to my capacious mind." And if you do so, you will be very foolish, unless you also adore the God who gave you your mind. By whose power is it that you have had the wit to gain wealth so speedily? I beseech you be humble in the presence of God, or you may in

a few days lose your reason, for it has often happened that men who have had more wit than others have been among the first to lose it. "Great wit to madness is allied." In many a case it has proved to be so. Remember Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, builder of cities, inventor of great things, and yet "he did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws," because he was proud, and exalted himself against God, neither gave glory for his greatness to the Most High.

We therefore settle it in our hearts as true, once for all, that God is the Giver of the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and the silver, and the gold, and whatever temporal blessings we enjoy. If honestly gained, we trace them to his hand; and we would thank him now and always for every good gift that we have received from him.

I need not make a list of spiritual blessings, nor need I remind you that they all come from God. You know how dependent you are upon him for them. By nature you are dead. What spiritual life can you get for yourselves without God? Can the dead make themselves to live? When you have been made alive, you are pardoned; can you pardon yourselves? Whence can forgiveness come but from God? You have more than pardon if you are a child of God, you are possessed of righteousness; how shall you ever have it but as God arrays you in the righteousness of Christ? Joy and peace are our portion, but both come by believing; they are the gift of God. Holiness, too, and everything else that prepares us for heaven, and helps us to reach that blessed place, is the gift of God freely bestowed upon unworthy men. We were unworthy when he began to bless us, and we are unworthy still; yet the hand that at first bestowed the gift upon us, continues to enrich us every day in all bountifulness. Shall we not praise him, lifting high our grateful song?

"Come thou fount of every blessing,  
Tune my heart to sing thy grace,  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise."

We will not withhold our thanks for such abounding goodness.

"Oh, to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let that grace, now, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to thee."

So much for the first point.

II. Now, secondly, and we come closer to our text -- MANY SEEM NOT TO KNOW THIS.

"She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold." She did not know, and in this lack of knowledge she stands not alone. There are great numbers in the world who do not know this elementary truth, that all good gifts, of any kind whatsoever, come from the hand of God. Why is this?

With some it arises from natural ignorance. Myriads of men know not God as yet; and they are to be pitied, if they have not even heard of him. I fear that in London there are many who have never received even the plainest instruction with regard to God and his Christ. It ought not to be so, seeing that so many in earlier years have passed through our Sunday-schools into which a child may go and come out again, and know but little that will abide with him. It is a pity that this should be the case; but facts go to show that I state no more than the plain truth. There are many whom we may meet in the street who could give us no intelligent account of what they owe to God. They scarcely know who he is. They use his name as a part of their profanity, and that is all. Brethren, I charge you, by the living God, that as far as your ability goes, you do not suffer a single person in London to be ignorant of God, and what men owe to him. With all your might, instruct those with whom you come in contact concerning the great Creator, Preserver, and Judge of men, and show them how all our blessings are to be traced to his generous hand. Thus shall be laid a foundation whereon may rest a saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are, however, many more who, from thoughtless ignorance, do not know that God gave them their providential mercies. Oh, what a thing it

is that the bulk of the people by whom we are surrounded should have a thought for everybody but God! Some persons are strictly honest to their fellow-men, but they never think that they owe God anything. Everybody is treated fitly by them except their Creator. They will be ungrateful to nobody except their very best Friend; and all for want of thought. Is it not ten thousand pities that so many miss heaven from heedlessness, and that so many go down to hell for want of thinking how they may escape from it? "The wicked shall be turned into hell," says the Psalmist, "and all the nations that forget God." What did these do who thus perish? Did they blaspheme? No; they only forgot God. Did they oppose his purposes? No, it is not said so; but they forgot God. That is all. He that forgets his king becomes a traitor. The soldier that forgets his captain becomes a deserter. The child that forgets his mother, becomes a prodigal. But the man that forgets his God is the worst of all; his sheer thoughtlessness leads him to the abyss of woe.

Some lose sight of God because of their wrong thoughts. They look upon everything that happens as luck. "I was a lucky fellow," says one. "Wonderfully fortunate I have always been," says another; "I have always had good luck." So God is pushed from his throne, and men pay their tribute to an imaginary something, which is really nothing, but which they call "luck." If luck has actually done anything for you, then by all means worship luck, and pay homage to it; but it is not so. Luck, fortune, and chance are the devil's trinity. If things have gone well with you, it has been so because it has pleased the Most High to favour you. I pray that you may not be unmindful of the heavenly blessing, but thank your God, and bless his name.

"Well," says one, "I do not attribute my success to luck. I say I owe it to myself." So you turn from your God, and worship yourself, do you? The Egyptians have been counted the most degraded people of this world in their worship. They worshipped onions, till Juvenal says, "O blessed people, who grow their gods in their own back gardens!" But I do not think they were quite so degraded as the man that worships himself. If I could bring my soul to worship an onion, I could never degrade myself low enough to worship myself. A man who makes himself his own god is mad. When you begin to adore yourself as a self-made man, you have



surely come to the very abyss of absurdity and idolatry. "Know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." Let us not then be guilty of the folly of forgetting him to whom we owe our all. "O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Still, alas, it is true that some, through their thoughtlessness or their corrupt thought about God, know not that he gave them their corn and wine and oil.

There are others who forget God from assumed ignorance; they know better, but they profess that they are too intelligent to believe in God.

Do you often hear the proud boastings of such men? Oh! It is folly of the most profound kind for any man to think he is too intelligent, or too clever, to believe in God, or to trace anything to him. "These things happen according to the laws of nature," they say. "The arrangements of nature are fixed and invariable." Thus "nature" becomes nothing more than a false god, which they worship. They have elevated a certain something which they call "nature" into the place of God, and they suppose that God is somehow tied by his own laws, and can never do any other than that which he has been accustomed to do; by such reasoning natural law is lifted up, and made higher than the omnipotent God himself. Go you that worship nature, and worship her if you will. I have not generally found much worship in it. I had a neighbor, who said to me, "I do not go and shut myself up in the stifling atmosphere on a Sunday; I stop at home, and worship the god of nature." I said to him, "he is made of wood, is he not?" "What do you mean?" he said in some surprise. "I think," I answered, "that I have heard you at worship, and you seem to me to adore your god by knocking him down." "Ah!" said he; "have you heard me playing skittles on Sunday?" "Yes," I said; "you are a pretty fellow to tell me that you stop at home, and worship the god of nature. Your worship is all a lie." When you hear men talk about this god of nature, it often means that they only want an opportunity of having more drink, or of amusing themselves, or of otherwise wasting the hours of God's holy day. As for us, I trust that we shall not assume an ignorance which is not ours. We know that God gave us all we have, and unto him shall be the praise.

A great many have no real lack of knowledge at all, if you search their minds. Theirs is a practical ignorance. They know not that God gave them these things, in the sense that they do not confess that it is so. They never speak about him as the one who provideth for all their needs; they never praise him for his bounty. They may, perhaps, jerk out a "Thank God," just as a matter of common speech; but there is no thankfulness in their heart. Practically, they live from year to year as if there were no God, and spend their time and their substance as if they were under no obligation whatever to the great Lord of providence. Practically it may be said of them, "They know not that I gave them their corn and their wine and their oil."

A lower depth is reached by those who do not recognise God because of their wilful ignorance; who, because of their deeds of darkness, hate the light, and refuse to acknowledge the gifts of God. Our Father in heaven "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust." But the unjust do not receive the refreshing showers as from his hand, nor do those who are evil acknowledge that it is God's sun that shines upon their head. They hate God, and are wilfully ignorant, "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."

Now, it does seem to be a very grievous thing that men should be indebted to God for everything, and should never praise him; that they should every morning be awakened by the light that he gives, and every evening be helped to sleep by the shades of darkness with which he mercifully closes the day, and curtains the night; and yet that they should never adore his name. Am I not speaking to some here who, through a tolerably long life, have never thought of their God, or whose thoughts concerning him have been but fitful and feeble? I would like to hold you to your seat for a moment, my friend, while I ask you whether you do not feel ashamed that you have never considered the claims of the Most High, or have never thought that he could have any claims, but supposed that you had just to live to think of yourself and your friends, and perhaps of your fellow-men, but never of your God? His goodness has been practically denied by you. You have lived as if there were no God, or as if

he were too far off to operate upon your life. You live as if you had received ought to have secured for him your service. Yet what have you done? Does a man keep a cow without expecting its milk? Would he keep a horse without putting it to work? Would he own a dog if it did not fawn upon him, and come at his call? Yet God has kept you all these years, and he has had nothing from you but sheer forgetfulness, or, possibly, something worse than that. What do you say to this? I press the matter upon you, and ask you carefully to review it before your own conscience, and before the Lord, to whom you must one day give account. Seeing that you have received so much from him, you should, at the very least, acknowledge that he is the Giver of all your good things. May God the Holy Spirit make you confess that you have not dealt well with your God, and strive with you until, by his almighty grace, you shall be constrained to change your evil course, and acknowledge the goodness and mercy you have received from him throughout your whole life!

III. In the third place, when men thus fail to recognize and acknowledge God's goodness--

**THIS IGNORANCE OFTEN LEADS TO THE PERVERSION OF GOD'S GIFTS.**

See how God puts it with reference to the people of Israel, "I multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal." What a depth of infamy it would be to receive the bounty of one king, and to pay homage therewith before the throne of his rival! This is what Israel did, and alas! Too many imitate them to-day. The people burned incense to the false god of the heathen on every hill. "She decked herself with her ear-rings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the Lord." This was a great iniquity. The very gold which God gave them they fashioned into ornaments for their idol, and poured out the wine that came as a gift from heaven, as an offering at Baal's shrine. There was a certain Indian potentate, who deposed his father from the throne, and then desired that father to send him his jewels, that he might wear them at his own coronation. These people desired God's gifts, in order that they might present them to Baal; and, alas! In this impiety they have many followers. How many there are who are using against God all that he has

given them! They have prepared it for Baal.

We do this whenever the gifts of God are used to augment pride. This is a temptation that besets all. We have all a tendency to swell and grow great simply because God has given us more than other people; whereas that but makes us the greater debtors. I have heard that, in the days of imprisonment for debt, there were people in prison who used to be quite proud because they owed ten thousand pounds, and who looked down with scorn upon a poor fellow who had come in there only owing a hundred pounds, or perhaps, only a five-pound note. The more they were in debt, the more they thought of themselves. Now, is not that the case with every proud man? Because you have greater ability, or greater wealth, than another, you owe so much the more to God; and yet you are foolish enough to make that, which ought to be a reason for being humble, a reason for being proud. God surely feels that his gifts are being misused when we handle them so as to make ourselves haughty and important. In doing this we forget him who gave us all, even as Hosea in another place saith concerning the people, "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore they have forgotten me."

Moreover, the gifts of God are perverted when we use them to justify sin, setting our necks stiffly in the way of evil, because, though we have wandered from God, the corn and the oil are still continued to us. "There are my rewards that my lovers have given me," said this nation that went after Baal; therefore she thought that her worship of Baal was worthy to be continued. How horrible a thing it is for a man to boast in his sin, because God does not swiftly follow it with judgment, and to continue therein because God does not at once withdraw his common mercies! Those whose hearts are set in them to do evil, because the sentence against the evil work is not executed speedily, shall have sore distress in the day when, at last, the righteous God arises to judgment.

Again, God's gifts are ill-used when because of the very abundance of them, we begin to excuse excesses. the drunkard and the glutton pervert what was meant to be a good gift into an occasion of sin and riot. God gives us all good things richly to enjoy; but when, instead of enjoying

them, men abuse them, and ruin themselves, body and soul, by missing the gifts of heaven, it would be small cause for wonder if God was roused to remove the gifts put to such base use. And since so many of those around us do abuse God's gifts in this manner, it behoves us, who desire to glorify God, to use all things with great temperance, and wholly to abstain from some thing, lest we should cause our brother to stumble.

Equally bad is it when a man uses the gifts of God's providence so as to foster selfishness. His silver and gold are multiplied; he hoards it up and makes a god of it. The poor are at his gate. There let them keep; why should he trouble about them? The church of God needs his aid. Let it need it. It shall have nothing from him. "Soul," says such a man, "thou must lay up much goods for many years." And, when he has effected his purpose, then he talks to his own soul again, poor creature that it is, and says, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry." He has made a god of his goods, and thus he has perverted God's gifts, and used them to God's dishonour. He has given them to Baal.

It grieves one's heart to see gifts of God used to oppose God. What would you have thought of David, when Jonathan gave him his sword and bow, if he had not taken the sword, and cut off Jonathan's head, or if he had fitted an arrow to the string, and shot Jonathan to the heart? It would have been ingratitude. But men fight against God with God's own gifts. A woman endowed with beauty, the rare gift of God, uses it to ensnare others to sin. God gives us garments, and there are some who use their very garments for nothing else but pride, and who go through the world with no motive but display. A man has a musical voice given to him, but he sings what God cannot be pleased to hear, and what no man or woman ought to listen to. Another has great intellect, and he gives himself up to pulling the Bible to pieces, and, as far as he can, to destroy much good. Another has a voice that is clear and loud, and skill in using it, and you hear him stand up and lead others to war against their Maker, and to sin with a high hand against the King of heaven. Oh, the pity is that there should be so much of good in the world, all heaped up to rot--that so many gifts of God should be used by men against him! When those in high authority oppress the righteous, they use their authority against

God; and when men in high standing are seen at police courts advocating that which is injurious to morals, they not only degrade themselves, but they make us think that the "nobility" with which they are said to be endowed must be a myth. God keep us all, dear friends, from ever using the gifts of our Maker against our Maker; and we are certainly acting against him when we go contrary to anything that is honest, lovely, and of good repute; and when, in any way, we sanction that which will do our fellow-creatures wrong, and will be injurious to the interests of true righteousness, and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ!

My text is sadly true with reference to many; "She did not know that I gave her corn and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal." They prepared for God's enemies what God himself had given to them, and what he meant to be used only for his own glory.

IV. And now my fourth observation is this--THIS PERVERSION OFTEN MOVES GOD TO WITHDRAW HIS MISUSED GIFTS.

"Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax."

God has given to many of you a great many mercies. Remember that, if you become proud of them, if because you have become fat, like Jeshurun, you begin to kick, he can take his gifts away. If you forsake God, who made you, and lightly esteem the Rock of your salvation, he will forsake you, and withdraw his bounty.

He can withdraw his gifts easily. "Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." You have seen the crows on the ploughed field, have you not? There they are, blackening the ground. But clap you hands, and they are gone. So have we often seen it with a man's wealth. There has been a little change in the money market, some little turn in commerce, and all his money has taken to itself wings, and flown away. Is it health and strength that you have, or great wit? Ah, sir, a puff of wind may take away life; a little gas may be fatal to health! We know not what dependent creatures we are. God can easily take away

the blessings which he gives, therefore let us remember him in the use of them. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God."

Moreover, God can take away his gifts unexpectedly. In the text, he says, "I will take away my corn in the time thereof," that is, in harvest, "and my wine in the season thereof," that is, just at the time of vintage. When it seems as if the harvest and vintage were secure, God would send a sudden blight upon both, and they would perish. God can take things away when they almost touch the tips of our fingers, and he can easily deprive us of misused blessings at the very moment when we think we are most sure of them. "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip;" and there is many an occasion of final disappointment when we think we have succeeded. We are only secure as we trust in the Giver of all good.

God can take away these things rightfully. What would you do yourself if you had one whom you fed who was always kidding against you? Would you feed a dog that was always barking at you, and trying to fly at you, and do you mischief? Is it not right that God should take away providential benefits from men when they misuse them, and pervert them to his dishonour? It is of his grace that these things are ours at all; he has but to withdraw that grace, and to deal with us as we deserve, and lo! We are impoverished at once.

If God does take these things away, I would pray that he may take them from you mercifully. I was riding one day with a young gentleman, who was leading a very reckless life indeed, but whose father was a very gracious man. I found that the son had taken to horse-racing, and I said, "That is right; go on as fast as you can. Till you have lost every penny you have, you will scarcely be willing to turn to God. Young fellows like you do not often come home, except round by the swine-trough. When you get down to that, then, I trust, you will cry to God for mercy, and say, 'I will arise, and go to my father.' " He was very astonished at my advice; but I think it was the right thing to say under the circumstances.

How often have I seen something of this sort take place! The Lord has taken away from a man wealth, or he has taken away health, or else the man has fallen into dishonour; the Lord takes away the corn in the time

thereof, and the wine in the season thereof, and then it happens, as we have it in the verse before the text, the afflicted one says, "I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better with me than now." So long as you come to Christ, I do not mind if you come round by "Weeping-Cross." Even if you come with a broken leg, with the loss of an eye, or with consumption making a prey of you, it will be well; if only your souls be saved, and you come home to your great Father, we will be glad. But why do you want to be whipped to Christ? Why not come willingly? Why do you need to have these truths burnt into you as with a hot iron? Why not learn them easily. "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." Be not hard-mouthed with God, for he will master you, if he once take you by the hand. If he means to bless you, he will conquer you, though he may have to use rough measures with you. By-and-by, when he has broken you in, he will deal with you in all the infinite tenderness of his compassion; and you will acknowledge that even his roughness was all the result of his love to you.

Now, I close by saying that the Lord may take these things away from us justly. He sometimes withdraws his bounty without intending mercy. The sufferings of guilty men here are like the first days of a horrible tempest that will continue for ever and ever. If they will not turn to him when he calls in mercy, but continue to reject his love, then will he begin to speak in thunder, and the first storm of his righteous wrath shall only be the beginning of an endless hurricane.

"Ye sinners, seek his grace,  
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;  
Fly to the shelter of his cross,  
And find salvation there."

I have tried to speak very earnestly; but if I have failed to speak as tenderly as I would, may the great Master forgive! Oh, that you would acknowledge your indebtedness to God! Oh, that you would cast away your idols! "As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God."



God grant that you may be led by the blessed Spirit to yield yourself to him who has given you so much cause to trust him, and to his name shall be eternal honour! Amen, and amen.

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## The Uses Of The Law

Wherefore then serveth the law? - Galatians 3:19

The apostle, by a highly ingenious and powerful argument, had proved that the law was never intended by God for the justification and salvation of man. He declares that God made a covenant of grace with Abraham long before the law was given on Mount Sinai; that Abraham was not present at Mount Sinai, and that, therefore, there could have been no alteration of the covenant made there by his consent; that, moreover, Abraham's consent was never asked as to any alteration of the covenant, without which consent the covenant could not have been lawfully changed, and, besides that, that the covenant stands fast and firm, seeing it was made to Abraham's seed, as well as to Abraham himself. "This I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise." Therefore, no inheritance and no salvation ever can be obtained by the law. Now, extremes are the error of ignorance. Generally, when men believe one truth, they carry it so far as to deny another; and, very frequently, the assertion of a cardinal truth leads men to generalise on other particulars, and so to make falsehoods out of truth. The objection supposed may be worded thus: "You say, O Paul, that the law cannot justify; surely then the law is good for nothing at all; 'Wherefore then serveth the law?' If it will not save a man, what is the good of it? If of itself it will never take a man to heaven, why was it written? Is it not a useless thing?" The apostle might have replied to his opponent with a sneer - he must have said to him, "Oh, fool, and slow of heart to understand. Is it proved that a thing is utterly useless because it is not intended for every purpose in the world? Will you say that, because iron cannot be eaten, therefore, iron is not useful? And because gold cannot be the food of man, will you, therefore, cast gold away, and call it worthless dross? Yet on

your foolish supposition you must do so. For, because I have said the law cannot save, you have foolishly asked me what is the use of it? and you foolishly suppose God's law is good for nothing, and can be of no value whatever." This objection is, generally, brought forward by two sorts of people. First, by mere cavillers who do not like the gospel, and wish to pick all sorts of holes in it. They can tell us what they do not believe; but they do not tell us what they do believe. They would fight with everybody's doctrines and sentiments, but they would be at a loss if they were asked to sit down and write their own opinions. They do not seem to have got much further than the genius of the monkey, which can pull everything to pieces, but can put nothing together. Then, on the other hand, there is the Antinomian, who says, "Yes, I know I am saved by grace alone;" and then breaks the law - says, it is not binding on him, even as a rule of life; and asks, "Wherefore then serveth the law?" throwing it out of his door as an old piece of furniture only fit for the fire, because, forsooth, it is not adapted to save his soul. Why, a thing may have many uses, if not a particular one. It is true that the law cannot save; and yet it is equally true that the law is one of the highest works of God, and is deserving of all reverence, and extremely useful when applied by God to the purposes for which it was intended.

Yet, pardon me my friends, if I just observe that this is a very natural question, too. If you read the doctrine of the apostle Paul you find him declaring that the law condemns all mankind. Now, just let us for one single moment take a bird's eye view of the works of the law in this world. Lo, I see, the law given upon Mount Sinai. The very hill doth quake with fear. Lightnings and thunders are the attendants of those dreadful syllables which make the hearts of Israel to melt Sinai seemeth altogether on the smoke. The Lord came from Paran, and the Holy One from Mount Sinai; "He came with ten thousand of his saints." Out of his mouth went a fiery law for them. It was a dread law even when it was given, and since then from that Mount of Sinai an awful lava of vengeance has run down, to deluge, to destroy, to burn, and to consume the whole human race, if it had not been that Jesus Christ had stemmed its awful torrent, and bidden its waves of fire be still. If you could see the world without Christ in it, simply under the law you would see a world in ruins, a world with God's black seal put upon it, stamped and sealed for condemnation; you would

see men, who, if they knew their condition, would have their hands on their loins and be groaning all their days - you would see men and women condemned, lost, and ruined; and in the uttermost regions you would see the pit that is digged for the wicked, into which the whole earth must have been cast if the law had its way, apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Ay, beloved, the law is a great deluge which would have drowned the world with worse than the water of Noah's flood, it is a great fire which would have burned the earth with a destruction worse than that which fell on Sodom, it is a stern angel with a sword, athirst for blood, and winged to slay; it is a great destroyer sweeping down the nations; it is the great messenger of God's vengeance sent into the world. Apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ, the law is nothing but the condemning voice of God thundering against mankind. "Wherefore then serveth the law?" seems a very natural question. Can the law be of any benefit to man? Can that Judge who puts on a black cap and condemns us all this Lord Chief Justice Law, can he help in salvation? Yes, he did; and you shall see how he does it, if God shall help us while we preach. "Wherefore then serveth the law?"

I. The first use of the law is *to manifest to man his guilt*. When God intends to save a man, the first thing he does with him is to send the law to him, to show him how guilty, how vile, how ruined he is, and in how dangerous a position. You see that man lying there on the edge of the precipice; he is sound asleep, and just on the perilous verge of the cliff. One single movement, and he will roll over and be broken in pieces on the jagged rocks beneath, and nothing more shall be heard of him. How is he to be saved? What shall be done for him - what shall be done! It is our position; we, too, are lying on the brink of ruin, but we are insensible of it. God, when he begins to save us from such an imminent danger, sendeth his law, which, with a stout kick, rouses us up, makes us open our eyes, we look down on our terrible danger, discover our miseries, and then it is we are in a right position to cry out for salvation, and our salvation comes to us. The law acts with man as the physician does when he takes the film from the eye of the blind. Self-righteous men are blind men, though they think themselves good and excellent. The law takes that film away, and lets them discover how vile they are, and how utterly ruined and condemned if they are to abide under the sentence of the law.

Instead, however, of treating this doctrinally, I shall treat it practically, and come home to each of your consciences. My, hearer, does not the law of God convince you of sin this morning? Under the hand of God's Spirit does it not make you feel that you have been guilty, that you deserve to be lost, that you have incurred the fierce anger of God? Look ye here, have ye not broken these ten commandments; even in the letter have ye not broken them? Who is there among you who hath always honored his father and mother? Who is there among us who hath always spoken the truth? Have we not sometimes borne false witness against our neighbor? Is there one person here who has not made unto himself another God, and loved himself, or his business, or his friends, more than he has Jehovah, the God of the whole earth? Which of you hath not coveted your neighbour's house, or his man-servant, or his ox, or his ass? We are all guilty with regard to every letter of the law; we have all of us transgressed the commandments. And if we really understood these commandments, and felt that they condemned us, they would have this useful influence on us of showing us our danger, and so of leading us to fly to Christ. But, my hearers, does not this law condemn you, because even if you should say you have not broken the letter of it, yet you have violated the spirit of it. What, though you have never killed, yet we are told, he that is angry with his brother is a murderer. As a negro said once, "Sir, I thought me no kill - me innocent there; but when I heard that he that hateth his brother is a murderer, then me cry guilty, for me have killed twenty men before breakfast very often, for I have been angry with many of them very often." This law does not only mean what it says in words, but it has deep things hidden in its bowels. It says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," but it means, as Jesus has it, "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." It says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," it meaneth that we should reverence God in every place, and have his fear before our eyes, and should always pay respect unto his ordinances and evermore walk in his fear and love. Ay, my brethren, surely there is not one here so fool-hardy in self-righteousness as to say, "I am innocent." The spirit of the law condemns us. And this is its useful property; it humbles us, makes us know we are guilty, and so are we led to receive the Saviour.

Mark this, moreover, my dear hearers, *one breach of this law is enough to condemn us for ever*. He that breaketh the law in one point is guilty of the whole. The law demands that we should obey every command, and one of them broken, the whole of them are injured. It is like a vase of surpassing workmanship, in order to destroy it you need not shiver it to atoms, make but the smallest fracture in it and you have destroyed its perfection. As it is a perfect law which we are commanded to obey, and to obey perfectly, make but one breach thereof and though we be ever so innocent we can hope for nothing from the law; except the voice, "Ye are condemned, ye are condemned, ye are condemned." Under this aspect of the matter ought not the law to strip many of us of all our boasting? Who is there that shall rise in his place and say, "Lord, I thank thee I am not as other men are?" Surely there cannot be one among you who can go home and say, "I have tithed mint and cummin; I have kept all the commandments from my youth?" Nay, if this law be brought home to the conscience and the heart we shall stand with the publican, saying, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." The only reason why a man thinks he is righteous is because he does not know the law. You think you have never broken it because you do not understand it. There are some of you most respectable people; you think you have been so good that you can go to heaven by your own works. You would not exactly say so, but you secretly think so; you have devoutly taken the sacrament, you have been mightily pious in attending your church or chapel regularly, you are good to the poor, generous and upright, and you say, "I shall be saved by my works." Nay, sir, look to the flame that Moses saw, and shrink, and tremble, and despair. The law can do nothing for us except condemn us. The utmost it can do is to whip us out of our boasted self-righteousness and drive us to Christ. It puts a burden on our backs and makes us ask Christ to take it off. It is like a lancet, it probes the wound. It is, to use a parable as when some dark cellar has not been opened for years and is full of all kinds of loathsome creatures, we may walk through it not knowing they are there. But the law comes, takes the shutters down, lets light in, and then we discover what a vile heart we have, and how unholy our lives have been; and, then, instead of boasting, we are made to fall on our faces and cry, "Lord, save or I perish. Oh, save me for thy mercy's sake, or else I shall be cast away." Oh, ye self-righteous ones now present, who think yourselves so good that ye can mount to heaven by your works - blind horses,

perpetually going round the mill and making not one inch of progress - do you think to take the law upon your shoulders as Sampson did the gates of Gaza? Do you imagine that you can perfectly keep this law of God? Will you dare to say, you have not broken it. Nay, surely, you will confess, though it be in but an under tone, "I have revolted." Then, this know: the law can do nothing for you in the matter of forgiveness. All it can do is just this: It can make you feel you are nothing at all; it can strip you; it can bruise you; it can kill you, but it can neither quicken, nor clothe, nor cleanse - it was never meant to do that. Oh, art thou this morning, my hearer, sad, because of sin? Dost thou feel that thou hast been guilty? Dost thou acknowledge thy transgression? Dost thou confess thy wandering? Hear me, then, as God's ambassador, God hath mercy upon sinners. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. And though you have broken the law, he has kept it. Take his righteousness to be yours. Cast yourself upon him. Come to him now, stripped and naked and take his robe as your covering, Come to him, black and filthy, and wash yourself in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; and then you shall know "wherefore then serveth the law?" That is the first point.

II. Now, the second. *The law serves to slay all hope of salvation of a reformed life.* Most men when they discover themselves to be guilty, avow that they will reform. They say, "I have been guilty and have deserved God's wrath, but for the future I will seek to win a stock of merits which shall counterbalance all my old sins." In steps the law, puts its hand on the sinner's mouth, and says, "Stop, you cannot do that, it is impossible." I will show you how the law does this. It does it partly thus, by reminding the man that *future obedience can be no atonement for past guilt.* To use a common metaphor that the poor may thoroughly understand me, you have run up a score at your chop. Well, you cannot pay it. You go off to Mrs. Brown, your shopkeeper, and you say to her, "Well, I am sorry, ma'am, that through my husband being out of work," and all that, "I know I shall never be able to pay you. It is a very great debt I owe you, but, if you please ma'am, if you forgive me this debt I will never get into your debt any more; I will always pay for all I have." "Yes," she would say, "but that will not square our accounts. If you do pay for all you have, it would be no more than you ought to do. But what about the old bills? How are they to be receipted? They won't be receipted by all

your fresh payments." That is just what men do towards God. "True," they say, "I have gone far astray I know; but then I won't do so any more." Ah, it was time you threw away such child's talk. You do but manifest your rampant folly by such a hope. Can you wipe away your transgression by future obedience? Ah, no. The old debt must be paid somehow. God's justice is inflexible, and the law tells you all your requirements can make no atonement for the past. You must have an atonement through Christ Jesus the Lord. "But," says the man, "I will try and be better, and then I think I shall have mercy given to me." Then the law steps in and says, "You are going to try and keep me, are you? Why, man, you cannot do it." *Perfect obedience in the future is impossible.* And the ten commandments are held up, and if any awakened sinner will but look at them, he will turn away and say, "It is impossible for me to keep them." "Why, man, you say you will be obedient in the future. You have not been obedient in the past, and there is no likelihood that you will keep God's commandments in time to come. You say you will avoid the evils of the past. You cannot. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.'" But you say "I will take greater heed to my ways." "Sir, you will not; the temptation that overcame you yesterday will overcome you to-morrow. But, mark this, if you could, you could not win salvation by it." The law tells you that unless you perfectly obey you cannot be saved by your doings, it tells you that one sin will make a flaw in it all, that one transgression will spoil your whole obedience. It is a spotless garment that you must wear in heaven; it is only an unbroken law which God can accept. So, then, the law answers this purpose, to tell men that their acquirements, their amendings, and their doings, are of no use whatever in the matter of salvation. It is theirs to come to Christ, to get A new heart and a right spirit; to get the evangelical repentance which needeth not to be repented of, that so they may put their trust in Jesus and receive pardon through his blood. "Wherefore then serveth the law?" It serveth this purpose, as Luther hath it, the purpose of a hammer. Luther, you know, is very strong on the subject of the law. He says, "For if any be not a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, and outwardly refrain from sin, as the Pharisee did, which is mentioned in the gospel, he would swear that he is righteous, and therefore he conceiveth an opinion of righteousness, and presumeth of his good works and merits. Such a one God cannot



otherwise mollify and humble, that he may acknowledge his misery and damnation, but by the law, for that is the hammer of death, the thundering of hell, and the lightning of God's wrath, that beateth to powder the obstinate and senseless hypocrites. For as long as the opinion of righteousness abideth in man, so long there abideth also in him incomprehensible pride, presumption, security, hatred of God, contempt of his grace and mercy, ignorance of the promises and of Christ. The preaching of free remission of sins, through Christ, cannot enter into the heart of such a one, neither can he feel any taste or savor thereof; for that mighty rock and adamant wall, to wit, the opinion of righteousness, wherewith the heart is environed, doth resist it. Wherefore the law is that hammer, that fire, that mighty strong wind, and that terrible earthquake rending the mountains, and breaking the rocks, (1 Kings 19:11-13) that is to say, the proud and obstinate hypocrites. Elijah, not being able to abide these terrors of the law, which by these things are signified, covered his face with his mantle. Notwithstanding, when the tempest ceased, of which he was a beholder, there came a soft and a gracious wind, in the which the Lord was; but it behoved that the tempest of fire, of wind, and the earthquake should pass, before the Lord should reveal himself in that gracious wind."

III. And now, a step further. You that know the grace of God can follow me in this next step. *The law is intended to show man the misery which will, fall upon him through his sin.* I speak from experience, though young I be, and many of you who hear me will hear this with ears of attention, because you have felt the same. There was a time with me, when but young in years, I felt with much sorrow the evil of sin. My bones waxed old with my roaring all day long. Day and night God's hand was heavy upon me. There was a time when he seared me with visions, and affrighted me by dreams; when by day I hungered for deliverance, for my soul fasted within me: I feared lest the very skies should fall upon me, and crush my guilty soul. God's law had got hold upon me, and was strewing me my misery. If I slept at night I dreamed of the bottomless pit, and when I awoke I seemed to feel the misery I had dreamed. Up to God's house I went; my song was but a groan. To my chamber I retired, and there with tears and groans I offered up my prayer, without a hope and without a refuge. I could then say with David, "The owl is my partner and

the bittern is my companion," for God's law was flogging me with its ten-thonged whip, and then rubbing me with brine afterwards, so that I did shake and quiver with pain and anguish, and my soul chose strangling rather than life, for I was exceeding sorrowful. Some of you have had the same. The law was sent on purpose to do that. But, you will ask, "Why that misery?" I answer, that misery was sent for this reason: that I might then be made to cry to Jesus. Our heavenly Father does not usually make us seek Jesus till he has whipped us clean out of all our confidence; he cannot make us in earnest after heaven till he has made us feel something of the intolerable tortures of an aching conscience, which has foretaste of hell. Do you not remember, my hearer, when you used to awake in the morning, and the first thing you took up was *Alleine's Alarm*, or *Baxter's Call to the Unconverted*? Oh, those books, those books, in my childhood I read and devoured them when under a sense of guilt, but they were like sitting at the foot of Sinai. When I turned to Baxter, I found him saying some such things as these: - "Sinner, bethink thee, within an hour thou mayest be in hell. Bethink thee; thou mayest soon be dying - death is even now gnawing at thy cheek. What wilt thou do when thou standest before the bar of God without a Saviour? Wilt thou tell him thou hadst no time to spend on religion? Will not that empty excuse melt into thin air? Oh, sinner, wilt thou, then, dare to insult thy Maker? Wilt thou, then, dare to scoff at him? Bethink thee; the flames of hell are hot and the wrath of God is heavy. Were thy bones of steel, and thy ribs of brass, thou mightest quiver with fear. Oh, hadst thou the strength of a giant, thou couldst not wrestle with the Most High. What wilt thou do when he shall tear thee in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver thee? What wilt thou do when he shall fire off his ten great guns at thee? The first commandment shall say, 'Crush him; he hath broken me!' The second shall say, 'Damn him; he hath broken me!' The third shall say, 'A curse upon him; he hath broken me!' And so shall they all let fly upon thee; and thou without a shelter, without a place to flee to, and without a hope." Ah! you have not forgotten the days when no hymn seemed suitable to you but the one that began,

"Stoop down my soul that used to rise  
Converse awhile with death  
Think how a gasping mortal lies,  
And pants away his breath."

Or else,

"That awful day shall surely come,  
The 'pointed hour makes haste,  
When I must stand before my Judge,  
And pass the solemn test."

Ay, that was why the law was sent - to convince us of sin, to make us shake and shiver before God. Oh! you that are self-righteous, let me speak to you this morning with just a word or two of terrible and burning earnestness. Remember, sirs, the day is coming when a crowd more vast than this shall be assembled on the plains of earth; when on a great white throne the Saviour, Judge of men, shall sit. Now, he is come; the book is opened; the glory of heaven is displayed, rich with triumphant love, and burning with unquenchable vengeance; ten thousand angels are on either hand; and you are standing to be tried. Now, self-righteous man, tell me now that you went to church three times a day! Come, man, tell me now that you kept all the commandments! Tell me now that you are not guilty! Come before him with a receipt of your mint, and your anise, and your cummin! Come along with you! Where are you? Oh, you are fleeing. You are crying, "Rocks hide us; mountains on us fall." What are you after, man? Why, you were so fair on earth that none dare to speak to you; you were so good and so comely; why do you run away? Come, man, pluck up courage; come before thy Maker; tell him that thou wert honest, sober, excellent, and that thou deservest to be saved! Why dost thou delay to repeat thy boastings? Out with it - come, say it! No, you will not. I see you still flying, with shrieks, away from your Maker's presence. There will be none found to stand before him, then, in their own righteousness. But look! look! look! I see a man coming forward out of that motley throng; he marches forward with a steady step, and with a smiling eye. What! is there any man found who shall dare to approach the dread tribunal of God? What! is there one who dares to stand before his Maker? Yes, there is one; he comes forward, and he cries, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Do you not shudder? Will not the mountains of wrath swallow him? Will not God launch that dreadful thunderbolt against him? No; listen while he confidently proceeds: "Who is he that

condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that hath risen again." And I see the right hand of God outstretched - "Come, ye blessed, enter the kingdom prepared for you." Now is fulfilled the verse which you once sweetly sang: -

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who aught to my charge shall lay?  
While, through thy blood, absolv'd I am  
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

IV. And now, my dear friends, I am afraid of wearying you; therefore, let me briefly hint at one other thought. "Wherefore then serveth the law." *It was sent into the world to shew the value of a Saviour.* Just as foils set off jewels, and as dark spots make bright tints more bright, so doth the law make Christ appear the fairer and more heavenly. I hear the law of God curse, but how harsh its voice. Jesus says, "come unto me;" oh, what music! all the more musical after the discord of the law. I see the law condemns; I behold Christ obeying it. Oh! how ponderous that price - when I know how weighty was the demand! I read the commandments, and I find them strict and awfully severe - oh! how holy must Christ have been to obey all these for me! Nothing makes me value my Saviour more than seeing the law condemn me. When I know this law stands in my way, and like a flaming cherubim will not let me enter paradise, then I can tell how sweetly precious must Jesus Christ's righteousness be, which is a passport to heaven, and gives me grace to enter there.

V. And, lastly, "Wherefore serveth the law." It was sent into the world *to keep Christian men from self-righteousness.* Christian men - do they ever get self-righteous? Yes, that they do. The best Christian man in the world will find it hard work to keep himself from boasting, and from being self-righteous. John Knox on his death-bed was attacked with self-righteousness. The last night of his life on earth, he slept some hours together, during which he uttered many deep and heavy moans. Being asked why he moaned so deeply, he replied, "I have during my life sustained many assaults of Satan; but at present he has assaulted me most fearfully, and put forth all his strength to make an end of me at once. The cunning Serpent has labored to persuade me, that I have

merited heaven and eternal blessedness by the faithful discharge of my ministry. But blessed be God, who has enabled me to quench this fiery dart, by suggesting to me such passages as these: 'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' and, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.'" Yes, and each of us have felt the same. I have often felt myself rather amused at some of my brethren, who have come to me, and said, "I trust the Lord will keep you humble," when they themselves were not only as proud as they were high, but a few inches over. They have been most sincere in prayer that I should be humble, unwittingly nursing their own pride by their own imaginary reputation for humility. I have long since given up entreating people to be humble, because it naturally tends to make them proud. A man is apt to say, "Dear me, these people are afraid I shall be proud; I must have something to be proud of." Then we say to ourselves, "I will not let them see it;" and we try to keep our pride down, but after all, are as proud as Lucifer within. I find that the proudest and most self-righteous people are those who do nothing at all, and have no shadow of presence for any opinion of their own goodness. The old truth in the book of Job is true now. You know in the beginning of the book of Job it is said, "The oxen were ploughing, and the asses were feeding beside them." That is generally the way in this world. The oxen are ploughing in the church - we have some who are laboring hard for Christ - and the asses are feeding beside them, on the finest livings and the fattest of the land. These are the people who have so much to say about self-righteousness. What do they do? They do not do enough to earn a living, and yet they think they are going to earn heaven. They sit down and fold their hands, and yet they are so reverently righteous, because forsooth they sometimes dole out a little in charity. They do nothing, and yet boast of self-righteousness. And with Christian people it is the same. If God makes you laborious, and keeps you constantly engaged in his service, you are less likely to be proud of our self-righteousness than you are if you do nothing. But at all times there is a natural tendency to it. Therefore, God has written the law, that when we read it we may see our faults; that when we look into it, as into a looking-glass, we may see the impurities in our flesh, and have reason to abhor ourselves in sackcloth and ashes, and still cry to Jesus for mercy. Use the law in this fashion, and in no other.

And now, says one, "Sir, are there any here that you have been preaching

at?" Yes, I like to preach at people. I do not believe it is of any avail to preach to people; preach right into them and right at them. I find in every circle a class, who say, in plain English, "Well, I am as good a father as is to be found in the parish, I am a good tradesman; I pay twenty shillings in the pound; I am no Sir John Dean Paul; I go to church, or I go to chapel, and that is more than everybody does; I pay my subscriptions - I subscribe to the infirmary; I say my prayers; therefore, I believe I stand as good a chance of heaven as anybody in the world." I do believe that three out of four of the people of London think something of that sort. Now, if that be the ground of your trust, you have a rotten hope; you have a plank to stand upon that will not bear your weight in the day of God's account. As the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, "Unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." And if ye think the best performance of your hands can save you, this know, that "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." Those who sought not after it have attained it. Wherefore? Because the one hath sought it by faith, the other hath sought it by the deeds of the law, where justification never was to be found. Hear, now, the gospel, men and women; down with that boasting form of your righteousness; away with your hopes, with all your trusts that spring from this -

"Could your tears for ever flow,  
Could your zeal no respite know,  
All for sin could not atone;  
Christ must save, and save alone."

If ye would know how we must be saved, hear this - ye must come with nothing of your own to Christ. Christ has kept the law. You are to have his righteousness to be your righteousness. Christ has suffered in the stead of all who repent. His punishment is to stand instead of your being punished. And through faith in the sanctification and atonement of Christ, you are to be saved. Come, then, ye weary and heavy laden, bruised and mangled by the Fall, come then, ye sinners, come, then, ye moralists, come, then, all ye that have broken God's law and feel it, leave your own trusts and come to Jesus, he will take you in, give you a spotless

robe of righteousness, and make you his for ever. "But how can I come?" says one; "Must I go home and pray?" Nay, sir, nay. Where thou art standing now, thou mayest come to the cross. Oh, if thou knowest thyself to be a sinner, now - I beseech you, ere thy foot shall leave the floor on which thou standest - now, say this -

"Myself into thy arms I cast:  
Lord, save my guilty soul at last."

Now, down with you, away with your self-righteousness. Look to me - look, now; say not, "Must I mount to heaven and bring Christ down?" "The word is nigh thee, on thy mouth and in thy heart; if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe with thy heart, thou shalt be saved." Yes, thou - thou - thou. Oh! I bless God, we have heard of hundreds who have in this place believed on Christ. Some of the blackest of the human race have come to me but even lately, and told me what God has done for them. Oh, that you, too, would now come to Jesus. Remember, he that believeth shall be saved, be his sins never so many; and he that believeth not, must perish, be his sins never so few. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would lead you to believe; so should ye escape the wrath to come? and have a place in paradise among the redeemed!

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## **The Vanguard And Rereward Of The Church**

The Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward. -  
Isaiah 52:12

The church of Christ is continually represented under the figure of an army; yet its Captain is the Prince of Peace; its object is the establishment

of peace, and its soldiers are men of a peaceful disposition. The spirit of war is at the extremely opposite point to the spirit of the gospel. Yet nevertheless, the church on earth has, and until the second advent must be, the church militant, the church armed, the church warring, the church conquering. And how is this? It is in the very order of things that so it must be. Truth could not be truth in this world if it were not a warring thing, and we should at once suspect that it were not true if error were friends with it. The spotless purity of truth must always be at war with the blackness of heresy and lies. I say again, it would cast a suspicion upon its own nature; we should feel at once that it was not true, if it were not an enmity with the false. And so at this present time, the church of Christ, being herself the only incarnation of truth left upon this world, must be at war with error of every kind of shape; or if she were not, we should at once conclude that she was not herself the church of the living God. It is but a rule of nature that holiness must be at enmity with sin. That would be but a mock purity which could lie side by side with iniquity and claim its kinship. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?" Shall Christ and Belial walk together? Shall the holy be linked with the unholy? If it were so, beloved, we might then not only suspect that the church was not the holy, universal and apostolic church; we might not only suspect it, but we might beyond suspicion pronounce a verdict upon her, "Thou art no more Christ's bride; thou art an antichrist, an apostate. Reprobate silver shall men call thee, because thou hast not learned to distinguish between the precious and the vile." Thus, you see, if the church be a true church, and a holy church, she must be armed: there are so many untrue things and unholy things, that she must be perpetually with her sword in her hand, carrying on combat against them. And every child of God proveth by experience that this is the land of war. We are not yet come to the time when every man shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, none daring to make him afraid. The mountains do not bring peace to the people, nor the little hills righteousness. On the contrary, the children of God hear the sound of war; the shrill clarion is constantly sounding in their ears; they are compelled to carry with them the sword and the shield, and constantly to gird their armor on, for they are not yet come to the land of peace; they are in an enemy's country, and every day will convince them that such is their position. Now, how comforting is this text to the believer who recognizes himself as a soldier, and the whole



church as an army! The church has its van-guard: "Jehovah will go before you." The church is also in danger behind; enemies may attack her in her hinder part, "and the God of Israel shall be her reward." So that the army is safe from enemies in front - and God alone knoweth their strength and it is also perfectly secure from any foes behind, however malicious and powerful they may be; for Jehovah is in the van, and the covenant God of Israel is behind: therefore the whole army is safe.

I shall first consider this as it respects the church of God; and then, in the second place, I shall endeavour to consider it as it respects us, as individual believers. May God comfort our hearts while considering this precious truth!

I. First, consider THE WHOLE CHURCH OF GOD AS AN ARMY. Remember that part of the host have crossed the flood; a large part of the army are standing this day upon the hills of glory; having overcome and triumphed. As for the rear, it stretches far into the future; some portions are as yet uncreated; the last of God's elect are not perhaps yet in existence. The rear-guard will be brought up in that day when the last vessel of mercy is full to the brim of grace, the last prodigal is restored to his Father's house, and the last of Christ's redeemed ones redeemed by power, as they were of old redeemed by blood. Now, cast your eyes forward to the front of the great army of God's elect, and you see this great truth coming up with great brilliance before you: "Jehovah shall go before you." Is not this true? Have you never heard of the eternal counsel and of the everlasting covenant? Did that not go before the church? Yea, my brethren, it went before manhood's existence, before the creation of this world that was to be the stage whereon the church should play its part, before the formation of the universe itself, when as yet all things that we now behold were unborn, when God lived alone in solitary majesty without a fellow, when there were no creatures. If there were such an eternity, an eternity filled with the Creator, and not one creature with him, even then it was, that God determined in his mind that he would form a people to himself who should show forth his praise; it was then that he settled how men should be redeemed; it was then the council of peace was held between the three divine persons, and it was determined that the Father should give the Son, that the Son should give

himself, that the Holy Spirit should be the active agent to fetch out all the lost sheep, and restore them to the fold. Oh! think, beloved, of that great text which says, "His goings forth were of old, even from everlasting." Do not think that the gospel is a new thing; it is older than your hoary mountains, nay, it is older than the firstborn sons of light. Before that "beginning," when God created the heavens and the earth, there was another "beginning," for "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And assuredly, the Gospel was ever in the Word, for Jesus was set up front everlasting as the great head of the covenant of grace. Behold, then, the glorious Jehovah in the Trinity of his persons, treading the pathless depths of eternity, that a way for his elect might be prepared herein. He has gone before us.

Take another view of the case. Jehovah shall go before you. Has he not gone before his church in act and deed? Perilous has been the journey of the church from the day when first it left Paradise even until now. When the church left Paradise, I say, for I believe that Adam and Eve were in the church of God, for I believe that both of them were redeemed souls, chosen of God, and precious. I see God give the promise to them before they leave the garden, and they go out from the garden, the church of God. Since that time, what a path has the church had to tread, but how faithfully has Jehovah led the way. We see the floods gather round about her, but even then she floats safely in the ark which Jehovah had provided for her beforehand, for the Lord had gone before her. I see the church going out from Ur of the Chaldees. It is but a little church, with the patriarch Abraham at its head. I see that little church dwelling in an enemy's country, moving to and fro; but I observe how the Lord is its constant leader - "When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; he suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." I see the church afterwards going down to the land of the cruel Pharaohs. It was a black part of her pilgrimage, for she was going to the lash of the taskmaster and to the heat of the burning fiery furnace; but I see Joseph going down before, Jehovah's great representative; Joseph goeth down into Egypt, and he saith, "God sent me before you to provide a place for you in the time of famine." So sings the Psalmist, "He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for

a servant: whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: to bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom. Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham." But now the church has to come up out of Egypt, and God goes before her still; "But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And he led them on safely so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies." The Red Sea is before them; Jehovah goes in front and dries up the sea. The desert must then be trodden; Jehovah marches in front, and scatters manna with both his hands; he splits the rock, and sends out a living stream. For forty years the church wanders there; Jehovah is with them; the fiery cloud-pillar leads them all their journey through. And now they come to the banks of Jordan; they are about to enter into the promised land; Jehovah goes before them and the Jordan is driven back, and the floods are dry. They came into the country of the mighty ones, the sons of Anak, men that were of the race of giants; but Jehovah had gone before them; the hornet was sent and the pestilence, so that when they came they said it was a land that did eat up the inhabitants thereof, for God himself with the sword and the pestilence was mowing down their foes that they might be an easier victory. "And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased. He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents."

But why need I go through all the pages of the history of the church of God in the days of the old dispensation? Hath it not been true from the days of John the Baptist until now? Brethren, how can ye account for the glorious triumphs of the church if ye deny the fact that God has gone before her? I see the church emerge, as it were, from the bowels of Christ. Twelve fishermen - what are these to do? Do? Why they are to shake the world, to uproot old systems of paganism that have become venerable, and whose antiquity seems a guarantee that men will never renounce them. These men are to blot out the name of Jupiter; they are to cast Venus from her licentious throne; they are to pull down the temple of

Delphos, scatter all the oracles, and disrobe the priests: these men are to overthrow a system and an empire of error that has stood for thousands of years - a system which has brought in to its help all the philosophy of learning and all the pomp of power; - these twelve fishermen are to do it. And they have done it, they have done it. The gods of the heathens are cast clown; they only remain among us as memorials of men's folly; but who bows down to Jupiter now? Where is the worshipper of Ashtaroth? Who calls Diana a divinity? The twelve fishermen have done it; they have erased from the world the old system of superstition; it seemed old as the eternal hills, yet have they dug up its foundations and scattered them to the winds. Could they have accomplished it unless Jehovah had been in the van and led the way? No, beloved, if ye read the history of the church, ye will be compelled to confess that whenever she went forward she could discern the footsteps of Jehovah leading the way. Our missionaries in these later times tell us that, when they went to the South Seas to preach the gospel, there was an evident preparedness in the minds of the people for the reception of the truth, and I believe that at this time, if the church were true to herself, there are nations and people and tribes that are just in the condition of the ancient Canaanites: the hornet is among them making way for the Lord's army to win an easy conquest. But sure I am that never minister ascends the pulpit, if he be a true minister of Christ; never missionary crosses the sea, never Sunday school teacher goes to his work, but that Jehovah goes before him to help him if he goes in earnest prayer and constant faith. If I were a poet I think I have a subject that might suggest a grand epic poem - the march of the church through the world, with Jehovah in her fore front. See, when first she comes forth, "the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed." Alas, poor church, what is now thy fate? But I hear a voice ahead. What is it? It is a laugh. Who laughs? Why the leader of the army laughs. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them. The Lord shall have them in derision." And shall we that are behind be mourning? Shall the church tremble? Let her call to mind the days of old, and comfort herself, that the Breaker has gone up before her, and the King at the head of her. But the enemy approaches. They bring out the rack, the bloody sword, the burning faggot. The march of the church lies through the flames, the floods must be forded, torments must be endured. Did the church ever stop a moment

in its march for all the martyrdoms that fell upon her like the drops of a fiery shower? Never, never did the church seem to march on with feet so ready, never were her steps so firm as when she dipped her foot each time in blood, and every moment passed through the fire. It was the marvel of those days that men were better Christians then, and more willing to make a profession of Christ than they are even now. And whereas this seems to be the day of cravens, the time of persecution was the age of heroes, the time of the great and the bold. And why? Because God had gone beforehand with his church, and provided stores of grace for stores of trouble, shelter and mercy for tempests and persecution, abundance of strength for a superfluity of trial. Happy is the church because God has gone before her. Whether it were over the tops of the mountains, where her pastors fell frozen by cold, or whether it were in the depths of the dungeon where her confessors expired upon the rack, whether it were in the flame or at the block, everywhere God went before his church, and she came forth triumphant because her great vanguard had cleared the way.

And now, beloved, we have come to the sweet part of the text, which saith, "And the God of Israel shall be the rereward." The original Hebrew is, "God of Israel shall gather you up." Armies in the time of war diminish by reason of stragglers, some of whom desert, and others of whom are overcome by fatigue; but the army of God is "gathered up;" none desert from it if they be real soldiers of the cross, and none drop down upon the road. The God of Israel gathers them up. He who goes before, like a shepherd before the flock, providing pasture for them, comes behind that he may gather the lambs in his arms - that he may gently lead those that are with young. "The God of Israel is your rereward." Now the church of Christ has been frequently attacked in the rear. It often happens that the enemy, tired of opposing the onward march by open persecution, attempts to malign the church concerning something that has either been taught, or revealed, or done in past ages. Now, the God of Israel is our rereward. I am never at trouble about the attacks of infidels or heretics, however vigorously they may assault the doctrines of the Gospel, I will leave them alone; I have no answer for their logic; if they look to be resisted by mere reason, they look in vain; I have the simple answer of an affirmation, grounded upon the fact that God had said it. It is the only

warfare I will enter into with them. If they must attack the rear let them fight with Jehovah himself. If the doctrines of the Gospel be as base as they say they are, let them cast discredit upon God, who revealed the doctrines; let them settle the question between God's supreme wisdom and their own pitiful pretensions to knowledge. It is not for Christian men to fear about the rear of the church. The doctrines of the Gospel, which are like the heavy baggage carried in the rear, or like the great guns kept behind against the time when they are wanted in the hour of battle, these are quite safe. The Amalekites may fall upon the stuff, or the Philistines may attack the ammunition, all is safe, for God is in the rereward; and let them but appear against our rear, and they shall instantly be put to the rout.

But I am thinking that perhaps the later trials of the church may represent the rereward. There are to come, perhaps, to the church, in days that are approaching, fiercer persecutions that she has ever known. We cannot tell, we are no pretenders to prophecy, but we know that it always has been so with the church - a time of prosperity and then a period of persecution. She has a Solomon, and she reigns in all her glory under his shadow; hut in after years Antiochus oppresses her, and she needs a Judas Maccabæus to deliver her. Perhaps we are living in an age too soft for the church. The Capuan holidays that ruined the soldiers of Hannibal may rob the church now; ease and lack of persecution may put us off our guard. Perhaps, there may come yet fiercer times for us. I know not what is meant by the battle of Armageddon, but sometimes I fear we are to expect trial and trouble in years to come; but certain I am, however fierce those troubles shall be, that God, who has gone before his church in olden times, will gather up the rear, and she who has been Ecclesia victrix - the church, the conqueror, will still be the same, and her rear shall constitute at last a part of the church triumphant, even as already glorified.

Can you now conceive the last great day when Jehovah, the rereward shall gather up his people? The time is come; the last of the salt is about to be removed; the church of God is now about to be carried up to dwell with her husband. Do you see the church moving upwards towards heaven? Behind her she leaves a world in flames; she sees the earth

destroyed, God removes it as a shepherd's tent; the inhabitants thereof are gone, and the tent must be folded up; as a vesture shall they be folded up, and they shall be changed. But between the church and a blazing world, between the church and the terrible destruction of hell, there is the bright pillar of God's presence - black to his enemies behind, but bright to his church in front. The close of the great dispensation of the Mediator shall be that the God of Israel shall be all in all, his church shall be completely safe; he shall have gathered up all things in one, whether they be things in heaven or things on earth. Then shall the sonnet of the poet be more than fulfilled to the rejoicing and perfected church.

"Daughter of Zion, awake from thy sadness,  
Awake, for thy foes shall oppress thee no more;  
Bright o'er thy hills dawns the day-star of gladness:  
Arise, for the night of thy sorrow is o'er.  
Strong were thy foes, but the arm that subdued them,  
And scatter'd their legions, was mightier far;  
They fled, like the chaff, from the scourge that pursued them,  
Vain were their steeds, and their chariots of war.

Daughter of Zion, the power that hath saved thee  
Extoll'd with the harp and the timbrel should be:  
Shout, for the foe is destroy'd that enslaved thee,  
The oppressor is vanquish'd, and Zion is free."

II. Let us turn to the second part of the sermon. We are now come to the last Sabbath of the year. Two troubles present themselves, the future and the past. We shall soon launch into another year, and hitherto we have found our years, years of trouble. We have had mercies, but still we find this house of our pilgrimage is not an abiding city, not a mansion of peace and comfort. Perhaps we are trembling to go forward. Foreseeing trouble, we know not how we shall be able to endure to the end. We are standing here and pausing for a while, sitting down upon the stone of our Ebenezer to rest ourselves, gazing dubiously into the future, saying, "Alas! what shall I do? Surely, I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy." Brother, arise, arise; anoint your head, and wash your face, and fast no longer; let this sweet morsel now cheer you; put this bottle to your

lips, and let your eyes be enlightened: "The Lord Jehovah will go before you." He has gone before you already. Your future path has all been marked out in the great decrees of his predestination. You shall not tread a step which is not mapped out in the great chart of God's decree. Your troubles have been already weighed for you in the scales of his love; your labour is already set aside for you to accomplish by the hand of his wisdom. Depend upon it.

"Your times of trial and of grief,  
Your times of joy and sweet relief,  
All shall come and last and end  
As shall please your heavenly Friend."

Remember, you are not a child of chance. If you were, you might indeed fear. You will go nowhere next year except where God shall send you. You shall be thrust into the hot coals of the fire, but God shall put you there. You shall perhaps be much depressed in spirit, but that heaviness shall be for your good, and shall come from your Father; you shall have the rod, but it shall not be the rod of the wicked - it shall be in God's hand. Oh! how comfortable the thought that everything is in the hand of God, and that all that may occur to me during the future years of my life is fore-ordained and overruled by the great Jehovah, who is my Father and my friend! Now stop, Christian, a moment, and realize the idea that God has gone before, mapping the way; and then let me ask you if you could now this morning be allowed to draw a fresh map, would you do it? If he should condescend to say, "Now your circumstances next year shall be just what you like; you shall have your own way, and go your own route to heaven, would you dare, even with God's permission, to draw a new chart?" If you should have that presumption, I know the result: you would find that you had gone the wrong way; you would soon be glad enough to retrace your step, and with many tears you would go to your heavenly Father, and say, "My Father, I have had enough to do with the helm of this ship; it is hard work to hold it; do what thou wilt with it; steer which way thou pleasest, though it be through the deepest floods and the hottest flame. I am weary, I sleep at the tiller, I cannot guide the ship, my tears fall fast from my eyes, for when I think to be wise I find myself to have committed folly; when I thought I was promoting my own



advantage in my scheme, I find I am rushing into a sea of losses." God, then, has gone before you in the decree of his predestination.

And recollect, God has gone before you in all your future journey in the actual preparations of his providence.

I do not think I am capable this morning, for my mind seems to wander far more than I could desire, of sketching how it is, but so it is, that God always makes a providence beforehand ready for his people when they get to the place. My God does not hastily erect a tent over me when I come to a certain spot. No; he builds an inn of mercy, and before I get there he provides a bed of comfort, and stores up the old wines of grace, that I may feast upon them. And all this is done long before I come to the actual necessity. None of us can tell how the future leans on the past, how a simple act of to-day shall bring about a grand event in a hundred years. We do not know how the future lies in the bowels of the past, and how what is to be is the child of that which is. As all men spring from their progenitors, so the providence of to-day springs from the providence of a hundred years past. The events of next year have been forestalled by God in what he has done this year and years before. I am certain of this, that on the road I am to travel during the next year, everything is ready for me. I am not going a road of hills and deep valleys, but I have heard the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." "And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." I say again, you are not going through a land that God has not prepared for you. O Israel, there is a well of Elim made for you long before you came out of Egypt, and there are palm trees that have been growing there that they might just come to the fruit-bearing state, and have fruit upon them, when you come there.

O Israel, God is not going to extemporize a Canaan for you; it is ready made, it is even now flowing with milk and honey; the vines that are to bear you grapes of Eshcol are already there and coming to perfection. God has forestalled your trials and troubles for the next year. The Lord Jehovah has gone before you.

There is also another phase of this subject. Jehovah has gone before us in the incarnation of Christ. As to our future troubles for next year and the remnant of our days, Jesus Christ has borne them all before. As for temptation, he "has been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." As for trials and sorrows, he has felt all we can possibly feel, and infinitely more. As for our difficulties, Christ has trodden the road before. We may rest quite sure that we shall not go anywhere where Christ has not gone. The way of God's people in providence is the exact track of Christ himself. The footsteps of the flock are identical with the footsteps of the shepherd, so far as they follow the leading and guidings of God.

And there is this reflection also, that, inasmuch as Christ has gone before us, he has done something in that going before, for he has conquered every foe that lies in his way. Cheer up now thou faint-hearted warrior. Not only has Christ travelled the road, but he has slain thine enemies. Dost thou dread sin? he has nailed it to his cross. Dost thou dread death? he has been the death of Death. Art thou afraid of hell? he has barred it against the advent of any of his children; they shall never see the gulf of perdition. Whatever foes may be before the Christian, they are all overcome. There are lions, but their teeth are broken; there are serpents, but their fangs are extracted; there rivers but they are bridged or fordable; there are flames, but we have upon us that matchless garment which renders us invulnerable to fire. The sword that has been forged against us is already blunted; the instruments of war which the enemy is preparing have already lost their point. God has taken away in the person of Christ all the power that anything can have to hurt us. Well then, the army may safely march on and you may go joyously along your journey, for all your enemies are conquered beforehand. What shall you do but march on to take the prey? They are beaten, they are vanquished; all you have to do is to divide the spoil. Your future life shall be only the dividing of the spoil. You shall, it is true, often dread combat; and you shall

sometimes have to wield the spear, but your fight shall be with a vanquished foe. His head is broken; he may attempt to injure you, but his strength shall not be sufficient for his malicious design. Your victory shall be easy, and your treasure shall be beyond all count. Come boldly on then, for Jehovah shall go before you. This shall be our sweet song when we come to the river of death: Black are its streams, and there are terrors there of which I cannot dream. But shall I fear to go through the dark stream if Jehovah goes before me? There may be goblins of frightful shape, there may be horrors of a hellish hue, but thou, Jehovah, shalt clear the way, thou shalt bid each enemy begone, and each fiend shall flee at thy bidding. I may march safely on. So confident would I feel in this great vanguard, that shouldst thou bid me go through hell itself, I need not fear all the terrors of the place of doom; for if Jehovah went before, he would tread out even to the last spark the fire; he would quench even to the last flame that burning; and the child of God might march safely through the flame that had been quenched and the ashes that were extinguished. Let us therefore never be troubled about the future. It is all safe, for Jehovah has gone before.

Now I hear one say, "The future seldom troubles me, sir; it is the past - what I have done and what I have not done - the years that are gone - how I have sinned, and how I have not served my master as I ought. These things grieve me, and sometimes my old sins start up in my recollection and accuse me; 'What! shalt THOU be saved?' say they, 'Remember us.' And they spring up in number like the sands of the sea. I cannot deny that I have committed all these sins, nor can I say that they are not the most guilty of iniquities. Oh! it is the rereward that is most unsafe. I dead most the sins of the past." O beloved, the God of Israel shall be your rereward. Notice the different titles. The first is "the Lord," or properly "Jehovah" - "Jehovah will go before you." That is the I am, full of omniscience and omnipotence. The second title is "God of Israel," that is to say, the God of the Covenant. We want the God of the Covenant behind, because it is not in the capacity of the I am, the omnipotent, that we require him to pardon sin, to accept our persons, to blot out the past, and to remove iniquity by the blood of Christ; it is as the God of the Covenant that he does that. He goes behind; here he finds that his child has left a black mark, and he takes that away; he finds here a heap of

rubbish, a mass of broken good works, and here another load of evil, of filth, and he carefully removes all, so that in that track of his children there is not a spot or a blemish; and though they have trodden the road the most observant of their foes at the last great day shall not be able to find that they have done any mischief on the journey, or one wrong thing in all their march, for the God of Israel hath so swept the way that he has taken away their iniquities and cast their sins behind his back.

Now let me always think, that I have God behind me as well as before me. Let not the memories of the past, though they cause me grief, cause me despair. Let me never bemoan because of past trial or past bereavement; let me never be cast down on account of past sin; but let me look to Christ for the pardon of the past, and to God for the sanctification of my past troubles. Let me believe that he who has cleared the way before me, has removed all enemies from behind me, that I am and must be perpetually safe. And now, are there any here to-day whose hearts God hath touched, who desire to join this great army? Have I one here who has been enlisted in the black army of the devil, and has long been fighting his way against God and against right? I pray that he may be compelled this day to ground his arms, and surrender at discretion to God. Sinner, if the Lord inclines thine heart this day to yield up thyself to him, the past shall all be blotted out; God shall be thy reward. As for thy innumerable sins, leave them to Christ; he will make short work of them; by his blood he will slay them all; they shall not be mentioned against thee for ever. And as for the future, thou chief of sinners, if now thou enlistest into the army of Christ by faith, thou shalt find the future shall be strewn with the gold of God's grace, and the silver of his temporal mercies; thou shalt have enough and to spare, from this day forth even to the end, and at the last thou shalt be gathered in by the great arms of God, that constitute the rear guard of his heavenly army. Come ye chief of sinners, come away to Christ. He now invites you to come to him; he asks nothing of you as a preparation. Christ's regiment is made up of men that are in debt and are discontented: the rag-tag of the world Christ will take; the scum, the dross, the offal of the universe Christ loves; the sweepings of our dens of iniquity, the very leavings of the devil's mill Christ is willing to receive, the chief of sinners, those who have been ministers in guilt, abortions of iniquity. Come to him; lay hold of him by faith; look to him as he hangs

upon the tree; believe in his merits, and then shalt this promise be yours with innumerable others that are rich beyond all estimation; and you shall rejoice that Jehovah is gone before you, and that the God of Israel shall be your rereward.

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## **Victor Emmanuel, Emancipator**

To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. - Isaiah 42:7

On a former occasion\* we contemplated the unconverted man as being bound by the cords of his sins. It was a very solemn and sorrowful topic. I trust it humbled us all, and made those of us whom the Son has made free, feel renewed gratitude for the glorious liberty of the children of God. Sad was the spectacle of the dungeon and the fetters, and the felon bound therewith, a man, a brother, the image of ourselves. It is a great relief to turn to another subject akin to that, but full of cheerfulness and joy. We showed you the prisoner: we have now to speak of him who came to set the prisoners free. We decried the captive's cords and bonds; we have now to tell you of him whose mighty touch liberates the bond-slaves, and signs the Magna Carta of eternal emancipation. The case of manhood bound like Prometheus to the rock, and preyed upon by the vulture of hell, appeared utterly hopeless, and the more so because the prisoner was his own fetter, and disdained to be free. After all that has been done for man, by the tenderness of God, the simplicity of the gospel, and the clear and plain command; yes, and after all the thunders of threatening, followed by the wooing notes of mercy, the captive continues still the willing slave of sin, and his liberation appears utterly hopeless. But things impossible with men are possible with God, and where human agency fails, divine agency delights to illustrate its own extraordinary energy. We gladly survey at this time the effectual operations of Jesus the Savior, the

true Victor Emmanuel, who comes to set men free from the bondage of their sins, to whose name be honor and glory world without end.

I. Looking at the first verses of this chapter, we shall consider WHO IT IS THAT SENDS JESUS CHRIST TO ACCOMPLISH THE LIBERATION OF THE SONS OF MEN, because much will depend upon the liberator's credentials, the authority by which he is warranted, and the power by which he is backed.

We sing for joy of heart as we see that the Infinite God himself commissioned the Lord Jesus to be the deliverer of men; and he did this, first, in his capacity as Creator. Read the fifth verse, and behold the great author of the Redeemer's commission: "Thus saith Jehovah, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it." He, then, who spared not his own Son, but sent him forth on the embassy of love, is Jehovah, who has made the heavens a pavilion of azure, gilded with the sun, and bedecked with stars; the self-same all-sustaining One who bears up the pillars of the universe, and impels the earth in its majestic circuit. He who gave its lustre to every precious stone from the mine, its life to every blade of grass, its fruit to every tree, its motion to every beast and winged fowl—for all these may be said to come out of the earth; he it is who sent the Incarnate God to open the two-leaved gates, and cut the bars of iron asunder, that the slaves of Satan might escape from the thralldom of their sins. Jesus, the Son of God, comes armed with the power of the Creator himself. Rejoice, then, ye that are lost, for surely the power which spake all things out of nothing, can now create you, though there be nought of good within you to aid the godlike work. Rejoice, ye that are marred and broken, like vessels spoiled upon the potter's wheel, your great Creator puts his hand a second time to the work, and resolves to form you for himself that you may show forth his praise. He by whom you were made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth, is able by his mysterious working to create in you a new heart, and infuse into you a right spirit. Is there not hope for the dark chaos of your fallen nature, and that heart of yours which is now without form and void? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is there any restraint of his power? It is true your fellow-creatures, be they exalted never so highly by office or character,

cannot regenerate you, the very idea is blasphemy against the prerogative of him who alone can create or destroy; but where the will of man, and blood, and birth all fail, the Spirit of the Lord achieves the victory. Thus saith the Lord, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." What has John written in the book of his vision? Is it not to the same purpose? He that sat upon the throne saith, "Behold, I make all things new." He who made the light can open your eyes. He who bade the rivers flow, can open springs of penitence within your souls. He who clothed the earth with verdure, can make your barren minds fruitful to his praise. If he piled yon Alpine summits, balanced the clouds which float about them, and formed the valleys which laugh at their feet, he can yet create within the little world of man thoughts that aspire to heaven, desires that ascend to the realms of purity, and good works which are the fair products of his Spirit. Has the Creator sent forth a liberator to captive men? Then is there hope indeed!

He who sent forth the Lord Jesus as his Elect One to restore our fallen race, also describes himself as the life giver; for returning to the fifth verse of the chapter before us, we read, "He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein!" The Lord creates animal life: he puts breath into the nostrils of men and beasts; he gives also mental life—the life which thinks, imagines, doubts, fears, understands, desires. All life comes from the central fountain of self-existence in the great I Am, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. This Eternal One, who has life in himself, has sent forth his Son to give life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins, and he has girded him with his own power, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." It is by the word of Jesus that the dead shall rise, "for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." Arrayed in such life-giving power no case of human corruption can be beyond the Redeemer's skill even those who rot, like Lazarus, shall come forth when he calls them, and the bonds of death and hell shall be loosed. Thus saith the Lord of life: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come

into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." The vision of Ezekiel's valley has become a fact since Jesus has appeared; and it is no marvel that it should be so, since the Eternal and Ever-living God has sent him. He can breathe the Holy Spirit into the dead soul, and give the heart that palpitates with penitence, and leaps with desires after God. He can give eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. All that belongs to life he can bestow—the hearing ear, the speaking tongue, the grasping hand. The great obstacle in his way is spiritual death, and as with a word he can remove it, the salvation of man is no longer a difficulty. Rejoice, ye heavens; and be glad, O earth; for among the graves of our sins, and into the very charnel-house of our corruption, the Quickener has descended, and is quickening whomsoever he will.

Nor is this all for he who sent the Redeemer is represented in the sixth verse as the faithful God. "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness;" that is to say, the God who sends Christ the Savior is not one who plays with words, and having given a promise to-day, retracts it to-morrow. "He is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent." Immutable are his promises and purposes, for they are founded in righteousness. He who has commissioned his chosen messenger is not unrighteous to forget his word. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall it not come to pass? Hence, thy dear brethren, every gospel promise has the stamp of the divine righteousness upon it, that you may know it to be true. Jesus assures us that, if we believe in him, we shall be delivered. God, who cannot lie, sets his seal to the promise. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved," is not only the declaration of Christ, but God himself confirms it. Then, "Amen, so let it be!" The vilest sinner that believeth shall find life and pardon, acceptance and blessedness in Christ Jesus. Thou hast not to deal, O trembler, with one who will interpret his promise at a lower point than thou dost understand it at; but thou hast to deal with One who means more than words can express, whose thoughts are as high above your thoughts, even when enlightened by his Word, as the heavens are above the earth. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He who utters these words is the Lord, the faithful Promiser, who has sent forth Christ, not to deceive



you with specious presences, but in very deed and truth to bring abundance of grace to those who trust him.

Reading further in the same verse, you will perceive that the everblessed sender of the Lord Jesus is omnipotent, for is it not added, "And will hold thine hand, and will keep thee"? By which is meant that God will give to the Mediator all his power. Christ is the power of God. Omnipotence dwells in him who once was slain, but now ever liveth, and he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him. In the gospel of Christ there is a putting forth of divine power as manifest as in the creation and in the upholding of the world. Here is our comfort under all the assaults with which the Christian faith is threatened, and under all the disappointments which the Christian church has hitherto undergone; Emmanuel, God with us, is still our strength. We are persuaded that the ultimate victory of the cross is absolutely certain, for "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." The creation was a work of omnipotence, and yet it was not accomplished all at once. The Lord could, if he had so willed it, have fashioned this habitable globe in one second of time, and have furnished all its chambers by a single word of his mouth. Instead of this, we have reason to believe that he lingered in the first formation of it, in the beginning, when he created the heavens and the earth; and arranged and disarranged it many times before he came to the final constitution of it in the first six days of time, wherein he modeled it to be a fit abode for man. Even then when he came to the final work, not in one day did he build up chaos into the beautiful house of humanity. Not at first did the firmament divide the waters, or the dry land appear above the seas. Not till the third day did the earth bring forth grass and the herb yielding seed, nor did sun and moon divide the empire of day and night till the fourth day had dawned; while the fowl that fly in the open firmament of heaven, and the living creatures that move in the waters, owned a yet later birth. Everything was gradual. Step by step the Maker advanced, get was there never anything less than omnipotence in every step of his progress. So, my brethren, the Lord might as easily have converted the whole world to Christ on the day of Pentecost as not, but not so had his decrees appointed. A step was taken in apostolic times, and the light shone forth in darkness; further on, the great division between

the heavenly and the earthly became marked and clear, and the church rose like the dry land above the seas of sin, while the plants of the Lord's right-hand planting brought forth their seed and their fruit. Even now the appointed lights make glad the sky, and the time hastens on when the Lord shall more evidently bless his living ones, and say, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth;" but all is done by degrees as he appoints. Our impatience would fain stand at the Eternal elbow, and say, "Master, complete thy work, and let our eyes behold the Second Adam in a world restored into a second Eden." But he tarries for awhile, and waits while his great appointed evenings and mornings fill up his week of glorious work. He delights in this noblest labor of his hands, and is not as the hireling who earnestly desireth the shadow that his toilsome task may be ended. He lingers lovingly, and his long suffering is salvation. The Lord's decrees tarry not so long but what in the divine reckoning, and according to the Lord's own estimate, the end will come quickly, but to the presumptuous who dare to say, "where is the promise of his coming?" he seems to linger long. How blessed will be the grand finale of redemption work; then shall the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy. The seventh day of redemption shall eclipse the Sabbath of nature, even as the new heavens and the new earth shall outshine the former: a river purer than Hiddekel shall water the new Eden, the tree of life of richer fruit shall grow in the midst of the garden, and then shall be fulfilled the saying which is written, "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." As we read the promise, "I will hold thine hand, and will keep thee," we see the certainty that the Savior girt with the allsufficiency of divine strength, will accomplish the work of human salvation. Be of good cheer, O children of God, and comfort yourselves with the belief, "that he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." His church has no reason for fear, but every ground of confidence as to her future. Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

"Fear not, though many a mighty foe  
Against thy walls advance;

Jehovah's arm will lay them low  
For thy deliverance.

Oh, take him at his royal word  
That word which cannot lie  
Thy shield and sword is Israel's Lord,  
Almighty sovereignty."

I know you will tell me, "most men say that the world will end in a few years; is it not written that the Bridegroom cometh quickly?" Yes, but remember that eighteen hundred years ago it was written that he would come quickly, and there have been prophets in all ages who have concluded from this that the end was near, while many believers have been like the Thessalonians, to whom Paul wrote: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." We have been instructed by certain pretended expositors to expect the time of the end for the last seven years, and yet it is possible that it may not arrive for the next seventy thousand years. Perhaps human history, as yet written, is but the first stanza of a wondrous poem, which shall be unfolded page by page for many an age to come, and it may be possible far more rapturous strains of divine mercy and grace in the conversion of men are yet to be read by angels and glorified spirits. If it be so it will still be true that he comes quickly, for what will time be compared with eternity? Even if the space taken up by the world's history be not a brief six thousand years, but sixty thousand times six thousand years, yet will it be but as a drop of a bucket compared with the years of the right hand of the Most High, the lifetime of the Ancient of Days. Fight on hopefully, my brethren, and be not distressed with rumors of times and seasons, but believe ye this, that God is, in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto himself, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Watch daily for the Lord's coming, but yet struggle to advance his empire, for "he shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." The Lord has not withdrawn his hand from his "elect, in whom his soul delighteth." He will subdue nations before him, he will loose the

loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates. With such a deliverer so gloriously upheld, there is no room for fear of failure. Our hope and faith joyfully rest in him to whom the Eternal gives his almightiness wherewith to subdue all things unto himself.

II. We will now advance a little further, the Lord helping us. Having contemplated the glorious One who sent Jesus to the work of man's emancipation, let us, in the second place, consider the SENT ONE HIMSELF.

We have him described in the first verse of this chapter, and the first words which we will select from the description inform us that Jesus is a chosen one. "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." God has been pleased to set apart his well-beloved Son to be the Savior of sinners, and in every way he is most suitable. As man he is supremely adapted for the work; no other of woman born was fitted for the enterprise. Born in a peculiar manner, without taint or blemish, he alone of human kind possessed the holy nature needful to make him God's messenger of love. I tried to show just now that God has girded our Lord with his omnipotence, and this ought to lead every sinner to feel that Christ can save him, for what cannot Omnipotence do? We may not talk of impossibilities or even difficulties when we have almightiness before us. No sinner can be difficult to save, no bonds hard to remove, when God, the Almighty One, comes forth to save. Now look at the other side of the picture, and remember that Christ Jesus was the most suitable person in whom the Father could place the fullness of his saving power. In his complex person he is every way adapted to stand as mediator between God and man. He who laid help upon one that is mighty, and exalted one chosen out of the people, was guided by infallible wisdom in his choice. None other was so fit as he; in fact there was no other. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." Other door of hope can no man open than that which God has opened in the person of Christ. O sinner, I beseech thee accept what God has wisely chosen. Let God's choice be thy willing choice. At this hour, constrained by the grace of God, say, "If God has chosen the Lord Jesus to be a propitiation for sin, my heart accepts him as the atonement for my sin, feeling that he alone can save me." If thus thou dost elect the Lord's elect One, thou shalt find him precious.

But we are also told in the first verse that the Lord Jesus is anointed to this work, as well as a choice one for it. "I have put my Spirit upon him." Now, the Holy Spirit is the greatest of all actors in the world of mind. He it is who can illuminate, persuade, and control the spirits of men. He doeth as he wills with mind, even as in the first creation the Lord wrought as he willed with matter. Now, if Jesus Christ has the fullness of the Holy Spirit resting upon him, it is not supposable that any sinner shall be so desperately enslaved that he cannot set him free. We are about to speak of blind eyes to be opened, but in the light of the Holy Spirit what eye need remain blind? We shall speak of captives to be liberated, but with God's free Spirit to loose him what soul need be bound? Bold men have taught doctrines which have emancipated the minds of their fellows from the slavery of superstition, but the Holy Ghost's teachings deliver minds from bondage of every kind, and make men free before the living God. Trembling sinner, accept Christ as your Savior; God appoints him; God anoints him. Are not these two reasons sufficient to make him acceptable to your soul?

Furthermore, the Redeemer is spoken of as being gentle and lowly of heart, which should commend him much to every lowly and contrite spirit. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." We need a Savior who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and Jesus is such. Souls conscious of sin are very tender, and agitated with many fears; to cure a wounded conscience is no fool's work, but fit labor for the most experienced physician. See you, then, how fitted Christ is. He never yet said an unkind word to a soul that desired to find mercy at his hands. In the records of his life you may find him try, but you shall never see him repel, an anxious spirit. When feeble faith could only touch the hem of his garment, yet virtue flowed from him. When the leper said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," it was but poor faith, but that faith saved him. Though you cannot yet believe as you would, yet say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," and he will not reject you. Look at the smoking candle-wick which yields no light, but makes much offensive smoke; yet, perchance, a living fire lingers in it, and therefore the tender Savior will not quench it, but will even fan it to a flame. And that bruised reed, how it mars the music of the pipes; draw it

out and break it. So would men do, but not so the sinner's Friend. He makes it perfect yet again, and pours the music of his love through it. O thou who art in thine own esteem utterly worthless, only fit to be thrown away, unfit to live and unfit to die; Jesus Christ, the gentle One, will give thee mercy, if thou seek him, and in giving he will not upbraid thee. O wandering child, Jesus will introduce thee to his Father, who will kiss thee with the kisses of his love, and take off thy rags of sin, and clothe thee with glorious robes of righteousness. Only come thou to him, for he is such an one that he cannot reject thee. "How can I come?" saith one. A prayer will bring thee; an anxious desire will be as a chariot to thee. A trust in him hath brought thee, and Christ is thine, if thou dost now accept him. If thy soul is truly willing to have Christ, Christ hath made thee willing, and has already begun to set thee free. May these thoughts concerning the great Emancipator cheer thee on to confidence in him.

One point more in this direction. The Christ who has come to save the sons of men is persevering to the last degree. "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law." Men are unwilling to be saved; they do not desire to be brought out of their prison-houses; but Jesus Christ will not cease to teach, nor cease to seek, nor cease to save, till every one of his elect is redeemed from the ruin of the fall, and until a multitude beyond all count shall surround the Father's throne. I tell thee, soul, if Christ wills to save thee, he will save thee. He will track thy footsteps, wander where thou mayst. If thou shouldst escape time after time, from the arrows of conviction, and plunge again and again into sin, yet will he seek thee out and find thee yet. O delay not, but yield to his power! I pray that he may stretch out his sovereign arm at this moment, and rescue thee from thyself. If thy heart were as adamant, or as the nether millstone, he can dissolve it with a touch. O that the rock-breaking hammer would come down upon thee now! He is mighty to save; may he prove his mightiness in thee!

III. It is time that we expound the text itself, and review THE WORK ITSELF.

According to the text, the Messiah's work of grace is divided into three

parts, of which the first is, to open the blind eyes. Here is a notable work which brings much glory to our Lord. Man's understanding is perverted from the knowledge of God, from a true sense of sin, from a realisation of divine justice, from a right estimate of salvation. The understanding, which is the eye of the soul, is darkened. But when the anointed Savior comes, he removes the scales of our mental ophthalmia, and in the light of God we see light, and then the sinner is humbled and bowed down, for he perceives his guilt and the justice of God. Moreover, he is filled with alarm, for he sees the bleeding Savior bearing Jehovah's wrath, and rightly judges that in every case sin must receive a recompense of wrath; for if sin laid on Christ was punished, how much more must personal sin involve banishment from the presence of the Most High? The sinner is then made to see that the only way in which sin can be removed is through the expiatory sufferings of a substitute. He is led to see that the atonement avails for him upon his believing. He is led to understand what believing is. He does believe; he trusts, and then in trusting he is made to see the completeness of pardon, and the glory of the justification which comes to us by faith in Jesus Christ. You may think that this is an easy thing for men to see, trained in the doctrine of it from their childhood, and hearing it incessantly from the pulpit; but, believe me, simple as it seems to be, no man receives it unless it has been given him from heaven. We may say to each one who has seen all this, "Blessed art thou, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." Many of us heard the gospel from our childhood, but until the Holy Spirit explained to us what it was to be a sinner, and what it was to believe in Jesus, we did not know even the rudiments of the gospel. We were in darkness ourselves, though the light shone round about us; and well might we be, for our eyes were not opened. When Jesus came we saw it all, and we understood the mystery. Our once blind eyes clearly saw ourselves lost, and Christ suffering instead of us; we believed in him, our sins disappeared, and we were accepted in the Beloved. My dear friend, if thou art seeking rest, I pray the Lord to open thine eyes to see the simplicities of the gospel. One touch of his finger will make thee wise unto salvation. There is no need for thee to study the twenty-one folio volumes of Albertus Magnus, or even the fifty-two volumes of John Calvin, for the whole secret of the gospel lies in these few words, "Believe and live;" yet thou canst not open the casket unless the Lord give thee the secret key. It

needs an opened eye to see even through a glass window; the clear witness of the gospel is dark to blind eyes.

The next work of the Messiah, according to the text, is to bring out the prisoners front the prison. This, I think, relates to the bondage under which a man lies to his sins. Habits of sin, like iron nets, surround the sinner, and he cannot escape their meshes. The man sins, and imagines that he cannot help sinning. How often do the ungodly tell us that they cannot renounce the world, cannot break off their sins by righteousness, and cannot believe in Jesus? Let all men know that the Savior has come on purpose to remove every bond of sin from the captive, and to set him free from every, chain of evil. I have known men strive against the habit of blasphemy, others against unchaste passions, and many more against a haughty spirit, or an angry temper; and when they have strived manfully but unsuccessfully in their own strength, they have been filled with bitter chagrin that they should have been so betrayed by themselves. When a man believes in Jesus his resolve to become a freeman is to a great extent accomplished at once. Some sins die the moment we believe in Jesus, and trouble us no more; others hang on to us, and die by slow degrees, but they are overcome so as never again to get the mastery over us. O struggler after mental, moral, spiritual liberty, if thou wouldst be free, thine only possible freedom is in Christ. If thou wouldst shake off evil habits or any other mental bondage, I shall prescribe no remedy to thee but this, to commit thyself to Christ the Liberator.

"The gates of brass before him burst,  
The iron fetters yield."

Love him, and thou shalt hate sin. Trust him, and thou shalt no more trust thyself. Submit thyself to the sway of the incarnate God, and he will break the dragon's head within thee, and hurl Satan beneath thy feet. Nothing else can do it. Christ must have the glory of thy conquest of self. He can set thee free from sin's iron yoke. He never failed yet, and he never shall. I earnestly entreat any man who desires to break off his sins (and we must break them off or perish by them), to try this divine remedy, and see if it does not give him holy liberty. Ask the thousands who have already believed in Jesus, and their testimony will confirm my



doctrine. Faith in the Lord Jesus is the end of bondage and the dawn of freedom.

The last part of this divine work is, bringing them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. This we will refer to those who are truly emancipated, and yet by reason of despondency sit down in the dark dungeon. We have in our pastoral duties constantly to console persons who are free from their sins, having by divine grace got the mastery over them, but yet they are in sadness. The door is open, the bars are broken, but with strange obstinacy of despondency they remain in the cell of fear, in which there is no necessity for them to continue for a moment. They cannot believe that these good things are true to them. They forgiven? They could believe everybody else to be pardoned but themselves. They made the children of God? Nay, they could hope for their sisters; they have joy in knowing that their father is a child of God, but as to themselves—can such blessings really fall to the lot of such unworthy ones? We have talked with hundreds of such and tried to console them, but we have only learned our own unskilfulness in the art of consolation. They are rich in inventions for self-torture, ingenious in escaping comfort. But, ah! the blessed Master of our souls, whose business it has been since Adam fell to bind up broken hearts, is never foiled. When his eternal Spirit comes to anoint with the oil of joy, he soon gives beauty for ashes. The mournful sentinel of the night-watches must rejoice when the day breaketh and the Sun of righteousness shines forth.

Although I speak to you in very common-place language, yet the theme is rich. This one thought alone ought to make our hearts dance for joy, to think that the Christ of God undertakes to lift up desponding and despairing spirits into hope and joy once more. I know who will rejoice to hear this. It is yonder good woman, who these many years has been in spiritual bondage. It is yonder young man, who has carried a secret burden month after month. It is yonder aged man, who longs to find Christ ere he gathers up his feet in his dying bed, and who thinks that his hour of grace has passed. Man, it is not so. Christ is still mighty to save. Still doth the message run: "He that believeth on him is not condemned." "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Go, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye,

buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Prisoners of hope, your liberator is near at hand. Trust him and be free. Though it seem a venturesome believing, yet venture on him. He cannot, will not reject you; he will proclaim a jubilee, and set each bondslave free.

See, then, how the great Redeemer blessed us: Jesus the Christ does all things well; he clears the understanding; he breaks the power of sinful habits; he removes the load of despondency; he doth it all. Christ Jesus, Mary's son and Jehovah's son man, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, yet God over all, blessed for ever; he who died on Calvary, whose precious blood is the panacea for all human ills, he it is, and he only, who is the Liberator of our fallen race.

#### IV. WHAT IS THE DESIGN OF GOD IN ALL THIS?

This question is answered in the next verse to the text: "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another." The great end of God in Christ was the manifestation of his own glorious attributes—a simple truth, but big with comfort, for should the sinner who has been an atrocious offender against laws human and divine conceive himself to be an improper subject for the grace of God, I would take him by the hand, and lest despair drive him to further sin, I would put this truth clearly before him. Where is mercy most glorified? Is it not in passing by the greatest offenses? Thou hast great offenses; there is room in thee for mercy to be greatly displaced. Where is grace glorified? Is it not in conquering the most violent passions? Thou hast such; grace may therefore be glorified in thee. Why, great sinner, instead of not being a fit subject for grace, I will venture to say that thou art in all respects one of the most suitable. There is elbow-room in thee for grace to work. There is room in thine emptiness for God's fullness. There is a clear stage in thy sinfulness for God's superabounding grace. But you have been a ringleader in the devil's army. Yes, and how can God strike a more telling blow against the hosts of darkness than by capturing you? But you tell me that you are an enormous sinner. How will the Lord of love encourage other sinners to come better than by calling you? For it will be rumoured about among your fellow-sinners:—"Have you heard that such an one is

saved?" I know they will jeer, but still, in their secret hearts, they will think it over, and they will say, "How is this?" and they will be led to enquire into the ways of God's grace. A brother told the church, a short time since, a little of his history, and it caused us all to rejoice in sovereign grace. He had lived in all manner of sin and iniquity; his profession had been for some years that of a public runner, and in that course of life he was brought into collision with the scum of society. He was practiced, also, in the pugilistic art, and that, we all know, is the very reverse of having an elevating tendency. But he came to the Tabernacle, and here Jesus met with him, and he rejoices now to teach to others the gospel which he once rejected. But what, think you has he been accustomed to do these three years? Some of our brethren preach in the streets, and he goes with them, and after they have told of what the grace of God can do, he humbly and yet boldly rises and says, "I am a living witness to what grace can do; I can declare to you what God's love has done for me." If the sermon which precedes his little speech has not interested the people, they are quite certain to be struck with his personal testimony, for in some localities many of the street folk know him, and as they look at him they say, "Why, that is old so-and-so. I knew him when he was this and that, and here he is converted;" and his witness-bearing works mightily among his old friends and acquaintances. I say, then, if now I speak to any other who has been a great offender, a drunkard, or what not, if my Master does but set you free and enlist you in his army, there will be such a shout go up in the hosts of Israel as shall make heaven ring, while the Philistines shall tremble, for their Goliath shall be slain, and a new champion raised up from his dead body to fight for the Lord of hosts. If the Lord saved men because of their merits, there would be no hope for great sinners, nor indeed for any one; but if he saves us for his own glory, that he may magnify his grace and his mercy among the sons of men, then none need despair. Up to the very gates of hell would I preach the gospel, and between the jaws of death would I proclaim it. God to glorify his grace sets free the captives, then why should not the most hell-deserving sinner, whose heart is like hardened steel, yet become a monument of Christ's power to save? I remember one who used to say that if God would but have mercy on him he should never hear the last of it, and it may well be the resolve of all of us, that earth and heaven shall never hear the last of our praises if grace shall but save us. As one of our

hymns puts it

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,  
While heaven's resounding mansions ring  
With shouts of sovereign grace."

Yes, we will each sing loudest, each owing most, each desiring, therefore, to bend the lowest and to praise the most heartily, the grace which has set us free.

Time flies with us; days are rushing past; years are hastening away. How long shall it be ere Christ shall gain your hearts? How long shall ye hear of him, and continue to refuse his grace? How long, ye unconverted ones, will ye hug your chains and kiss your fetters? "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

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## **The Victory Of Faith**

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. - 1 John 5:4

The epistles of John are perfumed with love. The word is continually occurring. while the Spirit enters into every sentence. Each letter is

thoroughly soaked and impregnated with this heavenly honey. If he speaks of God, his name must be love; are the brethren mentioned, he loves them; and even of the world itself, he writes, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." From the opening to the conclusion, love is the manner, love the matter, love the motive, and love the aim. We stand, therefore, not a little astonished, to find such martial words in so peaceful a writing; for I hear a sound of war. It is not the voice of love, surely, that says, "He that is born of God overcometh the world." Lo, here are strife and battle. The word "overcometh" seems to have in it something of the sword and warfare; of strife and contention; of agony and wrestling; so unlike the love which is smooth and gentle, which hath no harsh words within its lips; whose mouth is lined with velvet; whose words are softer than butter; whose utterances are more easily flowing than oil. Here we have war - war to the knife; for I read "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world;" strife until death; battle throughout life; fighting with a certainty of victory. How is it that the same gospel which always speaks of peace, here proclaims a warfare? How can it be? Simply because there is something in the world which is antagonistic to love; there are principles abroad which cannot bear light, and, therefore, before light can come, it must chase the darkness. Ere summer reigns, you know, it has to do battle with old winter, and to send it howling away in the winds of March, and shedding its tears in April shows. So also, before any great or good thing can have the mastery of this world, it must do battle for it. Satan has seated him self on his blood-stained throne, and who shall get him down, except by main force, and fight and war? Darkness broods o'er the nations; nor can the sun establish his empire of light until he has pierced night with the arrowy sunbeams, and made it flee away. Hence we read in the Bible that Christ did not come to send peace on earth, but a sword; he came to set "the father against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;" not intentionally, but as a means to an end; because there must always be a struggle ere truth and righteousness can reign. Alas! for that earth is the battle-field where good must combat with evil Angels look on and hold their breath, burning to mingle in the conflict, but the troops of the Captain of Salvation may be none but the soldiers of the cross; and

that slender band must fight alone, and yet shall triumph gloriously. Enough shall they be for conquest, and the motto of their standard is ENOUGH. Enough by the arm of the helping Trinity.

As God shall help me, I shall speak to you of three things to be found in the text. First, the text speaks of a great victory: it says, "This is the victory." Secondly, it mentions a great birth: "Whatsoever is born of God." And, thirdly, it extols a great grace, whereby we overcome the world, "even our faith."

I. First, the text speaks of a GREAT VICTORY - the victory of victories - the greatest of all. We know there have been great battles where nations have met in strife, and one has overcome the other; but who has read of a victory that overcame the world? Some will say that Alexander was its conqueror; but I answer, nay. He was himself the vanquished man, even when all things were in his possession. He fought for the world, and won it; and then mark how it mastered its master, conquered its conqueror, and lashed the monarch who had been its scourge. See the royal youth weeping, and stretching out his hands with idiotic cries, for another world which he might ravage. He seemed, in outward show, to have overcome old earth; but, in reality, within his inmost soul, the earth had conquered him, had overwhelmed him, had wrapped him in the dream of ambition, girdled him with the chains of covetousness, so that when he had all, he was still dissatisfied; and, like a poor slave, was dragged on at the chariot wheels of the world, crying, moaning, lamenting, because he could not win another. Who is the man that ever overcame the world? Let him stand forward: he is a Triton among the minnows; he shall outshine Cæsar; he shall outmatch even our own lately departed Wellington, if he can say he has overcome the world. It is so rare a thing, a victory so prodigious, a conquest so tremendous, that he who can claim to have won it may walk among his fellows, like Saul, with head and shoulders far above them. He shall command our respect; his very presence shall awe us into reverence; his speech shall persuade us to obedience; and, yielding honour to whom honour is due, we'll say when we listen to his voice, "'Tis even as if an angel shook his wings."

I shall now attempt to expand the idea I have suggested, showing you in

what varied senses the Christian overcomes the world. A tough battle, sirs, I warrant you: not one which carpet knights might win: no easy skirmish that he might win, who dashed to battle on some sunshiny day, looked at the host, then turned his courser's rein, and daintily dismounted at the door of his silken tent - not one which he shall gain, who, hut a raw recruit to-day, puts on his regimentals, and foolishly imagines that one week of service will ensure a crown of glory. Nay, sirs, it is a life-long war - a fight needing the power of all these muscles, and this strong heart; a contest which shall want all our strength, if we are to be triumphant; and if we do come off more than conquerors, it shall be said of us, as Hart said of Jesus Christ: "He had strength enough and none to spare;" a battle at which the stoutest heart might quail; a fight at which the braves might shake, if he did not remember that the Lord is on his side, and therefore, whom shall he fear? He is the strength of his life; of whom shall he be afraid? This fight with the world is not one of main force, or physical might; if it were, we might soon win it; but it is all the more dangerous from the fact that it is a strife of mind, a contest of heart, a struggle of the spirit, a strife of the soul. When we overcome the world in one fashion, we have not half done our work; for the world is a Proteus, changing its shape continually; like the chameleon, it hath all the colours of the rainbow; and when you have worsted the world in one shape, it will attack you in another. Until you die, you will always have fresh appearances of the world to wrestle with. Let me just mention some of the forms in which the Christian overcomes the world.

I. He overcomes the world when it sets up itself as a legislator, wishing to teach him customs. You know the world has its old massive law book of customs, and he who does not choose to go according to the fashion of the world, is under the ban of society. Most of you do just as everybody else does, and that is enough for you. If you see so-and-so do a dishonest thing in business, it is sufficient for you that everybody does it. If ye see that the majority of mankind have certain habits, ye succumb, ye yield. Ye think, I suppose, that to march to hell in crowds, will help to diminish the fierce heat of the burning of the bottomless pit, instead of remembering that the more faggots the fiercer will be the flame. Men usually swim with the stream like a dead fish; it is only the living fish that goes against it. It is only the Christian who despises customs, who does not care for

conventionalisms, who only asks himself the question, "Is it right or is it wrong? If it is right, I will be singular. If there is not another man in this world who will do it, I will do it; should a universal hiss go up to heaven, I will do it still; should the very stones of earth fly up, and smite me to death, I will do it still; though they bind me to the stake, yet I must do it; I will be singularly right; if the multitude will not follow me, I will go without them, I will be glad if they will all go and do right as well, but if not, I will despise their customs; I care not what others do; I shall not be weighed by other men; to my own Master I stand or fall. Thus I conquer and overcome the customs of the world." Fair world! she dresseth herself in ermine, she putteth on the robes of a judge, and she solemnly telleth you, "Man, you are wrong. Look at your fellows; see how they do. Behold my laws. For hundreds of years have not men done so? Who are you, to set yourself up against me?" And she pulls out her worm-eaten law-book, and turning over the musty pages, says, "See, here is an act passed in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and here is another law enacted in the days of Pharaoh. These must be right, because antiquity has enrolled them among her standard authorities. Do you mean to set yourself up and stand against the opinions of the multitude?" Yes, we do; we take the law-book of the world, and we burn it, as the Ephesians did their magic rolls; we take her deeds, and make them into waste paper; we rend her proclamation from the walls; we care not what others do; custom to us is a cobweb; we count it folly to be singular; but when to be singular is to be right, we count it the proudest wisdom; we overcome the world; we trample on her customs; we walk as a distinct people, a separate race, a chosen generation, a peculiar people. The Christian behaves in his dealings not as the laughing infidel insinuates, when he sneeringly describes Mawworm, as saying, "Boy, have you sanded the sugar?" "Yes, sir." "Have you put the sloe-leaves in the tea?" "Yes, sir." "Have you put red lead in the pepper?" "Yes, sir." "Then come to prayers." Christians do not do so; they say, "We know better; we cannot conform to the customs of the world. If we pray, we will also act, or else we are hypocrites, confounded hypocrites. If we go to the house of God, and profess to love him, we love him every where; we take our religion with us into the shop, behind the counter; into our offices; we must have it everywhere, or else God knows it is not religion at all." Ye must stand up, then, against the customs of mankind. Albeit, this may be a three-million peopled city, ye



are to come out and be separate, if ye would overcome the world.

2. We rebel against the world's customs. And if we do so, what is the conduct of our enemy? She changes her aspect. "That man is a heretic; that man is a fanatic; he is a cant, he is a hypocrite," says the world directly. She grasps her sword, she putteth frowns upon her brow, she scowleth like a demon, she girdeth tempests round about her, and she saith, "The man dares defy my government; he will not do as others do. Now I will persecute him. Slander! come from the depths of hell and hiss at him. Envy! sharpen up thy tooth and bite him." She fetches up all false things, and she persecutes the man. If she can, she does it with the hand; if not, by the tongue. She afflicts him wherever he is. She tries to ruin him in business; or, if he standeth forth as the champion of the truth why then she laugheth, and mocketh, and scorneth. She lets no stone be unturned whereby she may injure him. What is then the behaviour of the Lord's warrior, when he sees the world take up arms against him, and when he sees all earth, like an army, coming to chase him, and utterly destroy him? Does he yield? Does he yield? Does he bend? Does he cringe? Oh, no! Like Luther, he writes "Cedo nulli" on his banner - "I yield to none;" and he goes to war against the world, if the world goes to war against him.

"Let earth be all in arms abroad,  
He dwells in perfect peace."

Ah! some of you, if you had a word spoken against you, would at once give up what religion you have; but the true-born child of God cares little for man's opinion. "Ah," says he, "let my bread fail me, let me be doomed to wander penniless the wide world o'er; yea, let me die: each drop of blood within these veins belongs to Christ, and I am ready to shed it for his name's sake." He counts all things but loss, that he may win Christ - that he may be found in him; and when the world's thunders roars, he smiles at the uproar, while he hums his pleasant tune: -

"Jerusalem my happy home,  
Name ever dear to me;  
When shall my labours have an end,

In joy, and peace, and thee?"

When her sword comes out, he looketh at it. "Ah," saith he, "just as the lightning leapeth from its thunder lair, splitteth the clouds, and affrighteth the stars, but is powerless against the rock-covered mountaineer, who smiles at its grandeur, so now the world cannot hurt me, for in the time of trouble my Father hides me in his pavillion, in the secret of his tabernacle doth he hide me, and set me up upon a rock." Thus, again, we conquer the world, by not caring for its frowns.

3. "Well," saith the world, "I will try another style," and this believe me, is the most dangerous of all. A smiling world is worse than a frowning one. She saith, "I cannot smite the man low with my repeated blows, I will take off my mailed glove, and showing him a fair white hand, I'll bid him kiss it. I will tell him I love him: I will flatter him, I will speak good words to him." John Bunyan well describes this Madam Bubble: she has a winning way with her; she drops a smile at the end of each of her sentences; she talks much of fair things, arid tries to win and woo. Oh, believe me, Christians are not so much in danger when they are persecuted as when they are admired. When we stand upon the pinnacle of popularity, we may well tremble and fear. It is not when we are hissed at, and hooted, that we have any cause to be alarmed; it is when we are dandled on the lap of fortune, and nursed upon the knees of the people; it is when all men speak well of us, that woe is unto us. It is not in the cold wintry wind that I take off my coat of righteousness, and throw it away; it is when the sun comes, when the weather is warm, and the air balmy, that I unguardedly strip off my robes, and become naked. Good God! how many a man has been made naked by the love of this world! The world has flattered and applauded him; he has drunk the flattery; it was an intoxicating draught; he has staggered, he has reeled, he has sinned, he has lost his reputation; and as a comet that erst flashed across the sky, doth wander far into space, arid is lost in darkness, so doth he; great as he was, he falls; mighty as he was, he wanders, and is lost. But the true child of God is never so; he is as safe when the world smiles, as when it frowns; he cares as little for her praise as for her dispraise. If he is praised, and it is true, he says, ""My deeds deserves praise, but I refer all honor to my God." Great souls know what they merit from their critic; to

them it is nothing more than the giving of their daily income. Some men cannot live without a large amount of praise; and if they have no more than they deserve, let them have it. If they are children of God, they will be kept steady; they will not be ruined or spoiled; but they will stand with feet like hinds' feet upon high places. - "This is the victory that overcometh the world."

4. Sometimes, again, the world turns jailer to a Christian. God sends affliction and sorrow, until life is a prison-house, the world its jailer - and a wretched jailer too. Have you ever been in trials and troubles, my friends? and has the world never come to you and said, ""Poor prisoner, I have a key that will let you out. You are in pecuniary difficulties; I will tell you how you may get free. Put that Mr. Conscience away. He asks you whether it is a dishonest act. Never mind about him; let him sleep; think about the honesty after you have got the money, and repent at your leisure." So saith the world; but you say, "I cannot do the thing." "Well," says the world, "then groan and grumble: a good man like you locked up in this prison!" "No," says the Christian, "my Father sent me into want, and in his own time he will fetch me out; but if I die here I will not use wrong means to escape. My Father put me here for my good, I will not grumble; if my bones must lie here - if my coffin is to be under these stones - if my tomb-stone shall be in the wall of my dungeon - here will I die, rather than so much as lift a finger to get out by unfair means." "Ah," says the world, "then thou art a fool." The scorner laughs and passes on, saying, "The man has no brain, he will not do a bold thing; he hath no courage; he will not launch upon the sea; he wants to go in the old beaten track of morality." Ay, so he does; for thus he overcomes the world.

Oh! I might tell you of some battles that have been fought. There has been many a poor maiden, who has worked, worked, worked, until her fingers were worn to the bone, to earn a scanty living out of the things which we wear upon us, knowing not that oftentimes we wear the blood, and bones, and sinews of poor girls. That poor girl has been tempted a thousand times, the evil one has tried to seduce her, but she has fought a valiant battle; stern in her integrity, in the midst of poverty she still stands upright, "Clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners," a heroine unconquered by the temptations and enticements of

vice. In other cases: many a man has had the chance of being rich in an hour, affluent in a moment, if he would but clutch something which he dare not look at, because God within him said, "No." The world said, "Be rich, be rich;" but the Holy Spirit said, "No! be honest; serve thy God." Oh, the stern contest. and the manly combat carried on within the heart! But he said, "No; could I have the stars transmuted into worlds of gold, I would not for those globes of wealth belie my principles, and damage my soul : " thus he walks a conqueror. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

II. But my text speaks of a GREAT BIRTH. A very kind friend has told me that while I was preaching in Exeter Hall I ought to pay deference to the varied opinions of my hearers; that albeit I may be a Calvinist and a Baptist, I should recollect that there are a variety of creeds here. Now, if I were to preach nothing but what would please the whole lot of you, what on earth should I do? I preach what I believe to be true; and if the omission of a single truth that I believe, would make me king of England throughout eternity, I would not leave it out. Those who do not like what I say have the option of leaving it. They come here, I suppose, to please themselves; and if the truth does not please them, they can leave it. I will never be afraid that an honest British audience will turn away from the man who does not stick, and stutter, and stammer in speaking the truth. Well, now, about this great birth. I am going to say perhaps a harsh thing, but I heard it said by Mr. Jay first of all. Some say a new birth takes place in an infant baptism, but I remember that venerable patriarch saying, "Popery is a lie, Puseyism is a lie, baptismal regeneration is a lie." So it is. It is a lie so palpable that I can scarcely imagine the preachers of it have any brains in their heads at all. It is so absurd upon the very face of it, that a man who believes it put himself below the range of a common-sense man. Believe that every child by a drop of water is born again! Then that man that you see in the ring as a prize-fighter is born again, because those sanctified drops once fell upon his infant forehead! Another man swears - behold him drunk and reeling about the streets. He is born again! A pretty born again that is! I think he wants to be born again another time. Such a regeneration as that only fits him for the devil; and by its deluding effect, may even make him sevenfold more the child of hell. But the men who curse, and swear, and rob and steal, and those poor

wretches who are hanged, have all been born again, according to the fiction of this beautiful Puseyite church. Out upon it! out upon it! Ah, God sends something better than that into men's hearts, when he sends them a new birth.

However, the text speaks of a great birth. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." This new birth is the mysterious point in all religion. If you preach anything else except the new birth you will always get on well with your hearers; but if you insist that in order to enter heaven there must be a radical change, though this is the doctrine of the Scripture, it is so unpalatable to mankind in general that you will scarcely get them to listen. Ah! now ye turn away if I begin to tell you, that "except ye be born of water and of the Spirit, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." If I tell you that there must be a regenerating influence exerted upon your minds by the power of the Holy Ghost then I know ye will say "it is enthusiasm." Ah! but it is the enthusiasm of the Bible. There I stand; by this I will be judged. If the Bible does not say we must be born again, then I give it up; but if it does then, sirs, do not distrust that truth on which your salvation hangs.

What is it to be born again, then? Very briefly, to be born again is to undergo a change so mysterious, that human words cannot speak of it. As we cannot describe our first birth, so it is impossible for us to describe the second. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But while it is so mysterious, it is a change which is known and felt. People are not born again when they are in bed and asleep, so that they do not know it. They feel it; they experience it. Galvanism, or the power of electricity, may be mysterious; but they produce a feeling - a sensation. So does the new birth. At the time of the new birth the soul is in great agony - often drowned in seas of tears. Sometimes it drinks bitters, now and then mingled with sweet drops of hope. Whilst we are passing from death unto life, there is an experience which none but the child of God can really understand. It is a mysterious change; but, at the same time, it is a positive one. It is as much a change as if this heart were taken out of me, and the black drops of blood wrung from it, then washed and cleansed and put into my soul

again. It is "a new heart and a right spirit:" a mysterious but yet an actual and real change!

Let me tell you, moreover, that this change is a supernatural one. It is not one that a man performs upon himself. It is not leaving off drinking and becoming sober; it is not turning from a Roman Catholic to a Protestant; it is not veering round from a Dissenter to a Churchman, or a Churchman to a Dissenter. It is a vast deal more than that. It is a new principle infused which works in the heart, enters the very soul, and moves the entire man. Not a change of my name, but a renewal of my nature, so that I am not the man I used to be, but a new man in Christ Jesus. It is a supernatural change - something which man cannot do, and which only God can effect; which the Bible itself cannot accomplish without the attendant Spirit of God; which no minister's eloquence can bring about - something so mighty and wondrous, that it must be confessed to be the work of God, and God alone. Here is the place to observe that this new birth is an enduring change. Arminians tell us that people are born again, then fall into sin, pick themselves up again, and become Christians again - fall into sin, lose the grace of God, then come back again - fall into sin a hundred times in their lives, and so keep on losing grace and recovering it. Well, I suppose it is a new version of the Scripture where you read of that. But I read in my Bible that if true Christians could fall away, it would be impossible to renew them again unto repentance. I read, moreover, that wherever God has begun a good work he will carry it on even to the end; and that whom he once loves, he loves to the end. If I have simply been reformed, I may be a drunkard yet, or you may see me acting on the stage. But if I am really born again, with that real supernatural change, I shall never fall away, I may fall into a sin, but I shall not fall finally; I shall stand while life shall last, constantly secure; and when I die it shall be said -

"Servant of God, well done!  
Rest from thy blest employ;  
The battle's fought, the victory's won;  
Enter thy rest of joy."

Do not deceive yourselves, my beloved. If you imagine that you have been

regenerated, and having gone away from God, will be once more born again, you do not know anything about the matter; for "he that is born of God sinneth not." That is, he does not sin so much as to fall away from grace; "for he keepeth himself, that the evil one toucheth him not." Happy is the man who is really and actually regenerate, and passed from death unto life!

III. To conclude. There IS A GREAT GRACE. Persons who are born again really do overcome the world. How is this brought about? The text says, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Christians do not triumph over the world by reason. Not at all. Reason is a very good thing, and nobody should find fault with it. Reason is a candle: but faith is a sun. Well, I prefer the sun, though I do not put out the candle. I use my reason as a Christian man; I exercise it constantly: but when I come to real warfare, reason is a wooden sword; it breaks, it snaps; while faith, that sword of true Jerusalem metal, cuts to the dividing of soul and body. My text says, "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." Who are the men that do anything in the world? Are they not always men of faith? Take it even as natural faith. Who wins the battle? Why, the man who knows he will win it, and vows that he will be victor. Who never gets on in the world? The man who is always afraid to do a thing, for fear he cannot accomplish it. Who climbs the top of the Alps? The man who says, "I will do it, or I will die." Let such a man make up his mind that he can do a thing. and he will do it, if it is within the range of possibility. Who have been the men who have lifted the standard, and grasping it with firm hand, have upheld it in the midst of stormy strife and battle? Why, men of faith. Who have done great things? Not men of fear and trembling, men who are afraid; but men of faith, who had bold fronts, and foreheads made of brass-men who never shook, and never trembled, but believing in God, lifted their eyes to the hills, whence cometh their strength.

"Never was a marvel done upon the earth, but it had sprung of faith; nothing noble, generous, or great, but faith was the root of the achievement; nothing comely, nothing famous, but its praise is faith. Leonidas fought in human faith as Joshua in divine. Xenophon trusted to his skill, and the sons of Matthias to their cause." Faith is mightiest of the

mighty. It is the monarch of the realms of the mind; there is no being superior to its strength, no creature which will not bow to its divine prowess. The want of faith makes a man despicable, it shrivels him up so small that he might live in a nutshell. Give him faith, and he is a leviathan that can dive into the depths of the sea; he is a war horse, that cries, aha! aha! in the battle; he is a giant who takes nations and crumbles them in his hand, who encounters hosts, and at a sword they vanish; he binds up sheaves of sceptres, and gathers up all the crowns at his own. There is nothing like faith, sirs. Faith makes you almost as omnipotent as God, by the borrowed might of its divinity. Give us faith and we can do all things.

I want to tell you how it is that faith helps Christians to overcome the world. It always does it homoeopathically. You say, "That is a singular idea." So it may be. The principle is that, "like cures like." So does faith overcome the world by curing like with like. How does faith trample upon the fear of the world? By the fear of God. "Now," says the world, "if you do not do this I will take away your life. If you do not bow down before my false god, you shall be put in yon burning fiery furnace." "But," says the man of faith, "I fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. True, I may dread you, but I have a greater fear than that, I fear lest I should displease God; I tremble lest I should offend my Sovereign." So the one fear counterbalances the other. How does faith overthrow the world's hopes? "There," says the world, "I will give thee this, I will give thee that, if thou wilt be my disciple. There is a hope for you; you shall be rich, you shall be great." But, faith says, "I have a hope laid up in heaven; a hope which fadeth not away, eternal, incorrupt, amaranthine hope, a golden hope, a crown of life;" and the hope of glory overcomes all the hopes of the world, "Ah!" says the world, "Why not follow the example of your fellows?" "Because," says faith, "I will follow the example of Christ." If the world puts one example before us, faith puts another. "Oh, follow the example of such an one; he is wise, and great, and good," says the world. Says faith, "I will follow Christ; he is the wisest, the greatest, and the best." It overcomes example by example, "Well," says the world, "since thou wilt not be conquered by all this, come, I will love thee; thou shalt be my friend." Faith says, "He that is the friend of this world, cannot be the friend of God. God loves me." So he puts love against love; fear against fear; hope against hope; dread against dread; and so faith



overcomes the world by like curing like.

In closing my discourse, men and brethren, I am but a child; I have spoken to you as I could this morning. Another time, perhaps I might be able to launch more thunders, and to proclaim better the word of God; but this I am sure of - I tell you all I know, and speak right on. I am no orator; but just tell you what springs up from my heart. But before I have done, O that I may have a word with your souls. How many are there here who are born again? Some turn a deaf ear, and say, "It is all nonsense; we go to our place of worship regularly; put our hymn books and Bibles under our arm! and we are very religious sort of people." Ah, soul! if I meet you at the bar of judgment, recollect I said - and said God's word - "Except ye be born again ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." Others of you say, "We cannot believe that being born again is such a change as you speak of, I am a great deal better than I used to be; I do not swear now, and I am very much reformed." Sirs, I tell you it is no little change. It is not mending the pitcher, but it is breaking it up and having a new one; it is not patching the heart, it is having a new heart and a right spirit. There is nothing but death unto sin, and life unto righteousness, that will save your souls.

I am preaching no new doctrine. Turn to the articles of the Church of England, and read it there. Church people come to me sometimes to unite with our church; I show them our doctrines in their prayer book, and they have said they never knew they were there. My dear hearers, why cannot you read your own articles of faith? Why, positively, you do not know what is in your own prayer book, Men, now-a-days, do not read their Bibles, and they have for the most part no religion. They have a religion, which is all outside show, but they do not think of searching to see what its meaning really is. Sirs, it is not the cloak of religion that will do for you; it is a vital godliness you need; it is not a religious Sunday, it is a religious Monday; it is not a pious church, it is a pious closet; it is not a sacred place to kneel in, it is a holy place to stand in all day long. There must be a change of heart, real, radical, vital, entire. And now, what say you? Has your faith overcome the world? Can you live above it? or do you love the world and the things thereof? If so, sirs, ye must go on your way and perish, each one of you, unless ye turn from that, and give your

hearts to Christ. Oh! what say you, is Jesus worthy of your love? Are the things of eternity and heaven worth the things of time? Is it so sweet to be a worldling, that for that you can lie down in torment? Is it so good to be a sinner, that for this you can risk your soul's eternal welfare? O, my friends, is it worth your while to run the risk of an eternity of woe for a hour of pleasure? Is a dance worth dancing in hell with howling fiends for ever? Is one dream, with a horrid waking, worth enjoying, when there are the glories of heaven for those who follow God? Oh! if my lips would let me speak to you, my heart would run over at my eyes, and I would weep myself away, until ye had pity on your own poor souls. I know I am, in a measure, accountable for your souls, If the watchmen warn them not, they shall perish, but their blood shall be required at the watchman's hands, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?" thus saith the Lord. Besotted, filled with your evil wills, inclined to evil; still the Holy Ghost speaks by me this morning, "If ye turn unto the Lord, with full purpose of heart, he will have mercy upon you, and to our God, he will abundantly pardon." I cannot bring you; I cannot fetch you. My words are powerless, my thoughts are weak! Old Adam is too strong for this young child to draw or drag; but God speak to you, dear hearts; God send the truth home, and then we shall rejoice together, both he that soweth and he that reapeth, because God has given us the increase. God bless you! may you all be born again, and have that faith that overcometh the world!

"Have I that faith which looks to Christ,  
O'ercomes the world and sin -  
Receives him Prophet, Priest, and King,  
And makes the conscience clean?"

"If I this precious grace possess,  
All praise is due to thee;  
If not, I seek it from thy hands;  
Now grant it, Lord, to me."

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## **A View Of God's Glory**

And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. - Exodus 33:18

That was a large request to make. He could not have asked for more: "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." Why, it is the greatest petition that man ever asked of God. It seems to me the greatest stretch of faith that I have either heard or read of. It was great faith which made Abraham go into the plain to offer up intercession for a guilty city like Sodom. It was vast faith which enabled Jacob to grasp the angel; it was mighty faith which enabled Elijah to rend the heavens and fetch down rain from skies which had been like brass before; but it appears to me that this prayer contains a greater amount of faith than all the others put together. It is the greatest request that man could make to God: "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." Had he requested a fiery chariot to whirl him up to heaven; had he asked to cleave the water-floods and drown the chivalry of a nation; had he prayed the Almighty to send fire from heaven to consume whole armies, I could have found a parallel to his prayer; but when he offers this petition, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," he stands alone, a giant among giants; a Colossus even in those days of mighty men. His request surpasses that of any other man: "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." Among the lofty peaks and summits of man's prayers that rise like mountains to the skies, this is the culminating point; this is the highest elevation that faith ever gained: it is the loftiest place to which the great ambition of faith could climb; it is the topmost pillar of all the towering structures that confidence ever piled. I am astonished that Moses himself should have been bold enough to supplicate so wondrous a favor. Surely after he had uttered the desire, his bones must have trembled, his blood curdled in his veins, and his hair must have stood on end. Did he not wonder at himself? Did he not tremble at his own hardihood? We believe that such would have been the case had not the faith which prompted the prayer sustained him in the review of it.

Whence, then, came faith like this? How did Moses obtain so eminent a

degree of this virtue? Ah, beloved, it was by communion with God. Had he not been for forty days in the council-chamber with his God? Had he not tarried in the secret pavilion of burning fire? Had not Jehovah spoken to him as a man speaketh with his friend, he would not have had courage enough to ask so large a boon. Yea, more, I doubt whether all this communion would have been sufficient if he had not also received a fresh testimony to the grace of God, in sparing a nation through his intercession. Moses had argued with God, he had pleaded the covenant, and although God had said, "Let me alone that I may destroy them," he had still maintained his hold; he had even ventured to say, "If not, blot my name out of the book of life," let me die as well as the rest; he had wrestled hard with justice, and had prevailed. The strength gained by this victory, joined with his former communion with the Lord, made him mighty in prayer; but had he not received grace by these means, I think the petition was too large even for Moses to venture to carry to the throne. Would you, my brethren, have like faith, then walk in the same path. Be much in secret prayer. Hold constant fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; so shall you soar aloft on wings of confidence, so shall you also open your mouth wide and have it filled with divine favors, and if you do not offer the same request, yet you may have equal faith to that which bade Moses say, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory."

Allow me to refer you to the 13th verse of this chapter, where Moses speaks unto his God—"Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way." Moses asked a less favor before he requested the greater. He asked to see God's way before he prayed to see his glory. Mark you, my friends, this is the true mode of prayer. Rest not content with past answers, but double your request and go again. Look upon your past petitions as the small end of the wedge opening the way for larger ones. The best way to repay God, and the way he loves best, is to take and ask him ten times as much each time. Nothing pleases God so much as when a sinner comes again very soon with twice as large a petition—"Lord thou didst hear me last time, and now I am come again." Faith is a mighty grace, and always grows upon that which it feeds. When God has heard prayer for one thing, faith comes and asks for two things, and when God has given those two things, faith asks for six. Faith can

scale the walls of heaven. She is a giant grace. She takes mountains by their roots, and puts them on other mountains, and so climbs to the throne in confidence with large petitions, knowing that she shall not be refused. We are most of us too slow to go to God. We are not like the beggars who come to the door twenty times if you do not give them anything. But if we have been heard once, we go away, instead of coming time after time, and each time with a larger prayer. Make your petitions longer and longer. Ask for ten, and if God gives them, then for a thousand, and keep going on until at last you will positively get faith enough to ask, if it were proper, as great a favor as Moses did—"I beseech thee, show me thy glory."

Now, my friends, we have just spoken a word or two on the prayer itself; we shall have to see how it was received at the throne. It was answered, first, by a gracious manifestation; secondly, by a gracious concealment; and, thirdly, by a gracious shielding.

I. First of all this prayer which Moses offered was heard by God, and he gave him A GRACIOUS MANIFESTATION: "And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

I think that, when Moses put up this prayer to God, he was very much like Peter, when, on the mountain top, he wist not what he said. I do think that Moses himself hardly understood the petition that he offered to God. With all the clearness of his ideas; however pure his conception of the divinity might be, I do think that even Moses himself had not adequate views of the Godhead. He did not then know so much of God as he now has learned where he stands before the throne of the Most High. I believe that Moses knew that God is a Spirit. I think he must have been sensible that the mind of man can never conceive an idea of the incomprehensible Jehovah. He must have learned that the God of Mount Sinai, the King whose feet glowed like a furnace, and made the mountain smoke, could never be grasped by the senses of a mortal. Yet it is likely with all this knowledge, the great lawgiver had a vague and indistinct idea that it might be possible for divinity to be seen. My friends, it is hard for

creatures encumbered with flesh and blood to gain a just conception of a spirit. We are so linked with the material, that the spiritual is above our reach. Surely then, if a mere spirit is above our comprehension, much more "the Father of Spirits, the Eternal, Immortal, Invisible."

The poet sings most truly—

"The more of wonderful  
Is heard in him, the more we should assent.  
Could we conceive him, God he could not be;  
Or he not God, or we could not be men.  
A God alone can comprehend a God."

These eyes are but organs to convey to me the knowledge of material substances; they can not discern spirits; it is not their duty; it is beyond their province. Purer than celestial ether of the most refined nature; subtler than the secret power of electricity; infinitely above the most rarified forms of matter is the existence we call a spirit. As well might we expect to bind the winds with cords, or smite them with a sword, as to behold spirits with eyes which were only made to see gross solid materialism.

We find that Moses saw no similitude; no form passed before him. He had an audience; he had a vision; but it was an audience from behind a covering, and a vision, not of a person, but an attribute. Behold then the scene. There stands Moses about to be honored with visions of God. The Lord is about to answer thee. O Moses, God is come. Dost thou not tremble; do not thy knees knock together; are not thy bones loosened; are not thy sinews broken? Canst thou bear the thought of God coming to thee? O, I can picture Moses as he stood in that cleft of the rock with the hand of God before his eyes, and I can see him look as man never looked before, confident in faith, yet more than confounded at himself that he could have asked such a petition.

Now, what attribute is God about to show to Moses? His petition is, "Show me thy glory." Will he show him his justice? Will he show him his holiness? Will he show his wrath? Will he show him his power? Will he

break yon cedar and show him he is almighty? Will he rend yonder mountain and show him that he can be angry? Will he bring his sins to remembrance, and show that he is omniscient? No; hear the still small voice—"I will make all my goodness pass before thee." Ah! the goodness of God is God's glory. God's greatest glory is that he is good. The brightest gem in the crown of God is his goodness. "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." There is a panorama such as time would not be long enough for you to see.

Consider the goodness of God in creation. Who could ever tell all God's goodness there? Why, every creek that runs up into the shore is full of it where the fry dance in the water. Why, every tree and every forest rings with it; where the feathered songsters sit and make their wings quiver with delight and ecstasy. Why, every atom of this air, which is dense with animalculae, is full of God's goodness. The cattle on a thousand hills he feeds; the ravens come and peck their food from his liberal hands. The fishes leap out of their element, and he supplies them; every insect is nourished by him. The lion roars in the forest for his prey, and he sendeth it to him. Ten thousand thousand creatures are all fed by him. Can you tell, then, what God's goodness is? If you knew all the myriad works of God, would your life be long enough to make all God's creative goodness pass before you?

Then think of his goodness to the children of men. Think how many of our race have come into this world and died. We are of yesterday, and we know nothing. Man is as a flower; he lives, he dies; he is the infant of a day, and he is gone to-morrow, but yet the Lord doth not forget him. O, my God! if thou shouldst make all thy goodness pass before me—all thy goodness to the children of men—I must sit me down on an adamantine rock forever and look throughout eternity; I should wear these eyes out, and must have eyes of fire, or else I should never be able to see all thy goodness toward the sons of men.

But then rise higher still, and think of his sovereign goodness toward his chosen people. O, my soul, go thou back into eternity and see thy name in God's book of predestinating, unchanging grace! And then come down to the time of redemption, and see there thy Saviour bleeding and

agonizing. O my soul, there were drops of goodness before, but O, rivers of goodness roll before thee now! When thou sawest the Son of God groaning, agonizing, shrieking, dying, buried in his grave, and then rising again, thou sawest the goodness of God. "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." I say again, what a panorama! What a series of dissolving views! What sight upon sight, each one melting into the other! Could I stand here this morning, and borrow the eloquence of an angel; could I speak to you as I might wish—but, alas! I cannot break these bonds that hold my stammering tongue—could I loose these lips and speak as angels speak, then could I tell you something, but not much, of the goodness of God; for it is "past finding out." Since I cannot utter it myself, I would invoke all creation to be vocal in his praise. Ye hills, lift up your voices; let the shaggy woods upon your summits wave with adoration. Ye valleys, fill the air with the bleatings of your sheep and the lowing of your cattle. Ye that have life, if ye have voices, tune his praise; and if ye walk in silence, let your joyful motions show the thanks ye cannot speak. O, ye trees of the field, clap your hands; ye winds, in solemn harmony chant to his glory. Thou ocean, with thy myriad waves, in all thy solemn pomp, thy motion to and fro, forget not him who bids a thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain, and write no furrow on thy ever youthful brow. And you, ye storms, howl out his greatness; let your thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies; let your lightnings write his name in fire upon the midnight darkness; let the illimitable void of space become one mouth for song; and let the unnavigated ether, through its shoreless depths, bear through the infinite remote the name of him who is ever good and doeth good.

I can say no more concerning God's goodness. But this is not all that Moses saw. If you look to the words which follow my text, you will see that God said, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee;" but there was something more. No one attribute of God sets God out to perfection; there must always be another. He said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy," there is another attribute of God. There is his sovereignty. God's goodness without his sovereignty does not completely set forth his nature. I think of the man who, when he was dying, called me to see him. He said, "I am going to heaven." "Well," I replied. "what makes you think you are going



there, for you never thought of it before?" Said he, "God is good." "Yes." I answered. "but God is just." "No," said he, "God is merciful and good." Now that poor creature was dying, and being lost forever; for he had not a right conception of God. He had only one idea of God, that God is good; but that is not enough. If you only see one attribute you only have half a God. God is good, and he is a sovereign, and doeth what he pleases; and though good to all in the sense of benevolence, he is not obliged to be good to any. "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

Do not you be alarmed, my friends, because I am going to preach about sovereignty. I know some people, when they hear about sovereignty, say, "O, we are going to have some terrible high doctrine." Well, if it is in the Bible, that is enough for you. Is not that all you want to know? If God says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy," it is not for you to say it is high doctrine. Who told you it was high doctrine? It is good doctrine. What right have you to call one doctrine high and one low? Would you like me to have a Bible with "H" against high, and "L" against low, so that I could leave the high doctrine out and please you? My Bible has no mark of that kind; it says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious." There is divine sovereignty. I believe some are afraid to say any thing about this great doctrine lest they should offend some of their people; but, my friends, it is true, and you shall hear it. God is a sovereign. He was a sovereign ere he made this world. He lived alone, and this was in his mind: Shall I make any thing or shall I not? I have a right to make creatures or not to make any. He resolved that he would fashion a world. When he made it, he had a right to form the world in what shape and size he pleased; and he had a right, if he chose, to leave the globe untenanted by a single creature. When he had resolved to make man, he had a right to make him whatever kind of creature he liked. If he wished to make him a worm or a serpent, he had a right to do it. When he made him, he had a right to put any command on him that he pleased; and God had a right to say to Adam. Thou shalt not touch that forbidden tree. And when Adam offended, God had a right to punish him and all the race forever in the bottomless pit.

God is so far sovereign, that he has a right, if he likes, to save any one in this chapel, or to crush all who are here. He has a right to take us all to heaven if he pleases, or to destroy us. He has a right to do just as he pleases with us. We are as much in his hands as prisoners in the hands of her majesty when they are condemned for a capital offense against the law of the land; yea, as much as clay in the hands of the potter. This is what he asserted, when he said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious. and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." This stirs up your carnal pride, does it not? Men want to be somebody. They do not like to lie down before God, and have it preached to them that God can do just as he wills with them. Ah! you may hate it, but it is what the Scripture tells us. Surely it is self-evident that God may do as he will with his own. We all like to do what we will with our own property. God has said, that if you go to his throne he will hear you; but he has a right not to do it if he likes. He has a right to do just as he pleases. If he chooses to let you go on in the error of your ways, that is his right; and if he says, as he does, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," it is his right to do so. That is the high and awful doctrine of DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.\*

Put the two together, goodness and sovereignty, and you see God's glory. If you take sovereignty alone, you will not understand God. Some people only have an idea of God's sovereignty, and not of his goodness; such are usually gloomy, harsh, and ill-humored. You must put the two together; that God is good, and that God is a sovereign. You must speak of sovereign grace. God is not grace alone, he is sovereign grace. He is not sovereign alone, but he is graciously sovereign. That is the best idea of God. When Moses said, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," God made him see that he was glorious, and that his glory was his sovereign goodness. Surely, beloved, we cannot be wrong in loving the doctrine of free, unmerited, distinguishing grace, when we see it thus mentioned as the brightest jewel in the crown of our covenant God. Do not be afraid of election and sovereignty. The time is come when our ministers must tell us more about them; or, if not, our souls will be so lean and starved that we shall mutiny for the bread of life. O, may God send us more thorough gospel men who will preach sovereign grace as the glory of the gospel.

## II. The second point is—there was A GRACIOUS CONCEALMENT.

Read the next verse. "He said, thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live." There was a gracious concealment. There was as much grace in that concealment as there was in the manifestation. Mark you, beloved, when God does not tell us any thing, there is as much grace in his withholding it as there is in any of his revelations. Did you ever hear or read the sentiment, that there is as much to be learned from what is not in the Bible, as from what there is in the Bible? Some people read the Scriptures, and they say, "I wish I knew so-and-so." Now you ought not to wish such a thing; for if it was good for you, it would be there; and there is as much grace in what God has not put in the Bible, as in what he has put there. If he had put more in it, it would have been our destruction. There is just enough and no more. Do you know how Robert of Normandy lost his sight? His brother passed a red-hot copper bowl before his face, and burned the eyes out of their sockets; and there are some doctrines that men want to know, which, if they could understand them, it would be like passing a red-hot bowl before their eyes. They would scorch men's eyes out, and their understandings would be completely crushed. We have seen this in some ministers, who have studied so much that they have gone out of their minds. They have gone further than they ought to have ventured. There is a point to which we may go, and no further; and happy is the man who goes as near to it as possible without overstepping it. God said to Moses—"Thou canst not see my face and live." There are two senses in which this is true. No man can see God's face as a sinner; and no man can see God's face even as a saint.

First, no man can see God's face as a sinner. There comes a wretch before the throne of God. God has spread his books, and set his seat of judgment. There comes a man before the throne of God. Look at him! He is wearing a robe of his own righteousness. "Wretch, how comest thou in hither?" And the creature tries to look at God; he cries that he may live! But, no! God saith, "he cannot see my face and live." Thus saith the Judge. "Executioners of my vengeance, come forth!" Angels come with crowns on their brows; they grasp their swords and stand ready—"Bind him hand and foot; cast him into the lake that burneth." The wretch is cast away into the fire of hell. He sees written in letters of fire—"No man

can see my face and live." Clothed in his own righteousness, he must perish.

Then, again, it is true that no man, even as a saint, can see God's face and live; not because of moral disability, but because of physical inability. The body is not strong enough to bear the sight or vision of God. I cannot tell whether even the saints in heaven see God. God dwells among them; but I do not know whether they ever behold him. That is a speculation. We can leave that till we get there. We will decide it when we get to heaven. I hardly know whether finite beings when immortalized would be capable of seeing God. This much is certain—that on earth, no man, however holy, can ever see God's face, and yet live. Why, Manoah, when he saw an angel, thought he should die. He said—"I have seen an angel of the Lord; I shall die." If you and I were to meet an angel, or a troop of angels, as Jacob did at Mahanaim, we should say—"We shall die." The blaze of splendor would overwhelm us. We could not endure it. We "cannot see God and live." All that we can ever see of God, is what Moses called his "back parts." The words, I think, signify "regal train." You have seen kings have trains hanging behind them; and all that we can ever see of God is his train that floats behind. Yon sun that burns in the heavens with all his effulgence, you think he is bright; you look upon him, and he dazzles you; but all his splendor is but a single thread in the regal skirts of the robe of Deity. You have seen night wrapped in her sable mantle woven with gems and stars—there they shine as ornaments worked by the needle of God in that brilliant piece of tapestry which is spread over our heads, like a tent for the inhabitants of the earth to dwell in: you have said, "O! how majestic! That star, that comet, that silver moon, How splendid!" They are nothing, but just a tiny portion of the skirts of God that drag in the dust. But what are the shoulders—what the girdle of divinity—what the bracelets of Godhead—what the crown that girdles his lofty brow, man cannot conceive; I could imagine that all the stars and constellations of stars might be put together and threaded into a string—made into a bracelet for the arm, or a ring for the finger of Jehovah—but I cannot conceive what God is himself. All I can ever learn—all that the thunder ever spake—all that the boistrous ocean ever could teach me—all that the heaven above, or the earth beneath can ever open to my mind, is nothing but the "back parts" of God. I can never see; nor can I understand what he

is.

III. Now, beloved, we go to the third point; and that is THE GRACIOUS SHIELDING.

Moses had to be put in the cleft of a rock before he could see God. There was a rock in the wilderness once; Moses smote it, and water gushed out. The apostle tells us "that Rock was Christ." Very well, Paul, I believe it was. There is another thing I believe—I believe this rock was Christ. I know it was not Christ literally; but Moses stood on a literal rock. Moses stood on the top of a high mountain, hidden in the cleft of a real rock. But, O, my soul, what is the cleft of the rock where thou must stand; if thou wouldst ever see God's face and live. O, it is the "Rock of ages cleft for me," where I must hide my head! O, what a cleaving that was when Jesus died! O, my soul, enter into the hole in Jesus' side. That is the cleft of the rock where thou must abide and see God.

"Till God in human flesh I see,  
My thoughts no comfort find;  
The holy, just, and sacred Three,  
Are terrors to my mind."

But when I get into the cleft of that rock, O, my soul, when I get into that cleft whose massive roof is the well ordered everlasting covenant, whose solid golden floor is made of the solemn decrees of the predestination of the Most High; and whose sides are called Jachin and Boaz, that is establishment and strength, a cleft in a rock which is so enduring that time can never dissolve it. Precious Christ! may I be found in thee amid the concussion of the elements when the world shall melt away, and the heavens shall be dissolved! O, may I stand in thee, thou precious cleft of the Rock; thou art all-in-all to my soul.

Some of you, I know, are in that cleft of the Rock. But let me ask others, where are you? Let it be a personal question. I have preached a long while about God; I have tried to mount the height of this great argument and speak of the wondrous things of God. I may have failed, but let me say to each of you—Are you in that cleft of the rock? Can you sing this—

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head."

In closing, I want one practical inference, and what shall it be? Draw it yourselves. Let it be this—there is an hour coming, when we must all, in a certain sense, see God. We must see him as a Judge. It becomes us, then, to think seriously whether we shall stand in the cleft of the Rock when he comes. There is a passage we would mention before closing—"I saw death on a pale horse, and hell followed him." There was death on the pale horse; and the original says—"hades followed him." You know the word hades comprises both heaven and hell. It means the state of spirits. Yes, death is after me and thee. Ah, run! run! run! but run as thou wilt, the rider on the white horse shall overtake thee. If thou canst escape him seventy years, he will overtake thee at last. Death is riding! Here his horse comes—I hear his snortings, I feel his hot breath; he comes! he comes! and thou must die! BUT, WICKED MAN, WHAT COMES AFTERWARDS? Will it be heaven or hell? O, if it be hell that is after thee, where art thou when thou art cast away from God? Ah, I pray God deliver you from hell; he is coming after you, sure enough; and if you have no hiding-place. woe unto you. See you that cleft in the rock, see that cross, see that blood. There is security, and only there. Thy works are but a useless incumbrance; cast them away, and with all thy might flee to the mountain with

"Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling."

Yea, more than this, you will need divine aid, even in coming to Christ—

"O, for this no strength have I,  
My strength is at thy feet to lie."

But, poor helpless one, if thou art but hidden in Christ. all is secure. Storms may arise, but you cannot be overwhelmed; old Boreas may blow

until his cheeks do burst, but not a breath of wind can injure you; for in the cleft of the Rock you shall be hidden until the vengeance is overpast.

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## **Vile Ingratitude**

Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations. - Ezekiel 16:1-2

And how think you did the prophet proceed in order to accomplish the solemn commission which had been thus intrusted to him? Did he begin by reminding the people of the law which was delivered to Moses on the top of Sinai? Did he picture to them the exceeding fearfulness and quaking of the leader of Israel's host when he received that stony law in the midst of thunders and lightnings? Or did he, do you think, proceed to point out to them the doom which must inevitably befall them, because they had broken the divine law, and violated God's holy statutes? No, my brethren; if he had been about to show to the then unprivileged gentiles their iniquity, he might have proceeded on legal grounds; he was now however about to deal with Jerusalem, the highly-favoured city, and here he does not bring to their mind the law; he does not begin dealing out law-thunders to them at all; he fetches obligations as his arguments to convince them of sin from the grace of God, rather than from the law of God. And, my brethren, as I am about this evening to address you who profess to be followers of the Son of God, and who by faith have "fled for refuge to the hope set before you in the gospel," - as my business is to convince you of sin, I shall not begin by taking you to Sinai, - I shall not attempt to show you what the law is, and what that penalty is which devolves upon every man that breaks it; but, feeling that you are not under the law, but under grace, I shall draw arguments from the grace of God, from his gospel, from the favour which he has shown to you - arguments more powerful than any which can be fetched from the law, to

show you the greatness of your sin, and the abomination of any iniquity which you have committed against the Lord your God. I shall take Ezekiel's method as my model, and proceed to copy it thus: - First, let us consider the abomination of our sin, aggravated as it is by the remembrance of what we were when the Lord first looked upon us; secondly, let us see our sins in another light - in the light of what the Lord has made us since those happy days; and then, let us proceed to notice what our sins have themselves been; and we shall have, I think, three great lamps which may cast a terrible light on the great wickedness of our sins.

I. First, then, let us consider our iniquities - I mean those committed since conversion, those committed yesterday, and the day before, and today - and let us see their sinfulness in the light of what we were when the Lord first looked upon us. In the words of the prophet Ezekiel, observe what was our "birth and our nativity." He says of us, "Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan. Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite." Now, Canaan, as you know, was a cursed one, and the land of Canaan here meant, refers to the cursed people whom God utterly gave up to be destroyed with the sword, that not one of them might escape. Mark it, our nativity and our birth were of the land of the curse. "Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite." Though when the Lord is speaking of his people as they are in covenant with him, he tells them that their father was Abraham, whom he did choose, and their mother was Sarah whom he loved; yet when he speaks of their natural estate, he compares their parentage to that mixed offspring of an Amorite father and a Hittite mother. Ay, and what was our parentage, men and brethren? Let us look back and wonder. Surely our father Adam's wickedness was in us. Our early childhood began to discover the latent sparks of our sin. Scarcely do we remember the time when they were sparks, so early were they fanned into a flame. When any of you look back to your father's house, to the place from which God called you, you may be constrained to wonder, for I know there are many members of this church here present who are the only ones out of a family who were ever called to know the Lord. Your father, perhaps, lived and died a drunkard. You can look back to the two or three that you remember of your ancestors, and they have been "without God and without hope, strangers



to the commonwealth of Israel." Then what was there in you or in your father's house that God should set his love on you? Indeed, as for those of us who have been blessed with pious parents, we have nothing to boast of our ancestry, for we all were "born in sin and shapen in iniquity."

Hath the Lord loved us, though there was nothing in our birth or parentage to invite regard or merit esteem? Then surely every sin that we commit now, is aggravated by that sovereign choice, that infinite compassion that doated upon us, though our birth was vile, and our original base. Didst thou take me from the dunghill, O my God, and do I sin against thee? Didst thou take the beggar in his rags and lift him up to make him sit among thy sons and daughters, the very blood-royal of heaven? And has that beggar afterwards become a rebel against thee? Oh sin, thou art an accursed thing indeed! When I think of that grace which has thus honored the dishonorable, exalted the mean things of this world, and saved creatures that were the offscouring of creation, how I blush for the ingratitude that can forget such tender obligations, and do despite to such extraordinary unmerited goodness!

Further, the prophet goes on to say that not only their parentage was base, but their condition was dangerous in the extreme. That which was absolutely necessary for the life of an infant had in this case been utterly neglected. The babe had been cast away as though it were useless, and its life unworthy of preservation. Offspring deserted, having none to tend it or care for its welfare, may perhaps awaken the lowest, the most contemptuous kind of pity. Was not that just our condition when the Lord looked upon us? We had not been severed from the old natural stock of Adam; there had been no water used to wash us from our natural pollution, or to make our conscience supple, our neck pliant, or our knees bend before the power of grace. We had not been swaddled or cared for. There was everything in our condition that would tend to destruction, but nothing in us that would tend upwards towards God. Yet there we were, dying, nay dead, rotten, corrupted, so abominable that it might well be said, "Bury this dead one out, of my sight," when Jehovah passed by and he said unto us, "live." Oh! some of you can remember how you were steeped up to the very neck in lust. Pardon me, brethren, when I allude to these things that you may be led to see your present sins in the light of

the mercy which has blotted out your past iniquities. It is not long since with some of you that oaths larded your conversation daily, you could scarcely speak without blasphemy; as for others of us who were preserved from open sin, how base were we! The recollection of our youthful iniquity crushes us to the very earth. When we think how we despised the training we received, could laugh at a mother's prayers and contemn all the earnest tender exhortations which a godly parent's heart afforded to us, we could hide ourselves in dust and ashes and never indulge another thought of self-satisfaction. Yet though sovereign mercy has put all these sins away; though love has covered all these iniquities, and though everlasting kindness has washed away all this filth, we have gone on to sin. We have gone on to sin - thank God not to sin as we did before, not so greedily, not as the ox drinketh down water; - still we have transgressed, and that in the light of mercy, which has "blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins. Our sins, since redemption was revealed to our souls, are abominations indeed! If I had known, O my brethren, in that hour when Christ took away my sin - if I had known what an untoward disposition I had then to show, and what broken vows I should have now to reflect upon, I do not think I could have borne the revelation. If some of us who are here present, rejoicing in covenant love and mercy, could have a clear view of all the sins we have committed since conversion, of all the sins we shall commit till we land in heaven, I question whether our senses might not reel under the terrible discovery of what base things we are. I am sure if any man had told me that my heart would ever grow cold, that I should ever forget my Lord and Master, and get worldly - if an angel from heaven had told me these things, in the day when I first saw his face and looked and loved and lived, I should have said, "Is thy servant a dog that I should do this thing?" When I sat down and viewed the flowing of his precious blood and knew that my sins were put away, I thought I should never sin against him any more. I dreamed, and was it only a dream, that I should spend and be spent in his service; that no toil would be too hard, no sacrifice too great. And here we find ourselves flinching, and drawing back, and finding excuses for leaving his service; nay, worse than that, smiting the face of our best Friend and grieving his Holy Spirit, and often causing him to hide his face from us by reason of our sin. Well might Moses say, "I beseech thee, O Lord, show me not my wretchedness."

One thing else appears designed to represent our sins as blacker still. It appears from the fifth verse, that this child, this Jewish nation, when God loved it had none other to love it. "None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion on thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field to the loathing of thy person in the day that thou wast born." Do any of you know what it is to be cast out to the loathing of your person? We will not say that our character had become such that we were loathed by others, but well we remember the time when we loathed ourselves; when we could say with John Banyan that we wished we had been a dog or a toad sooner than have been a man, because we felt ourselves so vile in having sinned against God. Oh! I can recollect the season when my fondest wish was that I had never been born, because I so sinned against God. The sight of my iniquity was such, that horror took hold of me and amazement of soul overwhelmed me. I was indeed cast out to my own loathing if not to the loathing of others; and indeed it is no wonder if a man, when he has his eyes opened, loathes himself, for there is nothing so loathsome as an unregenerate heart - a heart that is like a den of unclean birds full of all manner of filthiness and ravenousness. The greatest abomination that ever existed physically is not to be compared with the moral abominations that dwell in the unrenewed heart. It is a miniature hell, it is pandemonium in embryo; you have but to let it grow, and the vileness which is in the human heart by nature would soon make a hell if there were no hell; and yet, my brethren, when we were loathed, when even our person was loathed, he loved us. Great God I how couldst thou love that which we ourselves hated? Oh! 'tis grace, 'tis grace, 'tis grace indeed! Where is free-will, my brethren; where is free-will? There is no such thing. "Nomen est sine re," said Martin Luther, it is a name for nothing. When we think of what we were; the thought of merit vanishes; it at once refutes itself the moment we look it in the face. It was grace - free, rich, unconstrained, sovereign grace which looked on us. I am sure if there be any who think there was some good thing in them that invited God's attention, or led him to look upon them, I can only say I know there was nothing of the sort in me; there was everything to hate, nothing to desire; everything to detest, nothing to delight in; much that he might spend his hatred on, but nothing which could command his affection or his love; still he loved us, still he loved us, and yet - O ye heavens be

astonished - yet we have sinned against him since then, we have forgotten him, we have doubted him, we have grown cold towards him; we have loved self at times better than we have loved our Redeemer, and have sacrificed to our own idols and made gods of our own flesh and self-conceit, instead of giving him all the glory and the honor for ever and for ever.

This is putting sin in a gospel light. I pray you, brethren, if my speech be feeble and I cannot make the light shine on these things, spend a little season, as you can, in retirement when you are at home, look at your sins in the light of the mercy which looked on you when you were thus dead, and lost, and hopelessly ruined. And surely the blush will mantle on your cheek, and you will bow your knee with many a tear, and cry, "Lord have mercy upon me! O, my, Father cast not away thy child! forgive a child that spurned his Father's love! forgive a wife who has played the harlot against a divine husband! pardon a soul that has been traitorous to its own Lord, - to him who is its life, its joy, its all! "

II. We must now pass on to another point. We have to think of what the Lord has done for us since the time he first loved us. I have made a mistake, brethren; I have made a mistake. "The time when he first loved us," did I say ! Why, before all time, when there was no day but the unrisin unsetting day of eternity, a beginning that knew no beginning, years that had no date. He loved his people then. I meant to refer rather to **THE TIME WHEN HE BEGAN TO MANIFEST HIS LOVE TO US PERSONALLY AND INDIVIDUALLY**. Well then, observe, that one of the chief things he did to us was to spread his skirt over us, and cover our nakedness. He washed us with the water of regeneration, yea, and truly washed away the stain of our natural sanguinity. Oh, that day, that day of days, as the days of heaven upon earth, when our eyes looked to Christ and were lightened, when the burden rolled from off our back! Oh, that hour, that earliest of all our gracious remembrances, that first of all dates, when we began to live, when we stepped down into that bath of atoning blood and came out of it fairer than any queen, more glorious than the daughters of men, white as alabaster, pure as crystal, like the driven snow without spot or blemish! That day we never can forget, for it always rises to our recollection the moment we begin to speak about pardon - the day

of our own pardon, of our own forgiveness. The galley-slave may forget the hour when he ceased to tug the oar. The poor chattel of his master may forget the time when he escaped from the accursed slave-holder's grasp, and became a freeman. The sick man may forget the day when, after being long worn with pain till he was emaciated and at the gates of death, the blood began to leap in his veins, and the glow of health began to invigorate his frame. The culprit who lay shivering beneath the headsmen's axe may forget the hour when suddenly his pardon was granted and his life was spared. But if all these should consign to oblivion their surprising joys, the pardoned soul can never, never, never forget. Unless reason should lose her seat, the quickened soul can never cease to remember the time when, Jesus said to it, "Live." Oh! and has Jesus pardoned all our sins and have we sinned still? Has he washed me, and have I defiled myself again? Did he shed his blood to cleanse me and have I returned again to my natural depravity? Oh, these are abominations indeed! I have heard some say that the sins of believers are but trifles. Ah! my brethren, I do think if there be any difference, the sins of disciples of Christ are a thousand times worse than the sins of unbelievers, because they sin against a gospel of love, a covenant of mercy; against sweet experience and against precious promises. The sinner may kick against the pricks, that is bad enough; but to kick against the wounds of Christ, is worse still. Yet that is what you and I have done. We have sinned since the dear hour that cleansed our guilt away.

Nor did the gracious things we have mentioned exhaust the lovingkindness of the Lord. When he had washed us, according to the ninth verse, he anointed us with oil. Yes, and that has been repeated many and many a time. "Thou hast anointed my head with oil." He gave us the oil of his grace; our faces were like priests, and we went up to his tabernacle rejoicing. Have ye received the Spirit, my brethren? Oh, think how great an honour that God should dwell in man. The centurion said he was not worthy that Christ should come under the roof of his house, and yet the Holy Spirit has not merely come under your roof but has come into your heart; there he dwells and there he reigns. Yet, my dear brethren, yet you have sinned. With God's oil on your head you have sinned. With the Holy Ghost in your heart you have sinned. Ah! if any man carried God within him, would he go and sin? Shall the body that is

the temple of the Holy Ghost be desecrated? Yet that has been the case with us. We have had God within us, and yet we have sinned. Marvel of marvels! He that would defile the house in which the king lived, would certainly be guilty of high insult; but he who defiles the temple in which the Holy Ghost resides - what shall be said of him? This is what we have done. O Lord, have mercy upon thy people! Now we see our abomination in this clear light, we beseech thee pardon it, for Jesu's sake!

But further, we find that he not only washed us, he not only anointed us with oil; but he clothed us, and clothed us sumptuously. The rich man in the parable of Jesus was clothed in scarlet, but we are better robed than he, for we are clothed in broidered-work. "Jesus spent his life to work my robe of righteousness." His sufferings were so many stitches when he made the broidered-work of my righteousness. "I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin." Our shoes have been as iron and brass, and as our day, so has our strength been. We have had always grace hitherto sufficient for us. "And I girded thee about with fine linen," - the righteousness of saints. He has given to us the virtues of the Holy Spirit, the robe of sanctification; and then he has covered us with silk, even with that all-glorious robe of righteousness "woven from the top throughout without seam," in which all his people stand arrayed. There never was any one dressed so well as God's people. Outwardly they may wear fustian and calico; they may come up to the house of God dressed in the garb of poverty, but they have robes which men cannot see, though such as angels can see and admire. A saint's wardrobe would be a matchless thing to look at if we could but see it with the eyes of our understanding illuminated. Have you ever been taken to see the wardrobes of some great personages, - their multiplied garments - the robes which they wore in state? You have wondered at their lavish expenditure; but see your own, see those shoes, that girding of fine linen, and that covering of silk. Why, all the wealth of mankind could not buy an ell of that stuff; they could not procure a hem, much less the entire robe with which the righteous are adorned and made glorious. And yet they have turned aside and sinned. What should you think of a bishop in his lawn sleeves defiling himself with outcasts in the street? What would think you of a king with a crown on his head going to break the laws of his kingdom? What would you think if a monarch should invest us with all

the insignia of nobility, and we should afterwards violate the high orders conferred upon us while adorned with the robes of state? This is just what you and I have done. We have had all these costly robes and glorious garments, and then we have gone and sinned against our God. O ingratitude of the vilest sort! Where are there words to denounce it? What language can fully express it?

We have but time to notice each one of these briefly; we have not only received clothing, but ornaments. "I have decked thee also with ornaments, and put bracelets upon thy hands and a chain on thy neck, and I put a jewel on thy forehead and earrings in thy ears, and a beautiful crown upon thy head." Just like a loving husband, not content with giving his wife an ornament, he gives her many. And the Lord, you see, gives to his Church all the ornaments she can possibly desire. There are ornaments for her ears, a crown for her head, bracelets for her hands, and a chain for her neck. We cannot be more glorious; Christ has given the Church so much, she could not have more. He could not bestow upon her that which is more beautiful, more precious, or more costly. She has all she can receive. The Lord Jesus has bestowed all his wealth, and all heaven's wealth upon his Church, and you and I are the inheritors and wearers of these precious ornaments. He has given to us jewels in our ears - a hearing ear; he has given us the jewel in our forehead - a holy courage for his name; he has given us a crown upon our head - a garland crown of lovingkindness and tender mercy; he has given us bracelets upon our hands, that whatsoever we touch may be graced, that our conduct may be beautiful and lovely, an ornament to the profession which we have espoused; and he has been pleased to put a chain about our necks, that we may ever be known to be right noble personages - noble of rank, exalted of station. Nevertheless, in the face of all these, we have sinned against him.

Dear friends, it may seem like repetition when I go over the list of these mercies, but I cannot help it. I should like every one of these to be as a trumpet in your ear to wake you up to look at your sins, and as a dagger in the heart of your pride to stab it and make it die. By these mercies of God, I adjure you, do hate your sins; by these lovingkindnesses, these favours, immense, innumerable, unsearchable, by these covenant gifts,

every one of them more precious, than a world of diamonds, I beseech you hate the sins that have grieved your gracious Lord; and made his Spirit mourn. To see my sins in the lurid light of Sinai were bad enough, but to see them in the mellow radiance of his countenance and in the light that is shed from the cross of my dying Master, this is to see sin in all its blackness and all its heinousness. Never, dear brethren, tamper with sin; never have anything to do with those who think sin is little because grace is great. Shun, I beseech you, any man who comforts his heart with the hope that the crimes of God's children are mere trifles. No; though there be precious blood to wash it all away, yet sin is an awful thing. Though there be covenant promises to keep the believer secure, yet sin is a damning thing. Though there be eternal love which will not execute the divine anger upon us, yet sin is a thrice - cursed thing. In fact, I would strain language to find an epithet for that sin which dares to nestle in the heart of a man whom God has loved and chosen. I know that there is a tendency among some ministers - I will not say to whom I allude; you may readily guess - who preach a gospel which does seem as if it tolerated iniquity. Oh, come not into their secret, I pray you. Better for you, though it were one of the worst things that could be, if you were to endorse Arminianism, rather than Antinomianism. Of the two devils I think the white devil is the least devilish. As Rowland Hill said, - "The one is a white devil and the other a black one." They are both devils, I doubt not, but still one is more fearful in its character than the other. Have nothing to do with that horrible spirit which has done more to destroy sound doctrine in our churches than anything else. Arguments will never break Antinomianism down. We are not afraid to meet our antagonists in fair and open battle. The ill lives of some who call themselves Calvinists, and are no more Calvinists than they are Jews, have brought that doctrine into great disrepute, and we often have flung in our faces the wickedness of some professors, and the rash, not to say wicked teaching of some of our preachers, as a reason why our brethren should be accounted worthy of all scorn. The more gracious God is, the more holy you should be; the more love he manifests to you, the more love should you reflect to him.

III. And now, I shall close by noticing in the third place, WHAT OUR SINS REALLY HAVE BEEN. We will not enter into particulars, we have each one, a different way. It were idle therefore for me to think of



describing the sins of such an assembly as the present. The germs, the vileness, the essence of our own sin, has lain in this - that we have given to sin and to idols things that belong unto God. "Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them, and tookest thy broidered garments and coveredst them, and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them. My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour." I have done this - let me make confession for myself, and then I admonish you each one apply the case to yourselves. It has been a happy Sabbath day, my soul has enjoyed personal fellowship with Christ: I have gone up in the pulpit and had liberty of speech, and power has attended the words; there has been manifestly the Holy Spirit in the midst of his Church; I have, gone home, had access to God in prayer, and enjoyed again communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. I go forth once more to unfold the things of the gospel, and with delight to my own soul, have I heard afterwards of saints who have been refreshed, and sinners converted. This was like "fine flour, and honey and oil" that God had given to me. What did he give it me for? Why, that I might offer it to him, and give him all the glory. And do you know, I have caught myself saying, "Ah, you have done well to-day; you are growing in grace, and living near to God." What! am I offering God's blessings before the shrine of my abominable pride? Am I making an offering to Moloch, and bringing the very gifts and love-tokens of my Father, to be laid upon the altar of my own pride? This is abominable indeed! This is so vile that no language can execrate it sufficiently. To offer my own work is bad enough, but to offer God's grace to idols, to spend his mercies in the gratification of my flesh - to look upon my own self as having done it, to sacrifice to my own conceit, to make an oblation to self of that which God has given me - this is atrocious enough to make a man fall very humbly before God, to feel the bitterness of his sin, and ask for pardon.

You have transgressed in like manner, I dare say. When you pray at a prayer meeting, the devil insinuates the thought, and you entertain it, "What a fine fellow I am!" You may detect yourself when you are talking to a friend of some good things God has done, or when you go home and

tell your wife lovingly the tale of your labour, there is a little demon of pride at the bottom of your heart. You like to take credit to yourself for the good things you have done. I am speaking of you all; there is no exception here. Does not a little bit of the old man creep out, just as when Jehu said, "Come see my zeal for the Lord." Now what is that but taking God's fine meal, and oil, and honey, and offering them to yourselves? It there should be an innocent man, one who pleads "not guilty" upon this matter he can get up and go out if he likes; but I am sure you will all sit still, at least, all who know your own hearts. Your own experience will compel you to say - " I must confess it before God." But have you not noticed that there are other ways besides this? Sometimes a man has another god besides pride. That god may be his sloth. He does not want to do much; he reads in the Bible that there is a finished righteousness, that the covenant of grace is complete. Have you never detected yourself, when inclined to be dilatory in spiritual things, leaning on the oar of the covenant, instead of pulling at it, and saying, "Well, these things are true, but there is no great need for me to stir myself." Ah! you have been quietly nestling down to sleep, even under the influence of the sweet wine of the covenant of grace. It is sad that it should be so. It would be bad enough if we had picked up an excuse from our own logic; but instead of that, we have gone to God's book to feign apologies for our idleness. Was not that taking his mercies and sacrificing them to false deities? Sometimes it is even worse. God gives to his people riches, and they offer them before the shrine of their covetousness. He gives them talent, and they prostitute it to the service of their ambition. He gives them judgment, and they pander to their own advancement, and seek not the interest of his kingdom. He gives them influence; that influence they use for their own aggrandisement, and not for his honour. What is this but parallel to taking his gold, and his jewels, and hanging them upon the neck of Ashtaroth. Ah! let us take care when we think of our sins, that we set them in this light. It is taking God's mercies to lavish them upon his enemies. Now, if you were to make me a present of some token of your regard, I think it would be the meanest and most ungracious thing in the world I could do to take it over to your enemy, and say, "There, I come to pay my respects." To pay my respects to your foe with that which had been the token of your favour! There are two kings at enmity with one another - two powers that have been at battle, and one of them has a

rebellious subject, who is caught in the very act of treason, and condemned to die. The king very graciously pardons him, and then munificently endows him. "There," says he, "I give you a thousand crown-pieces;" and that man takes the bounty, and devotes it to increasing the resources of the king's enemies. Now, that were a treason and baseness too vile to be committed by worldly men. Alas then! that is what you have done. You have bestowed on God's enemies what God gave to you as a love token. Oh, men and brethren, let us bow ourselves in dust and ashes before God; let us turn pride out to-night if we can; but it will be hard work. Let us try, in the strength of the Spirit, that we may at least put our foot on its neck, and as we come to the Lord's table, may we have a joy for pardoned guilt, but may we mourn that we have pierced the Lord, and mourn most that we continue to pierce him still, and sometimes put him to an open shame by our disregard for his laws.

The Lord bless this to his people; and as for those who are unconverted, let them recollect that if the righteous have cause to weep, and if the sins of the saint be abominable, what must be the iniquity of that man who goeth on still in his sins and repenteth not! The Lord grant to such, grace to repent, and pardon, for Jesus' sake.

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## **A Vision Of the Latter-Day Glories**

And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. - Isaiah 2:2, Micah 4:1

THE PROPHETS OF GOD were anciently called seers, for they had a supernatural sight which could pierce through the gloom of the future and behold the things which are not seen as yet, but which God hath

ordained for the last times. They frequently described what they saw with spiritual eyes after the form or fashion of something which could be seen by the eye of nature. The vision was so substantial that they could picture it in words, so that we also may behold in open vision, the glorious things which they beheld after a supernatural sort. Let us imagine Isaiah as he stood upon Mount Zion. He looked about him and there were "the mountains that are round about Jerusalem" far outvying it in height, but yielding to Zion in glory. Dearer to his soul than even the snow-capped glories of Lebanon which glittered afar off was that little hill of Zion, for there upon its summit stood the temple, the shrine of the living God. the place of his delight, the home of song, the house of sacrifice, the great gathering-place whither the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord. to serve Jehovah, the God of Abraham. Standing at the gate of that glorious temple which had been piled by the matchless art of Solomon, he looked into the future and he saw, with tearful eye, the structure burned with fire; he beheld it cast down and the plough driven over its foundations. He saw the people carried away into Babylon, and the nation cast off for a season. Looking once more through the glass he beheld the temple rising from its ashes, with glory outwardly diminished, but really increased. He saw on till he beheld Messiah himself in the form of a little babe carried into the second temple; he saw him there, and he rejoiced; but ere he had time for gladness his eye glanced onward to the cross; he saw Messiah nailed to the tree; he beheld his back ploughed and mangled with the whip. "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," said the prophet, and he paused awhile to bemoan the bleeding Prince of the House of David. His eye was now doomed to a long and bitter weeping, for he saw the invading hosts of the Romans setting up the standard of desolation in the city. He saw the holy city burned with fire and utterly destroyed. His spirit was almost melted in him. But once more he flew through time with eagle wing, and scanned futurity with eagle eye; he soared aloft in imagination, and began to sing of the last days - the end of dispensations and of time. He saw Messiah ones again on earth. He saw that little hill of Zion rising to the clouds - reaching to heaven itself. He beheld the New Jerusalem descending from above, God dwelling among men, and all the nations flowing to the tabernacle of the Most High God, where they paid him holy worship.

We shall not, to-day, look through all the dim vista of Zion's tribulations. We will leave the avenue of troubles and of trials through which the church *has* passed and *is* to pass, and we will come, by faith, to the last days; and may God help us while we indulge in a glorious vision of that which is to be ere long, when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." The prophet saw two things in the vision. He saw *the mountain exalted*, and he beheld *the nations flowing to it*. Now will you use your imagination for a moment; for there is a picture here which I can scarcely compare to anything, except one of Martin's magnificent paintings, in which he throws together such masses of light and shade that the imagination is left at liberty to stretch her wings and fly to the utmost height. In the present instance, you will not be able to outstrip the reality, however high you may endeavor to soar; for that which is in our text will certainly be greater than that which the preacher can utter, or that which you may be able to conceive.

Transport yourselves for a moment to the foot of Mount Zion. As you stand there, you observe that it is but a very little hill. Bashan is far loftier, and Carmel and Sharon outvie it. As for Lebanon, Zion is but a little hillock compared with it. If you think for a moment of the Alps, or of the loftier Andes, or of the yet mightier Himalayas, this mount Zion seems to be a very little hill, a mere mole-hill insignificant, despicable, and obscure. Stand there for a moment, until the Spirit of God touches your eye, and you shall see this hill begin to grow. Up it mounts, with the temple on its summit, till it outreaches Tabor. Onward it grows, till Carmel, with its perpetual green, is left behind, and Salmon, with its everlasting snow sinks before it. Onward still it grows, till the snowy peaks of Lebanon are eclipsed. Still onward mounts the hill, drawing with its mighty roots other mountains and hills into its fabric; and onward it rises, till piercing the clouds it reaches above the Alps; and onwards still, till the Himalayas seem to be sucked into its bowels, and the greatest mountains of the earth appear to be but as the roots that strike out from the side of the eternal hill; and there it rises till you can scarcely see the top, as infinitely above all the higher mountains of the world as they are above the valleys. Have you caught the idea, and do you see there afar off upon the lofty top, not everlasting snows, but a pure crystal table-land,

crowned with a gorgeous city, the metropolis of God, the royal palace of Jesus the King. The sun is eclipsed by the light which shines from the top of this mountain; the moon ceases from her brightness, for there is now no night: but this one hill, lifted up on high, illuminates the atmosphere, and the nations of them that are saved are walking in the light thereof. The hill of Zion hath now outsoared all others, and all the mountains and hills of the earth are become as nothing before her. This is the magnificent picture of the text. I do not know that in all the compass of poetry there is an idea so massive and stupendous as this - a mountain heaving, expanding, swelling, growing, till all the high hills become absorbed, and that which was but a little rising ground before, becomes a hill the top whereof reacheth to the seventh heavens. Now we have here a picture of what the church is to be.

Of old, the church was like Mount Zion, a very little hill. What saw the nations of the earth when they looked upon it? - a humble man with twelve disciples. But that little hill grew, and some thousands were baptized in the name of Christ; it grew again and became mighty. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands began to break in pieces kingdoms, and now at this day the hill of Zion stands a lofty hill. But still, compared with the colossal systems of idolatry, she is but small. The Hindoo and the Chinese turn to our religion, and say, "It is an infant of yesterday; ours is the religion of ages." The Easterns compare Christianity to some miasma that creeps along the fenny lowlands, but their systems they imagine to be like the Alps, outsoaring the heavens in height. Ah, but we reply to this, "Your mountain crumbles and your hill dissolves, but our hill of Zion has been growing, and strange to say, it has life within its bowels, and grow on it *shall*, grow on it *must*, till all the systems of idolatry shall become less than nothing before it, till false gods being cast down, mighty systems of idolatry being overthrown, this mountain shall rise above them all, and on, and on, and on, shall this Christian religion grow, until converting into its mass all the deluded followers of the heresies and idolatries of man, the hill shall reach to heaven, and God in Christ shall be all in all." Such is the destiny of our church, she is to be an all-conquering church, rising above every competitor.

We may more fully explain this in two or three ways. The church will be

like a high mountain, for she will be *pre-eminently conspicuous*. I believe that at this period the thoughts of men are more engaged upon the religion of Christ than upon any other. It is true, and there be few that will deny it, that every other system is growing old: gray hairs are scattered here and there, although the followers of these religions know it. As for Mahomet, has he not become now effete with grey old age? And the sabre once so sharp to slay the unbeliever hath it not been blunted with time and rested into its scabbard? As for the old idolatries, the religion of Confucius, or of Budha, where are their missionaries, where the old activity that made minor idolatries bow before them? They are now content to be confined within their own limit, they feel that their hour is come that they can grow no further, for their strong man is declining into old age. But the Christian religion has become more conspicuous now than ever it was. In every part of the world all people are thinking of it; the very gates of Japan - once fast closed - are now open to it, and soon shall the trumpet voice of the gospel be heard there, and the name of Jesus the Son of the Highest shall there be proclaimed by the lips of his chosen servants. The hill is already growing, and mark you, it is to grow higher yet; it is to be so conspicuous, that in every hamlet of the world the name of Christ shall be known and feared. There shall not be a Bedouin in his tent, there shall not be a Hottentot in his kraal, there shall not be a Laplander in the midst of his eternal snow, or an African in that great continent of thirst, that shall not have heard of Christ. Rising higher, and higher, and higher, from north to south, from east to west, this mountain shall be beheld; not like the star of the north which cannot be seen in the south, nor like the "cross" of the south which must give way before the "bear" of the north - this mountain, strange to say it, contrary to nature shall be visible from every land. Far-off islands of the sea shall behold it, and they that are near shall worship at the foot thereof. It shall be pre-eminently conspicuous in clear, cloudless radiance gladdening the people of the earth. This I think is one meaning of the text, when the prophet declares "that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains. and shall be exalted above the hills."

This, however, is but a small part of the meaning. He means that the church of Christ shall become *awful and venerable in her grandeur*. It

has never been my privilege to be able to leave this country for any time, to stand at the foot of the loftier mountain" of Europe, but even the little hills of Scotland, where half way up the mist is slumbering, struck me with some degree of awe. These are some of God's old works, high and lofty, talking to the stars, lifting up their heads above the clouds as though they were ambassadors from earth ordained to speak to God in silence far aloft. But poets tell us - and travelers who have but little poetry say the same - that standing at the foot of some of the stupendous mountains of Europe, and of Asia, the soul is subdued with the grandeur of the scene. There, upon the father of mountains, lie the eternal snows glittering in the sun-light, and the spirit wonders to see such mighty things as these? such massive ramparts garrisoned with storms. We seem to be but as insects crawling at their base, while they appear to stand like cherubims before the throne of God, sometimes covering their face with clouds of mist, or at other times lifting up their white heads, and singing their silent and eternal hymn before the throne of the Most High. There is something awfully grand in a mountain, but how much more so in such a mountain as is described in our text, which is to be exalted above all hills, and above all the highest mountains of the earth.

The church is to be awful in her grandeur. Ah! now she is despised; the infidel barketh at her, it is all he can do; the followers of old superstitions as yet pay her but little veneration. The religion of Christ, albeit that it has to us all the veneration of eternity about it - "For his goings forth were of old, even from everlasting" - yet to men who know him not Christianity seems to be but a young upstart, audaciously contending with hoary-headed systems of religion. Ay, but the day shall come when men shall bow before the name of Christ, when the cross shall command universal homage, when the name of Jesus shall stay the wandering Arab and make him prostrate his knee at the hour of prayer, when the voice of the minister of Christ shall be as mighty as that of a king, when the bishops of Christ's church shall be as princes in our midst, and when the sons and daughters of Zion shall be every man of them a prince, and every daughter a queen. The hour cometh, yea, and now draweth nigh, when the mountain of the Lord's house in her awful grandeur shall be established on the top of the mountains.



There is yet, however, a deeper and larger meaning. It is just this - that the day is coming when the church of God shall have *absolute supremacy*. The church of Christ now has to fight for her existence. She hath many foes, and mighty ones too, who would snatch the chaplet from her brow, blunt her sword, and stain her banners in the dust; but the day shall come when all her enemies shall die; there shall not be a dog to move his tongue against her. she shall be so mighty that there shall be nought left to compete with her. As for Rome, you shall seek but find it not. It shall be hurled like a millstone in the flood. As for Mahomed's lustful superstition, they shall ask for it, but the imposter shall not be found. As for false gods, talk to the bittern and the owl, to the mole, and to the bat, and they shall tell you where they shall be discovered. The church of Christ at that time shall not have kings of the earth to bind her, and to control her, as if she were but a puny thing, nor shall she have them to persecute her and lift up their iron arm to crush her; but she, then, shall be the queen and empress of all nations; she shall reign over all kings; they shall bow down and lick the dust of her feet; her golden sandals shall tread upon their necks; she, with her scepter, with her rod of iron, shall break empires in pieces like earthen vessels. She shall say, "Overturn! overturn! overturn! until he come, whose right it is; and I will give it HIM" The destiny of the church is universal monarchy. What Alexander fought for, what Ceasar died to obtain, what Napoleon wasted an his life to achieve, that Christ shall have: - the universal monarchy of the broad acres of the earth. "The sea is his, and he made it, and his hands formed the dry land." The whole earth shall come, and worship, and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker; for every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

You have now, I think, the meaning of the text, - the church growing and rising up till she becomes conspicuous, venerable, and supreme. And now let me pause here a moment, to ask how this is to be done.

How is this to be done? I reply, there are three things which will ensure the growth of the church. The first is the individual exertion of every Christian. I do not think that all the exertions of the church of Christ will ever be able to reach the climax of our text. I think we shall see something

more than natural agency, even though employed by the Spirit, before the church of Christ shall be exalted to that supremacy of which I have spoken; but, nevertheless, this is to contribute to it. In the olden times, when men raised cairns to the memory of departed kings, it was usual to put a heap of stones over the tomb, and every passer-by threw another stone. In course of age. those mounds grew into small hills. Now the church of Christ in the present day is growing something in that way. Each Christian converted to Christ throws his stone; we each do our measure. By the grace of God let us each make sure of one stone being deposited there, and strive to add another by laboring to be the instruments of bringing someone else to Christ; in this way the church will grow; and as year after year rolls on, each Christian serving his Master, the church will increase; and it shall come to pass in the last times, that even by the efforts of Christ's people, owned by God the Holy Spirit, this mountain shall be highly exalted in the midst of the hills.

This however, although all that we can do, is not, I think, all that we have to expect. We can *do* no more, but we may *expect* more. Besides, the church of Christ differs from all other mountains in this: - that she has within her a living influence. The ancients fabled that under Mount Etna, Vulcan was buried. Some great giant, they thought, lay there entombed; and when he rolled over and over, the earth began to tremble, and the mountains shook, and fire poured forth. We believe not the fable, but the church of God, verily, is like this living mountain. Christ seems to be buried within her; and when he moves himself his church rises with him. Once he was prostrate in the garden; then Zion was but a little hill; then he rose, and day-by-day as he is lifted up his church rises with him; and in the day when he shall stand on Mount Zion, then shall his church be elevated to her utmost height. The feet is, that the church, though a mountain, is a volcano - not one that spouts fire, but that hath fire within her; and this inward fire of living truth, and living grace, makes her bulge out, expands her side, and lifts her crest, and onwards she must tower, for truth is mighty, and it must prevail - grace is mighty, and must conquer - Christ is mighty, and he must be King of kings. Thus you see that there is something more than the individual exertions of the church; there is a something within her that must make her expand and grow, till she overtops the highest mountains,

But mark you, the great hope of the church, although it is reckoned madness by some to say it, is the second advent of Christ. When he shall come, then shall the mountain of the Lord's house be exalted above the hills. We know not when Jesus may come. All the prophets of modern times have only been prophets from the fact that they have made profit by their speculations; but with the solitary exception of that pun upon the word, I believe they have not the slightest claim upon your credit; not even men who are doctors of divinity, who can spoil an abundance of paper with their prophesies of second Adventism; "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of God." Christ may come this morning; while I am addressing you Christ may suddenly appear in the clouds of heaven. he may not come for many a weary age. but come he must; in the last days he must appear; and when Christ shall come he will make short work of that which is so long a labor to his church. His appearance will immediately convert the Jews. They have looked for Messias a king. there he is, in more than regal splendor. They shall see him. they shall believe on him; he will then tell them that he is the Messiah whom their fathers crucified. Then will they look on him whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for their sin, and gathering round their great Messiah in glorious march they shall enter and be settled in their own land. They shall once more become a great and mighty nation, nay, a Jew shall become a very prince among men, firstborn in the church of God. Then shall the fullness of the Gentiles be converted and all kindreds and people shall serve the Son of David. Mark, the church is to rise first, and when the church has risen to eminence and greatness, the nations will flow unto her. Her rising will not be owing to the nations, but to the advent of Christ, and after she has become great, conspicuous, and supreme, then will the nations flow to her. I am looking for the advent of Christ, it is this that cheers me in the battle of life - the battle and cause of Christ. I look for Christ to come, somewhat as John Bunyan described the battle of Captain Credence with Diabolus. The inhabitants of the town of Mansoul fought hard to protect their city from the prince of darkness, and at last a pitch battle was fought outside the walls. The captains and the brave men of arms fought all day till their swords were knitted to their hands with blood; many and many a weary hour did they seek to drive back the Diabolians. The battle seemed to waver in the balance,

sometimes victory was on the side of faith, and anon, triumph seemed to hover over the crest of the prince of hell; but just as the sun was setting, trumpets were heard in the distance, Prince Emmanuel was coming, with trumpets sounding, and with banners flying, and while the men of mansoul passed onwards sword in hand, Emmanuel attacked their foes in the rear, and getting the enemy between them twain, they went on, driving their enemies at the swords point, till at last, trampling over their dead bodies, they met, and hand to hand the victorious church saluted its victorious Lord. Even so must it be. We must fight on day-by-day and hour-by-hour; and when we think the battle is almost decided against us, we shall hear the trump of the archangel, and the voice of God, and he shall come, the Prince of the kings of the earth: at his name, with terror they shall melt, and like snow driven before the wind from the bare side of Salmon shall they fly away; and we, the church militant, trampling over them, shall salute our Lord, shouting, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Thus then, have I explained the first part of the text.

II. The second part of the text we have to consider, is this sentence - "AND ALL NATIONS SHALL FLOW UNTO IT." Here is a figure, perhaps not so sublime, but quite as beautiful as the first. Still endeavor to retain in your minds the picture of this stupendous mountain, reaching above the clouds, seen by all mankind, in either hemisphere, a wonder of nature which could not be accomplished by the ordinary rules of art, but which divine wisdom will be able to perform. Well, wonder of wonders, you see all the nations of the earth converging to this great mountain, as to a common center. Once in the year all the people of Israel were wont to go to the little hill of Zion; and now, once for all, you see, not Israel, but all the nations of the earth comming to this great hill of Zion, to worship the Most High God. The white sails are on the Atlantic, and the ships are 'dying before the wind, even as the bird flitteth through the sky. What bear they? What is their noble cargo? Lo! they come from far, bringing the sons and daughters of Zion from the ends of the earth. See you there the camel and the dromedary, the great caravan passing over the pathless desert? What are these and what is their costly freight? Lo they are bringing the daughters of God, and the sons of Zion up to the Most High God, to worship him. From all parts of the earth you see them coming -

from the freezing cold and from the burning heat, from the far-off islands of the sea, and from the barren sands they come; they come, all converging towards the great center of their high and holy worship. This we are not to understand of course, literally, but as a figure of the great spiritual fact that all the souls of men shall tend to Christ, and to union with his church.

Again, I beg you carefully to observe the figure. It does not say they shall come to it, but they shall "*flow* unto it." Understand the metaphor. It implies first their number. *Now* our churches are increased, converts drop into the churches; drop after drop the pool is filled. But in those days they shall flow into it; now it is but the pouring out of water from the bucket; then it shall be as the rolling of the cataract from the hillside, it shall flow into it. Now our converts, however numerous, are comparatively few, but then a nation shall be born in a day. The people shall renounce their gods at once. Whole nations shall of a sudden by an irresistible impulse flow into the church, not one by one, but in one vast mass. The power of God shall be seen in bringing whole nations into the church of God. You have seen the river flowing onward to the sea, with its banks all swollen, bearing its enormous contribution to the boundless ocean. So shall it be in the last days; each nation shall be like a river, rolling towards the foot of this great mountain, the church of the living God. Happy, happy, happy day, when India and China with their teeming myriads, and all the nations of the earth, with their multitude of tongues, shall flow into the mountain of God!

But the text conveys the idea not only of numbers, but of - (I know the exact word, but then I do not like to use it, for fear some should not know the meaning of it, it means that the nations of the earth shall come willingly to it) - *spontaneity*. That was the word I wanted to use; but wherefore should we use big words; when we might find little ones. They are to come willingly to Christ; not to be driven, not to be pumped up, not to be forced to it, but to be brought up by the word of the Lord, to pay him willing homage; they are to flow to it. Just as the river naturally flows down-hill by no other force than that which is its nature, so shall the grace of God be so mightily given to the sons of men, that no acts of parliament, no state churches, no armies will be used to make a forced

conversion. "The nations shall flow unto it." Of themselves, made willing in the day of God's power, they shall flow to it. Whenever the church of God is increased by unwilling converts it loses strength; whenever men join the church because of oppression, which would drive them to make a profession of religion, they do not flow, the church is weakened, end not strengthened, but in those days the converts shall be voluntarily won - shall come in willingly by divine grace; they shall flow unto it.

But yet again, this represents the *power* of the work of conversion. They "shall flow to it." Imagine an idiot endeavoring to stop the river Thames. He gets for himself a boat, and there he stands, endeavoring to push back the stream. He objects to it flowing towards the sea. and with his hands he tries to put it back. Would you not soon hear laughter along the banks? Ah, fool, to attempt to stop the stream! Now, the word "flow," here conveys just the idea. "The nations shall flow unto it." The Secularist may rise up and say, "Oh, why be converted to this fanatical religion? Look to the things of time." The false priests may rouse themselves with all their anger to defy Christ, and endeavor to keep their slaves; but all their attempts to stop conversion will be like an idiot seeking to drive back a mighty stream with his puny hands. "All nations shall flow unto it." What an idea it is! Oh, take your stand to-day, like prophets of the Lord, and look into the future. To day the church appears like the dry bed of a torrent; here I stand, and I see a little water flowing in a secret and thread-like stream, amongst the stones. So little is it that I can scarcely detect it, but I take the glass of prophecy, I look far onward, and I see a rolling mass of water, such as is sometimes seen in the rapid rivers of Africa; and there it is, coming with thundering sound. Wait for a few more years, and that torrent, like Kishon's mighty river, sweeping all before it, shall fill this dry bed, and swell on, and on, and on, with tumultuous waves of joy, till it meets the ocean of Christ's universal reign, and loses itself in God. Here you see, then, you have more than your imagination can grasp. This stupendous mountain, and all the nations of the earth - vast numbers with immense force - spontaneously coming up to the house of the living God.

Now, I shall close by a practical address, very brief, and I trust very earnest. Is it not a great subject for praise that the nations of the earth

*may flow* to the hill of God and to his house? If I were to tell you that all the nations of Europe were climbing the sides of the Alps, you would ask me, "And what benefit do they gain thereby? They must pass over the slippery fields of ice and they may lose their lives in the midst of the bottomless chasms that are overhung by the mighty precipices; they may suddenly be overwhelmed and buried in the all-destroying avalanche, and should they reach the summit they must fall down exhausted. What is there that men should covet in those barren heights; rarefied air and cold would soon destroy them, should they attempt to exist there." Ah, but it is not so with God's hill. There shall be no snow upon its summit, but the warmth and light of Jehovah's love, there shall be no chasms in its side wherein souls may be destroyed, for there shall be a way, and a highway, (the unclean shall not pass over it) a way so easy that the wayfaring man shall not err therein.

The mountains of which we read in Scripture were some of them such, that if they were accessible no one would desire to climb them. There were bounds set round about Sinai, but had there been no bounds who would have wished to ascend it? A mountain that burned with fire, and upon which there was a sound as of a trumpet waxing exceeding loud and long. No, brethren, we are not come to a mountain like Sinai with its supernatural thunders; we are not come to a hill bare, and barren, and bleak, and difficult to climb, like the mountains of earth; but the hill of God, though it is a high hill, is a hill up which on hands and knees the humble penitent may readily ascend. Ye are come to a mountain which is not forbidden to you. there are no bounds set about it to keep you off, but you are freely bidden and freely invited to come to it. And the God who invited you will give you grace to come. If he has given you the will to come, he will give you grace to climb the sides of the hill, till you shall reach its upper glories, and stand on its summit transported with delight. While I am talking about the nations that will flow to Christ, might we not weep to think that there are so many in this congregation that are not flowing to Christ but are going *from* him? Ah! soul; what are the splendours of the Millennium to thee, if thou art his enemy? For when he tramples his foes in his hot displeasure, thy blood shall stain his garments, even as the garments of the wine-pressers are stained with the blood of the grape. Tremble, sinner, for the advent of Christ must be thy

destruction though it shall be the church's Joy and comfort. Ye say, "Come quickly." Know ye not that to you the day of the Lord is darkness and not light, for that day burneth as an oven, and they that are proud and do wickedly shall be as stubble, and the fire shall consume them with burning heat. Oh! ye people that to-day hear the words of Jesus! ye are now this day invited to come to the mountain of his church, on which stands his cross and his throne. Ye weary, heavy laden, sin-destroyed sin-ruined souls, ye that know and feel your need of Jesus ye that weep because of sin, ye are bidden to come now to Christ's cross. to look to him who shed his blood for the ungodly, and looking to him, you shall find peace and rest; so that when he cometh with rainbow wreath, and robes of storm, you shall be able to see him, not with alarm and terror, but with joy and gladness. for you shall say, "Here he is, the man who died for me has come to claim me, he who bought me has come to receive me; my judge is my Redeemer, and I will rejoice in him." Oh! turn ye, ye English heathens - turn ye unto God! ye inhabitants of London, some of you as vile as the inhabitants of Sodom. turn ye, turn ye to God! O Lord Jesus! by thy grace turn every one of us to thyself! Bring in thine elect; let thy redeemed rejoice in thee; and then let the fullness of the nations flow unto then, and thine shall be the glory, for ever and ever.

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## **A Visit To The Harvest Field**

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waited for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. - James 5:7-8

The earth that yields seed to the sower and bread to the eater has received its constitution from God; and it is governed through his wise providence by fixed laws that are infinitely reliable; and yet, at the same time, with such diversified conditions and minute peculiarities as may well convince us that the Almighty intended the operations of nature to supply us with spiritual instruction as well as with material good. He who ordained the seed time and the harvest meant to teach us by them. Nor has he left us in vague uncertainty as to the lessons we should learn! In metaphor and parable he has interpreted them to us. The author of the Bible is also the architect of the universe. The book that is writ and the things that are made alike bear witness to his eternal power and Godhead. He who shall study them both will see clearly the idioms of one author. In the two masterpieces the hand of the same great artist may be discerned. We are all so dependent upon the labors of the field, that we ought at the season of harvest to remember how much we owe to the God of harvest. It is but common gratitude that we should go to the field awhile, and there hear what God the Lord may have to say to us among the waving sheaves. No matter what our business may be, the wealth of the country must after all, to a large extent, depend upon the crops that are produced, and the well being of the whole state has a greater dependence upon the harvest than many of you could probably imagine. We will not forget the bounties of God. We will not fail at least to endeavor to learn the lesson which this bountiful season is intended to teach us. Our Lord Jesus often preached of the sowing and of the reaping. His were the best of sermons and his the choicest of illustrations: therefore, we shall do well if we repair to the

field, mark the scattering of the corn, and the ingathering of it, to enforce the exhortation of the text.

Our subject, to-night, will involve three or four questions: How does the husbandman wait? What does he wait for? What is his encouragement? What are the benefits of his patient waiting? Our experience is similar to his. We are husbandmen, so we have to toil hard, and we have to wait long: then, the hope that cheers, the fruit that buds and blossoms, and verily, too, the profit of that struggle of faith and fear incident to waiting will all crop up as we proceed.

I. First, then, HOW DOES THE HUSBANDMAN WAIT? He waits with a reasonable hope for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain. He expects the harvest because he has ploughed the fields and sown the grain. If he had not, he would not be an example for our imitation. Had he left his fields fallow, never stirred the clods, and never cast in among them the golden seed, he would be an idiot were he expecting the soil to produce a harvest. Thorns and thistles would it bring forth to him—nothing more. Out on the folly of those, who flatter their souls with a prospect of good things in time to come while they neglect the opportunity of sowing good things in the time present. They say they hope it will be well with them at the end; but, since it is not well with them now, why should they expect any change—much less a change contrary to the entire order of Providence? Is it not written "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption"? Do you expect to sow to the flesh and reap salvation? That is a blessing reserved for him who soweth to the spirit; for he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. As for the man who scatters nothing but the wild oats of sin, who simply lives to indulge his own passions, and determinately resolves to neglect the things that make for his peace,—he can but upbraid himself if he collect to reap anything good of the Lord. They that sow to the wind shall reap the whirlwind, they that sow nothing shall reap nothing, they that sow sparingly shall reap also sparingly. It is only those who by God's grace have been enabled to sow abundantly, though they have gone forth weeping, who shall afterwards come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them. Patience by all means, but not that foolish patience which expects something good to

turn up in spiritual things, as some fools do in business when they turn aside from legitimate trade to foster bubble schemes. Thou shalt have, my brother, after all according to what thou art, and to what thou art fairly going for. If thou art a believer, to thee shall be the promise—thou shalt share the victories and spoils of thy Lord. If thou art a careless, godless worldling, to thee shall be the fruit of thy deeds, and sad and bitter shall be those grapes of Gomorrah that thou shalt have to eat. The husbandman waits with a reasonable hope; he does not look for grain where he has cast in garlic. Save then that thou art a fool, thou wilt like him count only on the fruit of thine own sowing.

While he waits with a patient hope, he is no doubt all the more patient of the issue, because his hope is so reasonable. And not only does he wait with patience, but some stress is put upon the length of it; "and hath long patience for the precious fruit of the earth." Now, brethren in Christ, our waiting, if it be the work of the Holy Spirit, must have this long patience in it. Are you a sufferer? There are sweet fruits to come from suffering! "Not for the present seemeth it to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." Have long patience for those peaceable fruits. You shall be brought out of your trouble, deliverance will be found for you out of your affliction when the discipline for which you were brought into it has been fulfilled. Have lot patience, however, for not the first month does the husbandman find a harvest. If he has sown in the winter, he does not expect he will reap in the early spring; he does not go forth with his sickle in the month of May and expect to find golden sheaves. He waits. The moons wax and wane; suns rise and set; but the husbandman waits till the appointed time is come. Wait thou, O sufferer, till the night be over. Watch after watch thou hast already passed through; the morning breaketh. Tarry thou a little longer, for if the vision tarry it shall come. "Thou shalt stand in thy lot in the end of the days." Ere long thou shalt have a happy exit out of thy present trials. Are you a worker? Then you need as much patience in working as you do in suffering. We must not expect to see immediate results in all cases from the preaching of the Gospel, from the teaching of Scripture in our classes, from distributing religious literature, or from any other kind of effort. Immediate results may come. Sometimes they do, and they greatly cheer the worker; but it is

given to some to wait long, like the husbandman, ere the fruit reaches maturity. Truth, like the grain of mustard seed, does not wax into a tree tomorrow being sown to-day: it takes its leisure. Or, like the leaven in the measure, it doth not work in the next moment; it must have its time. If you have some principle to teach that is now obnoxious, go on with it. Perhaps, you may never see it popular in your day. Do not mind the fickle winds or fret yourself because of the nipping frosts. Truth is mighty and it will prevail, though it may have a hard fight before it wins the victory. Souls may not be won to God the first time you pray for them, nor the first time you exhort them, nay, nor the twentieth time. If thou hast gone to a sinner once on Christ's errand and he has rejected thee, go again seven times; nay, go again seventy times seven; for if thou shouldst at last succeed by thy master's gracious help, it will well repay thee. The long, tedious winter of thy waiting will appear as a short span to look back upon when thou hast reaped the field of thy labor. The little patience that thou hadst to exert for a while will seem as nothing, like the travail of the mother when the man-child is born into the world. Hush, then, your sad complaints, and still your petulant wailings.

"O dreary life! we cry, O dreary life!  
And still the generations of the birds  
Sing thro' our sighing; and the flocks and herds  
Serenely live while we are keeping strife."

Be patient, O worker, for impatience sours the temper, chills the blood, sickens the heart, prostrates the vigor of one's spirit, and spoils the enterprise of life before it is ripe for history. Wait thou, clothed with patience, like a champion clad in steel. Wait with a sweet grace, as one who guards the faith and sets an example of humility. Wait in a right spirit, anxious, prayerful, earnest submissive to the ways of God, not doubtful of his will. Disciple of Jesus, "learn to labor and to wait."

With regard to the result of Christian obedience, the lesson is no less striking. The first thing that a farmer does by way seeking gain on his farm is to make a sacrifice which could seem immediately to entail on him a loss. He has some good wheat in the granary, and he takes out sacks full of it and buries it. He is so much the poorer, is not he? At any

rate, there is so much the less to make bread for his household. He cannot get it again; it is under the clod, and there too it must die; for except it die, it bringeth not forth fruit. You must not expect as soon as you become a Christian, that you shall obtain all the gains of your religion, perhaps you may lose all that you have for Christ's sake. Some have lost their lives; they have sown their house and land, relatives, comfort, ease, and at last they have sown life itself in Christ's field, and they seemed for the time to be losers; but, verily I say unto you, this day, if you could see them in their white robes before the throne of God, rejoicing, you would see how rich a harvest they have reaped, and how the sowing which seemed a loss at first has ended, through God's abundant grace, in the greatest eternal gain. Have patience, brother, have patience. That is a false religion that aims at present worldly advantage. He who becomes religious for the loaves and fishes, when he hath eaten his loaves and fishes, hath devoured his religion. There is nothing in such piety but pretension. If thou canst be bought, thou canst be sold: if thou hast taken it up for gain, thou wilt lay it down for what promises thee a better bargain. Be willing to be a loser for Christ, and so prove thou art his genuine follower. The husbandman, I say, does not expect immediate reward, but reckons upon being a loser for a while. He waits, waits with long patience, for the precious fruit of the earth. It is a reasonable waiting on the outset, and not regretful when wearied and worried with delay.

And, while the husbandman waits, you observe in the text he waits with his eye upward, he waits until God shall send him the early and the latter rain. He has wit enough for this; even if he be a worldly man he knows that the harvest depends not only on the seed he sows and on the soil he cultivates, but upon the rain which he cannot control; the rain that cometh at the bidding of the Almighty. If the skies be brass, the clods will be iron. Unless God shall speak to the clouds, and the clouds shall speak to the earth, the earth will not speak to the corn, and the corn will not make us speak the words of rejoicing. Every husbandman is aware of this, and every Christian must remember it. "I am to wait," says a sufferer, "for God's help and for the graces that come by affliction, but I must wait with my eye upward, for all the ploughing of affliction will not profit me, and all the sowing of meditation will not speed me, unless God send his gracious Spirit like showers of heavenly rain. If I am a worker, I must

work. When I wait, I must wait always looking upward." The keys of the rain-clouds which water the earth hang at the girdle of Jehovah. None but the eternal Father can send the Holy Spirit like showers on the church. He can send the comforter, and my labor will prosper; it will not be in vain in the Lord; but if he deny, if he withhold this covenant blessing, ah me! work is useless, patience is worthless, and all the cost is bootless: it is in vain. In spiritual, as in temporal things, "it is vain to rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness." "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." We must have the dew, O God, or else our seed shall rot under the clod. We must wait, and wait with our eye upwards, or else our expectation will perish as a still-born child. So with regard to the comfort, and joy, and ultimate fruit of our faith, we must have our eye upward looking for the coming of the Lord from heaven, for the day of his appearing will be the day of our manifestation. Our life is hid with Christ now; when he shall appear we shall appear with him. When he shall be revealed in glory before the eyes of the assembled multitude, we shall be conspicuous in glory too. Not till then shall the fullness of the reward be bestowed, but the risen saints shall be glorified in the glorification of their coming Lord. Oh, for more of this living with the eyes upward, less minding of earthly things, and more looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of God!

Note, however, that while the husbandman waits with his eye upward, he waits with his hands at work, engaged in restless toil. He sows, and it is a busy time. When he sees the green blade, what then? He has to work. Those weeds must not be suffered to outgrow the wheat and choke it. Up and down the field the laborer must go, and the husbandman must be at the expense of this, and all along until the wheat is ripened there is sure to be something to do in this field, so his eyes must be keen, his skill must be taxed, and no drudgery must be disdained. In all labor there is profit, but nothing is gained without pains. We look up to God. He will not accept the look of a sluggard. The eye that looks up to God must be attended with the hand that is ready for work. So if I suffer and expect the blessing for the suffering, I must spend solitary hours in my chamber seeking and searching; to wit, seeking in prayer, and searching God's Word for the blessing. If I am a worker, I must look to God for the result, but then I must also use all the means. In fact, the Christian should work

as if all depended upon him, and pray as if it all depended upon God. He should be always nothing in his own estimation; yet he should be one of those gloriously active nothings of which God makes great use, for he treats the things that are not as though they were, and gets glory out of them. Yes, the husbandman waits. He cannot push on the months; he cannot hasten the time of the harvest home; but he does not wait in silence; in sluggishness and negligence; he keeps to his work and waits too. So do you, O Christian men! wait for the coming of your Lord, but let it be with your lamps trimmed and your lights burning, as good servants attending to the duties of the house, until the master of the house returns to give you the reward.

The husbandman waits under changeful circumstances, and various contingences. At one time he sees the fair prospect of a good crop. The wheat has come up well. He has never seen more green springing from the ground; but, peradventure, it may be too-strong, and may need even to be put back. By-and-by, after long showers and cold nights, the wheat looks yellow, and he is half afraid about it. Anon there comes, or he fancies there is a blight or a black smut. Nobody knows what may happen. Only a farmer knows how his hopes and fears alternate and fluctuate from time to time. It is too hot, too cold; it is too dry; it is too wet; it is hardly ever quite right, according to his judgment, or rather according to his unbelief. He is full of changes in his mind because the season is full of changes. Yet he waits, he waits with patience. Ah dear friends, when we work for God, how often will this happen! I speak from no inconsiderable experience. There are always changes in the field of Christian labor. At one time we see many conversions, and we bless God that there are so many seals to our testimony. But some of the converts after a while disappoint us. There was the blossom, but it produced no fruit. Then there will come a season when many appear to backslide. The love of many waxes cold. Perhaps we have found in the church the black smut of heresy. Some deadly heresy creeps in, and the anxious husbandman fears there will be no harvest after all. Oh, patience, sir, patience. Ten thousand farmers' fears have been disappointed this year. Many a fretful expression and murmuring word need to be repented of, as the farmer has looked at last upon the well-filled ear, and the heavy wheat sheaf. So, too, mayhap, O evangelical worker, it will be with you.

When God shall give you a rich return for all you have done for him, you will blush to think you ever doubted; you will be ashamed to think you ever grew weary in his service. You shall have your regard. Not tomorrow, so wait: not the next day perhaps, so be patient. You may be full of doubts one day, your joys sink low. It may be rough windy breather with you in your spirit. You may even doubt whether you are the Lord's, but if you have rested in the name of Jesus, if by the grace of God you are what you are, if he is all your salvation, and all your desire,—have patience; have patience, for the reward will surely come in God's good time. Now this is how the husbandman waits, and becomes to us the model of patience.

II. Very briefly, in the second place, we have to ask, WHAT DOES THE HUSBANDMAN WAIT FOR? for we are in this respect like him. He waits for results, for real results; right results; he hopes also rich results. And this is just what we are waiting for—waiting as sufferers for the results of sanctified affliction. May those results be read; may they be right; may they be rich. Oh that we might have every virtue strengthened, every grace refined, by passing through the furnace. There are great blessings connected with patient endurance as in Job's case. He had a plenteous harvest, may we have the same. And you workers, you must work for results, for, though conversion is the work of God, it is in many cases as clearly a product of the holy living, the devout teaching, and the fervent praying of his servants, as any collect can be the result from a cause. Go on, go on, and may you have real conversions—not pretended conversions—not such as are sometimes chronicled in newspapers—"fifty-one conversions of an evening"—as if anybody knew! May there be real conversions, and ripe fruits for Jesus, in the growth and advance of those who are converted, and may many of them turn out to be such fruit-bearing Christians when they are matured in, grace, that the richest result in the prosperity of the Church may come to you from all your work. You are waiting for results. And you are, also, dear brethren, like the husbandman, waiting for a reward. All the while till the harvest comes, he has nothing but outlay. From the moment he sows, it is all outgoing until he sells his crops, and then, recovering at once the principal and the interest, he gets his reward. In this world, look not for a recompense. You may have a grateful acknowledgment in the peace, and quiet, and



contentment of your own spirit, but do not expect even that from your fellow-men. The pure motive of any man who serves his generation well is generally misrepresented. As a rule the loungee looks on at the laborer not to praise but to blame him: not to cheer him but to chide him. The less he does, the less he will be open to rebuke, and the more he does oftentimes, and the more vigorously, the more he shall be upbraided. Look not for your reward here. Suppose men praise you, what is their praise worth? It would not fill your nostrils if you were about to die. The approbation of those who have neither skill nor taste—what pleasure can it afford the artist? Should one stoop for it, or, having it, lift his head the higher? Our reward is the approbation of God, which he will give of his abundant grace. He first gives us good works, as one observes, and then rewards us for those good works, as if they were altogether our own. He gives rewards though they are not a debt, but altogether of grace. Look for the reward hereafter. Wait a bit, man, wait a bit; your reward is not yet. Wait till the week is over, and then shall come the wage. Wait until the sun is gone down, and then there will be the penny for every laborer in the vineyard. Not yet, not yet, not yet. The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth. This is what we wait for.

III. Thirdly, WHAT IS THE HUSBANDMAN'S ENCOURAGEMENT IN WAITING? Well, he has many.

The first is, that the fruit he waits for is precious. He waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth. It is worth waiting for. Who that walks through a corn field, such corn fields as we have seen this year, where the crops are plentiful, but will say, "Well, this was, after all, worth all the trouble and all the expense, and all the long patience of that winter which is over and gone?" If the Lord should draw you near unto himself by your affliction, if he should make his image in you more clear, it will be worth waiting for. And if, after your labors he should give you some soul for your reward, oh, will it not repay you? Mother, if your dear child should after all be brought back from his sinful ways to love his Saviour! Sunday-school teacher, if some of those little girls should love the name of Jesus, and you should live to see them honored members of the Church of God, will it not be worth waiting for? It there worth while to preach every Sabbath for a million years, if but one soul were brought in at last. I

remember Mr. Richard Knill saying, if there were one unconverted person, and he were in Siberia, and God had ordained that he should only be saved by all the Christians in all the world (and that would be a vast number), all of them making a journey to Siberia to talk with him, it would be worth all the trouble if the soul were at length brought in. And so it would. We may wait, therefore, with patience, because the reward of our labor will be precious. Above all, the reward of hearing the master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," is worth waiting for! Even now to get a word from him is quite enough to cheer us on, though he a soft, still voice that speaks it, but oh, the joy of that loud voice "Well done.

It were worth going through a thousand perils by land and by sea to come out and win that "Well done." We might count it worth while to face the lions of hell and do battle with Apollyon himself, to snatch but one poor lamb from between their jaws. It were worth while to do all that I say, if we might hear the Master say to us, "Well done," at the last. This then encourages us, as well as the husbandman—the preciousness of the fruit.

A godly husbandman waits with patience, again, because he knows God's covenant. God has said "seed time and harvest, summer and winter, shall not cease," and the Christian farmer knowing, this is confident. But oh, what strong confidences have we who have looked to Christ, and who are resting on the faithful word of a covenant God. He cannot fail us. It is not possible that he should suffer our faith to be confounded. "Heaven and earth may pass away," and they shall, but his word shall not fail. They that sow in faith shall reap abundantly. The glory shall be theirs. And, brother workers, if we do not for a time see all the results we expect, yet the Lord has said, "Surely all flesh shall see the salvation of God." The day must come when the dwellers in the wilderness shall bow before him and lick the dust. "He has set his king upon his holy hill of Zion," and they that said, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us," will have to submit themselves and lick the dust at his feet. Have courage, therefore. The covenant stands good, the harvest must come as surely as the seed time has come.

Moreover, every husbandman is encouraged by the fact, that he has seen other harvests. I suppose if the farmer had never heard of a harvest, and

had never seen one, it would take some considerable persuasion to get him to sow his seed. But then he knows his father sowed seed and his grandsire, and that the race of men in all generations have put their seed under the clods as an act of faith, and God has accepted their faith, and sent them a return. And, O brethren, have not we multitudes of instances to confirm our confidence? Let us cheerfully resign ourselves to the Lord's will in suffering, for as others of his saints who went before us have reaped the blessing, So shall we. Let us work on for our Lord and Master, knowing that apostles and confessors, and a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before, have seen great results, and so shall we. Let us patiently tarry till the Lord come, for as in the first coming those that waited for him rejoiced, so shall those who are found watching and waiting at his second advent. We have not only the promise of God, but that promise fulfilled to tens of thousands who have preceded us, therefore, we should be ashamed to be impatient, rather let us patiently wait and work on, till the day breaketh, and the harvest cometh.

IV. And now, brethren, do you ask, WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PATIENCE? To patiently wait God's appointed time is our business. I have shown you how we are to wait, but note this, whatever benefit there may be in patience, it is very clear there is none in impatience. Suppose a man should be impatient under suffering. Will it diminish his suffering? Will it increase the probabilities of his restoration? We all know that the irritability of temper which is caused by impatience, is one of the difficulties which the physician has to battle with. When the patient is calm there is a better chance of his recovery. If we were near impatient till there was any good to be derived from our fretfulness, we should not be impatient just yet. There is a story told of Mr. Hill being on board a vessel once. It is said he heard the mate swear, and afterwards he heard the captain use a profane oath. I think Mr. Hill interposed as the captain was about to swear again, and said, "No, no, let us be fair, let us have everything turn and turn about. Your mate has sworn, and you have had an oath. Now it is my turn—my turn to swear." The captain looked at him somewhat astonished, and could not but admit that there was a degree of rightness and propriety in every man having his turn. However, Mr. Hill did not swear, and the captain said, "I suppose, sir, you don't mean to take your turn, you don't mean to swear." "Oh, yes," said the good old

man, "I mean to swear as soon as ever I can see the good of it." We might do the same by our impatience brethren. Let us be impatient as soon as ever we can see the use it will serve. If the farmer should want rain just now, his impatience would not influence the clouds and make them pour out their torrents. If your child happened to be very petulant, and have a very noisy tongue, and a mischievous disposition, the mother's impatience would not calm the child, control its temper, still its fitful passion, or subdue its stubborn humor. Whatever happens to you, there is nothing can happen to you worse than your being impatient, for of all troubles in the world that one can be troubled with, an impatient spirit is about the worst. O that ye would endeavor to conquer impatience. It cast Satan out of heaven, when he was impatient at the honor and dignity of the Son of God. He was impatient at being a servant to his Maker, and was driven from his high estate. Let us be rid of impatience which made Cain kill his brother, and which has done a thousand mischievous things since. May God grant us like the husbandman patiently to watch and wait.

But the benefits of patience are too many for me to hope to enumerate them. Suffice it to say, patience saves a man from great discouragement. If I expect that God will bless my labors to a large extent the first month, and so strain every nerve and toil with every sinew till my strength is ready to yield, and my spirit begins to flag; and the blessing does not come at the time I looked for; I shall be disheartened. But, if I expect some result, a great result in God's appointed week of harvest, even though I may not count on seeing it myself at once; I shall keep on renewing my labors, reviving my hopes, and encouraging myself in the Lord my God. Surely a farmer would give up his farm in sheer despair if he expected a harvest in a month's time after sowing. He would be month after month in a very sad way, if waiting to see it were not a condition for which he was thoroughly prepared. If you expect an interval during which your patience will be tried, you will not grow discouraged, because it is absolutely requisite that you should wait. Expect to wait for the glory; expect to wait for the reward which God hath promised; and, while you are waiting on the Lord your bread shall be certain, and your water shall be sure: you shall often eat meat, thank God, and take courage. The short days and long nights shall not be all charged with gloom, but full often

they shall be tempered with good cheer. When we patience it keeps us in good heart for service. A man to whom it is given to wait for a reward keeps up his courage, and when he has to wait, he says, "It is no more than I expected. I never reckoned that I was to slay my enemy at the first blow. I never imagined that I was to capture the city as soon as ever I had digged the first trench; I reckoned upon waiting, and now that is come, I find that God gives me the grace to fight on and wrestle on, till the victory shall come." And patience saves a man from a great deal of haste and folly. A hasty man never is a wise man. He is wise that halts a little, and ponders his ways, especially when adversity crosses his path. I have known brethren in the ministry get discouraged and leave their pulpits, and repent as long as ever they lived that they left a sphere of labor, where they ought to have toiled on. I have known Christian people get discouraged, and touchy, and angry, fall out with the church of which they were members, go out in the wilderness, and leave the fat pastures behind them. They have only had to regret all their lives, that they had not a little more patience with their brethren, and with the circus stances which surrounded them. Whenever you are about to do anything in a great hurry, pause and pray. The hot fever in your own system ill fits you to act discreetly. While you tarry for a more healthy temperature of your own feelings, there may be a great change in the thermometer outside as to the circumstances that influence you. Great haste makes little speed. He that believeth shall not make haste; and as the promise runs, he shall never be confounded.

Above all, patience is to be commended to you because it glorifies God. The man that can wait, and wait calmly, astonishes the worldling, for the worldling wants it now. You remember John Bunyan's pretty parable (as you all know it, I will only give the outline)—of Passion and Patience. Passion would have all his best things first, and one came in, and lavished before him out of a bag all that the child could desire. Patience would have his best things last, and Patience sat and waited, so when Passion had used up all his joy, and all he sought for, Patience came in for his portion, and as John Bunyan very well remarked, there is nothing to come after the last, and so the portion of Patience lasted for ever. Let me have my best things last, my Lord, and my worst things first. Be they what they may, they shall be over, and then my best things shall last for

ever and for ever. He that can wait hath faith, and it is faith that marks the true Christian. He that can wait hath grace, and it is grace that marks the child of God. O that the Lord would grant to every one of you more and more of this excellent grace of patience, to the praise and glory of his name.

I have well nigh done. Yet there is one other respect in which our case is like that of the husbandman. As the season advances, his anxieties are prone to increase rather than to abate. If he has had long need of patience while the seasons have succeeded each other, and while organic chances have been in course of development, surely there is a stronger denoted on his patience as the crisis approaches when he shall reap the produce. How anxiously at this season will he observe the skies, watch the clouds, and wait the opportune time to get in his crops and garner them in good condition! Is there no peril that haunts him lest, after all, the blast or the mildew should cheat his hopes; lest fierce winds should lay the full-grown stems prostrate on the ground; lest then the pelting showers of rain should drench the well-filled ears of corn? I might almost call this the husbandman's last fear, and yet the most nervous fear that agitates his mind. In like manner, beloved, we have a closing scene in prospect which may, and will in all probability, involve a greater trial of faith, and a sterner call for patience, than any or all of the struggles through which we have already passed. Perhaps I can best describe it to you by quoting two passages of Scripture, one specially addressed to workers, the other more particularly to sufferers. For the first of these texts; you will find it in Hbr 10:35-36 "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, What, after ye have done the will of God, ye may receive the promise." This is sweet counsel for thee, O pilgrim, to Zion's city bound. When thou wast young and strong, thou didst walk many a weary mile with that staff of promise. It helped thee over the ground. Don't throw it aside as useless, now that thou art old and infirm. Lean upon it. Rest upon that promise, in thy present weakness, which lightened thy labor in the days of thy vigor. "Cast not away your confidence." But, brethren, there is something more. The Apostle says, "Ye have need of patience, after ye have done the will of God." But, why, you will say, is patience so indispensable at this juncture of experience? Doubtless you all know that we are never so subject to

impatience as when there is nothing we can do. All the while the farmer is occupied with ploughing, harrowing, tilling, drilling, hoeing, and the like, he is too busy to be fretful. It is when the work is done, and there is nothing more to occupy his hands, that the very leisure he has to endure gives occasion to secret qualms and lurking cares. So it ever is with us. While "we are laborers together with God," our occupation is so pleasant that we little heed the toil and moil of hard service. But when it comes to a point where we have no province, for it is "God that giveth the increase," we are apt to be grievously distrustful; our unbelief finds full play. Hence it is, brethren, that after our fight is fought, after our race is run, after our allotted task is finished, there is so much need of patience, of such patience as waits only on God and watches unto prayer, that we may finish our course with joy and the ministry we have received of the Lord Jesus. And what about the second text? Where is that to be found? It is in the early part of this epistle of James. Turn to Jam 1:4 "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Oh, how indisposed we all of us are to take this advice! Methinks I see Paul retiring thrice to wrestle with God in prayer, that he would remove the thorn from his flesh. He felt the rankling, and he craved for relief. He had hardly thought of it as a seton that must irritate before it could relieve, or as a medicine that must gripe before it could head. But oh, patience is then wrought up to its climax, when the soul so accepts the chastisement from the hand of God that she cannot, and will not, ask him to change his treatment or alter his discipline.

Seemeth it not as though patience were a virtue par excellence which puts the last polish on Christian chastity? We will hie us back to the cornfields again: I am afraid we were forgetting them. But this time we will not talk so much with the farmer as with the crops. Knowest thou then what it is that gives that bright yellow tinge of maturity to those blades which erst were green and growing? What, think you, imparts that golden hue to the wheat? How do you suppose the husbandman judges when it is time to thrust in the sickle? I will tell you. All the while the corn was growing, those hollow stems served as ducts that drew up nourishment from the soil. At length the process of vegetation is fulfilled. The fibres of the plant become rigid; they cease their office; down below there has been a failure of the vital power which is the precursor of death. Henceforth the

heavenly powers work quick and marvellous changes; the sun paints his superscription on the ears of grain. They have reached the last stage: having fed on the riches of the soil long enough, they are only influenced from above. The time of their removal is at hand, when they shall be cut down, carried away in the team, and housed in the garner. So, too, beloved in the Lord, it is with some of you. Do I speak as a prophet? Do I not rather echo a trite observation? "The fall of the year is most thickly strewn with the fall of human life." You have long been succoured with mercies that have come up from mother-earth; you have been exposed to cold dews, chilling frosts, stormy blasts; you have had the trial of the vapory fog, the icy winter, the fickle spring, and the summer drought; but it is nearly all over now. You are ready to depart. Not yet for a brief space has the reaper come. "Ye have need of patience." Having suffered thus far, your tottering frame has learnt to bend. Patience, man—patience! A mighty transformation is about to be wrought on you in a short space. Wait on the Lord. Holiness shall now be legibly, more legibly than ever, inscribed on your forefront by the clear shining of the Sun of Righteousness. The heavenly husbandman has you daily, hourly, in his eye, till he shall say to the angel of his presence, "Put in your sickle." Then, as we pronounce your obituary with the meed of praise due to one in whom God has wrought a perfect work, we shall record that you were patient under affliction, resigned to the will of the Lord, and ready to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Patience has had her perfect work: you lack nothing. God grant unto you this gracious "nunc dimittis" when your time for ingathering has come!

Now, I have only spoken to believers, because as I have already said, the unbeliever cannot wait with patience, for he has nothing to wait for. There is nothing for him but a fearful looking for of judgment. Oh, it must be an awful thing to go from a life of poverty, or of suffering, or of drudgery here, into the world where the wrath of God abideth for ever. It matters not what your position here may be, if at the end you enter into rest. Equally little does it matter what joys or wealth you have here, if after all you are driven from the Lord's presence. May you be led to believe in Jesus. There lies safety. May you rest in his precious blood. There is pardon; there is salvation. God grant it, for Christ's sake Amen.



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## **The Voice Behind Thee**

And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.  
- Isaiah 30:21

On the Sabbath before last we spoke concerning "the still small voice." After the thunder and the fire and the earthquake had passed away, for the Lord was not in them, there came a still small voice unto Elijah, which reached the prophet's heart, and brought him back to his former condition of communion with God. This hopeful morning we shall hear that same "still small voice" actually speaking a warning and teaching word, and we shall see how it operates upon the sinner, reaching both his ear and his heart. God calls to the rebellious, and by his gentle word they are brought to his feet with repentance, turned from their evil wandering, and led in the way of obedience.

The word behind us which is spoken of in the text is mentioned as one among other covenant blessings. No "if" or "but" is joined to it. It is one of those gracious, unconditional promises upon which the salvation of the guilty depends. There are many comforts of the new life which depend upon our own action and behaviour, and these come to us with "ifs"; but those which are vital and essential are secured to the chosen of God without "but" or "peradventure." It shall be so: God declares it shall, and he has power to carry out every jot and tittle of every promise that he makes to his people. I shall ask you at this good hour mainly to admire the free and sovereign grace of God in making such a promise as this to anybody, and especially in making it to a people whom he speaks of as "a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the

Lord." He severely upbraids them, and then in great patience he says to them, even to them, "Your ears shall hear a word behind you." God's grace is marvellous in itself, but its most marvellous point is the singular channel in which it chooses to flow: it runs down into the Dead Sea of sin and makes the waters pure.

I. I invite you to notice first of all THE POSITION OF THE WANDERER to whom this special blessing comes. How does God find men when he declares that they shall hear a word behind them? First, he finds them with their backs turned to him. This is clear enough, if you remember that the word is to be heard "behind" them. The sinner has gone away from God, and God calls after him from behind. He has turned his back upon his true Friend, his best Friend, his only capable Friend, but that Friend does not therefore change his temper and resent the insult; nay, he is provoked to a love more pleading and persuasive than ever, and calls to him to come into the right way. After having transgressed wilfully and wickedly, the rebel now distinctly turns his back on God and truth; according to the Lord's complaint, "they have turned unto me the back, and not the face." He turns his back on the law, on the gospel, on mercy, on eternal life. He turns his back on the adoption of the great Father, on pardon bought with the blood of Jesus, on regeneration which can alone be wrought by the Holy Spirit: he turns his back upon holiness, happiness, and heaven. He turns away from sunlight, and wanders down into deeper and yet deeper night, striving to get away from God and holy influences. Yet the Lord follows him, and with a voice of touching love and tender compassion he calls to him, "This is the way, walk ye in it." The word of warning, instruction, and entreaty follows the wanderer, and with ever-increasing pathos beseeches him to turn and live. Again and again the wise, earnest, personal voice assails his ear, as if love resolved that he should not perish if wooing could win him to life. The wanderer seeks not God, but his God seeks him. Man turns from the God of love, but the love of God turns not away from him.

What matchless grace is this, that God should thus call after sinners when they openly renounce his rule, and flee from his mercy. Oh, if the Lord had turned his back on us, where had we been? If he had given us up to our own devices, and left us to ourselves, then our eternal ruin would

want but a few more days and months to consummate itself, and we should be driven for ever from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. Have we not said unto God, "Depart from us: we desire not the knowledge of thy ways"? If he had replied to us, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell," it had only been the echo of our own words. When we said to him "Depart," suppose he had turned round and said, "Depart, depart yourselves." But instead of that, while we turn ourselves deliberately away from God, he still calls after us; he will not let us go. We have a freedom of will, but it is by that freedom of will that men are damned, since they will not come unto Christ that they might have life, but they will to follow the devices and desires of their own hearts. Free-will, thus held in chains by evil lustings, becomes the most destructive agency in the world; but, blessed be God, he has freedom of will too, and that freedom of sovereign grace will not have its hands bound nor its lips closed, but it will act and speak in omnipotent love. So when the Lord sees us in the wantonness of our wickedness, dead in trespasses and sins, his great love wherewith he loves us seeks us out, and from the lips of that love come tender accents bidding us return to God, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

Observe that these persons had not only turned their backs on God, but they were going further and further away from him. Of course, when you have once turned your back upon the right, the further you travel the more wrong you become. They were not content to be near to God, even with their backs to him, but they hastened away. They are eager and quick to escape from their own mercy. Like the prodigal, they are not satisfied till they get into "a far country": they cannot rest in the same land with their God: they journey with all speed away from the Lord, and the greater the distance that they can set between themselves and their Father the more are they at ease. In forgetting God they find a horrible peace: the peace of death, a peace which will stupefy them into eternal destruction. Now, it is while they are thus going hot foot away from God, further and further every day, madly rushing along the downward road, never satisfied with the sin to which they have attained, flying from God as if he were their terror and would be their destroyer, it is even then that the word sounds behind them and they are startled into thought. They have a powerful voice pleading with them thus,— "Turn ye, turn ye; why

will ye die, O house of Israel? This is the way, walk ye in it. The way you are now pursuing is not the way to peace and safety; return at once, for this is the way, walk ye in it." Here again I admire the overflowing riches of the grace of God, that he should call men to himself when they are altogether taken up with other things, when every thought, and every word, and every act is in rebellion against him. Paul saith, "Doth God care for oxen?" but here is a far greater wonder, "Doth God care for worthless revolters?" When a chosen man is desperately set on mischief, determined to destroy himself, God is yet more determined to save him. The two determinations meet, and we shall see which of the two will prove itself the stronger one. We soon find that the determination of God overcomes the determination of man. The iron breaks the northern iron and the steel. "Thus saith the Lord; your covenant with death is broken, and your league with hell is disannulled:" for there was a prior covenant, a covenant of grace made by God himself, which stands fast for ever; and there was a prior league which God made with his Son on our behalf, and that league shall overthrow our league with death and hell. Glory be to God that even when the sinner is still rebellious, and shows no signs of repentance, nor is conscious of any wish to turn from the error of his ways, even then, while his heart is black as night, and his spirit is choke-full with rebellion, God calls to him, "Return, O backsliding children." "They shall hear a voice behind them, saying, This is the way."

More than this, however, is true. They had turned their backs on God, and were going further from him, though they were warned not to do so, and they were pursuing their course in spite of warning. Read the twentieth verse: "Thine eyes shall see thy teachers": there they stood, good men, right in the way, entreating their hearers to cease from provoking their God and destroying their own souls. Hear them cry, "Turn ye from your iniquities, for this way leads to death: turn ye, turn ye." They can see their teachers stretching out their hands with eager importunity, pleading even unto boiling tears, persuading them to turn from the way and the wages of sin. Still they push on, as if eternal destruction were a prize to be sought rather than a doom to be dreaded. Was it not so with many of us in the days of our unregeneracy? Mother and father endeavored to block up the evil road: in them our eyes beheld our teachers. How they taught us: how they prayed with us: how they

laboured if possible to turn us from the error of our ways! But we persevered with obstinate resolve. It is hard going to hell over a pleading mother, and equally hard to destroy one's self by pushing aside an earnest father's good advice; but we seemed resolved to do so. Then perhaps followed Sunday-school teachers, full of intense love to us; and how they pleaded! How wisely they set the case before us, and how tenderly they pleaded: our eyes did see our teachers, but still our eyes would not see the right way, nor would our hearts desire it; we were determined that we would by hook or by crook land ourselves in hell. Our soul was given to her idols, and after those idols we resolved to go. We loved the wages of iniquity, the pleasures of the flesh, the pride of life, the conceit of self-salvation: we loved anything better than our God; and though our teachers were before us, ready to help and eager to teach we made small account of them. In after-life it may be our teachers were earnest pastors, who could not preach dull, dead sermons, and would not suffer us to sleep ourselves into perdition. They cried aloud and spared not: they were in anguish about us: they gave themselves no rest until we would turn from our iniquities. We could see our teachers, and we had a loving respect for them too, yet we cast their word behind our back: it was of no use to us: we loved iniquity, and that way we would go, come what might of it. Yet even then, when we were despising God's prophets and paying no regard to all the words of warning, the Lord was still loving us, looking after us, and crying after us, and saying, "This is the way; this is the way: walk ye in it. Come back, come back, come back: you are destroying yourselves: return unto your Father and your God." Why did he not throw the reins on our necks, and say, "Let them alone; they are given unto idols: I have hewed them with the prophets, I have ploughed them with men of God, but all has come to nought; they have stiffened their necks, they have hardened their hearts, they have made their forehead like unto an adamant stone; therefore let them reap the result of their transgressions"? But it was not so, for God had made this word an unconditional promise of his covenant, "They shall hear a voice behind them."

One more mark of the ungodly condition of those whom God would call was this, that they had many ways in which to wander. Sometimes they roamed to the right hand, at other times they wandered to the left, but

they never turned face about. Hear ye the way to heaven; it is right about face then keep straight on to glory. Nay, but we will turn this way, we will turn that way, we will turn any way except to God. Some men have right-hand sins, respectable iniquities which challenge little censure from their fellows; not black, but whitewashed sins. Such men are not thieves, they are not licentious, they are not drunkards, but their sins take a quieter form; they mock God with their self-righteousness, and insult him with their prayers, which are no prayers, but only pretences and fictions, and not the real prayers of God's elect ones. Others have left-hand sins; they plunge into the sins of the flesh; no vice is too black for them. Only propose to have a little pleasure and they will plunge into any vice to gain it: ay, and almost without pleasure, altogether without present profit, they will sin, as if for sin's own sake. When they have burned their finger in the candle they will after that hold their arm in the fire; when they have brought disease into their bodies by sin they will return to the evil which caused it; when they have beggared their purse by their extravagant lusts yet still they will go on playing the profligate; when they have filled themselves with despair till they are as a bucket running with gall and wormwood, and this has been emptied out for them by God's grace, they will fill it up again, for they are infatuated with sin; they find a delight in it and they will not, they cannot give it up. Shall the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may they that have been accustomed to do evil learn to do well. Alas, such a miracle has not happened to them. They choose all shapes of evil, but the good they will not have. I say their right-hand sins, their left-hand sins, sins of their life, sins of their heart,—they will follow all these eagerly, but unless God by his own omnipotent voice shall call them back they will not come to him, to Jesus, to grace, to holiness, and heaven. Tell it, tell it, tell it; sound it forth beneath the sky for ever and ever, that the Lord does call to himself such wanton wanderers. "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, saith the Lord: Turn, O backsliding children; for I am married unto you." Oh, the pity of God, not only for the miserable, but for the wicked; it surpasses thought. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Favour to the guilty is the choicest of favour. We come not to preach salvation to the righteous—for where shall we find them?—but we proclaim it to the unrighteous and to the ungodly. "The whole have no need of a physician; but they that are sick"; and Christ has come after the sick, calling, not the righteous, but

sinner to repentance. Oh, if anything will touch the heart it should be this word of free grace, this fact that God doth bid men return to him. Mercy is full of patience; it bears and forbears, and still it cries, "This is the way, walk ye in it"; oh, who would be so cruelly ungrateful as to close his ear against its pleadings?

Thus I have spoken sufficiently upon the position of the wanderer.

II. Now, for a little while, we will dwell upon THE CALL OF MERCY. "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee."

Notice, it is a call that is altogether undesired, and comes unsought to the man who has gone astray. He hears the inward call whose voice is "Return:" he looks for a moment, and then puts his foot down to pursue his journey. "Never," he says, "will I alter my course," and he boldly hastens on, though before him lie death and hell. As he is persevering in his ruinous course the same word again bids him "Return." He hears the admonition, but still he pushes on; he must not and will not return from the way of evil. If he could reach a spot where such disturbing voices would never trouble him how gladly would he hasten towards it. Hence so many altogether forsake the place of worship: they prefer the stagnant pool of stupid obstinacy to the sweet river of the water of life. So far from desiring to be warned, if they could voyage to a distant Tarshish, where voices of warning would never reach them more, it would be a delightful journey; and if ship could be taken, they would, like Jonah, pay the fare to the shipmaster, and secure a berth in the next vessel. I have heard of one in the backwoods of America who was unloading his furniture, and while doing so up rode a Methodist minister. "Confound you," said he, "I have moved half-a-dozen times to get away from you Methodist fellows: I am never comfortable where you are. I will put the things on the cart again, and find a spot where I shall be free from you." On they went to another clearing, but when they reached it the first thing that happened, before the man took up his lodging, was the appearance of a Methodist minister. "Where shall I go to get away from you Methodist preachers?" "There is nowhere I know of," said the minister, "that you can go, for I am afraid if you go to hell you will find some of them there, for preachers have been lost. The very best thing you can do is to yield at once, and let me hold a

service to-night in your camp." That was sound advice; and so some of you will be pestered and worried as long as you live if you will not come to Christ. Omnipotence has servants everywhere, and these are all charged to warn you of your peril. I knew one who would not go to a place of worship, and turned every Bible out of his house; but he found a copy of the holy Book in his house, and as he cursed and swore he learned that it was the property of a daughter whom he loved too much to scold, and he was obliged to let the sacred volume rest where she had placed it. A Bible in a house where it is forbidden to be read is a splendid power for good, as he soon discovered. In a house where it is outwardly honoured the Bible may have little influence, but if it gets where it must not be allowed, everybody reads it. If you can make God's Word to be forbidden fruit, Eve will feed on it, and Adam will follow her. Thus the grace of God came into the house, and it would never be expelled. Down by Mitcham, when the lavender is growing, if you take a house there you will discern a smell of lavender; you may shut the windows and close the doors, but when any persons enter a whiff of lavender enters with them, you cannot help it; and if you live where the gospel is preached at all you will be sure to hear it, and made to know of it. It is God's intention that you should. It is a voice that comes unasked and undesired, but come it does.

"A word behind thee"; it is the voice of an unseen caller whose existence has been almost forgotten. It is not the teachers that speak in this powerful way. The teachers you have seen with your eyes, and they have done you no good; but someone calls whom you never saw and never will see till he sits on the throne of judgment at the last great day; but still he utters a word which cannot be kept out of your ears. It will come to you mysteriously at all sorts of hours crying, "Return, return, return." It will sound often at dead of night, and make the chambers of conscience ring with its notes. I have known it to wake a man out of his slumbers: I have known it sound in his dreams till he dreamed of hell, and woke up and felt the torment in his own conscience. Though he has done all he could, has been off to the theatre, to the gay party, to the entertainment, to deeper sin, yet still even there the word has haunted him. I recollect one who in this very city plunged into all manner of gaiety to try to get rid of this word, yet God met him in a play; words were used in the performance which touched his conscience, and he fled from the



playhouse as from a burning building, fell on his knees, and sought and found the Saviour. This call of mercy is the word of a hidden One: you cannot see who it is that speaks, yet you cannot shut your ears to his admonitions nor refuse reverence to his warnings.

This voice pursues and overtakes the sinner. Do you see him running,—with all his might rushing to his own destruction? The word comes, at first, rather feebly—"Return." He scarcely looks back, but on he flies. Lo, the voice follows. He runs faster from it to show his determination to carry out his own will. The voice still follows him, saying, "Return." Then he stops a minute, but being desperately enamoured of his transgressions, he again takes to his heels to fly away from God; still the word pursues his footsteps, and in pleading accents cries,—"Return, return, return, return;" till at last he is constrained to sit down and listen to the word which comes from he knows not where. He cannot understand how and why it comes so home to him, but it is a fulfillment of the promise; it is the word behind him saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

That voice when it comes to sinners is generally most opportune, for according to the text they are to hear this voice behind them when they turn to the right hand or to the left. A man may go steadily plodding on in his course of ungodliness and hear no such word of pleading, but how often it has happened that there has been a temptation of a more than usually forceful character, and the traveller was about to turn to the right, and then, at that precise moment, he has heard the word of God behind him giving him warning. His feet had almost gone; his steps had well-nigh slipped, but the word of the Lord upheld him, and he went not into the deadly sin. Or it may be it is what I have described as a left-handed sin: the man was carried on to an action which, if he had actually performed it, would have involved his sure destruction; but just as he was about to turn down Deadman's Lane there came a voice behind him, "Return, return." Often it is so, and even if the man does not return and seek the right way, but keeps steadily on as carelessly as ever, still he is slackening his speed, and he dares not take that left-hand turning into gross sin which he would have followed if the word had not checked him. Even where the Spirit of God does not save a man it keeps him from

many a sin; and when men rebel against the light and will not yield to it, yet still that light has a restraining influence over them of which they may be unconscious. Those who watch them know that if that bit and bridle had not been supplied by the word they would have gone to an excess of riot which would have been dangerous to others as well as totally destructive to themselves. Blessed be God for the opportuneness of the word of mercy. Men delay to come, but God does not delay to call.

And you see, to close this second point, that it is absolutely necessary that the potent word should be spoken and should be heard. For the man had seen his teachers, but they had not wrought him any good. How often the Lord seems to put us ministers right up in the corner with our faces to the wall, till we are little in the eyes of our hearers and little in our own eyes. He does so with me, and while I can glorify his name and bless him abundantly for the many that are brought to Christ, yet I never take the slightest congratulation to myself about it, for what am I but the driest and most barren stick that there is in all my Master's garden apart from his watering? If sinners had nothing to save them but us poor preachers, not one of them would be brought up from death and hell. Sinners would laugh at us as simpletons if God were not with us: they do so as it is, and I do not wonder at it, because there is enough in us that deserves to be laughed at. They are ready to despise us, and we cannot be broken-hearted if they do, for we ourselves used in former days to despise the servants of God, and if we do not do so now, it is because the grace of God has made a change in us: we cannot expect better treatment than we ourselves rendered to better men when they pleaded with us. The word behind us is needful, that "still small voice" which no mortal man can speak, but only God himself, that inward monition of the conscience, that touching language of the heart which is as much beyond the power of man as to make a world or breath life into an image of clay. Therefore pray ye mightily to the blessed Spirit that he may breathe on men and save them, and that the word of God may still follow and pursue them till they turn from the way of transgression.

I leave that point. You have seen the position of the rambler, and the grace of God in the call of mercy.

III. But what was THE WORD OF THAT CALL? It is stated at full length, "This is the way, walk ye in it." That is the word of the call. It contains within itself, first, specific instruction. "This is the way." There is a kind of preaching which has nothing specific, definite, and positive in it: it is a bit of cloud-land, and you may make what you like out of it—God's grace or man's merit, faith in Christ or faith in self. You need to be your own instructor, and then like the child looking into the fire you will see whatever your own eye chooses to create. Too much preaching is of a kind so mixed that it reminds me of the showman when his visitors asked, "Which is Wellington and which is Napoleon?" "Whichever you please," said he; "you have paid your money and you may take your choice." So it seems to be with many preachers as to doctrine. You may have what kind of doctrine you like so long as you pay your pew-rent. "Cleverly put," cries one, when he had heard a smart sermon. Is not that enough? I answer, it is not enough: we want the sure testimony of revelation, sealed in the heart by the Holy Ghost. Cleverness is not God's way of blessing men. Conjectures and loose opinions are not worth the breath which is expended in expressing them. The Lord lays down a definite pathway, and he says, "This is the way." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved; this is the way. Repent and be converted, every one of you; this is the way. To leave sin, to quit self, to trust in Christ: this is the way." Something definite is laid down before those who desire to be taught of God, and they are told what is to be done, what is to be received, what is to be given up. "This is the way." Definite instruction is given. This may not suit the Broad School, but it is exactly what the anxious seeker needs.

This definite instruction may also be said to be a special correction. When the voice behind says, "This is the way," it does as good as say that the opposite path is not the way; for there is only one way to heaven, and there never will be two; and when men hear a voice saying, "This is the way," it does in effect remind them that the opposite is not the way. If ye are going the reverse of the right way, turn ye from it, and ye shall live. How much we ought to bless God that the gospel comes in as a corrective, kills the false and introduces us to the true. May falsehood be slain within us, and truth reign there for ever. May we leave all other roads, since the Lord has said of one road only, "This is the way."

It is also a word of sure confirmation. "This is the way." When that is heard many times,— "This is the way," "This is the way," "This is the way;" when, according to our hymn,

"We hear our Saviour say,  
'Come hither, soul, I am the Way,'"

if we have already believed it to be the way we are strengthened in that conviction. Hearing the mysterious word declaring again and again, "This is the way," men grow to believe the truth of God's word, and out of that by-and-by there is begotten a living faith in a living Saviour. Oh, this is a great mercy, to hear the same thing many times, to hear the voice proclaim again and again and again, "This is the way," "This is the way." "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ, the righteous." May the repetitions of the Spirit effectually preserve us from the deadly shadow of doubt, and fix us as a nail in a sure place.

This is followed up by a word of personal direction. "Walk ye in it." Do not merely hear about it, but "walk ye in it." Be not content to be critics, thinkers, and considerers, but become doers of the word. "This is the way,"—here is the doctrine: "Walk ye in it,"—there is the practice. Well is it when the Lord by his Spirit speaks to the runaway sinner and tells him what he is to do and to believe; then he makes the way and the walk to be vividly present,— "This is the way, walk ye in it" without delay.

This takes the form of encouraging permission. Some think they may not come to Christ. They actually ask the question, "May I believe in him? Is there salvation for me?" Why, saith the text, "This is the way." Do not sit looking at it: "walk ye in it." "But I am so big a sinner." "Christ is the way; walk ye in it." There is room enough for big sinners in Jesus. "But I have been so long coming." Never mind: this is the way, "walk ye in it." Never mind if you have been seventy years coming if you have come to the way at last, "Walk ye in it." "But I am afraid my feet are so polluted that I shall stain the way:" "This is the way, walk ye in it." You are not told to stand on one side and wait till something shall happen to you which shall persuade you to come, but here is the king's highway, walk ye in it. Walking is the simplest of all exercises. There is no great artistic skill

required in order to walk, but walking is all that is wanted. Come to Christ,—come to him anyhow. Oh soul, tumble to him somehow; trust him as best you can: and if you cannot do it without question, trust him because you must trust him, since you have nobody else to trust to. Throw yourself into Jesus' arms; swoon away on the bosom of Christ. It is the essence of faith, to die into the life of God in Christ Jesus. This is the message which comes behind many a runaway sinner,—"This is the way, walk ye in it."

IV. According to our text success is promised to the word. "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." Notice, THE SUCCESS OF THE WORD,—thine ears shall hear. God not only gives us something to hear, but he gives us ears to hear with. Oh, the mercy of God! he spreads the table, and then he gives the appetite; he furnishes the garments, and he gives us the sense of nakedness, and so leads us to put them on. Everything that is wanted to bear a man from the gates of hell to the gates of heaven free-grace provides. Nothing is left out: the catalogue is complete: he that sends the tidings also opens the ears. "Thine ears shall hear." This is effectual grace. Teachers cannot make men hear. They can appeal to the external ear, and after that they have no more that they can do; but God can make men hear. Without violating the freedom of their wills he can get at their hearts, at their consciences, at their understandings, and he can press the truth home to their souls. When the Lord does it, it is done. When we do it, it is often so done that afterwards it is undone, but verily I know that what God doeth shall be for ever. All that is of nature's spinning will be unravelled one day; but when God spins, it will last throughout eternity.

I take it when we read here, "Thine ears shall hear," it means first, that the message of divine love shall come to the man's mind so as to create uneasiness in it. He is jauntily traversing the road to destruction: he has chosen the path, and he delights in it. It often looks to him to be a flowery way, a pleasant road. So he walks on, and he would be very happy but for that word behind him crying, "Turn ye! turn ye! turn ye!" Just as he was turning down that glade in the wood to the right, where all the flowers of spring are found in profusion, that call troubled him again! He would sooner have seen a serpent hissing in the pathway, or heard a lion roar

from the thicket, than have heard that word. The man says, "I never can be quiet: I can see other people going to amusements and pleasures, and they heartily enjoy themselves; but the fact is, the more amusement I have the less I am amused, and I am never more miserable than when everybody else is laughing. Why am I thus?" He thinks he is hardly done by, and is the special object of God's hatred. Everybody else is jolly, but he is gloomy. They can look on the wine when it is red, when it moveth itself aright, when it giveth its colour in the cup; and so could he once look into the rosy depths, but now he sees that serpent at the bottom of it, and he is afraid to touch it lest the draught should turn to venom in his veins. He almost curses the arrangements of heaven which have made him so ill at ease. He wishes he had never heard the parson preach the sermon which bothered him so; he wishes he had never had a godly mother at all, that he might have gone straight away into sin, and have been as merry as a cricket; but now there is that voice again behind him, boring its way into his tingling ears. For a moment he had forgotten it, but there it comes again—"Turn! turn! turn! turn!" He stops his ears; but it bombards his soul with worse than cannon balls; as if the word of God pounded him with shells, he hears the thunders of the cannonade,—*"Return! Return! Return!"* What can he do? He longs to escape from the divine rebuke. The word has made him quiver and quake. So far so good. We shall see next what will happen to him.

After a while there gets to be a desire in his heart. It is only a faint and spasmodic desire,—nothing very strong or constant—but there it is, and it cannot be quenched. "I wish I could get right somehow: for in my present condition I am in an evil case; I am sailing in the wrong boat; I wish I could land somewhere, and take the return boat and get to my home. I do not feel at all easy; I wish I knew what to do to be saved. I do know it somehow, for I have heard it every Sabbath day, but yet I do not understand it; I cannot get hold of it; I wish I could, for I am anxious to be forgiven, to be renewed in the spirit of my mind, to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus." "Do you know," he says to someone, "that voice I could not bear, that used to wake me up at nights, that kept me out of pleasure? There is a kind of music in it now; I like to hear it: I wish I heard it so that it had an effect upon me, for I am afraid I shall go down to the pit, and be lost under accumulated responsibilities for having

neglected the call of divine love. Oh, help me to come to Christ, for I am anxious to reach him, but I feel as if I could not come. I do not feel as I ought. I am told to believe, but I do not know what it means, or I cannot do it.

"I would but can't believe,  
Then all would easy be.  
I would but cannot, Lord, relieve:  
My help must come from thee."

He is getting on all right, friends. We shall have a better bulletin concerning him directly. He is wonderfully improving: a great deal of the fever of pride has gone out of the man; we shall have him yet in perfect health. He could not rest because he heard too much of the word behind him, and now he cannot rest because he cannot hear enough of it: he desires that it may penetrate his soul and change him from darkness to light.

What shall happen next? As that voice continues to sound, it pulls him up, and leads to resolve. The word of the Lord has put a bit into his mouth and a bridle between his jaws; he does not dare go any further; he sits down to consider. I think I saw him on his knees too, and he is resolved if heaven is to be had he will have it; if mercy is to be found he will find it; he will rake the world over, but he will gain the pearl of great price. I think I heard him say he would not go to sleep till he found Jesus. I am glad he has come to that pass. Friend, you are just like the prodigal when he said, "I will arise and go to my father"; only take care you do not end in resolutions. Let it be said of you as of that same prodigal, "He arose, and came to his father"; for all our resolutions are not worth the making unless they be most earnestly and speedily carried into effect. Observe the effect of the word behind the wanderer. Cannot you see the man who was running so fast? He has pulled up. He sees a line drawn across his path, and he must not go over it. He feels that if he goes further he may never have another call of mercy, and this makes him pause. Did not we sing this morning,

"Soon that voice will cease its calling"?

The man is anxious to obey while he may. He is not yet resolved to go back, but he dares not go further.

Watch him, for the voice is calling again, and he is every now and then turning his ear round as if he wanted to hear it. "Return, return, return." He smites upon his breast and cries, "Would God I could return; I will return, for I cannot perish; I cannot let things go as once I did; I cannot leave everything to take its own way while I take my chance. No, I must have Christ or else I die, and I must have him soon, or else I shall seal my eternal destiny, and prove a castaway for ever. O God, call again, call again; keep on calling, till I come; for lo, my spirit answers, 'Draw me, and I will run after thee.' When thou saidst unto me, 'Seek ye my face,' my heart said unto thee, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'"

What will be the last stage of this inner work? Since the man dares not go any further in this wrong way, what is he to do? He cannot turn to the right or to the left, for God has hedged up his way with thorns. Now, listen to what he will say, "I will return unto my first husband, for it was better with me then than now." This poor soul looks on him whom he pierced. He did not know he was piercing his Redeemer; but now he sees it all, and while his eyes begin to stream with tears, he turns unto this Christ upon the cross, and finds life while looking at him. See him get up and feel as if he did not know what to do with himself as he cries,

"Blest cross; blest sepulchre; blest rather be  
The man that here did shed his blood for me."

Now he enquires, "Which is my way? Speak, sweet voice; speak, sweet voice; tell me which is my way." And now the voice moves and speaks in front of him; for shepherds go before their sheep. The man looks and sees the Crucified One with pierced hands and feet leading the way, and he delights to follow him: ay, and he shall follow him until at the last he shall see his face in glory everlasting. Redeemed by blood and rescued by power eternal, and brought home to the great Shepherd's fold, to go no more out for ever, the sinner shall be filled with gladness. Listen, then, listen, ye that have turned your backs on God! Infinite mercy woos you,



boundless compassion entreats you to be saved. Turn ye; turn as you are, all black and filthy and bemired; tarry not to mend or wash, but come to Jesus all unholy and unclean, without a single sound speck upon your leprous frame, utterly lost and ruined. Christ died for such as you. I say again, tarry not to improve yourselves, but come now, while mercy's voice incites you, while the Holy Ghost not only entreats, but sweetly constrains. Come and welcome, sinners, come. The Lord bless you. Amen.

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## **A Voice From The Hartley Colliery**

If a man die, shall he live again? - Job 14:14

Once more the Lord has spoken. Once again the voice of Providence has proclaimed "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of grass." O sword of the Lord, when wilt thou rest and be quiet? Wherefore these repeated warnings? Why doth the Lord so frequently and so terribly sound an alarm? Is it not because our drowsy spirits will not awaken to the realities of death? We fondly persuade ourselves that we are immortal, that though a thousand may fall at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand, yet death shall not come nigh unto us. We flatter ourselves that if we must die, yet the evil day is far hence. If we be sixty, we presumptuously reckon upon another twenty years of life; and the man of eighty, tottering upon his staff, remembering that some few have survived to the close of a century, sees no reason why he should not do the same. If man cannot kill death, he tries at least to bury him alive; and since death will intrude himself in man's pathway, we endeavor to shut our eyes to the ghastly object. God in providence is continually filling our path with tombs. With kings and princes there is too much forgetfulness of the world to come; God has, therefore, spoken to them. They were but few in number; one death might be sufficient in their case.

That one death of a beloved and illustrious prince will leave its mark on courts and palaces. As for the workers, they also are wishful to put far from them the thought of the coffin and the shroud: God has spoken to them also. There were many; one death would not be sufficient; it was absolutely necessary that there should be many victims, or we should have disregarded the warning. Two hundred witnesses cry to us from the pit's mouth, a solemn fellowship of preachers all using the same text, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" If God had not thus spoken by the destruction of many, we should have said, "Ah, it is a common occurrence; there are frequently such accidents as these?" The rod would have failed in its effect had it smitten less severely. The awful calamity at the Hartley Colliery has at least had this effect, that men are talking of death in all our streets. Oh! Father of thy people, send forth thy Holy Spirit in richer abundance, that by this solemn chastisement higher ends may be answered than merely attracting our thoughts to our latter end. Oh! may hearts be broken, may eyes be made to weep for sin, may follies be renounced, may Christ be accepted, and may spiritual life be given as the result of temporal death to the many who now sleep in their untimely graves in Earsdon churchyard.

This text is appropriate to the occasion, but God alone knoweth how applicable the discourse may be to some here present; yes, to young hearts little dreaming that there is but a step between them and death; to aged persons, who as yet have not set their house in order, but who must do it, for they shall die and not live. We will take the question of the text, and answer it upon Scriptural grounds. "If a man die, shall he live again?" NO!—YES!

I. We answer the question first with a "No." He shall not live again here; he shall not again mingle with his fellows, and repeat the life which death has brought to a close. This is true of him with regard to himself, and equally true with regard to his neighbors. Shall he live again for himself? No. Shall he live again for his household? No.

1. Dwell for a moment on the first thought. "If a man die, shall he live again." Shall he live for himself. No; if he hath lived and died a sinner, that sinful life of his shall never be repeated. Sinner, thou mayest empty

the cups of drunkenness in this world throughout a long life, but thou shalt never have another season to spend in intoxication! Thou who hast broken through all the bounds of morality, thou mayest live in this life debauched, depraved, and devilish, but death shall put an end to thy career of lust. Let the cup be sweet; it is the last time thou shalt ever drink it. If there be any pleasures in sin, thou shalt never taste them again. The sweets shall be over once for all, and at the bottom thou shalt find the bitter dregs which shall be gall for ever. Once thou shalt insult high heaven, but not twice. Once shalt thou have space to blaspheme; once shalt thou have time proudly to array thyself in self-righteousness; once shalt thou have power to despise the Christ who is the Savior of men, but not twice. The longsuffering of God shall wait for thee through thy life of provocations; but thou shalt not be born again into this world; thou shalt not a second time defile its air with blasphemies, nor blot its beauties with impiety. Thou shalt not live again to forget the God who hath daily loaded thee with mercies. Thou hast thy daily bread now; the clothes that are on thy back shelter thee from the cold; thou goest to thy house, and thou hast comforts and mercies there, but like the swine which feed beneath the oak forgetful of the green bough which yields the acorn, or like the brute which is content to eat the grass, but never thanks the sun or the cloud which nourished the pasture, so thou livest in this world, forgetful of the God who made thee, in whom thou livest, and movest, and hast thy being. In this life thou art unthankful but thou shalt have no further opportunity for this ingratitude. All thy candles shall go out in eternal darkness. There shall be no more dainty meals for thee; no more joyous holidays, no more quiet slumbers. Every mercy shall be taken from thee. That which makes life desirable shall be removed if thou diest impenitent, till thou shalt hate thine existence and count it thy highest blessing if thou couldst cease to be. Thou shalt not live again, I say, to treat thy God worse than the ox treateth its owner. The ass knoweth his master's crib, but thou knowest not, though thou shalt know, for this is the last season in which thou shalt play the brute. My dear hearers, many of you have something more than the common mercies of God, you have his Word, Sabbath after Sabbath, preached in your ears. I may say truthfully concerning you who attend this house of prayer, that you hear one who, when he fails for want of power, fails not for want of will to do you good; one who has not shunned to warn you, and to preach in all

simplicity the whole counsel of God, so far as he has been taught it by the Holy Spirit. If you die you shall not live again to stifle the voice of your conscience, and to quench the Spirit of God. You shall have no more Sabbaths to mis-spend when this life is over. There shall be no church bells for you, after your knell is tolled. No affectionate voice shall beseech you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. No warning hand shall point you to the cross; no loving lip shall cry, "This is the way; walk ye in it." Ye have your last warnings now sinners; if ye reject them ye shall have no more. Ye hear in this life your last invitations; despise them, and the door shall be shut in your face for ever. Christ is lifted up before your eyes, look to him now and live; refuse him, and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, and no other life in which you may lay hold of him.

Fix'd is their everlasting state,  
Could man repent, 'tis then too late;  
Justice has closed mercy's door,  
And God's longsuffering is no more.

Here you may have a mother to weep for you; a wife to pray for you, friends who will counsel you; the blessings of a Christian country, an open Bible, and a house of prayer, but it is your last time. Now or never; now or never. Lost in time; lost in eternity; saved now, saved for ever. Sinner, it is thy last turn. Will thou choose to be damned? Then damned thou art without hope! May God save thee now, and saved thou art beyond fear of perishing. But it is thy last, thine only opportunity. Where the tree falleth there it must lie for ever.

"Return, O wanderer to thy home,  
'Tis madness to delay;  
There are no pardons in the tomb,  
And brief is mercy's day.  
Return! Return!"

Solemnly let us say it, awful as it appears, it is well that the sinner should not live again in this world. "Oh!" you will say, when you are dying, "if I could but live again, I would not sin as I once did." When you are in the

pit of hell, perhaps your pride will lead you to imagine that if you could come back to earth again you would be another man. Ah! but you would not be so! Unless you had a new heart and a right spirit, if you could live again, you would live as you did before. Keep the fountain unchanged, and the same streams will flow. Let the cause remain, and the same effects will follow. If the lost spirits could escape from hell, they would sin as they did before; if they could again listen to the gospel they would again reject it, for he that is filthy will be filthy still; the flames of hell shall work no change in character; for they have no sanctifying influence; they punish, but they do not cleanse. Sinners, it is well that you will not live again, for if you did you would but increase your condemnation. There would be two lives of sin, of rejection of Christ, of unbelief, and, if it were possible, hell would then be less tolerable for you than it shall be now. Oh! my poor dying hearers, by the corpses in the dark smothering gas of Hartley Pit, I pray you be awakened, for your death-hour is hastening on, and you have but to-day in which to find a Savior.

"Sinner beware.—the axe of death,  
Is raised and aimed at thee:  
Awhile thy Maker spares thy breath,  
Beware, O barren tree."

Every time you hear your clock tick, let it say to you, "Now or never, NOW OR NEVER, NOW OR NEVER."

In the case of the child of God, it is the same, so far as he himself is concerned, when he dies he shall not live again. No more shall he bitterly repent of sin; no more lament the plague of his own heart, and tremble under a sense of deserved wrath. No more shall the godly pitman suffer for righteousness' sake, despising the sneer of his comrades. The battle is once fought: it is not to be repeated. If God hath safely guided the ship across the sea and brought it to its desired haven, it casteth anchor for ever, and goeth not out a second time into the storm. Like those earnest Methodist miners, we have one life of usefulness, of service, of affliction, of temptation; one life in which to glorify God on earth in blessing our fellow-men; one life in which faith may be tried and love made perfect; one life in which we may prove the faithfulness of God in providence; and

one life in which we may see Christ triumphant over sin in our mortal bodies, but we shall not return to the scene of conflict.

Brethren is it not a mercy for you and for me if we be in Christ, that our furnace is not to be re-lit? Oh, brethren, it were unkind for us to wish back the dead! Ah, when we think of those brethren, those men of God, who in the pit held prayer meeting when they knew that the fatal gas would soon take away their lives; though we look at their weeping widows and their sorrowing children, it were wrong to wish them back again. What would any of us who fear God think, if we were once in heaven? Would not the very suggestion of return, though it were to the most faithful spouse and best-beloved children, be a cruelty? What, bring back again to battle the victor who wears the crown! Drag back to the storm and the tempest, the mariner who has gained the strand! What, bring me back again to pain and sorrow, to temptation, and to sin? No. Blessed be thou, O God, that all the wishes of friends shall not accomplish this, for we shall be

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

This world is not so lovely as to tempt us away from heaven. Here we are strangers and foreigners; here we have no abiding city; but we seek one to come. There is one wilderness, but we bless God there are not two. There is one Jordan to be crossed, but there is not another. There is one season when we must walk by faith and not by sight, and be fed with manna from heaven; but blessed be God there is not another, for after that comes the Canaan—the rest which remaineth for the people of God. What man among ye, immersed in the cares of business, would desire two lives? Who, that is tired to-day with the world's noise, and vexed with its temptations; who that has come from a bed of sickness; who that is conscious of sin, would wish to leave the haven when once it is reached? As well might galley-slave long to return to his oar, or captive to his dungeon? No, blessed be God, the souls which have ascended from the colliery to glow are not to leave their starry spheres, but rest in Christ for ever.

2. But now we pass to the other thought under this first head. If a man die, shall he live again?" Shall he live for others? No. The sinner shall not live to do damage to others. If there were any fathers who perished in the pit who had neglected the training of their children, they cannot live again to educate them for Christ. If there were any there (we hope there were not, and there is a hopeful sign, for I am told that there was not a single public-house within a mile of the village), but if there were there any who by their ill example taught others to sin, they shall never do it again. If there were any there who led others astray, by bold speeches against God, they have done once for all their life's-mischiefs. And so with each of us to-night. Do I speak to one here who is living a useless life; a tree planted in rich soil but bearing no fruit; a creature made by God but rendering him no service? Do I not speak to some such to-night? I know I do. You cannot be charged with outward vice, or with positive irregularity of conduct, but still it may be said of you, "I was an hungred and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; naked and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison and ye visited me not." Ye have not done it unto one of the least of these his brethren, and ye have not done it unto Christ. It is not necessary to do anything in order to be lost. The way to perdition is very simple; it is only a little matter of neglect. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation." Well, sinner, this is the last life of negligence that you shall ever spend; the very last season when you shall turn upon your heel and say, "Ha! ha! there is nothing in it!" The last time in which you shall put off the messenger by saying, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." The neglect of our own souls is a most solemn mischief to others. When others see that we neglect, they take courage and neglect too.

"One sickly sheep infests the flock,  
And poisons all the rest."

But there are others whose example is bad. What sorrow it is to notice men who carry the infection of sin wherever they go about them. In some of our villages, and especially in our towns, we have men who are reeking dung-hills of corruption. To put them by the side of a youth for an hour would be almost as dangerous as to make that youth walk through

Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. Men who, as Saul breathed out threatenings, breathe out lasciviousness. Ah! do I speak to such a wretch? It is thy last rebellion—thy last revolt. Thou shalt never do this again. Never again shalt thou lead others down to hell, and drag them to the pit with thee. Remember that. And some there be who not only by example, but by overt teaching drive others astray. We have still, in this enlightened Christian land, wretches who boast the name of "infidel lecturer;" whose business it is to pervert men's minds by hard speeches against the majesty of heaven. Let them labor hard if they mean to subvert Jehovah's throne, for they have little time to do it in. Well may the enemies of the Lord of Hosts be desperately in earnest, for they have an awful work to do, and if they consider the puny strength with which they go forth to battle against the Judge of all the earth, and the brevity of the time that can be given to the struggle, well may they work and toil. This is their only time their sure damnation draweth nigh. Hushed shall be their high words; cold shall be their hot and furious hearts. God shall crush them in his anger, and destroy them in his hot displeasure. If a man die, he shall not live again to scatter hemlock seed, and sow sin in furrows. I do not know what your life is my friend. You have stepped in here to-night; it is not often you are in a place of worship, but listen now. You know that to your family you are sometimes a terror, and always an ill example. Ah, you are a co-worker with Satan now, but God shall put you where you shall do no more hurt to that fair child of yours; where you shall not teach your boy to drink; where you shall not instil into your daughter's mind unholy thoughts. The time shall come, masters, when you shall be taken away from those men who imitate you in your evil ways. The time shall be over with you working-man yonder, you shall not much longer jeer at the righteous, and sneer at the godly. You will find it hard work to laugh at the saints when you get into hell. You will find when God comes to deal with you, and your life is over, that it will be utterly impossible for you then to call them fools, for you will be thinking yourself the greatest fool that ever was, that you did not, like them, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Well, jeer and joke, and point the finger, and slander, and persecute as you may; it is the last time, and you shall never have another opportunity to mock the saints. O remember, it were better for you that a mill-stone were about your neck, and that you were cast into the depths of the sea than that you should



thus offend Christ's little ones. Well, I think we may say it is a great mercy that the sinner shall not live again in this sense. What, bring him back again—that old drunkard of the village tap-room, restore him to life? No, no; good men breathed more freely when he was gone. What, bring back that vile old blasphemer who used to curse God? No, no; he vexed the righteous long enough; let him abide in his place. What, bring back that lewd, lascivious wretch to seduce others and lead them astray? What, bring back that thief to train others to his evil deeds? Bring back that self-righteous man who was always speaking against the gospel, and striving to prejudice other men's minds against gospel light? No, no. With all our love of one man, the love of many is stronger still, and we could not wish for the temporary and seeming good of one, to permit him to go raging, among others. Natural benevolence might suggest even the loosing of a lion as a creature, but a greater benevolence says, "No, let him be chained, or he will rend others." We might not wish to crush even a serpent. Let it live, it has its own sphere and its own enjoyment. But if the serpent creep among men, where it can bite and infuse its poison into human veins, let it die. Without compunction we say it,— "It were better that one man should die for the nation, that the whole nation perish not." If a man die then, as far as others are concerned, he shall not live again to curse his kind.

And now, me remind you that it is the same with the saint, "If a man die, shall he live again?" No. This is our season to pray for our fellow-men, and it is a season which shall never return. Mother, you shall never come back to pray for your daughters and your sons again! Ministers, this is your time to preach. We shall never have an opportunity of being God's ambassadors anymore. Oh! when I sometimes think of this, I am ashamed that I can preach with dry eyes, and that sobs do not choke my utterance. Methinks if I were lying upon my dying bed, I might often say, "O Lord, would that I could preach again, and once more warn poor souls." I think Baxter says he never came out of his pulpit without sighing, because he had played his part so ill, and yet who ever preached more earnestly than he? And so, at times when we have felt the weight of souls, yet in looking back, we have thought we did not feel it as we should; and when we have stood by the corpse of one of our own hearers, we have had the reflection, "Would that I could have talked more

personally, and spoken more earnestly, to this man!" I often feel that if God should ever permit me to say I am clear of the blood of you all, it is about as much as I can ever hope to have, for that must be heaven to a man, to feel that God has delivered him out of his ministry, it is such an awful thing to be responsible before God for the souls of men. "If the watchman warn them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." And so, remember, it is with each one of you. Now is your time to rescue the fallen, to teach the ignorant, to carry the lambs in your bosom, or to restore the wandering; now is your season for liberality to the Church, for care of the poor, for consecration to Christ's service, and for devotion to his cause. If there could be sorrow among the spirits that are crowding around the throne of Christ, methinks it would be this, that they had not labored more abundantly, and were not more instant in season and out of season in doing good. If those godly pitmen over whom we mourn tonight, had not done their utmost while they were here, the deficiency could never be made up. Let me commend to you the example of some of those who were in the pit, praying and exhorting their fellow men just as they were all in the last article of death. They were Primitive Methodists. Let their names clothe Primitive Methodism with eternal honor! I conceive that in employing poor unlettered men to preach, the plan of the Primitive Methodists is New Testament and Scriptural policy. Such methods of usefulness we have endeavored to pursue, and hope to do so yet more fully. The Primitive Methodists think that a man may preach who never went to college; that a man may preach to his fellow-miners even though he cannot speak grammatically; and hence they do not excite their ministers to labor after literary attainments, but after the souls of men; and the local preachers are chosen solely and wholly for their power to speak from the heart, and to make their fellow-men feel. We should have done more for London if we had not been so squeamish. Real Primitive Methodism we have seen in London, in the person of Mr. Richard Weaver; and if you would put a score of the ministers who have preached in the theatres altogether, they would not have made one such a man as Richard Weaver, for real effect upon the masses. And yet what teaching had he, and what wisdom? None, but that he feels the power of God in his own soul, and speaks out of his heart, roughly and rudely, but still mightily to others. We want all our Churches to feel that they must not say, "Who is John So-and-so? He is

only a cobbler; he must not preach. What is Tom So-and-so? He is only a carpenter; why should he preach?" Ah, these are the men who shook the world; these are the men whom God used to destroy old Rome. With all our gettings, while we seek to get education in the ministry, we must take care that we do not despise those things that are not, which God shall make mightier than the things that are: and those base things which God hath chosen to stain the pride of human glorying, and to bring into contempt all the excellent of the earth. I know that I address some working men here. Working men, oh, that you knew Christ in your own hearts as they did in the Hartley pit! You see they had no preacher down there. Do not get the notion that you want a minister in order to come to Christ. Priestcraft is a thing we hate, and as you hate it too, we are quite one in that opinion. I preach the Word, but what am I more than you? If you can preach to edification, I pray you do so. Your poor brethren in the pit, though not set apart to that work, were yet as true priests unto the living God, and ministers for Christ, as any of us. So be you. Hasten to work while it is called to-day; gird up your loins and run the heavenly race for the sun is setting never to rise again upon this land.

II. "If a man die shall he live again?" Yes, yes, that he shall. He does not die like a dog; he shall live again; not here, but in another and a better or a more terrible land. The soul, we know, never dies, but when it leaves the clay it mounts to sing with angels or descends to howl with fiends. The body itself shall live again. The corpses in the pit were some of them swollen with foul air; some of them could scarcely be recognized, but as the seed corn has not lost its vitality, shrivelled though it be, neither have those bodies. They are now sown, and they shall spring up either to bear the image of condemnation, or of immortality and life. Scattered to the winds of heaven, devoured of beasts, mixed with other substances and other bodies, yet every atom of the human body has been tracked by the eye of omniscience, and shall be gathered to its proper place by the hand of omnipotence. The Lord knoweth every particle of the bodies of them that are his. All men, whether they be righteous or wicked, shall certainly live again in the body, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. This much cometh to all men through Christ, that all men have a resurrection. But more than that. They shall all live again in the eternal state; either for ever glorified with God in Christ, blessed with the

holy angels, for ever shut in from all danger and alarm; or in that place appointed for banished spirits who have shut themselves out from God, and now find that God has shut them out from him. They shall live again, in weal or woe, in bliss or bane, in heaven or in hell. Now ye that are unconverted, think of this I pray you for a moment. Ye shall live again; let no one tempt you to believe the contrary. Whatever they shall say, and however speciously they may put it, mark this word—you shall not rot in the tomb for ever; there shall not be an end of you when they shall say "Earth to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes." Ye shall live again. And hark thee, sinner; let me hold thee by the hand a moment; thy sins shall live again. They are not dead. Thou hast forgotten them, but God has not. Thou hast covered them over with the thick darkness of forgetfulness, but they are in his book, and the day shall come when all the sins that thou hast done shall be read before the universe and published in the light of day. What sayest thou to this, sinner? The sins of thy youth, thy secret sins—oh! man, let that thought pierce through thee like a point of steel, and cut thee to the very quick—thy sins shall live again. And thy conscience shall live. It is not often alive now. It is quiet, almost as quiet as the dead in the grave. But it shall soon awaken, the trumpet of the archangel shall break its long sleep; depend on that; the terrors of hell shall make thee lift up thine eyes which have so long been heavy with slumber. You have had an awakened conscience, but then you are still in the land of hope, you will find however that an awakened conscience when there is no Christ to flee to is an awful thing. Remorse of conscience has brought many a man to the knife and to the halter. Ah, careless sinner, you dare not to-night sit up an hour alone and think over the past and the future; you know you dare not. But there will be no avoiding conscience hereafter, it speaks now, but it will thunder then; it whispers now, and you may shut your ears, but its thunder-claps then shall so startle you that you cannot refuse to listen. Oh! transgressor, thy conscience shall live again, and shall be thy perpetual tormentor. Remember that your victims shall live again. Am I addressing any who have enticed companions into sin, and conducted friends to destruction? Your dupes shall meet you in another world and charge their ruin upon you. That young lad whom you led astray from the path of virtue shall point to you in hell and say, "He was my tempter." That woman—let us cover up that deed,—bright eyes shall sparkle upon you through the black

darkness like the eyes of serpents, and you shall hear the hissing voice, "Thou didst bring me here," and you shall feel another hell in the hell of that other soul. Oh! God, save us, let the sins of our youth be covered. Oh, save us! Let the blood of Jesus be sprinkled on our conscience, for, there are none of us that dare meet our conscience alone! Shelter us, thou Rock of Ages. Deliver us from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation. Sinner, remember thy God shall live. Thou thinkest him nothing now; thou shalt see him then. Thy business now stops the way; the smoke of time dims thy vision; the rough blasts of death shall blow all this away, and thou shalt see clearly revealed to thyself the frowning visage of an angry God. A God in arms, sinner, a God in arms, and no scabbard for his sword; a God in arms, and no shelter for thy soul; a God in arms, and even rocks refusing to cover thee; a God in arms, and the hollow depths of earth denying thee a refuge! Fly, soul! while it is yet time: fly, the cleft in the rock is open now. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Fly, sinner, to the open arms of Jesus! Fly! for he casteth out none that come to him.

And then, lastly, as this is true of the sinner, so it is true of the saint. He shall live again. If in this life only we had hope, we were of all men the most miserable. If we knew that we must die and not live for ever, our brightest joys would be quenched; and in proportion to the joy we lost would be the sorrow which followed. We shall live again. Godly wife, thy Christian husband, though he perished by the fatal "damp," shall live again, and thou shalt sit with him before the eternal throne. He finished his life with prayer amid his comrades, he shall begin anew with praise amid the cherubim. Widow, bereaven of thy many children, thou hast lost them all; not lost we hope, but gone before. Oh! there shall be joy when every link that was snapped shall be re-fitted; when again the circle shall be completed, and all losses restored.

"Far, far removed from fear and pain,  
Dear brethren we shall meet again."

That sweet hymn of the children is a blessed one after all—

"We shall meet to part no more."

Death, thou canst not rob us, thou canst not tear away a limb from Jesu's body! Thou canst not take away a single stone from the spiritual temple. Thou dost but transplant the flower, O death! thou dost not kill it. Thou dost but uproot it from the land of frost to flourish in the summer's clime; thou dost but take it from the place where it can only bud, to the place where it shall be full blown. Blessed be God for death, sweet friend of regenerated man! Blessed be God for the grave, safe wardrobe for these poor dusty garments till we put them on afresh glowing with angelic glory. Thrice blessed be God for resurrection, for immortality, and for the joy that shall be revealed in us. Brethren, my soul anticipates that day; let yours do the same. One gentle sigh and we fall asleep; perhaps we die as easily as those did in the colliery; we sleep into heaven, and wake up in Christ's likeness. When we have slept our last on earth, and open our eyes in heaven, oh! what a surprise! No aching arm, no darkness of the mine, no choked armpit, no labor and no sweat, no sin, no stain there! Brethren, is not that verse near the fact which says,

"We'll sing with rapture and surprise,  
His loving kindness in the skies?"

Shall we not be surprised to find ourselves in heaven? What a new place for the poor sinner. From the coal mine to celestial spheres. From black and dusty toil to bright and heavenly bliss. Above ground once for all, ay and above the skies too. Oh! long-expected day begin! When shall it come? Hasten it, Lord.

Come death and some celestial hand,  
To bear our souls away!"

I have thus tried to bring forward the text. Oh that the Lord, in whose name I desire to speak, may bless it to some among you. I have now to ask you kindly to think of those who are suffering through this terrible calamity. More than four hundred widows and orphans are left bereaved

and penniless, for the working-man has little spare cash to provide for such contingencies. As a congregation we can do but little to alleviate so great a sorrow, let us, however, bear our part with others. I have no doubt the wealthier ones among you have already contributed in your different connexions, either through the Lord Mayor, or Mark Lane, or the Coal Market, or the Stock Exchange, or in some other way, but there are many of you who have not done so, and those who have may like an opportunity of doing so again. Let us do what we can to-night, that we may show our gratitude to God for having spared our lives; and as we drop our money into the box, let us offer a prayer that this solemn affliction may be blessed to all in the land, and that so Christ may be glorified.

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## **The Voice Of The Blood Of Christ**

The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. -  
Hebrews 12:24

Of all substances blood is the most mysterious, and in some senses the most sacred. Scripture teacheth us,—and after all there is very much philosophy in Scripture,—that "the blood is the life thereof,"—that the life lieth in the blood. Blood, therefore, is the mysterious link between matter and spirit. How it is that the soul should in any degree have an alliance with matter through blood, we cannot understand; but certain it is that this is the mysterious link which unites these apparently dissimilar things together, so that the soul can inhabit the body, and the life can rest in the blood. God has attached awful sacredness to the shedding of blood. Under the Jewish dispensation, even the blood of animals was considered as sacred. Blood might never be eaten by the Jews; it was too sacred a thing to become the food of man. The Jew was scarcely allowed to kill his own food: certainly he must not kill it except he poured out the blood as a sacred offering to Almighty God. Blood was accepted by God as the

symbol of the atonement. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, because, I take it, blood hath such an affinity with life, that inasmuch as God would accept nought but blood, be signified that there must be a life offered to him, and that his great and glorious Son must surrender his life as a sacrifice for his sheep.

Now, we have in our text "blood" mentioned—two-fold blood. We have the blood of murdered Abel, and the blood of murdered Jesus. We have also two things in the text:—*a comparison between the blood of sprinkling, and the blood of Abel; and then a certain condition mentioned.* Rather, if we read the whole verse in order to get its meaning, we find that the righteous are spoken of as coming to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel; so that the condition which will constitute the second part of our discourse, is coming to that blood of sprinkling for our salvation and glory.

I. Without further preface I shall at once introduce to you the CONTRAST AND COMPARISON IMPLIED IN THE TEXT. "The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." I confess I was very much astonished when looking at Dr. Gill and Albert Barnes, and several of the more eminent commentators, while studying this passage, to find that they attach a meaning to this verse which had never occurred to me before. They say that the meaning of the verse is not that the blood of Christ is superior to the blood of murdered Abel, although that is certainly a truth, but that the sacrifice of the blood of Christ is better, and speaketh better things than the sacrifice which Abel offered. Now, although I do not think this is the meaning of the text and I have my reasons for believing that the blood here contrasted with that of the Saviour, is the blood of the murdered man Abel, yet on looking to the original there is so much to be said on both sides of the question, that I think it fair in explaining the passage to give you both the meanings. They are not conflicting interpretations; there is indeed a shade of difference but still they amount to the same idea.

First, then, we may understand here a comparison between the offerings Abel presented, and the offerings Jesus Christ presented, when he gave his blood to be a ransom for the flock.



Let me describe Abel's offering. I have no doubt Adam had from the very first of his expulsion from the garden of Eden offered a sacrifice to God; and we have some dim hint that this sacrifice was of a beast, for we find that the Lord God made Adam and Eve skins of beasts to be their clothing, and it is probable that those skins were procured by the slaughter of victims offered in sacrifice. However, that is but a dim hint: the first absolute record that he have of an oblatory sacrifice is the record of the sacrifice offered by Abel. Now, it appears that very early there was a distinction among men. Cain was the representative of the seed of the serpent, and Abel was the representative of the seed of the woman. Abel was God's elect, and Cain was one of those who rejected the Most High. However, both Cain and Abel united together in the outward service of God. They both of them brought on a certain high day a sacrifice. Cain took a different view of the matter of sacrifice from that which presented itself to the mind of Abel. Cain was proud and haughty: he said "I am ready to confess that the mercies which we receive from the soil are the gift of God, but I am not ready to acknowledge that I am a guilty sinner, deserving God's wrath, therefore," said he, "I will bring nothing but the fruit of the ground." "Ah, but" said Abel, "I feel that while I ought to be grateful for temporal mercies, at the same time I have sins to confess, I have iniquities to be pardoned, and I know that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin; therefore," said he, "O Cain, I will not be content to bring an offering of the ground, of the ears of corn, or of first ripe fruits, but I will bring of the firstlings of my flock, and I will shed blood upon the altar, because my faith is, that there is to come a great victim who is actually to make atonement for the sins of men, and by the slaughter of this lamb, I express my solemn faith in him." Not so Cain; he cared nothing for Christ; he was not willing to confess his sin; he had no objection to present a thank-offering, but a sin-offering he would not bring. He did not mind bringing to God that which he thought might be acceptable as a return for favors received, but he would not bring to God an acknowledgment of his guilt, or a confession of his inability to make atonement for it, except by the blood of a substitute. Cain, moreover, when he came to the altar, came entirely without faith. He piled the unhewn stones, as Abel did, he laid his sheaves of corn upon the altar, and there he waited, but it was to him a matter of comparative

indifference whether God accepted him or not. He believed there was a God, doubtless, but he had no faith in the promises of that God. God had said that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head—that was the gospel as revealed to our first parents; but Cain had no belief in that gospel—whether it were true or not, he cared not—it was sufficient for him that he acquired enough for his own sustenance from the soil; he had no faith. But holy Abel stood by the side of the altar, and while Cain the infidel perhaps laughed and jeered at his sacrifice, he boldly presented there the bleeding lamb as a testimony to all men, both of that time and all future times, that he believed in the seed of the woman—that he looked for him to come who should destroy the serpent, and restore the ruins of the fall. Do you see holy Abel, standing there, ministering as a priest at God's altar? Do you see the flush of joy which comes over his face, when he sees the heavens opened, and the living fire of God descend upon the victims? Do you note with what a grateful expression of confident faith he lifts to heaven his eye which had been before filled with tears, and cries, "I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast accepted my sacrifice, inasmuch as I presented it through faith in the blood of thy Son, my Saviour, who is to come."

Abel's sacrifice, being the first on record, and being offered in the teeth of opposition, has very much in it which puts it ahead of many other of the sacrifices of the Jews. Abel is to be greatly honored for his confidence and faith in the coming Messiah. But compare for a moment the sacrifice of Christ with the sacrifice of Abel, and the sacrifice of Abel shrinks into insignificance. What did Abel bring? He brought a sacrifice which showed the necessity of blood-shedding but Christ brought the blood-shedding itself. Abel taught the world by his sacrifice that he looked for a victim, but Christ brought the actual victim. Abel brought but the type and the figure, the Lamb which was but a picture of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world; but Christ was that Lamb. He was the substance of the shadow, the reality of the type. Abel's sacrifice had no merit in it apart from the faith in the Messiah with which he presented it; but Christ's sacrifice had merit of itself; it was in itself meritorious. What was the blood of Abel's lamb? It was nothing but the blood of a common lamb that might have been shed anywhere, except that he had faith in Christ the blood of the lamb was but as water, a contemptible thing; but

the blood of Christ was a sacrifice indeed, richer far than all the blood of beasts that ever were offered upon the altar of Abel, or the altar of all the Jewish high priests. We may say of all the sacrifices that were ever offered, however costly they might be, and however acceptable to God, though they were rivers of oil and tens of thousands of fat beasts, yet they were less than nothing, and contemptible, in comparison with the one sacrifice which our high priest hath offered once for all, whereby he hath eternally perfected them that are sanctified.

We have thus found it very easy to set forth the difference between the blood of Christ's sprinkling and the blood which Abel sprinkled. But now I take it that there is a deeper meaning than this, despite what some commentators have said. I believe that the allusion here is to the blood of murdered Abel. Cain smote Abel, and doubtless his hands and the altar were stained with the blood of him who had acted as a priest. "Now," says our apostle, "that blood of Abel spoke." We have evidence that it did, for God said to Cain, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground," and the apostle's comment upon that in another place is—"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he being dead yet speaketh," speaketh through his blood, his blood crying unto God from the ground. Now, Christ's blood speaks too. What is the difference between the two voices?—for we are told in the text that it "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Abel's blood spoke in a threefold manner. It spoke in heaven; it spoke to the sons of men; it spoke to the conscience of Cain. The blood of Christ speaks in a like threefold manner, and it speaks better things.

First, the blood of Abel spoke in heaven. Abel was a holy man, and all that Cain could bring against him was, "His own works were evil, and his brother's were righteous." You see the brothers going to the sacrifice together. You mark the black scowl upon the brow of Cain, when Abel's sacrifice is accepted while his remains untouched by the sacred fire. You note how they begin to talk together—how quietly Abel argues the question, and how ferociously Cain denounces him. You note again how God speaks to Cain, and warns him of the evil which he knew was in his

heart; and you see Cain, as he goes from the presence chamber of the Most High, warned and forewarned; but yet with the dreadful thought in his heart that he will imbrue his hands in his brother's blood. He meets his brother; he talks friendly with him: he gives him, as it were, the kiss of Judas; he entices him into the field where he is alone; he takes him unawares; he smites him, and smites him yet again, till there lies the murdered bleeding corpse of his brother. O earth! earth! earth! cover not his blood. This is the first murder thou hast ever seen; the first blood of man that ever stained thy soil. Hark! there is a cry heard in heaven, the angels are astonished; they rise up from their golden seats, and they enquire, "What is that cry?" God looketh upon them, and he saith, "It is the cry of blood, a man hath been slain by his fellow; a brother by him who came from the bowels of the self-same mother has been murdered in cold blood, through malice. One of my saints has been murdered, and here he comes, And Abel entered into heaven blood-red, the first of God's elect who had entered Paradise, and the first of God's children who had worn the blood red crown of martyrdom. And then the cry was heard, loud and clear and strong; and thus it spoke—"Revenge! revenge! revenge!" And God himself, upstarting from his throne, summoned the culprit to his presence, questioned him, condemned him out of his own mouth, and made him henceforth a fugitive and a vagabond, to wander over the surface of the earth, which was to be sterile henceforth to his plough.

And now, beloved, just contrast with this the blood of Christ. That is Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God; he hangs upon a tree; he is murdered—murdered by his own brethren. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not, but his own led him out to death." He bleeds; he dies; and then is heard a cry in heaven. The astonished angels again start from their seats, and they say, "What is this? What is this cry that we hear?" And the Mighty Maker answers yet again, "It is the cry of blood; it is the cry of the blood of my only-begotten and well-beloved Son!" And God, uprising from his throne, looks down from heaven and listens to the cry. And what is the cry? It is not revenge; but the voice crieth, "Mercy! mercy! mercy!" Did you not hear it? It said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Herein, the blood of Christ "speaketh better things than that of Abel," for Abel's blood said, "Revenge!" and made the

sword of God start from its scabbard; but Christ's blood cried "Mercy!" and sent the sword back again, and bade it sleep for ever.

"Blood hath a voice to pierce the skies,  
'Revenge!' the blood of Abel cries;  
But the rich blood of Jesus slain,  
Speaks peace as loud from every vein."

You will note too that Abel's blood cried for revenge upon one man only—upon Cain; it required the death of but one man to satisfy for it, namely, the death of the murderer. "Blood for blood!" The murderer must die the death. But what saith Christ's blood in heaven? Does it speak for only one? Ah! no, beloved; "the free gift hath come upon many." Christ's blood cries mercy! mercy! mercy! not on one, but upon a multitude whom no man can number—ten thousand times ten thousand.

Again: Abel's blood cried to heaven for revenge, for one transgression of Cain that for ought that Cain had done, worthless and vile before, the blood of Abel did not demand any revenge: it was for the one sin that blood clamoured at the throne of God, and not for many sins. Not so the voice of the blood of Christ. It is "for many offenses unto justification." Oh, could ye hear that cry, that all-prevailing cry, as now it comes up from Calvary's summit—"Father, forgive *them!*" not one, but many. "Father, forgive them." And not only forgive them this offense, but forgive them all their sins, and blot out all their iniquities. Ah! beloved, we might have thought that the blood of Christ would have demanded vengeance at the hands of God. Surely, if Abel be revenged seven fold, then must Christ be revenged seventy times seven. If the earth would not swallow up the blood of Abel, till it had had its fill, surely we might have thought that the earth never would have covered the corpse of Christ, until God had struck the world with fire and sword, and banished all men to destruction. But, O precious blood! thou sayest not one word of vengeance! All that this blood cries is peace! pardon! forgiveness! mercy! acceptance! Truly it "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Again: Abel's blood had a second voice. It spoke to the whole world. "He being dead yet speaketh"—not only in heaven, but on earth. God's

prophets are a speaking people. They speak by their acts and by their words as long as they live, and when they are buried they speak by their example which they have left behind. Abel speaks by his blood to us. And what does it say? When Abel offered up his victim upon the altar he said to us, "I believe in a sacrifice that is to be offered for the sins of men," but when Abel's own blood was sprinkled on the altar he seemed to say, "Here is the ratification of my faith; I seal my testimony with my own blood; you have now the evidence of my sincerity, for I was prepared to die for the defense of this truth which I now witness unto you." It was a great thing for Abel thus to ratify his testimony with his blood. We should not have believed the martyrs half so easily if they had not been ready to die for their profession. The Gospel in ancient times would never have spread at such a marvellous rate, if it had not been that all the preachers of the gospel were ready at any time to attest their message with their own blood. But Christ's blood "speaketh better things than that of Abel." Abel's blood ratified his testimony, and Christ's blood has ratified his testimony too; but Christ's testimony is better than that of Abel. For what is the testimony of Christ? The covenant of grace—that everlasting covenant. He came into this world to tell us that God had from the beginning chosen his people—that he had ordained them to eternal life, and that he had made a covenant with his son Jesus Christ that if he would pay the price they should go free—if he would suffer in their stead they should be delivered. And Christ cried e'er "he bowed his head and gave up the ghost"—"It is finished." The covenant purpose is finished. That purpose was "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Such was the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ, as his own blood gushed from his heart, to be the diestamp, and seal, that the covenant was ratified. When I see Abel die I know that his testimony was true; but when I see Christ die I know that the covenant is true.

"This covenant, O believer, stands  
Thy rising fears to quell;  
'Tis signed and sealed and ratified,  
In all things ordered well."

When he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, he did as much as say,

"All things are made sure unto the seed by my giving myself a victim." Come, saint, and see the covenant all blood-bestained, and know that it is sure. He is "the faithful and true witness, the prince of the kings of the earth." First of martyrs, my Lord Jesus, thou hadst a better testimony to witness than they all, for thou hast witnessed to the everlasting covenant; thou hast witnessed that thou art the shepherd and bishop of souls; thou hast witnessed to the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of thyself Again: I say, come, ye people of God, and read over the golden roll. It begins in election—it ends in everlasting life, and all this the blood of Christ crieth in your ears. All this is true; for Christ's blood proves it to be true, and to be sure to all the seed. It "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Now we come to the third voice, for the blood of Abel had a three-fold sound. It spoke in the conscience of Cain. Hardened though he was, and like a very devil in his sin, yet he was not so deaf in his conscience that he could not hear the voice of blood. The first thing that Abel's blood said to Cain was this: Ah! guilty wretch, to spill thy brother's blood! As he saw it trickling from the wound and flowing down in streams, he looked at it, and as the sun shone on it, and the red glare came into his eye, it seemed to say, "Ah! cursed wretch, for the son of thine own mother thou hast slain. Thy wrath was vile enough, when thy countenance fell, but to rise up against thy brother and take away his life, Oh! how vile!" It seemed to say to him, "What had he done that thou shouldst take his life? Wherein had he offended thee? Was not his conduct blameless, and his conversation pure? If thou hadst smitten a villain or a thief, men might not have blamed thee; but this blood is pure, clean, perfect blood; how couldest thou kill such a man as this?" And Cain put his hand across his brow, and felt there was a sense of guilt there that he had never felt before. And then the blood said to him again, "Why, whither wilt thou go? Thou shalt be a vagabond as long as thou livest." A cold chill ran through him, and he said, "Whosoever findeth me will kill me." And though God promised him he should live, no doubt he was always afraid. If he saw a company of men together, he would hide himself in a thicket, or if in his solitary wanderings he saw a man at a distance, he started back, and sought to bury his head, so that none should observe him. In the stillness of the night he started up in his dreams. It was but his wife that slept by his side; but he thought he felt some one's hands gripping his throat, and

about to take away his life. Then he would sit up in his bed and took around at the grim shadows, thinking some fiend was haunting him and seeking after him. Then, as he rose to go about his business, he trembled. He trembled to be alone, he trembled to be in company. When he was alone he seemed not to be alone; the ghost of his brother seemed staring him in his face; and when he was in company he dreaded the voice of men, for he seemed to think every one cursed him, and he thought every one knew the crime he had committed, and no doubt they did, and every man shunned him. No man would take his hand, for it was red with blood, and his very child upon his knee was afraid to look up into his father's face, for there was the mark which God had set upon him. His very wife could scarcely speak to him,—for she was afraid that from the lips of him who had been cursed of God some curse might fall on her. The very earth cursed him. He no sooner put his foot upon the ground, than where it had been a garden before it suddenly turned into a desert, and the fair rich soil became hardened into an arid rock. Guilt, like a grim chamberlain, with fingers bloody red, did draw the curtain of his bed each night. His crime refused him sleep. It spoke in his heart, and the walls of his memory reverberated the dying cry of his murdered brother. And no doubt that blood spoke one more thing to Cain. It said, "Cain, although thou mayest now be spared there is no hope for thee; thou art a man accursed on earth, and accursed for ever, God hath condemned thee here, and he will damn thee hereafter." And so wherever Cain went, he never found hope. Though he searched for it in the mountain top, yet he found it not there. Hope that was left to all men, was denied to him: a hopeless, houseless, helpless vagabond, he wandered up and down the surface of the earth. Oh! Abel's brood had a terrible voice indeed.

But now see the sweet change as ye listen to the blood of Christ. It "speaketh better things than that of Abel." Friend! hast thou ever heard the blood of Christ in thy conscience? I have, and I thank God I ever heard that sweet soft voice.

"Once a sinner near despair;  
Sought the mercy seat by prayer."

He prayed: he thought he was praying in vain. The tears gushed from his



eyes; his heart was heavy within him; he sought, but he found no mercy. Again, again, and yet again, he besieged the throne of the heavenly grace and knocked at mercy's door Oh! who can tell the mill-stone that lay upon his beating heart, and the iron that did eat into his soul. He was a prisoner in sore bondage; deep, as he thought, in the bondage of despair was he chained, to perish for ever. That prisoner one day heard a voice, which said to him, "Away, away to Calvary!" Yet he trembled at the voice, for he said, "Why should I go thither, for there my blackest sin was committed; there I murdered the Saviour by my transgressions? Why should I go to see the murdered corpse of him who became my brother born for adversity?" But mercy beckoned, and she said, "Come, come away, sinner!" And the sinner followed. The chains were on his legs and on his hands, and he could scarcely creep along. Still the black vulture Destruction seemed hovering in the air. But he crept as best he could, till he came to the foot of the hill of Calvary. On the summit he saw a cross; blood was distilling from the hands, and from the feet, and from the side, and mercy touched his ears and said, "Listen!" and he heard that blood speak; and as it spoke the first thing it said was, "Love!" And the second thing it said was, "Mercy!" The third thing it said was, "Pardon." The next thing it said was, "Acceptance." The next thing it said was, "Adoption." The next thing it said was, "Security." And the last thing it whispered was, "Heaven." And as the sinner heard that voice, he said within himself, "And does that blood speak to me?" And the Spirit said, "To thee—to thee it speaks." And he listened, and oh what music did it seem to his poor troubled heart, for in a moment all his doubts were gone. He had no sense of guilt. He knew that he was vile, but he saw that his vileness was all washed away; he knew that he was guilty, but he saw his guilt all atoned for, through the precious blood that was flowing there. He had been full of dread before; he dreaded life, he dreaded death; but now he had no dread at all; a joyous confidence took possession of his heart. He looked to Christ, and he said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" he clasped the Saviour in his arms, and he began to sing:—"Oh! confident am I; for this blest blood was shed for me." And then Despair fled and Destruction was driven clean away. and instead thereof came the bright white-winged angel of Assurance, and she dwelt in his bosom, saying evermore to him, "Thou art accepted in the Beloved: thou art chosen of God and precious: thou art his child now, and thou shalt be his favourite

throughout eternity." "The blood of Christ speaketh better things than that of Abel."

And now I must have you notice that the blood of Christ bears a *comparison* with the blood of Abel in one or two respects, but it excelleth in them all.

The blood of Abel cried "Justice!" It was but right that the blood should be revenged. Abel had no private pique against Cain; doubtless could Abel have done so, he would have forgiven his brother; but the blood spoke justly, and only asked its due when it shouted "Vengeance! vengeance! vengeance!" And Christ's blood speaketh justly, when it saith, "Mercy!" Christ has as much right to demand mercy upon sinners, as Abel's blood had to cry vengeance against Cain. When Christ saves a sinner, he does not save him on the sly, or against law or justice, but he saves him justly. Christ has a right to save whom he will save, to have mercy on whom he will have mercy, for he can do it justly, he can be just, and yet be the justifier of the ungodly.

Again, Abel's blood cried effectively. It did not cry in vain. It said, "Revenge!" and revenge it had. And Christ's blood, blessed be his name, never cries in vain. It saith, "Pardon;" and pardon every believer shall have it saith, "Acceptance," and every penitent is accepted in the Beloved. If that blood cry for me, I know it cannot cry in vain. That all-prevailing blood of Christ shall never miss its due; it must, it shall be heard. Shall Abel's blood startle heaven, and shall not the blood of Christ reach the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth?

And again, Abel's blood cries continually, there is the mercy-seat, and there is the cross, and the blood is dropping on the mercy-seat. I have sinned a sin. Christ says, "Father, forgive him." There is one drop. I sin again: Christ intercedes again. There is another drop. In fact, it is the drop that intercedes, Christ need not speak with his mouth; the drops of blood as they fall upon the mercy-seat, each seemeth to say, "Forgive him! forgive him! forgive him!"

Dear friend, when thou hearest the voice of conscience, stop and try to

hear the voice of the blood too. Oh! what a precious thing it is to hear the voice of the blood of Christ. You who do not know what that means, do not know the very essence and joy of life; but you who understand that, can say, "The dropping of the blood is like the music of heaven upon earth." Poor sinner! I would ask thee to come and listen to that voice that distils upon thy ears and thy heart to-day. Thou art full of sin; the Saviour bids thee lift thine eyes to him. See, there, his blood is flowing from his head, his hands, his feet, and every drop that falls, still cries, "Father, O forgive them! Father, O forgive them." And each drop seems to cry also as it falls, "It is finished: I have made an end of sin, I have brought in everlasting righteousness." Oh! sweet, sweet language of the dropping of the blood of Christ" It "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

II. Having thus, I trust, sufficiently enlarged upon this subject I shall now close by addressing you with a few earnest words concerning the second point.—The **CONDITION INTO WHICH EVERY CHRISTIAN IS BROUGHT**. He is said to be "come to the blood of sprinkling." I shall make this a very brief matter, but a very solemn and pointed one. My hearers, have you come to the blood of Christ? I do not ask you whether you have come to a knowledge of doctrine, or of an observance of ceremonies, or of a certain form of experience; but I ask you if you have come to the blood of Christ. If you have, I know how you come. You must come to the blood of Christ with no merits of your own. Guilty, lost, and helpless, you must come to that blood, and to that blood alone, for your hopes; you come to the cross of Christ and to that blood too, I know, with a trembling and an aching heart. Some of you remember how you first came, cast down and full of despair; but that blood recovered you. And this one thing I know: if you have come to that blood once, you will come to it every day. Your life will be just this—"Looking unto Jesus." And your whole conduct will be epitomized in this—"To whom coming as unto a living stone." Not to whom I have come, but to whom I am always coming. If thou hast ever come to the blood of Christ thou wilt feel thy need of coming to it every day. He that does not desire to wash in that fountain every day, has never washed in it at all. I feel it every day to be my joy and my privilege that there is still a fountain opened. I trust I came to Christ years ago but ah! I could not trust to that, unless I could come again to-day. Past experiences are doubtful things to a Christian; it

is present coming to Christ that must give us joy and comfort. Did you not, some of you, sing twenty years ago that hymn,

"My faith doth lay her hand  
On that dear head of thine  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess my sin."

Why, beloved you can sing it as well to-day as you did then. I was reading the other day some book, in which the author states, that we are not to come to Christ as sinners as long as we live; he says we are to grow into saints. Ah! he did not know much, I am sure; for saints are sinners still, and they have always to come to Christ as sinners. If ever I go to the throne of God as a saint, I get repulsed; but when I go just as a poor humble seeking sinner, relying upon nothing but thy blood, O Jesus, I never can get a repulse, I am sure. To whom coming as unto "blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Let this be our experience every day.

But there are some here who confess that they never did come. I cannot exhort you, then, to come every day, but I exhort you to come now for the first time. But you say, "May I come?" Yes, if thou art wishing to come thou mayest come; if thou feelest that thou hast need to come thou mayest come.

"All the fitness he requireth,  
Is to feel your need of him;"

And even

This he gives you,  
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

But you say, "I must bring some merits." Hark to the blood that speaks! It says, "Sinner, I am full of merit: why bring thy merits here?" "Ah! but," thou sayest "I have too much sin." Hark to the blood: as it falls, it cries, "Of many offenses unto justification of life." "Ah! but," thou sayest, "I

know I am too guilty." Hark to the blood! "Though your sins be as scarlet I will make them as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." "Nay," says one, "but I have such a poor desire, I have such a little faith." Hark to the blood! "The bruised reed I will not break, and smoking flax I will not quench." "Nay, but," thou sayest, "I know he will cast me out, if I do come." Hark to the blood! "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "Nay, but," sayest thou, "I know I have so many sins that I cannot be forgiven." Now, hear the blood once more, and I have done. "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin." That is the blood's testimony, and its testimony to thee. "There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood;" and behold the blood's witness is—"The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Come, poor sinner, cast thyself simply on that truth. Away with your good works and all your trustings! Lie simply flat on that sweet word of Christ. Trust his blood; and if thou canst put thy trust alone in Jesus, in his sprinkled blood, it shall speak in thy conscience better things than that of Abel.

I am afraid there are many that do not know what we mean by believing. Good Dr. Chalmers once visiting a poor old woman, told her to believe in Christ, and she said, "But that is just the thing I do not know what you mean by." So Dr. Chalmers said, "*Trust* Christ." Now, that is just the meaning of believing. Trust him with your soul; trust him with your sins; trust him with the future; trust him with the past; trust him with everything. Say,

"A guilty, weak, and worthless worm,  
On Christ's kind arms I fall  
Be thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus and my all."

May the Lord now give you his blessing; for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **The Wailing Of Risca**

Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. - Jeremiah 4:20

The sorrow of the weeping prophet was exceeding heavy when he uttered these words of bitter lamentation. A great and present burden from the Lord is weighing so heavily upon our hearts this morning, that we cannot spare so much as a moment for sympathy with the griefs of past ages. God has visited our land, and his strokes have been exceeding hard. We are constrained to take up a wailing, and cry aloud, "Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment." There is a spot in South Wales which has frequently yielded me a quiet and delightful retreat. Beautiful for situation, surrounded by lofty mountains, pierced by romantic valleys, the breathing of its air refreshes the body, and the sight of the eyes makes glad the heart. I have climbed its hills, I have seen the ever widening landscape, the mountains of Wales, the plains of England, and the seas sparkling afar. I have descended the hills and marked the mist creeping up the side of the hills and covering the woods in clouds. I have mingled with its godly men and women, and worshipped God in their assemblies. These lips have ministered the Word in that once happy valley. I have been fired with the glorious enthusiasm of the people when they have listened to the Word. Well doth my soul remember one night, which I shall never forget in time or in eternity, when, crowded together in the place of worship, hearty Welsh miners responded to every word of Christ's minister, with their "gogonians" encouraging me to preach the Gospel, and crying "Glory to God" while the message was proclaimed. I remember how they constrained me, and kept me well nigh to midnight, preaching three sermons, one after another, almost without rest, for they loved to listen to the gospel. God was present with us, and many a time has the baptismal pool been stirred since then by the fruit of that night's

labor. Nor shall I ever forget when standing in the open air beneath God's blue sky, I addressed a mighty gathering within a short distance of that spot; when the Spirit of God was poured upon us, and men and women were swayed to and fro under the heavenly message, as the corn is moved in waves by the summer winds. Great was our joy that day when the people met together in thousands, and with songs and praises separated to their homes, talking of what they had heard. But now our visitation of that neighborhood must ever be mingled with sorrow. How hath God been pleased to smite down strong men, and to take away the young men upon a sudden! "How suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment." Oh! vale of Risca, I take up a lamentation for thee: the Lord hath dealt sorely with thee. Behold, and see if there be sorrow in any valley like unto thy sorrow which is done unto thee. The angel of death has emptied out his quiver upon thee; the awful reaper hath gathered to himself full sheaves from thy beautiful valley.

You all know the story, it scarce needs that I should tell it to you. Last Saturday week some two hundred or more miners descended in health and strength to their usual work in the bowels of the earth. They had not been working long, their wives and their children had risen, and their little ones had gone to their schools, when suddenly there was heard a noise at the mouth of the pit; -- it was all explosion, -- all knew what it meant. Men's hearts failed them, for well they prophesied the horror which would soon reveal itself. They wait awhile, the foul gas must first be scattered, brave men with their lives in their hands descend into the pit, and when they are able to see with the dim miner's lamp, the light falls upon corpse after corpse. A few, a handful are brought up alive, and scarce alive, but yet, thank God, with enough of the vital spark remaining to be again kindled to a flame; but the great mass of those strong men have felt the grip of death. Some of them were brought up to the top with their faces burned and scarred, with their bodies disfigured by the fire; but many are discovered whose faces looked as if they sweetly slept, so that it was scarcely possible to believe that they really could be dead, so quietly had the spirit quitted the habitation of clay. Can you picture to yourselves the scene? The great fires lit around the pit flaming both night and day, the thick mist, the pouring rain drenching the whole of the valley. Do you see the women as they come clustering round the pit,

shrieking for their sons, and their husbands, and their fathers. Do you hear that shrill scream as yonder woman has just discovered the partner of her soul, and there do you mark another bending over the form of her two stalwart sons, now alas taken from her for ever? Do you mark the misery that sits upon the face of some who have not found their sons, or their fathers, or their husbands, or their brothers, and who know not where they are, and feel a thousand deaths themselves because they feel convinced that their precious ones have fallen, though their corpses cannot be found? The misery in that valley is past description, those who have witnessed it, fail to be able to picture it. As the cry of Egypt in the night when the destroying angel went through all the land and smote the firstborn; as the wail of Rachel when she could not be comforted for her children, because they were not; such has been the howling, the weeping, the lamentation of that fair but desolate valley.

My friends, this judgment has a voice to us, and the scarce buried bodies of those men which lie around us in vision, have each a sorrowful lesson. The cry of the widow, and of the childless mother, shall come up into our ears to-day, and, O Lord God of Sabbath, may it so arouse us that we may hear, and fear, and tremble, and turn unto thee -- that this dread calamity may be to us the means of our salvation, or if saved, the means of stirring us up more earnestly to seek the salvation of our fellow men.

There are three points upon which I shall try to address you this morning, though I feel inadequate to such a task. First, I shall say somewhat upon sudden bereavements; then I shall dwell awhile upon the fact of sudden death; and afterwards we will say but a little, for we know but little of the sudden exchange which sudden death shall bring both to saints and sinners.

I. Our first sorrowful theme is **SUDDEN BEREAVEMENTS**. Alas! alas! how soon may we be childless; how soon may we be widowed of the dearest objects of our affections! O Lord, thou hast shown to us this day, how soon thou canst blast our gourds and wither all the fruits of our vineyard. The dearest ones, the partners of our blood, how soon can death proclaim a divorce between us -- our children the offspring of our loins, how soon canst thou lay them beneath the sod. We have not a



single relative who may not become to us within the next moment a fountain of grief. All that are dear and precious to us are only here by God's good pleasure. What should we be to-day if it were not for those whom we love, and who love us? What were our house without its little prattlers? What were our habitation without the wife of our bosom? What were our daily business without our associates and friends to cheer us in our trials? Ah! this were a sad world indeed, if the ties of kindred, of affection, and of friendship all be snapped; and yet it is such a world that they must be sundered, and may be divided at any moment.

From the fact that sudden bereavements are possible -- not only to miners and to women whose husbands are upon the sea, but to us also -- I would that we would learn profitable lessons. And first let us learn to set loose by our dearest friends that we have on earth. Let us love them-love them we may, love them we should -- but let us always learn to love them as dying things. Oh, build not thy nest on any of these trees, for they are all marked for the axe. "Set not thine affections on things on earth," for the things of earth must leave thee, and then what wilt thou do when thy joy is emptied, and the golden bowl which held thy mirth shall be dashed to pieces? Love first and foremost Christ; and when thou lovest others, still love them not as though they were immortal. Love not clay as though it were undying -- love not dust as though it were eternal. So hold thy friend that thou shalt not wonder when he vanishes from thee, so view the partakers of thy life that thou wilt not be amazed when they glide into the land of spirits. See thou the disease of mortality on every cheek, and write not Eternal Upon the creature of an hour.

Take care that thou puttest all thy dear ones into God's hand. Thou hast put thy soul there, put them there. Thou canst trust him for temporals for thyself, trust thy jewels with him. Feel that they are not thine own, but that they are God's loans to thee; loans which may be recalled at any moment -- precious benisons of heaven, not entailed upon thee, but of which thou art but a tenant at will. Your possessions are never so safe as when you are willing to resign them, and you are never so rich as when you put all you have into the hand of God. You shall find it greatly mitigate the sorrow of bereavements, if before bereavement you shall have learned to surrender every day all the things that are dearest to you

into the keeping of your gracious God.

Further, then, you who are blessed with wife and children, and friends, take care that you bless God for them. Sing a song of praise to God who hath blessed you so much more than others. You are not a widow, but there are many that wear the weeds, and why is it not your lot? You are not bereaven of your spouse, but there is many a man whose heart is rent in twain by such a calamity, -- why is it not your portion too? You have not to follow to-morrow your little ones to their narrow graves -- early flowers that did but bud and never ripened, withering alas! too soon. Oh! by the sorrow which you would feel if they were taken away, I exhort you to bless God for them while you have them. We sorrow much when our gifts are taken away, but we fail to thank God that he spared them to us so long. Oh! be not ungrateful, lest thou provoke the Lord to smite very low the mercy which thou dost not value. Sing unto the Lord, sing unto his name. Give unto him the blessing which he deserves for his sparing favors which he has manifested towards you in your household.

And then permit me to remind you that if these sudden bereavements may come, and there may be a dark chamber in any house in a moment, and the coffin may be in any one of our habitations, let us so act to our kinsfolk and relatives as though we knew they were soon about to die. Young man, so treat thy hoary father as thou wouldst behave to him if thou knewest he would die to-morrow. When thou shalt follow him to the grave, amidst all thy tears for his loss, let there not be one tear of repentance because of thine ill behavior to him. And you godly fathers and mothers, to you I have a special message -- your children are committed to your care, they are growing up, and what if after they be grown up they should plunge into sin and die at last impenitent! Oh, let not the fierce regret sting you like an adder, -- "Oh that I had prayed for my children! Oh that I had taught them before they departed." I pray you so live, that when you stand over your child's dead body you may never hear a voice coming up from that clay, "Father, thy negligence was my destruction. Mother, thy want of prayer was the instrument of my damnation" But so live, that when you hear the funeral knell, for a neighbor even, you may be able to say, "Poor soul, whether he is gone to heaven or to hell, I know I am clear of his blood." And with double

earnestness be it so with your children. "Yes," says one "but I have thought of teaching my children more of Christ, and being more earnest in prayer for them bye-and-bye," but what if they should die tomorrow I "Yes," says the wife, "I have thought of speaking to my ungodly husband, and trying to induce him to attend the house of God with me, but I was afraid he would only laugh at me, so I put it off for a month or two." Ah! what if he dies before you have cleared your conscience of him? Oh my brothers and sisters in Christ, if sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies and if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay, and not madly to destroy themselves. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.

In the light, then, of sudden bereavements, let not another hour pass over your head, when you have reached home, before you have freed your conscience of the blood of your children's souls. Gather them together around you this afternoon and say to them, "My dear children, I have learned to day that you may die; I knew it before, but I have had it impressed upon my mind by a solemn incident. My dear children, I cannot help telling you, that as you must die, I am anxious that God's Holy Spirit should graciously lead you to repent of sin and seek a Savior." And then, when you have told them the way to salvation in simple terms, put your arms about their necks, and bid the little ones kneel down, and pray, "O God! upon their infant hearts, stamp thou, the image of thyself. As they are in the image of the earthy, so make them in the image of the heavenly that at the last I may be able to say, `Here am I, and the children thou hast given me.'"

II. The second head of my discourse this morning was to be, SUDDEN DEATH. AS WE VIEW IT MORE PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO OURSELVES.

The miners of Risca had no more idea of dying that Saturday morning than you or I have, nor did there seem much likelihood that they would. They had gone up and down the pit, some of them, many thousands of times in their lives. It is true that some had perished there, but then, how

very many had gone up and down and had not perished. Nay, they had grown so fearless of danger, that some of them even thrust themselves into it, and in defiance of every regulation for the preservation of human life, they were bold and careless, and would gratify a selfish indulgence when a spark might have caused the destruction of them all. We will not say that it was any negligence that caused this accident God forbid that we should lay anything to the charge of those who have now departed, and have to answer before their God -- but, at any rate, sure it is that men who have most to do with danger are generally the most callous, and those who are most exposed are usually utterly careless about the very danger which others see but which they will not see themselves. Any warning you or I might have given them would have been thought unnecessary, if not impertinent. "Why need I be so careful? I have done this fifty times before. Why may I not do it again?" But as in a moment, although there was no lightning flash, no earthquake, no opening of a pit to swallow them up, quick in a moment the gas explodes and they stand before the Eternal God. It was but the twinkling of an eye, even as though the last trump had sounded (and indeed it did sound as far as they were concerned), and down fell the lifeless corpse, and the spirit returned to God who made it. And you and I are in danger too. We are not in the pit in the midst of explosive air, but there are a thousand gates to death. How many there be who have fallen dead in the streets? How many sitting in their own homes? I stayed but a week or two ago with an excellent Christian man, who was then in the halest and most hearty health. I was startled indeed when I heard immediately after that he had come home, and sitting down in his chair had shut his eyes and died. And these things are usual, and in such a city as ours we cannot go down a street without hearing of some such visitation. Well, our turn must come. Perhaps we shall die falling asleep in our beds after long sickness, but probably we shall be suddenly called in such an hour as we think not to face the realities of eternity. Well, if it be so, if there be a thousand gates to death, if all means and any means may be sufficient to stop the current of our life, if really, after all, spiders' webs and bubbles are more substantial things than human life, if we are but a vapor, or a dying taper that soon expires in darkness, what then? Why, first, I say, let us all look upon ourselves as dying men, let us not reckon on tomorrow Oh! let us not procrastinate, for taken in Satan's great net of procrastination we may

wait, and wait, and wait, till time is gone and the great knell of eternity shall toll our dissolution. To-day is your only time. O mortal men, the present moment is the only moment you may call your own, and oh! how swift its wings! This hour is yours; yesterday is gone; to-morrow is with God, and may never come. "To-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts." Many have had their first impressions from thoughts of death, and hence it is that Satan never likes to let a man think of the grave. I know a family in which the governess, the daughter of a Christian minister, was told upon her entering her office, that she was never to mention the subject of death to the children. They were never to know even that children might die. I did not marvel when I knew the infidelity of the head of the household. What better atmosphere for an infidel to breathe in, than where the blast of death is never felt? Infidels ought to be immortal. They ought to live in a world where they can never die, for their infidelity will never be able to pass the stream of Jordan. There are infidels on earth but there are none in heaven, and there can be none in hell. They are all convinced -- convinced by terrible facts -- convinced that there is a God while they are crushed beneath his vengeance, and made to tremble at his eternal power. But I pray you, sirs, be not such fools as to live as though your bones were iron and your ribs were brass. Let us not be such madmen as to run as though there were no bounds to our race: let us not play away our precious days as though days were common as sands on a sea shore. That hour-glass yonder contains all the sands of your life. Do you see them running? How swiftly do they empty out! With some of you, the most of the sands are in the bottom bulb of the glass and there are only a few to go trickling through the narrow passway of its days. Ah! and that glass shall never be turned again, it shall never run a second time for you. Let it once run out and you will die. Oh! live as though you meant to die. Live as though you knew you might die to-morrow. Think as though you might die now, and act this very hour as though I could utter the mandate of death, and summon you to pass through the portals of the tomb.

And then take care, I pray you, that you who do know Christ not only live as though you meant to die, but live while you live. Oh what a work we have to do, and how short the time to do it in! Millions of men unconverted yet, and nothing but our feeble voice with which to preach

the Word! My soul, shalt thou ever condemn thyself in thy dying moments for having preached too often or too earnestly? No, never. Thou mayest rebuke thy sloth, but thou canst never bemoan thy excessive industry. Minister of Christ! in thy dying hour it will never be a theme of reproach to you that you preached ten times in the week, that you stood up every day to preach Christ, and that you so preached that you spent yourself, and wasted your body with weakness. No, it will be our dull sermons that will haunt us on our dying beds, our tearless preaching, our long studyings, when we might have preached better had we come away and preached without them; our huntings after popularity, by gathering together fine words, instead of coming right up, and saying to the people, "Men and women, you are dying, escape for your life and fly to Christ;" preaching to them in red-hot simple words of the wrath to come and of the love of Christ. Oh! there are some of you members of our churches, who are living, but what are you living for? Surely you are not living to get money -- that is the worldling's object. Are you living merely to please yourselves? Why that is but the beast's delight. Oh! how few there are of the members of our churches who really live for God with all their might. Do we give to God as much as we give to our own pleasures? Do we give Christ's service as much time as we give to many of our trifling amusements? Why, we have professional men of education, men of excellent training and ability, who when they once get into a church, feel that they could be very active anywhere else, but as Christians they have nothing to do. They can be energetic in parish vestries or in the rifle corps, but in the church they give their name, but their energies are dormant. Ah! my dear hearers, you who love the Savior, when we shall come before Christ in heaven, if there can be a regret, it will be that we did not do more for Christ while we were here. I think as we fall down before his feet and worship him, if we could know a sorrow, it would be because we did not bring him in more jewels for his crown -- did not seek more to feed the hungry, or to clothe the naked -- did not give more to his cause, and did not labor more that the lost sheep of the house of Israel might be restored. Live while you live; while it is called to-day, work, for the night cometh wherein no man can work.

And let us learn never to do anything which we would not wish to be found doing if we were to die. We are sometimes asked by young people

whether they may go to the theater, whether they may dance, or whether they may do this or that. You may do anything which you would not be ashamed to be doing when Christ shall come. You may do anything which you would not blush to be found doing if the hand of death should smite you; but if you would dread to die in any spot, go not there; if you would not wish to enter the presence of your God with such-and-such a word upon your lip, utter not that word; or if there would be a thought that would be uncongenial to the judgment-day, seek not to think that thought. So act that you may feel you can take your shroud with you wherever you go. Happy is he that dies in his pulpit. Blessed is the man that dies in his daily business, for he is found with his loins girt about him serving his Master; but, oh, unhappy must he be to whom death comes as an intruder, and finds him engaged in that which he will blush to have ever touched, when God shall appear in judgment. Power supreme; thou everlasting King; permit not death to intrude upon an ill-spent hour, but find me rapt in meditation high; hymning my great Creator; proclaiming the love of Jesus, or lifting up my heart in prayer for myself and my fellow-sinners. Let me but serve my God, and then, Death, I will not say to thee when thou mayest come -- come when thou wilt; but if I might choose, come to me while I am yearning after souls; come to me when the cry of inviting love is on my lip, and when I am weeping over the souls of men Come to me, then, that men may say,

"He did his body with his charge lay down,  
He ceased at once to work and live."

But I may talk thus about sudden death and the likelihood of it, but ah! sirs, I cannot stir your hearts for I cannot stir my own as I would. The fact that so many die each day has very little force in it for us, because it is so trite an event, we have heard of it so many times. We look down the catalogue of deaths and take the average, and we say, "Fifty below the average, or a hundred above the average," but our dying never comes home to us. All men will persist in thinking all men mortal but themselves. If there were a great Hydra in the city of London, which every day ate ten of the inhabitants of London alive, we should be dreadfully miserable, especially if we never knew when it would be our turn to be eaten too. If we were certain that it would eat all in London by-and-bye,

but would only eat ten in a week, we should all tremble as we passed by the huge monster's den, and say, "When will it be my time?" and that would cast a cloud over the whole metropolis, blacker than its usual fog. But here is a monster, Death, which devours its hundreds at its meal; and with its iron tongue the funeral knell keeps crying out for more; its greedy and insatiable man never being filled; its teeth never being blunted; its ravenous hunger never being stayed. And here we are, and though it will be our turn by-and- bye to be devoured of this great monster, yet how little do we think about it! One reason I think is, because we so seldom visit the dying. I stood once by the side of a poor boy whom I had taught as a Sunday-school teacher; he had received very little good training at home, and though he was but a had of seventeen, he became a drunkard and drank himself to death at one debauch. I saw him, and talked to him, and tried to point him to the Savior, and heard at last the death-rattle in his throat, and as I went down stairs I thought everybody a fool for doing anything except preparing to die. I began to look upon the men who drove the carts in the street, the men who were busy at their shops, and those who were selling their wares, as being all foolish for doing anything except their eternal business and myself most of all foolish for not pointing dying sinners to a living Christ, and inviting them to trust in his precious blood. And yet in an hour or so all things took their usual shape, and I began to think that I was not dying after all, and I could go away and be I fear as heartless as before. I could begin to think that men were after all wise in thinking of this world, and not the next; I mean not that I really thought so, but I fear I acted as if I thought so; the impression of the dying-bed was so soon obliterated. If you could see all die who die, perhaps the impression would be different. I would liken the sons of men to a company of South Sea Islanders, whose canoe being disabled, floated upon a raft, and they were attacked by sharks; they disappeared one by one, till but three or four were left. Can you conceive the despair which would settle upon the countenance of these few? If they knew a God, do you not think they would then indeed call on him? And in what respect, except that death was more apparent to them were they different from us? Man after man is being taken away from us by the devouring monster. Friends and kinsfolk have been snatched into the deep, and some of us remain upon the edge of the raft. Yon gray-haired man may be the next that is carried away. The hosts of God are crossing the flood;



some have already passed it and are singing the eternal song, and

"We are to the margin come,  
And soon expect to die."

God help us so to live in the expectation of death, that Christ may be glorified in us whether we sleep or wake, and that we may be able to say, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain."

III. I shall detain you but a few minutes longer, while I dwell upon the third theme, which is, **THAT SUDDEN EXCHANGE WHICH A SUDDEN DEATH WILL CAUSE.**

You see yonder Christian man, he is full of a thousand fears, he is afraid even of his interest in Christ, he is troubled spiritually, and vexed with temporal cares. You see him cast down and exceeding troubled, his faith but very weak; he steps out side yon door, and there meets him a messenger from God who smites him to the heart, and he is dead. Can you conceive the change? Death has cured him of his fears, his tears are wiped away once for all from his eyes; and, to his surprise, he stands where he feared he should never be, in the midst of the redeemed of God, in the general assembly and church of the first-born. If he should think of such things, would he not upbraid himself for thinking so much of his trials and of his troubles, and for looking into a future which he was never to see? See yonder man, he can scarcely walk, he has a hundred pains in his body, he says he is more tried and pained than any man. Death puts his skeleton hand upon him, and he dies. How marvellous the change! No aches now, no casting down of spirit, he then is supremely blest, the decrepid has become perfect, the weak has become strong, the trembling one has become a David, and David has become as the angel of the Lord. Hark to the song which pours from the lips of him who just now groaned; look at the celestial smile which lights the features of the man just now racked with pain and tormented with anguish! Was ever change so surprising, so marvellous? When I think of it, I could almost long for it to come across myself this morning; to go from the thousand eyes of you that look upon me, to look into the eyes of Christ, and to go from your songs, to the songs of spirits before the throne, to leave the sabbath work

on earth for an eternal sabbath of rest: to go from unbelieving hearts, from Christians who need to be cheered and sinners that need to be convinced, to be with those who need no preaching, but who in one eternal song, sing "Hallelujah to God and the Lamb." I can imagine that when a man dies thus suddenly, one of the first emotions he experiences in the next world will be surprise. I can conceive that the spirit knows not where it is. It is like a man waking up from a dream. He looks about him. Oh, that glory! how resplendent yon throne! He listens to harps of gold, and he can scarce believe it true. "I, the chief of sinners, and yet in heaven? I, a doubting one and yet in paradise? "And then when he is conscious that he is really in heaven, oh! what overwhelming joy; how is the spirit flooded with delight, covered over with it scarcely able to enjoy it because it seems to be all but crushed beneath the eternal weight of glory. And next, when the spirit has power to recover itself, and open in eyes from the blindness caused by this dazzling light, and to think -- when its thoughts have recovered themselves from the sudden effect of a tremendous flood of bliss, -- the next emotion will be gratitude. See how that believer, five minutes ago a mourner, now takes his crown from off his head, and with transporting joy and gratitude bows before his Savior's throne. Hear how he sings; was ever song like that, the first song he ever sang that had the fullness of Paradise and perfection in it -- "Unto him that loved me and washed me from my sins in his blood, unto him be glory." And how he repeats it, and repeats it again, and looks round to cherubim and seraphim, and prays them to assist him in his song, till all the harps of heaven retaught the melody of gratitude, re-tuned by the one faithful heart, send up another hallelujah, and yet another, and another; while the floods of harmony surround the eternal throne of God.

But what must be the change to the unconverted man? His joys are over for ever. His death is the death of his happiness -- his funeral is the funeral of his mirth. He has just risen from his cups; he has another cup to drain, which is full of bitterness. He has just listened to the sound of the harp and the viol, and the music of them that make merry, an eternal dirge greets his ears, mixed with the doleful chorus of the shrieks of damned souls. What horror and surprise shall seize upon him! "Good God," he says, "I thought it was not so, but lo, it is. What the minister said to me is true; the things I would not believe are at last ready so." When

the poor soul shall find itself in the hands of angry fiends, and lifts up his eyes in hell, being in torment so hot, so feverish, so thirsty, that it shall seem in that first moment as though it had been athirst for a million years, what will be his surprise! "And am I," he will say, "really here? I was in the streets of London but a minute ago; I was singing a song but an instant before, and here am I in hell! What! so soon damned? Is the sentence of God like a lightning-flash? Does it so instantaneously give the spirit and destroy its joys? Am I really here?" And when the soul has convinced itself that it is actually in hell, can you imagine next the overwhelming horror that will roll over it. It, too, will be stunned with a mighty flood, not with a flood of glory but with a flood of anger, of wrath, of divine justice. Oh! how the spirit is tormented now -- tormented beyond thought. And then at last, when the wave recedes a moment, and there is a pause, what black despair shall then seize upon the spirit! Have you ever seen men die without a hope? I read but yesterday a case of a young woman who had procrastinated many times, and at last she was told by the physician that within nine hours he really believed she would be a corpse. Then, when death really became a matter of fact to her, she rose up in the bed upon which she had been laid by the sudden stroke of God, and she prayed -- prayed till she fell back fainting, and her lips were livid and her cheek was pale, while she cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Friends talked to her, consoled and comforted her, and bade her trust in Christ; but she said, "It is of no use for you to comfort me; no, it is too late. I made a fatal resolve some months ago that I would again enjoy the world, and that resolve has destroyed my soul." And then she rose up in bed again, with eyes starting from their sockets, and prayed again till she was breathless, and groaned and cried, and fell down again in a faint, needing to be restored once more. And so she did, till with a ghastly look -- an awful look of horror -- as though she felt the anguish of another world, she expired.

Now if such is the remorse of a spirit before it feels the wrath of God -- if the first drops are sufficient thus to destroy all hope and beat in pieces all our boastings, what will the eternal hail be -- what will the everlasting sleet of divine wrath be when once it is poured out? Sodom and Gomorrah! Why all their fiery hail from heaven shall be nothing compared with the eternal fire that must fall upon the sinner. Do you

think I love to speak on such a theme as this? My soul trembles while she thinks of it. No, I would sooner preach of other things by far, but it is needful that men may be awakened. Oh! I implore you, men and brethren, ye that know not God, and are still condemned, because you believe not in Christ, I pray you think of these things. Oh that I had a Baxter's heart, that I could weep over sinners as he did; but my soul feels as true an anguish for your souls as ever Baxter felt. Oh that you would be saved! My eyes ache; my brow is full of fire now, because I cannot preach as I wanted to preach to you. Oh that God would take up the work and send that truth right home. I know I shall soon die and you too, and I shall face each of you, and your eyes shall stare on me for ever and ever, if you be lost through my unfaithfulness. And shall it be -- shall it be? Oh that we had a hope that all of us might see the face of God and live! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

Spirit of God, convince of sin, and bring the heart to Christ, and may we all without exception see thy face in joy and glory, and praise thee, world without end. Amen.

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## **The War Of Truth**

And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men and go out, fight with Amalek; to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. - Exodus 17:9

The children of Israel were led out of Egypt with a strong hand and an out-stretched arm. They were conducted into the vast howling wilderness, where there were few, if any, permanent abodes of men. For some time they pursued their march in solitude, discovering wells and other traces of a nomadic population, but not meeting with any to disturb their loneliness. But it appears that then, as now, there were wandering tribes who, like the Bedouin Arabs, wandered to and fro through that very

country which the people of Israel were now treading with their feet. These people, excited by the hope of spoil, fell suddenly upon the rear of the children of Israel, smote the hindmost of them in a most cowardly manner, took their spoil, and then swiftly decamped. Gathering strength and courage from this successful foray, they then dared to attack the whole host of Israel, which at that time must have amounted to two or three millions of souls, who had been brought out of Egypt and fed by miracle in the wilderness. This time Israel was not to be surprised; for Moses had said unto Joshua—"Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand;" pleading with God, in order that every blow struck with the sword might be made doubly powerful by the mighty assistance of God. We are told that a great victory was achieved; the Amalekites were put to the rout, and because of their unprovoked attack upon the children of Israel, they were condemned to extermination; for we find it written thus:—"Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi. For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Now, beloved, this scene of warfare is not recorded in Scripture as in interesting circumstance to amuse the lover of history, but it is written for our edification; for we remember the text which says—"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our profit." There is some profit to be derived from this—and we believe a peculiar profit, too, since God was pleased to make this the first writing commanded by Divine authority as a record for generations to come. We think that the journeys of the children of Israel furnish us with many emblems of the journey of God's church through the world; and we believe, that this fight with Amalek is a metaphor and an emblem of that constant and daily fight which all God's people must carry on with sins without and sins within. This morning I shall more particularly confine myself to *sin without*; I shall speak of the great battle which at the present moment is being waged for God and for his truth, against the enemies of the Cross of Christ. I shall endeavour, first, to make a few remarks upon *the war itself*, then to review *the authorised method of warfare*, which is twofold

—hard blows and hard prayers, and then I shall finish by *stirring up God's church* to great and earnest diligence in the warfare for God and for his truth.

I. First, then, we shall make some remarks upon THE GREAT WARFARE which we think is typified by the content between the children of Israel and Amalek.

First of all, note that this crusade, this sacred, holy war of which I speak, is *not with men*, but with Satan and with error. "We wrestle not with flesh and blood." Christian men are not at war with any man that walks the earth. We are at war with infidelity, but the persons of infidels we love and pray for; we are at warfare with any heresy, but we have no enmity against heretics; we are opposed to, and cry war to the knife with everything that opposes God and his truth: but towards every man we would still endeavour to carry out the holy maxim, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you." The Christian soldier hath no gun and no sword, for he fighteth not with men. It is with "spiritual wickedness in high places" that he fights, and with other principalities and powers than with those that sit on thrones and hold sceptres in their hands. I have marked, however, that some Christian men—and it is a feeling to which all of us are prone—are very apt to make Christ's war a war of flesh and blood, instead of a war with wrong and spiritual wickedness. Have you never noticed in religious controversies how men will fall foul of each other, and make personal remarks and abuse each other? What is that but forgetting what Christ's war is? We are not fighting against men; we are fighting *for* men rather than *against* them. We are fighting for God and his truth against error and against sin; but not against men. Woe, woe, to the Christian who forgets this sacred canon of warfare. Touch not the persons of men, but smite their sin with a stout heart and with strong arm. Slay both the little ones and the great; let nothing be spared that is against God and his truth; but we have no war with the persons of poor mistaken men. Rome we hate even as we abhor hell, yet for her votaries we ever pray. Idolatry and infidelity we fiercely denounce, but the men who debase themselves by either of them are the objects not of wrath, but pity. We fight not against the men, but against the things which we consider in God's sight to be wrong. Let us always make that distinction,

otherwise the conflict with Christ's church will be degraded into a mere battle of brute force and garments rolled in blood; and so the world will again be an Aceldama—a field of blood. It is this mistake which has nailed martyrs to the stake and cast confessors into prison, because their opponents could not distinguish between the imaginary error and the man. While they spoke stoutly against the seeming error; in their ignorant bigotry they felt that they must also persecute the man, which they need not and ought not to have done. I will never be afraid to speak out my mind with all the Saxon words I can get together, and I am not afraid of saying hard things against the devil, and against what the devil teaches; but with every man in the wide world I am friends, nor is there one living with whom I am at enmity for a moment any more than with the babe that has just been brought into the world. We must hate error, we must abhor falsehood; but we must not hate men, for God's warfare is against sin. May God help us always to make that distinction.

But now let us observe that the warfare which the Christian carries on, may be said for his encouragement, to be a most *righteous* warfare. In every other conflict in which men have engaged, there have been two opinions, some have said the war was right, and some have said it was wrong; but in regard to the sacred war in which all believers have been engaged, there has been only one opinion among right-minded men. When the ancient priest stirred up the Crusaders to the fight, he made them shout *Deus vult—God wills it*. And we may far more truly say the same. A war against falsehood, a war against sin, is God's war; it is a war which commends itself to every Christian man, seeing he is quite certain that he has the seal of God's approval when he goes to wage war against God's enemies. Beloved, we have no doubt whatever, when we lift up our voices like a trumpet against sin, that our warfare is justified by the eternal laws of justice. Would to God that every war had so just and true an excuse as the war which God wages with Amalek—with sin in the world!

Let us recollect again, that it is a war of the *greatest importance*. In other wars it is sometimes said—"Britons! fight for your hearths and your homes, for your wives and for your children—fight and repel the foe!" But in this war it is not merely for our hearths and for our homes, for our

wives and for our children, but it is for something more than this. It is not against them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but it is a fight for souls, for eternity, against those who would plunge man into eternal perdition, a fight for God, for the deliverance of men's souls from wrath to come. It is a war which ought, indeed, to be commenced, to be followed up, and carried out in spirit, by the whole army of God's elect, seeing that no war can be more important. The instrumental salvation of men is above all things the highest object to which we can attain, and the routing of the foes of truth is a victory beyond all things to be desired. Religion must be the foundation of every blessing which society can hope to enjoy. Little as men think it, religion has much to do with our liberty, our happiness, and our comfort. England would not have been what it now is, if it had not been for her religion; and in that hour when she shall forsake her God, her glory shall have fallen, and "Ichabod" shall be written upon her banners.

In that day when the Gospel shall be silenced, when our ministers shall cease to preach; when the Bible shall be chained; in that day—God forbid it should ever come to pass—in that day, England may write herself among the dead, for she hath fallen, since God hath forsaken her, seeing she hath cast off her allegiance to him. Christian men, in this fight for right, ye are fighting for your nation, for your liberties, your happiness and your peace; for unless religion, the religion of heaven be maintained, these will most certainly be destroyed.

Let us reflect, in the next place, that we are fighting with insidious and very *powerful foes*, in this great warfare for God and Christ. Let me again make the remark, that whilst speaking of certain characters, I am not speaking of the men, but of their errors. At this time we have peculiar difficulties in the great content for truth—peculiar, because very few appreciate them. We have enemies of all classes, and all of them far wider awake than we are. The infidel hath his eyes wide open, he is spreading his doctrines everywhere; and while we think—good easy men—that full surely our greatness is ripening, that frost is nipping many of our fair shoots, and unless we awaken, God help us! In almost every place infidelity seems to have a great away; not the bold bragging infidelity of Tom Payne, but a more polite and moderate infidelity; not that which



slayeth religion with a bludgeon, but that which seeks to poison it with a small dose of poison, and goeth its way, and saith still it hath not hurt public morals. Everywhere this is increasing; I fear that the great mass of our population are imbued with an infidel spirit. Then we have more to fear than some of us suppose from Rome; not from Rome openly; from that we have little to fear; God hath given to the people of England such a bold Protestant spirit, that any open innovation from the Pope of Rome would be instantly repelled; but I mean the Romanism that has crept into the Church of England under the name of Puseyism. Everywhere that has increased; they are beginning to light candles on the altar, which is only a prelude to those greater lights with which they would consume our Protestantism. Oh! that there were men who would unmask them! We have much to fear from them; but I would not care one whit for that if it were not for something which is even worse. We have to deal with a spirit, I know not how to denominate it, unless I call it a spirit of moderatism in the pulpits of protestant churches. Men have begun to rub off the rough edges of truth, to give up the doctrines of Luther and Zwingle, and Calvin, and to endeavour to accommodate them to polished tastes. You might go into a Roman Catholic chapel now-a-days, and hear as good a sermon from a Popish priest as you hear in many cases from a Protestant minister, because he does not touch disputed points, or bring out the angular parts of our Protestant religion. Mark, too, in the great majority of our books what a dislike there is to sound doctrine! the writers seem to fancy that truth is of no more value than error; that as for the doctrines we preach, it cannot matter what they are; still holding that

"He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

There is creeping into the pulpits of Baptists and every other denomination, a lethargy and coldness, and with that a sort of nullification of all truth. While they for the most part preach but little notable error, yet *the truth* itself is uttered in so minute a form that no one detects it, and in so ambiguous a style, that no one is struck with it. So far as man can do it, God's arrows are blunted, and the edge of his sword is turned in the day of battle. Men do not hear the truth as they used to. The velvet mouth is succeeding to the velvet cushion, and the organ is the only thing in the building which giveth forth a *certain* sound.

From all such things, "good Lord deliver us!" May heaven put an end to all this moderatism; we want out-and-out truth in these perilous days; we want a man just now to speak as God tells him, and care for nobody. Oh! if we had some of the old Scotch preachers! Those Scotch preachers made kings tremble; they were no men's servants; they were very lords, wherever they went, because each of them said, "God has given me a message; my brow is like adamant against men; I will speak what God bids me." Like Micah, they said, "As the Lord my God liveth, whatsoever my God saith unto me, that will I speak." Heroes of the truth, soldiers of Christ awake! Even now there are enemies. Think not that the fight is over; the great warfare of truth waxes more hot and fierce than ever. Oh! soldiers of Christ! take your swords from your scabbards! stand up for God and for his truth again, lest a free grace gospel should be forgotten.

Let me just say, once more, concerning this war, that it is one that is to be of *perpetual duration*. Let us recollect, my beloved, that this war between right and wrong must be continued, and never must cease until truth has the victory. If you suppose that our forefathers did enough for truth and for God, and that you may be idle, you have made a great mistake. Until that day when the might with the right, and the right with the might shall be, we must never sheathe our swords; until that happy hour when Christ shall reign, when he shall be Master of all lands, when "swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks," and men shall not learn war any more; until that day the conflict is to be kept up. Let no man think we are in such a position that we have no need for watchfulness: terrible as the war has been before, it is as terrible now, though in another manner. We have not now to resist unto blood, striving against sin, but we have need of as stern a power of resistance as ever was possessed by martyrs and confessors in days gone by. Brethren, we must awake; the army must be aroused, the soldiers of the Lord must be quickened to a consciousness of their position. Now, now, we blow the trumpet; rush to the fight ye slumbering soldiers! Up, up, up! Let your banners wave, and let your swords be taken from your scabbards; it is a day of fight—a day of war and contention.

I cannot, however, conclude this section of my discourse without remarking that it is not merely error in religion with which we have to

fight, but error in practice. Oh! beloved this world is a wicked world still, and London is an abominable city still. We have a fine gloss everywhere—a fair exterior, but, alas, within the hidden parts sin is still dominant. This is the great city of pretence, the gaudy house of sham, the foul home of pollution. Our streets are lined with fair houses; but what have we behind them? what have we there, in the very vitals of our city? This city is a colossal culprit, it is a behemoth sinner, and everywhere there are those who live in the vilest of vices, and yet go unchecked and unreprieved, for it is unfashionable to tell men of their sins and there are few who have the spirit to speak out plainly of men's sins. When we consider the mass of female profligacy which numbers its votaries by tens of thousands, are we not driven to conclude that the same sin must be rife enough with *men*. And ah! that there should be need to utter it. Are not the men who ensnare and seduce the poor unfortunates, allowed to enter society as respectable and moral. What is this but abominable hypocrisy. We are greater sinners in London than many suppose. Everything is painted over. But think not that you can deceive God in this way? Sin is stalking through the land at a horrid pace; iniquity still runs down our streets, covered up, it is true, not open sin, but still offensive alike to God and to good men. Oh! my brethren, the world is not good yet; it is filmed over, but all the while the loathsome disease lurks within. Up, again, I say, soldiers of Christ; the war against sin is not finished, it is scarce begun.

II. But now, secondly, we have to notice, briefly the APPOINTED MEANS OF WARFARE. When Amalek came out against Israel, God appointed two means of combating them. If he had chosen, he could have sent a wind and driven them away, or have cut off their hosts by the blast of the pestilence; but it did not so please him; for he would put honor upon human effort, and, therefore, he said to Joshua, "Choose out your men, and go fight with Amalek." It is true Joshua might, by God's strength, have overcome the foe; but says God, "While I honor human effort, I will still make men see that God doeth all. Moses! go up to yonder hill; stand there in prayer, hold up thy rod, and whilst the soldiers of Joshua rush into the fight, Moses shall plead, and you shall be unitedly successful. Your prayer, O Moses, without the sword of Joshua, shall not prosper; and the sword of Joshua, without the rod of Moses, shall not be effectual." The two ways of fighting sin are these—hard blows and hard

prayers.

First, the church must employ hard blows and hard fighting against sin. It is of no use for you to shut yourselves up in your houses, and pray to God to stay sin, unless you go and do something yourselves. If you pray away till you are dumb, you shall never have a blessing unless you exert yourselves. Let the farmer pray for a harvest; will he ever have it, unless he ploughs the field and then sows his seed? Let the warrior pray for victory, and let his soldiers stand peacefully to be shot at, will he gain a triumph? No, there must be an active exercise of the power given by God, or else prayer without it will be of no avail. Let us, then, brethren and sisters, each in our spheres, deal hard blows at the enemy. This is a fight in which all can do something who are the Lord's people. Those who halt upon their crutches can use them for weapons of war, as well as the mighty men can wield their swords! We have each an allotted work to do, if we are the Lord's elect; let us take care that we do it. You are a tract distributor; go on with your work, do it earnestly. You are a Sunday-school teacher; go on, do not stay in that blessed work, do it as unto God, and not as unto man. You are a preacher; preach as God giveth you ability, remembering that he requireth of no man more than he hath given to him; therefore, be not discouraged if you have little success, still go on. Are you like Zebulon, one that can handle the pen? Handle it wisely; and you shall smite through the loins of kings therewith. And if you can do but little, at least furnish the shot for others, that so you may help them in their works of faith and their labours of love. But let us all do something for Christ. I will never believe there is a Christian in the world who cannot do something. There is not a spider hanging on the king's wall but hath its errand; there is not a nettle that groweth in the corner of the churchyard but hath its purpose; there is not a single insect fluttering in the breeze but accomplisheth some divine decree; and I will never have it that God created any man, especially any Christian man, to be a blank, and to be a nothing. He made you for an end. Find out what that end is; find out your niche, and fill it. If it be ever so little, if it is only to be a hewer of wood and drawer of water, do something in this great battle for God and truth. Joshua must go out and take his men. I think I see him; he appears to have been a man of war from his youth; but what a motley host he had to choose from! Why, they were a set of slaves; they

had never seen a sword in their lives, except in the hands of the Egyptians; they were poor, miserable creatures; they were cowards when they saw their old enemies at the Red Sea, and now their weapons were those which were washed up from the Red Sea, and their regimentals were of all descriptions upon earth. Joshua, however, chooses out the strongest of them, and says, "Come with me." It was indeed, as one called it, a "ragged regiment" with which he went to fight: and yet the ragged regiment was the victorious one. Joshua won the day against the Amalekites, who had been trained to a predatory life. So, ye children of God, ye may know little of the tactics of warfare, your enemies may overthrow you in arguments, and annihilate you in logic; but, if you are God's children, they that are with you are more than a match for your foes; you shall live to see them yet dead upon the field; only fight on with faith in God, and you shall be victorious.

But this is not all. Joshua might have fought; but he would have been routed, had it not been for Moses on the brow of the hill. They were both necessary. Do you not see the battle! It is not on a very large scale, but it is still worthy of your earnest attention. There is Amalek, rushing to the war with discordant cries; see, Israel is repulsing them, and Amalek flees! But what is it that I notice? Now Israel turns back and flees; now again they rally and Amalek is put to the flight! Lo! they are cut to pieces by the sword of Joshua, and mighty Amalek wavers like the corn beneath the mower's scythe. The crowd of Amalek are dropping. But again! again the battle wavers; Joshua flees; but once again he rallies his troops! And have you not observed the wonderful phenomenon? There, on the brow of the hill stands Moses. You will notice that when his hands were outstretched, Israel routed Amalek; but the moment when from weariness he dropped his hands, then Amalek had a temporary victory; and when again he held up his rod, Israel routed the foe. Each time the hand of prayer fell down, victory wavered between the combatants. Do you see the venerable intercessor? Moses, being an aged man, becomes weary from standing so many hours, they seat him upon a stone; still, arms are not iron, and the hands are drooping; but see! his eyes are flashing fire, and his hands are lifted up to heaven; tears are beginning to flow down his cheeks and his ejaculatory prayers are going to heaven like so many darts, which shall find their target in the ear of God. Do you see him, He is the hinge of

victory; as he falters Amalek prevails; and as he is strong the chosen people gain the victory. See! Aaron is holding his hand for a moment; and anon Hur is supporting it, and the good old man changes his hands, for the battle lasts all day long, and in the hot sun it is wearisome work to hold them in one position. But see how manfully he holds them; stiff, as though they were cut out of stone; weary and worn, still his hands are out-stretched, as if he were a statue, and his friends assist his zeal. And see now, the ranks of Amalek are broken like thin clouds before a Biscay gale. They fly! they fly! Still his hands are motionless; still they fight; still the Amalekites fly; still Joshua prevails, until at last all the foes lie dead on the plain, and Joshua returns with the shout of joy.

Now this teaches that there must be prayer as well as effort. Minister! preach on; you shall have no success unless you pray. If you do not know how to wrestle with God on your knees, you will find it hard work to wrestle with men on your feet in the pulpit. You may make efforts to do so, but you shall not be successful, unless you back up your efforts with prayer. You are not so likely to fail in your efforts as in your prayers. We never read that Joshua's hand was weary with wielding the sword, but Moses' hand was weary with holding the rod. The more spiritual the duty, the more apt we are to tire of it. We could stand and preach all day, but we could not be in our closets all day one-half so easily. To spend a night with God in prayer would be far more difficult than to spend a night with men in preaching. Oh! take care, take care, church of Christ, that thou dost not cease thy prayers! Above all, I speak to my own much loved church, my own people. You have loved me, and I have loved you, and God has given us great success, and blessed us. But, mark, I trace all of it to your prayers. You have assembled together in multitudes, perfectly unparalleled, to pray for me on each Monday evening, and I know I am mentioned at your family altars, as one who is very dear to your hearts; but I am afraid lest you should cease your prayers. Let the world say, "Down with him;" I will stand against them all, if you will pray for me; but if you cease your prayers it is all up with me and all over with you. Your prayers make us mighty; the praying legion is the thundering legion. If I might compare myself to a military commander, I should say, that when I see my men rise to pray in such large numbers, I feel like Napoleon, when he sent out his old guards. The battle had wavered;

"There," said he, "they go; now the victory is sure." Or, like our own guards, the black caps, who, wherever they went carried victory with them. The praying legion is a thundering legion everywhere. Men can stand against anything but prayer. We would pray the very gates of hell off their hinges, if we could pray as some men have done. Oh! that we had might in prayer. Do not, I beseech you, I entreat you, do not cease to pray; cease what you please, but do not give up that; down on your knees, wrestle with God, and verily the Lord our God will bless us, "and all the ends of the earth shall fear him."

III. And now I am to close up with just a few remarks, in the third place, TO STIR YOU UP TO THE WARFARE. Remember, O children of God, that there are many things that should make you valiant for God and for his truth. The first thing I will bring to your remembrance is the fact, that this warfare in which you are engaged is an *hereditary* warfare; it is not one which *you* began, but it is one which has been handed to you from the moment when the blood of Abel cried aloud for vengeance. Each martyr that has died has passed the blood-red flag to the next, and he in his turn has passed it on to another. Every confessor who has been nailed to the stake to burn, has lit his candle, and handed it to another, and said, "Take care of that!" And now here is the old "sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Remember what hands have handled the hilt; remember what arms have wielded it; remember how often it has "pierced to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow." Will you disgrace it. *Will you disgrace it?* There is the great banner: it has waved in many a breeze; long ere the flag of this our land was made, this flag of Christ was born aloft, Will you stain it? *Will you stain it?* Will you not hand it to your children, still unsullied, and say, "Go on, go on; we leave you the heritage of war; go on, go on, and conquer. What your fathers did, do you again; still keep up the war, till time shall end." I love my Bible because it is a Bible baptized with blood; I love it all the better, because it has the blood of Tyndal on it; I love it, because it has on it the blood of John Bradford, and Rowland Taylor, and Hooper; I love it, because it is stained with blood. I sometimes think I like the baptismal pool because that has been stained with blood, and is now upon the continent, forbidden by law. I love it, because I see in it the blood of men and of women who had been martyred, because they loved the truth. Will you not, then, stand by the

banner of truth, after such an illustrious pedigree of warriors have held it in their hands?

I would that I could have addressed you as I desired, but my voice fails me; I cannot, therefore, urge you, except by one consideration, and that is, the prospect of ultimate victory. It is certain that ere long we shall triumph; therefore let us not give up the fight. I have been much gratified of late to hear that there is a revival in the ranks of Christ's church; here and there I hear of great evangelists who are starting up. Some have said to me, when they have mentioned their names, "What say you to them?" My answer is, "Would God that all the Lord's servants were prophets!" Oh! that God might send thousands and thousands of men, who would gather multitudes together to hear his word. I would that the day were come, when every church and every chapel in England were as full of souls as this, and as large as this. I do think the churches are reviving; but if they are not, still victory is certain—God will still get the victory; Jehovah will triumph. Satan may dream he will, but he will not. Therefore, men and brethren, on to victory; let the crown that is before you, nerve you to the fight; to victory; to victory; and on, on, on! for God is with you. Remember the great intercessor; Christ is on the hill, and whilst you are in the valley he pleads, and must prevail, therefore, go on, and conquer, for Christ's sake!

I can no longer address you, but must finish up by repeating the words with which I always like to conclude my sermons: "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned!" Oh! that ye would believe in Christ; oh! that God would give you faith to put your trust in him; this is the only way of salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved."

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**War! War! War!**



Fight the Lord's battles. - 1 Samuel 18:17

We shall not take these words in their literal application, as coming from the lips of Saul, when he gave David his elder daughter, Merab, to wife; but shall accommodate the passage, and use it as an exhortation given to the church of Christ, and to every Soldier of Jesus: "Fight the Lord's battles." If this exhortation be not found in the selfsame words, coming from the lips of Jesus, nevertheless the whole tenor of the Word of God is to the same effect - "Fight the Lord's battles."

At the present crisis, the minds of men are exceedingly agitated with direful prospects of a terrible struggle. We know not whereunto this matter may grow. The signs of the times are dark and direful. We fear that the vials of God's wrath are about to be poured out, and that the earth will be deluged with blood. As long as there remains a hope, let us pray for peace, nay, even in the time of war let us still beseech the throne of God, crying, that he would "send us peace in our days."

The war will be looked upon by different persons with different feelings. The Italian will consider, all through the controversy, his own country; the Sardinian will be looking continually to the progress or to the defeat of his own nation; while the German, having sympathy with his own race, will be continually anxious to understand the state of affairs. There is one power however, which is not represented in the congress and which seems to be silent, because the ears of men are deaf to aught that it hath to say. To that power all our sympathies will be given, and our hearts will follow it with interest; and all through the war, the one question that we shall ask, will be "How will that kingdom prosper?" "You all know to which kingdom I refer—it is the kingdom of Jesus Christ upon earth; that little one which is even at this time growing, and which is to become a thousand, which is to break in pieces all the monarchies of earth, and to seat itself upon their ruins, proclaiming universal liberty and peace, under the banner of Jesus Christ. I am sure that we shall think far more of the interests of religion than of anything else, and our prayer will be, "O Lord, do what thou wilt with the earthen pitchers of men's monarchies, but let thy kingdom come, and let thy will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven!"

While, however, we shall anxiously watch the contest, it will be quite as well if we mingle in it ourselves. Not that this nation of England should touch it; God forbid. If tyrants fight, let them fight; let free men stand aloof. Why should England have aught to do with all the coming battles? As God has cut us off from Europe by a boisterous sea, so let us be kept apart from all the broils and turmoils into which tyrants and their slaves may fall. I speak now, after a spiritual manner, to the church of Christ. I say, "Let us mingle in the fray; let us have something to do. We cannot be neutral; we never have been. Our host is ever in hostility to sin and Satan. "My voice is still for war." The senate of Christ's church can never talk of peace. For thus it is written: "The Lord will have war."

This will bring us to the text, and here I shall consider first of all, the Lord's battles; we are not to fight our own; secondly, the Lord's soldiers; and thirdly, the King's command, "Fight the Lord's battles."

I. First, THE LORD'S BATTLES, what are they? Not the garment rolled in blood, not the noise, and smoke, and din of human slaughter. These may be the devil's battles, if you please, but not the Lord's. They may be days of God's vengeance but in their strife the servant of Jesus may not mingle. We stand aloof. Our kingdom is not of this world; else would God's servants fight with sword and spear. Ours is a spiritual kingdom, and the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.

What are God's battles? Let us here carefully distinguish between the battles of God, and our own. Oh, my brethren and sisters in Christ, it is not your business to fight your own battles, not even in defense of your own character. If you be maligned and slandered, let the slanderer alone. His malignity will but be increased by any attempt that you shall make to defend yourself. As a soldier of Christ you are to fight for your Master, not for yourself. You are not to carry on a private warfare for your own honor, but all your time and all your power is to be given to his defense and his war. You are not to have a word to speak for yourselves. Full often, when we get into little tempers, and our blood is roused, we are apt to think that we are fighting the cause of truth, when we are really maintaining

our own pride. We imagine that we are defending our Master, but we are defending our own little selves. Too often the anger rises against an adversary not because his words reflect dishonor upon the glorious Christ, but because they dishonor us. Oh! let us not be so little as to fight our own battles! Depend upon it, the noblest means of conquest for a Christian in the matter of calumny and falsehood, is to stand still and see the salvation of God. Sheathe thine own sword, put away all thine own weapons, when thou comest to fight thine own battle, and let God fight for thee, and thou shalt be more than conqueror.

Again, we must recollect that there is such a thing as fighting the battles of our own sect, when we ought to be fighting God's battles. We imagine that we are maintaining the church when we are only maintaining our section of it. I would always be very tender of the honor of the Christian body to which I belong, but I would rather see its honor stained, than that the glory of the entire church should be dimmed. Every soldier ought to love the peculiar legion in which he has enlisted, but better to see the colors of that legion rent to tatters, than to see the old standard of the cross trampled in the mire. Now I trust we are ready to say of our own denomination, Let its name perish, if Christ's name shall get ought of glory thereby." If the extinction of our sect should be the conquest of Christ and the promoting of his kingdom, then let it be wiped out of the book of record, and let not its name be heard any more. We should, I say, each of us defend the body to which we belong, for we have conscientiously joined it believing it to be the nearest to the old standard of the church of Christ, and God forbid that we should leave it for a worse. If we see a better, then would we sacrifice our prejudices to our convictions, but we cannot leave the old standard so long as we see it to be the very standard which floated in the hand of Paul, and which was handed by him through divers generations, through Chrysostom to Augustine, from Augustine to Calvin, and so on through the glorious race of mighty men who have not been ashamed of the gospel of Christ Jesus. But yet I say let our name. and let our sect, and let our denomination be absorbed, and let it sink, so that the battle of the Lord may but be well fought, and the time of Christ's triumph hastened.

"Fight the Lord's battles." Then what are these? These are battles with sin

and battles with error, and battles with war, and battles with worldliness. Fight ye these Christian. and ye shall have enough to do.

The Lord's battle is first of all with sin. Seek grace to fight that battle in your own heart. Endeavour by divine grace to overcome those propensities which continually push you towards iniquity. On your knees wrestle against your besetting sins. As habits appear endeavor to break them by the battle-axe of strong resolution wielded by the arm of faith. Take all your lusts as they bestir themselves to the foot of the cross, and let the blood of Jesus fall upon those vipers and they must die. The blood of Christ shall spill the blood of sin. The death of Christ shall be the death of iniquity, the cross of Christ shall be the crucifixion of transgression. Labour with yourselves to drive the Canaanites out of your hearts. Spare none, let no petty lust escape. Put down pride and sloth, and lust, and unbelief and you have now a battle before you which may fill your hands, and more than fill them. Oh! cry unto God your strength, and look unto the hills from whence cometh your help, and then fight on again, and as each sin is overcome, each evil habit broken off, each lust denied go on to the rooting up of another, and the destruction of more of them, until ail being subdued, body soul and spirit shall be consecrated to Christ as a living sacrifice, purified by his Holy Spirit.

And while this battle is being fought, ay, and while it is still fighting, go out and fight with other men's sins. Smite them first with the weapon of holy example. Be yourselves what you would have others be. be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Be yourselves clean ere ye can hope to be the purifiers of the world; and then, having first sought the blessing of God, go out into the world and bear your witness against sin. Let your testimony be unflinching; never let a sin pass under your eye without rebuke. Slay utterly young and old; let not one escape. Speak sometimes sternly if the sinner be hardened in his sin, speak gently, if it be his first offense, seeking not to break his head but to break the head of his iniquity —not to break his bones or wound his feelings, but to cut his sin in twain, and leave his iniquity dead before his eyes. Go ye forth where sin is the most rampant. Go down the dark alley, climb the creaking staircase; penetrate the dens of iniquity where the lion of the pit lies in his death lair, and go ye and pluck out of the mouth of the lion two legs and a piece

of a ear, if that be all which you can save. Count it always your joy to follow the track of the lion, to beard him in his den, and fight him where he reigneth most secure. Protest daily, hourly, by act, by word, by pen, by tongue, against evil of every kind and shape. Be ye as burning and shining lights in the midst of darkness, and as two-edged swords in the midst of the hosts of sin. Why, a true Christian who lives near to God, and is filled with grace and is kept holy, may stand in the midst of sinners and do wonders. What a marvellous feat was that which Jonah did! There was the great city of Nineveh, having in it six score thousand souls that knew not their right hand from their left, and one man went against it—Jonah—and as he approached it he began to cry, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." He entered the city—perhaps he stood aghast for a moment at the multitude of its population, at its richness and splendor, but again he lilted up his sharp shrill voice, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." On he went, and the crowd increased around him as he passed through each street, but they heard nothing but the solemn monotony, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown;" and yet again, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." And on he went, that solitary man, till he caused convulsion in the midst of myriads, and the king on his throne robed himself in sackcloth and proclaimed a fast, a day of mourning and of sadness. Yet on he went, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," till all the people bowed before him, and that one man was the conqueror of the myriad. Ah! believer, if you will go out and do the same, if you will go into the streets, the lanes, the by-ways the houses, and into the privacies of men, and still with this continued cry against sin and iniquity, say to them, "Look unto the cross and live, look unto the cross and live." Though there were but one earnest man in London who would continue that monotony of "Look unto the cross and live," from end to end this city would shake, and the great leviathan metropolis would be made to tremble. Go forth then, believer, and cry against sin with all thy might.

And even so must we cry against error. It is the preacher's business Sabbath after Sabbath, and week-day after week-day, to preach the whole gospel of God and to vindicate the truth as it is in Jesus from the opposition of man. Thousands are the heresies which now beset the

church. O children of God! fight the Lord's battles for truth. I am astonished, and yet more astonished when I come to turn it over, at the want of earnestness that there is in the Protestantism of the present age. How do you imagine that Cardinal Wiseman pays for all his splendours, and that the Romish church is supported? Fools and slow of heart, ye find them much of their wealth. If he is to preach in any place, who is it that crowds the chapel full, and pays for admission? The Protestants; and the Protestantism of England is the pay-master of the Pope. I am ashamed that sons of the Reformers who have Smithfield still in their midst unbuilt upon, should bow themselves before the beast, and give so much as a single farthing to the shrine of the devil's firstborn son Take heed to yourselves, ye Protestants, lest ye be partakers of her plagues; touch her not, lest ye be defiled. Give a drachm to her, or a grain of incense to her censors, ye shall be partakers of her adulteries and partakers of her plagues. Every time you pass the house of Popery let a curse light upon her head: Thus saith the Lord:—"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her; for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."— Rev 18:4-8 How soft some men's minds are growing how effeminate in the battle. I hear then speaking of Puseyism,—and what is that but Popery made worse than it was before by being more despicable and deceivable than even Popery itself. Do ye not hear men talk of the Puseyites in these days and say, "Ah! well, they differ a little from us." Do not the evangelical party in the Church of England seem at the present moment to make common cause and party with the Puseyite? Else how is it that the great preachings have been alternatively conducted by High and Low Church? It is all very well with that Church when it is separated from her heretical sons, and a great gulf fixed, but all that helps to bridge that gulf must mar her glory and destroy her power. We must have no truce, no treaty with Rome. War! war to the knife with her! Peace there cannot be. She cannot

have peace with us—we cannot have peace with her. She hates the true Church, and we can only say that the hatred is reciprocated. We would not lay a hand upon her priests; we would not touch a hair of their heads. Let them be free; but their doctrine we would destroy from the face of the earth as the doctrine of devils. So let it perish, O God, and let that evil thing become as the fat of lambs. Into smoke let it consume: yea into smoke let it consume away.

We must fight the Lord's battles against this giant error, whichever shape it takes; and so must we do with every error that pollutes the church. Slay it utterly; let none escape. "Fight the Lord's battles." Even though it be an error that is in an Evangelical Church, yet must we smite it. I love all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, but, nevertheless, I cannot have any truce any treaty with divers errors that have crept into the church, nor would I have you regard them with complacency. We are one in Christ; let us be friends with one another; but let us never be friends with one another's error. If I be wrong, rebuke me sternly; I can bear it, and bear it cheerfully and if ye be wrong, expect the like measure from me, and neither peace nor parley with your mistakes. Let us all be true to one another, and true to Christ; and as soon as we perceive an error, though it be but as the shadow of one, let us root it out and drive it from us, lest it plague the whole body, and put leprosy into the entire fabric of the church. No peace with sin. no peace with falsehood. War, war, war without deliberation: war for ever with error and deceit!

And yet again, it is the Christian's duty always to have war with war. To have bitterness in our hearts against any man that lives is to serve Satan. We must speak very hardly and sternly against error, and against sin; but against men we have not a word to say, though it were the Pope himself: I have no enmity in my heart against him as a man, but as anti-Christ. With men the Christian is one. Are we not every man's brother? "God hath made of one flesh all people that dwell upon the face of the earth." The cause of Christ is the cause of humanity. We are friends to all, and are enemies to none. We do not speak evil, even of the false prophet himself; as a man, but, as a false prophet. we are his sworn opponents. Now, Christians, ye have a difficult battle to fight, because ye fight with all evil and hostility between man and man: you are to be peacemakers.

Go wherever you may, if you see a quarrel you are to abate it. You are to pluck firebrands out of the fire, and strive to quench them in the waters of lovingkindness. It is your mission to bring the nations together, and weld them into one. It is yours to make man love man, to make him no more the devourer of his kind. This you can only do by being the friends of purity. Peace with error is war with man: but war with error is peace with man. Smite error, smite sin, and you have done your best to promote happiness and union among mankind. Oh, go, Christian, in the Spirit's strength, and smite your own anger—put that to the death, smite your own pride—level that, and then smite every other man's anger. Make peace wherever you can; scatter peace with both your hands. Let this be the very air you breathe; let nothing drop from your lip but words of healing, words of tenderness, words which shall abate the strife and noise of this poor distracted world. And now you have a battle before you,—a battle against sin and against error, and then, also, a battle against strife,—the battle of love.

II. And now FOR THE LORD'S SOLDIERS: who are they that are to fight the Lord's battle? Not everybody. The Lord has his army, his church: who are they? The Lord's soldiers are all of his own choosing. He has chosen them out of the world; and they are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. But if you want to know the Lord's soldiers, I will tell you how you may ascertain whether you are one. When the Lord Jesus enlists a soldier in his church, the first thing he does with him is, he tells him that he must first take off every rag of the old garments that he was wont to wear. "Now," saith Jesus to him, "thy rags must be relinquished; thy sins and thy self-righteousness must both be forsaken. Here is the regimental, here is the inner garment of my imputed righteousness, and here is the outward garment of divine sanctification. Put on these, and thou art mine. But in thine own robes, I will have nothing to do with thee, thou shalt still continue an heir of wrath, and I will not enlist thee among the heirs of grace." As soon as a man has his rags taken off, it Christ has enlisted him, the next thing he is required to do is, to wash. He is washed, from head to foot, in a matchless bath of blood; and when washed, he is arrayed, and clothed upon with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This done, he is taken into the midst of the army and introduced to his comrades, and he is led to love the whole army. "Well," says one, "I love



my own rank." Do you? Then you do not belong to it, if you do not love the other ranks too. He who is a true soldier of Christ, wears his regimentals, and he loves the whole army. He keeps to his own regiment, and he likes its banner—the flag that has braved so often the battle and the storm; still he loves the whole army, however much the colors may differ. He loves all them that serve the Lord Jesus Christ. "By this also ye shall know whether ye be his disciples, if ye love one another, even as Christ has loved you."

Once brought into the army, there is one mark whereby you may know Christ's soldier, namely, that he is not his own. If you meet him, he will say, "From head to foot I belong to my Captain, every inch of me; and what is more, I have given up goods and chattels, wife and children, time and talents, everything to him. I am not my own, I am bought with a price." He is a consecrated man. Come, then, put these questions to yourselves. Have you been washed in the blood of Christ? Do you boast in the imputed righteousness of Christ? And are you clothed about with the sanctification of his Spirit? Have you given up everything for his cause, and for the love you bear his name are you willing to live or willing to die, as he shall please, if you may but promote his honor? Well, then, you are his soldier, and therefore I shall not need to draw any further lines of distinction; but go to the third point, which is—

III. THE EXHORTATION—"Fight!" "Fight the Lord's battles." If you are the soldier of the heavenly King; "To arms! to arms!" "Fight the Lord's battles."

Here I would observe, that there are some people who are very fond of looking on, and not fighting. Perhaps five out of every six of our church do little but look on. You go to see them, and you say, "Well, what is your church doing?" "Well, we bless God, we are doing a great deal; we have a Sabbath-school, with so many children; our minister preaches so many times, and so many members have been added to the churches. The sick are visited; the poor are relieved." And you stop them, and say, "Well, friend, I am glad to hear that you are doing so much; but which work is it that you take? Do you teach in the Sabbath school?" "No." "Do you preach in the street?" "No." "Do you visit the sick?" "No." Do you assist in the

discipline of the church?" "No." "Do you contribute to the poor?" "No." Yet I thought you said you were doing so much. Stand out, sir, if you please, you are doing nothing at all. Be ashamed! Your master does not say, "Look on at the Lord's battles;" but "Fight" them. "Ah," says one. "but then, you know, I contribute towards the support of the ministers he has to do that." Oh! I see, you have made a mistake; you thought that you belonged to the English government, and not to Christ's government. You have been paying for a substitute, have you? You are not going to fight in person; you are paying, to keep a substitute to fight for you. Ah, ye have made a great mistake here. Christ will have all his soldiers fight. Why, I am not kept to do the fighting for you: I wilt endeavor to encourage you, and nerve you to the battle; but as to doing your duty, no, I thank you. The Romanist may believe that his priest does the work for him; I do not believe any such thing in my case, nor in the case of your ministers. Christ did not serve you by proxy, and you cannot serve him by proxy. No, "he his own self bare our sins in his own body," and you must work for Christ in your own body, your own self, with your own heart and with your own hands. I do hate that religion which another man can do for you. Depend upon it, it is good for nothing. True religion is a personal thing. O soldiers of the heavenly King, leave not our lieutenants and your officers to fight alone. Come on with us; we wave our swords in front. Come comrades, on! we are ready to mount the call, or lead the forlorn hope. Will you desert us? Come up the ladder with us. Let us show the enemy what Christian blood can do, and at the sword's point let us drive our foes before us. If you leave us to do all it will all be undone; we want all to do something, all to be laboring for Christ. Here, then, is the exhortation to each individual Christian—"Fight the Lord's battles."

And now, I will read you over the code martial—the rules which Christ, the Captain, would have you obey in fighting his battles.

**Regulation I.—NO COMMUNICATION NOR UNION WITH THE ENEMY!**

"Ye are not of the world." No truce, no league, no treaty, are you to make with the enemies of Christ. Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing."

## Regulation II.—NO QUARTER TO BE GIVEN OR TAKEN!

You are not to say to the world, "There! believe me to be better than I am"—and do not ever believe the world to be better than it is? Do not ask it to excuse you; do not excuse it. No parley with it whatever. If it praises you, do not care for its praise; if it scorns you laugh in its face. Have nought to do with its pretended friendship. Ask nothing at its hands; let it be crucified to you, and you to it.

## Regulation III.—NO WEAPONS OR AMMUNITION TAKEN FROM THE ENEMY ARE TO BE USED BY IMMANUEL'S SOLDIERS, BUT ARE TO BE UTTERLY BURNED WITH FIRE!

If you beat them, and you find their guns lying on the ground, spike them and melt them; never fire them off:—that is to say, never fight Christ's battles with the devil's weapons. If your enemy gets angry do not get angry with him; if he slanders you, do not slander him. One of the devil's long guns is slander: spike it and melt it; do not attempt to use it against the enemy. All kinds of bitterness—these are firebrands of death which Satan hurls against us: never hurl them back at him. Remember you Master. "When he was reviled he reviled not again." Never meddle with the enemy's weapons, even if you can. If you think you can crush him by his own mode of warfare, do not do it. It was all very well for David to cut off Goliath's head with his own sword; but it would not have done for him to try that, until he had first of all split his head open with a stone. Try to get a stone out of the brook of truth, and throw it with the sling of faith, but have nothing to do with Goliath's sword; you will cut your fingers with it, and get no honor.

## Regulation IV.—NO FEAR, TREMBLING, OR COWARDICE!

"The children of Ephraim, being armed, turned their backs in the day of battles" but Christ wants no cowardice of you. Fear not. Remember, if any man be ashamed of Christ in this generation, of him will Christ be ashamed in the day when he comes in the glory of his Father and all his holy angels. "I say unto you, fear not him that can kill the body, but after

that hath no more that he can do; but fear him who is able to cast both body and soul into hell; I say unto you, fear him."

#### Regulation V.—NO SLUMBERING, REST, EASE, OR SURRENDER!

Be always at it, all at it, constantly at it, with all your might at it. No rest. Your resting time is to come, in the grave. Be always fighting the enemy. Ask every day for grace to win a victory, and each night sleep not unless you can feel that you have done something in the cause of Christ—have helped to carry the standard a little further into the midst of the enemy's ranks. Oh! if we did but attend to these regulations how much might be done! But because we forget them, the cause of Christ is retarded and the victory is along.

And now, before I send you away, I would call out Christ's soldiers, and drill them for a minute or two. I see sometimes the captains marching their soldiers to and fro, and you may laugh and say they are doing nothing; but mark, all that manoeuvring, that forming into squares, and so forth, has its practical effect when they come into the field of battle. Suffer me, then, to put the Christian through his postures.

The first posture the Christian ought to take, and in which he ought to be very well practiced, is this. **DOWN UPON BOTH KNEES, HANDS UP, AND EYES UP TO HEAVEN!** No posture like that. It is called the posture of prayer. When Christ's church has been beaten every way else, it has at last taken to its knees, and then the whole army of the enemy has fled before us, for on its knees Christ's church is more than conqueror. The praying legion is a legion of heroes. He who understands this posture has learned the first part of the heavenly drill.

The next posture is: **FEET FAST, HANDS STILL, AND EYES UP!** A hard posture that, though it looks very easy. "Stand still and see the salvation of God." I have known many men who could practice the first position who could not practice the: second. Perhaps that was the hardest thing that the children of Israel ever did. When they had the sea before them and Pharoah behind them, they were commanded to stand still. But if you must learn to stand still when you are provoked, to be silent when you are

mocked, to wait under adverse providences, and still believe that in the darkest hour the sun is not dead, but will shine out again. Patient waiting for Christ's coming, may we all learn this.

Another posture is this: QUICK MARCH, CONTINUALLY GOING ONWARD! Ah! there are some Christians who are constantly sleeping on their guns; but they do not understand the posture of going onward. Quick march! Many Christians seem to be better skilled in the goose step of lifting up one foot after another and putting them down in the same place, rather than going onwards. Oh! I would we all knew how to progress—to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Never think you are doing anything unless you are getting forwarder—have more love, more hope, more joy, and are extending your sphere of usefulness. Soldiers of Christ, Quick march!" Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward." Let them not go back; let them not stand still. On, on, on, soldiers of Christ! Go forward!

Another posture is one that is very hard to learn indeed. It is what no soldier, I think, was ever told to do by his captain, except the soldier of Christ: EYES SHUT, AND EARS SHUT, AND HEART SHUT! That is when you go through Vanity Fair. Eyes shut, so as not to look upon temptation; ears shut, so as not to regard either the praise or the scoffs of the world; and heart shut against evil, with the great stone of precept. "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." Roll a stone at the door of your heart, that sin may not come out of it. That is a hard posture; but you will never fight the battles of the Lord till you know how to maintain that.

And then there is another posture: FEET FIRM, SWORD IN HAND. EYES OPEN; LOOKING AT YOUR ENEMY, WATCHING EVERY FEINT THAT HE MAKES, AND WATCHING TOO YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO LET FLY AT HIM SWORD IN HAND! That posture you must maintain every day. Guard against the darts of the enemy; hold up your shield, and be ready to run on him and give him a deadly wound. I need not explain that. You that have to do with business, you that are in the ministry, You that are serving God as deacons and elders, you know how often you have to ward off the dart and look well at your enemy, and meet him sword in

hand, ready to rush in whenever your time shall come. Let no opportunity —let no occasion pass by. Wound your enemy whenever you can; slay sin, slay error, and destroy bitterness, as often as ye have opportunity so to do.

There is one other posture, which is a very happy one for the child of God to take up and I would have you remember to-day. HANDS WIDE OPEN, AND HEART WIDE OPEN, WHEN YOU ARE HELPING YOUR BRETHREN, a hand ready to give whate'er the church needs, and an eye ready to look up for help when you cannot give help with your hand, and ready to guide the hand whenever help is wanting; and a heart open to hear the tale of another's want, to "rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep."

Above all, the best posture for Christ's church, is that of PATIENT WAITING FOR THE ADVENT OF CHRIST, a looking-forward for his glorious appearance, who must come and will not tarry, but who will get unto himself the victory.

Now, it you will go to your houses, and if divine grace shall help you to put yourselves through this form of drill, you will be mighty in the day of battle to put down the enemy.

And now suffer the word of exhortation, very brief, but hot and earnest. O Christian men and women, the more ye think of it the more will ye be ashamed of yourselves, and of the present church, that we do so little for Christ. Some eighteen hundred years ago, there were a handful of men and women in an upper room; and that handful! of men and women were so devoted to their master end so true to his cause, that within a hundred years they had overrun every nation of the habitable globe; yea, within fifty years they had preached the gospel in every land. And now look at this great host gathered here to-day. Probably there are not less than two or three thousand members of Christian churches, besides this mixed multitude and now what will you do in fifty years time? What does the church do in any year of its existence? Why, hardly anything at all. I sometimes wonder how long God will allow the church to be cooped up in England. I fear that we shall never see the world converted, till this

country is invaded. If it should ever happen that our hearths and homes should be invaded, And that we should be scattered, north, south, east and west, all through the world, it will be the grandest thing that ever happened for the church of Christ. I would go down on my knees and pray night and day that it may not happen for the nation's sake; but nevertheless I sometimes think that the greatest disaster that can ever occur to our nation, will be the only way in which Christ's church will be spread. Look at it. Here you have your churches in almost every street, and despite the destitution of London, it is not destitute if you compare it with the nations of the world. Oh, ought we not as ministers of Christ to pour out in legions? and ought not our people to go everywhere in the habitable world, in ones, and twos, and threes, preaching the gospel? But would you have us leave wife, and house, and children? I would not have you do it; but if ye would do it then would Christ's power be seen, and then would the might of the church return to it once again. They were men without purse or scrip that went everywhere preaching the word, and God was with them, and the world heard them and was converted. Now we cannot go if we are not sent, and perhaps it is only reasonable that flesh and blood should not ask more. but still if the life of (hod were in the church, it would never stop in England long; it would send forth its bands and legions, rolling along in one tremendous stream; a new crusade would be preached against the heathen nations, and the sword of the Lord and of Gideon would smite the stoutest of our foemen, and Christ would reign, and his unsuffering kingdom then would come. Oh that the church had power with men, and power with God! Dear brothers and sisters, look out and see what you can do, every one of you. Do something to-day. Do not let this Sunday go without every one of you trying to be the means of winning a soul to God. Go to your Sunday Schools this afternoon; go to your preaching stations; go to your tract district each one in his sphere; go to your families, your mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters; go home and do something to-day. "Fight the Lord's battles." You can do nothing of yourselves; but God will be with you. If you have the will to serve him, he will give you the power. Go today, and seek to heal some breach, to put away some enmity, to slay some sin, or to drive out some error; and God being with you this shall be a happier day to your soul, and a holier day to the world than you have seen in all your experience before.

I will have one blow, and then you may go. Sinner! I remember that thou art here this morning as well as the saint. Sinner! thou art not Christ's soldier; thou art a soldier of Satan; thou wilt have thy pay soon, man, when thou hast worn thy sword out, and worn thine arm out in fighting against Christ. Thou shalt have thy pay. Look at it and tremble. "The wages of sin is death," and damnation too. Will you take these two, or will you now renounce the black old tyrant, and enlist under the banner of Christ? O that God would give you the earnest money of free grace, and enlist you now as a soldier of the cross. Remember, Christ takes the very dregs to be his soldiers. Every man that was in debt, and every man that was discontented, came to David, and he became a captain over them. Now, if you are in debt this morning to God's law, and cannot pay, if you are discontented with the devil's service, jaded and worn out with pleasure, come to Christ, and he will receive you, make you a soldier of the cross, and a follower of the Lamb. God be with you and bless you, from this day forth, even for ever!

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## The Warning Neglected

He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. - Ezekiel 33:5

In all worldly things, men are always enough awake to understand their own interests. There is scarce a merchant who reads the paper, who does not read it in some way or other, with a view to his own personal concerns. If he finds that by the rise or fall of the markets, he will be either a gainer or loser, that part of the day's news will be the most important to him. In politics, in everything, in fact, that concerns temporal affairs, personal interest usually leads the van. Men will always be looking out for themselves, and personal and home interests will generally engross the major part of their thoughts. But in religion, it is otherwise. In religion men love far rather to believe abstract doctrines, and to talk of general truths, than the searching inquiries which examine their own personal interest in it. You will hear many men admire the preacher who deals in generalities, but when he comes to press home searching questions, by-and-by they are offended. If we stand and declare general facts, such as the universal sinnership of mankind, or the need of a Saviour, they will give an assent to our doctrine, and possibly they may retire greatly delighted with the discourse, because it has not affected them; but how often will our audience gnash their teeth, and go away in a rage, because, like the Pharisees with Jesus, they perceive, concerning a faithful minister, that he spoke of them. And yet, my brethren, how foolish this is. If in all other matters we like personalities - if in everything else we look to our own concerns, how much more should we do so in religion? for, surely, every man must give an account for himself, at the day of judgment. We must die alone; we must rise at the day of resurrection one by one, and each one for himself must appear before the bar of God; and each one must either have said to him, as an individual, "Come ye blessed;" or else, he must be appalled with the thundering sentence, "Depart, ye cursed." If there were such a thing as national

salvation; if it could be possible that we could be saved in the gross and in the bulk, that so, like the sheaves of corn, the few weeds that may grow with the stubble, would be gathered in for the sake of the wheat, then, indeed, it might not be so foolish for us to neglect our own personal interests; but if the sheep must, every one of them, pass under the hand of him that telleth them, if every man must stand in his own person before God, to be tried for his own acts - by everything that is rational, by everything that conscience would dictate, and self-interest would command, let us each of us look to our own selves, that we be not deceived, and that we find not ourselves, at last, miserably cast away.

Now, this morning, by God's help, I shall labor to be personal, and whilst I pray for the rich assistance of the Divine Spirit, I will also ask one thing of each person here present - I would ask of every Christian that he would lift up a prayer to God, that the service may be blessed; and I ask of every other person that he will please to understand that I am preaching *to him, and at him*; and if there be anything that is personal and pertinent to his own case, I beseech him, as for life and death, to let it have its full weight with him, and not begin to think of his neighbor, to whom perhaps it may be even more pertinent, but whose business certainly does not concern him.

The text is a solemn one - "He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning: his blood shall be upon him." The first head is this - *the warning was all that could be desired* - "he heard the sound of the trumpet." Secondly, *the excuses for not attending to the startling warning are all of them both frivolous and wicked*: and therefore, in the third place, *the consequences of inattention must be terrible, because man's blood must then be on his own head*.

I. First, then, THE WARNING WAS ALL THAT COULD BE DESIRED. When in time of war an army is attacked in the night, and cut off and destroyed whilst asleep, if it were impossible for them to be aware of the attack, and if they had made all diligence in placing their sentinels, but nevertheless the foe were so wary as to destroy them, we should weep; we should attach no blame to any one, but should deeply regret, and should give to that host our fullest pity. But if, on the other hand, they had

posted their sentinels, and the sentinels were wide awake, and gave to the sleepy soldiers every warning that could be desired, but nevertheless, the army were cut off, although we might for common humanity regret the loss thereof, yet at the same time we should be obliged to say, if they were foolish enough to sleep when the sentinels had warned them; if they folded their arms in presumptuous sloth, after they had sufficient and timely notice of the progress of their blood-thirsty enemy, then in their dying, we cannot pity them: their blood must rest upon their own heads. So, it is with you. If men perish under an unfaithful ministry, and have not been sufficiently warned to escape from the wrath to come, the Christian may pity them, yea, and methinks, even when they stand before the bar of God, although the fact of their not having been warned will not fully excuse them, yet it will go far to diminish their eternal miseries, which otherwise might have fallen upon their heads; for we know it is more tolerable for unwarned Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than it is for any city, or any nation that has had the Gospel proclaimed in its ears. My brethren, if on the other hand, we have been warned, if our ministers have been faithful, if they have aroused our conscience, and have constantly and earnestly called our attention to the fact of the wrath to come, if we have not attended to their message, if we have despised the voice of God, if we have turned a deaf ear to their earnest exhortation, if we perish, we shall die warned - die under the sound of the Gospel, and our damnation must be an unpitied one, for our blood must fall upon our own heads. Permit me then, to try, if I can, to enlarge upon this thought, that the warning has been, in the case of many of you, all that could have been needed.

In the first place, the warnings of the ministry have been to most of you warnings that have been *heard* - "He heard the sound of the trumpet." In far off lands, the trumpet sound of warning is not heard. Alas! there are myriads of our fellow-creatures who have never been warned by God's ambassadors, who know not that wrath abideth on them, and who do not yet understand the only way and method of salvation. In your case it is very different. You have heard the Word of God preached to you. You cannot say, when you come before God, "Lord, I knew no better." There is not a man or a woman within this place who will dare then to plead ignorance. And moreover, you have not only heard with your ears, but

some of you have been obliged to hear it in your consciences. I have before me many of my hearers whom I have had the pleasure of seeing now for some years. It has not been once, or twice, but many a time, I have seen the tear guttering their cheeks when I have spoken earnestly, faithfully, and affectionately to you. I have seen your whole soul moved within you; and yet, to my sorrow, you are now what you were: your goodness has been as the early cloud, and as the morning dew that passeth away. You have heard the Gospel. You wept under it, and you loved the sound of it, and you came again, and wept again, and many marveled that you did weep, but the greatest marvel was, that after having wept so well, you wiped away your tears so easily. Oh, yes, God is my witness, there are some of you not an inch nearer heaven, but ye have sealed your own damnation doubly sure, unless ye repent: for ye have heard the Gospel, ye have despised prophesyings, ye have rejected the counsel of God against yourself; and, therefore, when you shall die, ye must die pitied by your friends, but at the same time with your blood on your own heads.

The trumpet was not only heard, but, more than that, *its warning was understood*. When the man, supposed in the text, heard the trumpet, he understood by it that the enemy was at hand, and yet he took not warning. Now, my brethren, in your case, the sound of the Gospel warning has been understood. A thousand faults your minister may have, but there is one fault from which he is entirely free and that is, he is free from all attempts to use fine language in the expression of his thoughts; ye are all my witnesses, that if there be a Saxon word, or a homely phrase, a sentence that is rough and market-like, that will tell you the truth, I always use that first. I can say solemnly, as in the sight of God, that I never went out of my pulpit, except with the firm belief, that whatever might have happened, I was perfectly understood. I had sought, at least, so to gather wise words, that no man might mistake my meaning; gnash his teeth he might, but he could not say, "The preacher was misty and cloudy, talking to me of metaphysics, beyond my comprehension; he has been obliged to say, "Well, I know what he meant, he spoke plainly enough to me." Well, sirs, then if it be so, and if ye have heard warnings that ye could understand, so much the more guilty are ye, if ye are living this day in rejection of them. If I have preached to you in a style above

comprehension, then on my head must be your blood, because I ought to have made you understand; but if I come down to men of low estate, and pick even vulgar phrases to suit common people, then if you understood the warning, and if ye then risked it, mark you, my hands are clean of your blood. If ye be damned, I am innocent of your damnation, for I have told you plainly, that except ye repent, ye must perish, and that except ye put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is for you no hope of salvation.

Again, this trumpet sound was *startling*. The trumpet's sound is ever considered to be the most startling in the world. 'Tis that which shall be used on the resurrection morning to startle the myriads of sleepers, and make them rise from their tombs. Ay, and ye have had a startling ministry. Ye have sat, some of you, under ministers that might have made the devil himself tremble, so earnest have they been; and they have made you tremble sometimes, so much, that you could not sleep. The hair of your head was well nigh moved to stand upright. They spake as though they never might speak again: as dying men to dying men. They spoke as if they had been in hell, and knew the vengeance of the Almighty, and anon, they spoke as if they had entered into the heart of Jesus, and read his love to sinners. They had brows of brass; they knew not how to flinch. They laid your iniquity bare before your face, and with rough language that was unmistakable, they made you feel that there was a man there who told you all things that ever you did. They so declared it, that you could not help feeling under it. You always retained a veneration for that minister, because you felt that he at least was honest with you; and you have sometimes thought that you would even go and hear him again, because there at least your soul was moved, and you were made to hear the truth. Yes, you have had a startling ministry, some of you. Then, sirs, if ye have heard the cry of fire, if ye are burned in your beds, your charred ashes shall not accuse me. If I have warned you that he that believeth not must be damned, if you are damned, your miserable souls shall not accuse me. If I have startled you sometimes from your slumbers, and made your balls and your pleasure parties uneasy, because I have sometimes warned you of these things, then sirs, if after all you put away these warnings, and you reject these counsels, you will be obliged to say, "My blood is on my own head."

In many of your cases the warning has been *very frequent*. If the man heard the trumpet sound once and did not regard it, possibly we might excuse him; but how many of my audience have heard the trumpet sound of the gospel very frequently. There you are, young man. You have had many years of a pious mother's teaching, many years of a pious minister's exhortations. Wagon loads of sermons have been exhausted upon you. You have had many sharp providences, many terrible sicknesses. Often when the death-bell has tolled for your friend, your conscience has been aroused. To you warnings are not unusual things; they are very common. Oh! my hearers, if a man should hear the gospel but once, his blood would be upon his own head for rejecting it; but of how much sorer punishment shall you be thought worthy who have heard it many and many a time. Ah! I may well creep, when I think how many sermons you have listened to, many of you, how many times you have been cut to the heart. A hundred times every year you have gone up to the house of God, and far oftener than that, and you have just added a hundred billets to the eternal pile. A hundred times the trumpet has sounded in your ears, and a hundred times you have turned away to sin again, to despise Christ, to neglect your eternal interests, and to pursue the pleasures and the concerns of this world. Oh! how mad is this, how mad! Oh, sirs, if a man had but once poured out his heart before you concerning your eternal interests, and if he had spoken to you earnestly, and you had rejected his message, then, even then, ye had been guilty. But what shall we say to you upon whom the shafts of the Almighty have been exhausted? Oh, what shall be done unto this barren ground that hath been watered with shower after shower, and that hath been quickened with sunshine after sunshine? What shall be done unto him who being often rebuked, still hardeneth his neck? Shall he not be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy, and shall it not then be said, "His blood lieth at his own door, his guilt is on his own head?"

And I would just have you recollect one thing more. This warning that you have had so often has come to you *in time*. "Ah," said an infidel once, "God never regards man. If there be a God, he would never take notice of men." Said a Christian minister, who was sitting opposite to him in the carriage, "The day may come, sir, when you will learn the truth of what

you have just said. "I do not understand your allusion, sir," said he. "Well, sir, the day may come, when you may call, and he will refuse; when you may stretch out your hands and he will not regard you, but as he has said in the book of Proverbs, so will he do, 'Because I called, and ye refused; because I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded, I also will mock at your calamity, I will laugh when your fear cometh.'" But oh, sirs, your warning has not come too late. You are not warned on a sick bed, at the eleventh hour, when there is but a bare possibility of salvation, but you are warned in time, you are warned to-day, you have been warned for these many years that are now past. If God should send a preacher to the damned in hell, that were an unnecessary addition to their misery. Surely, if one could go and preach the gospel through the fields of Gehenna, and tell them of a Saviour they had despised, and of a gospel that is now beyond their reach, that were taunting poor souls with a vain attempt to increase their unutterable woe; but O my brethren, to preach the gospel now is to preach in a hopeful period; for "now is the accepted time: now is the day of salvation." Warn the boatman before he enters the current, and then, if he is swept down the rapids, he destroys himself. Warn the man before he drinks the cup of poison, tell him it is deadly: and then, if he drinks it, his death lies at his own door. And so, let us warn you before you depart this life; let us preach to you while as yet your bones are full of marrow, and the sinews of your joints are not loosed. We have then warned you in time, and so much the more shall your guilt be increased, because the warning was timely; it was frequent, it was earnest, it was appropriate, it was arousing, it was continually given to you, and yet you sought not to escape from the wrath to come.

And so even this morning would I say to you, if ye perish, my skirts are white of your blood; if ye are damned, it is not for want of calling after, nor for want of praying for, nor for want of weeping over. Your blood must be on your own heads; for the warning is all that is needed.

II. And now we come to the second point. MEN MAKE EXCUSES WHY THEY DO NOT ATTEND TO THE GOSPEL WARNING, BUT THESE EXCUSES ARE ALL FRIVOLOUS AND WICKED. I will just go over one or two of the excuses that people make. Some of them say, "Well, I did not attend to the warning because I did not believe there was any

necessity for it." Ah! You were told that after death there was a judgment, and you did not believe there was any necessity that you should be prepared for that judgment. You were told that by the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified, and that only through Christ can sinners be saved; and you did not think there was any necessity for Christ. Well, sir, you ought to have thought there was a necessity. You know there was a necessity in your inner consciousness. You talked very large things when you stood up as an unbeliever, a professed unbeliever: but you know there was a still small voice that while you spake belied your tongue. You are well aware that in the silent watches of the night you have often trembled; in a storm at sea you have been on your knees to pray to a God whom on the land you have laughed at; and when you have been sick nigh unto death, you have said, "Lord, have mercy upon me;" and so you have prayed, that you have believed it after all. But if you did not believe it, you ought to have believed it. There was enough in reason to have taught you that there was an hereafter; the Book of God's revelation was plain enough to have taught it to you, and if you have rejected God's Book, and rejected the voice of reason and of conscience, your blood is on your own head. Your excuse is idle. It is worse than that, it is profane and wicked, and still on your own head be your everlasting torment.

"But," cries another, "I did not like the trumpet. I did not like the Gospel that was preached." Says one, "I did not like certain doctrines in the Bible. I thought the minister preached too harsh doctrines sometimes, I did not agree with the Gospel; I thought the Gospel ought to have been altered, and not to have been just what it was." You did not like the trumpet, did you? Well, but God made the trumpet, God made the Gospel; and inasmuch as ye did not like what God made, it is an idle excuse. What was that to you what the trumpet was, so long as it warned you? And surely, if it had been time of war, and you had heard a trumpet sounded to warn you of the coming of the enemy, you would not have sat still, and said, "now I believe that is a brass trumpet, I would like to have had it made of silver." No, but the sound would have been enough for you, and up you would have been to escape from the danger. And so it must be now with you. It is an idle presence that you did not like it. You ought to have liked it, for God made the Gospel what it is.



But you say, "I did not like the man that blew it." Well, if you did not like one messenger of God, there are many in this city. Could you not find one you did like? You did not like one man's manner; it was too theatrical; you did not like another's: it was too doctrinal; you did not like another's: it was too practical - there are plenty of them, you may take which you do like, but if God has sent the men, and told them how to blow, and if they blow to the best of their ability, it is all in vain for you to reject their warnings, because they do not blow the way you like. Ah, my brethren, we do not find fault with the way a man speaks, if we are in a house that is on fire. If the man calls, "Fire! Fire!" we are not particular what note he takes, we do not think what a harsh voice he has got. You would think any one a fool, who should lie in his bed, to be burned, because he said he did not like the way the man cried, "Fire." Why his business was to have been out of bed and down the stairs at once, as soon as he heard it.

But another says, "I did not like the man himself; I did not like the minister; I did not like the man that blew the trumpet; I could hear him preach very well, but I had a personal dislike to him, and so I did not take any notice of what the trumpet said." Verily, God will say to thee at last, "Thou fool, what hadst thou to do with that man; to his own master he stands or falls; thy business was with thyself." What would you think of a man? A man has fallen overboard from a ship, and when he is drowning, some sailor throws him a rope, and there it is. Well, he says, in the first place, "I do not like that rope; I don't think that rope was made at the best manufactory; there is some tar on it too, I do not like it; and in the next place, I do not like that sailor that threw the rope over, I am sure he is not a kind-hearted man, I do not like the look of him at all;" and then comes a gurgle and a groan, and down he is in the bottom of the sea; and when he was drowned, they said, that it served him right, if he would not lay hold of the rope, but would be making such foolish and absurd objections, when it was a matter of life and death. Then on his own head be his blood. And so shall it be with you at last. You are so busy with criticising the minister, and his style, and his doctrine, that your own soul perishes. Remember you may get into hell by criticism, but you will never criticise your soul out of it. You may there make the most you can of it. You may be there and say, "I did not like the minister, I did not like his manner, I

did not like his matter;" but all your dislikings will not get one drop of water to cool your burning tongue, nor serve to mitigate the unalleviated torments of that world of agony.

There are many other people who say, "Ah, well, I did none of those things, but I had a notion that the trumpet sound ought to be blown to everybody else, but not to me." Ah! that is a very common notion. "All men think all men mortal, but themselves," said a good poet; and all men think all men need the Gospel, but not themselves. Let each of us recollect that the Gospel has a message to each one of us. What saith the Gospel to *thee* my hearer? What saith the Word to *thee*? Forget thy neighbors, and ask this question. Doth it condemn *thee*? or doth it assure *thee* of *thy* pardon? for recollect, all thou hast to do in the hearing of the Word, is to hear with thine own ears for thine own soul, and it will be idle for any one to say "I did not think it applied to me," when we know that it is to be preached to every creature under heaven, and therefore there must be something in it for every creature or else it would not be preached to every creature.

Well, says another, "But I was so busy, I had so much to do, that I could not possibly attend to my soul's concerns. What will you say of the man who had so much to do that he could not get out of the burning house, but was burnt to ashes? What will you say of the man that had so much to do, that when he was dying, he had not time to send for a physician? Why, you will say, then he ought not to have so much to do. And if any man in the world has a business which causes him to lose his own soul for want of time, let him lay this question to his heart, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" But it is false - it is false - men have got time. It is the want of will, not want of way. You have time, sir, have you not, despite all your business, to spend in pleasure? You have time to read your newspaper - have you no time to read your Bible? You have time to sing a song - have you no time to pray a prayer? Why, you know when farmer Brown met farmer Smith in the market one day, he said to him, "Farmer Smith, I can't think how it is you find time for hunting. Why, man, what with sowing and mowing and reaping and plowing, and all that, my time is so fully occupied on my farm, and I have no time for hunting." "Ah," said he, "Brown, if you liked

hunting as much as I do, if you could not find time, you'd make it." And so it is with religion, the reason why men can not find time for it is, because they do not like it well enough. If they liked it, they would find time. And besides, what time does it want? What time does it require? Can I not pray to God over my ledger? Can I not snatch a text at my very breakfast, and think over it all day? May I not even when I am busy in the affairs of the world, be thinking of my soul, and casting myself upon a Redeemer's blood and atonement? It wants no time. There may be some time required; some time for my private devotions, and for communion with Christ, but when I grow in grace, I shall think it right to have more and more time, the more I can possibly get, the happier I shall be, and I shall never make the excuse that I have no time.

"Well," says another, "but I thought I had time enough, you do not want me, sir, to be religious in my youth, do you? I am a lad, and may I not have a little frolic and sow my wild oats as well as anybody else?" Well - yes, yes; but at the same time the best place for pleasure that I know of, is where a Christian lives; the finest happiness in all the world is the happiness of a child of God. You may have your pleasures - oh, yes! you shall have them doubled and trebled, if you are a Christian. You shall not have things that worldlings call pleasures, but you shall have some that are a thousand times better. But only look at that sorrowful picture. There, far away in the dark gulf of woe, lies a young man, and he cries, "Ah! I meant to have repented when I was out of my apprenticeship, and I died before my time was up." "Ah!" says another by his side, "and I thought, whilst I was a journeyman, that when I came to be a master, I would then think of the things of Christ, but I died before I had got money enough to start for myself." And then a merchant behind wails with bitter woe, and says, "Ah! I thought I would be religious when I had got enough to retire on, and live in the country; then I should have time to think of God, when I had got all my children married out, and my concerns settled about me, but here I am shut up in hell; and now what are all my delays worth, and what is all the time I gained for all the paltry pleasures in the world? Now I have lost my soul over them." We experience great vexation if we are unpunctual in many places; but we can not conceive what must be the horror and dismay of men who find themselves too late in the next world! Ah! friends, if I knew there was one

here who said, "I shall repent next Wednesday," I would have him feel in a dreadful state till that Wednesday came; for what if he should die? Oh! what if he should die? Would his promise of a Wednesday's repentance save him from a Tuesday damnation?

Ah, these are all idle excuses. Men make not such when their bodily life is concerned. Would God that we were wise, that we would not make such pitiful pretences to apology, when our soul, our own soul, is the matter at stake. If they take not warning, whatever their excuse, their blood must be upon their own head.

III. And now, I come most solemnly to conclude with all the power of earnestness; the warning has been sufficient, the excuse for not attending to it has been proved profane; then the last thought is "HIS BLOOD SHALL BE ON HIS OWN HEAD." Briefly thus - he shall perish; he shall perish *certainly*; he shall perish *inexcusably*. He shall *perish*. And what does that mean? There is no human mind, however capacious, that can ever guess the thought of a soul eternally cast away from God. The wrath to come is as inexpressible as the glory that shall be revealed hereafter. Our Saviour labored for words with which to express the horrors of a future state of the ungodly. You remember he talked of worms that die not, and fires that are never quenched, of a pit without a bottom, of weeping, and wailing and gnashing of teeth in the outer darkness.

No preacher was ever so loving as Christ, but no man ever spoke so horribly about hell; and yet even when the Saviour had said his best and said his worst, he had not told us what are the horrors of a future state. Ye have seen sicknesses, ye have heard the shrieks of men and women when their pangs have been upon them. We, at least, have stood by the bedsides even of some dear to us, and we have seen to what an extent agony may be carried in the human body, but none of us know how much the body is capable of suffering. Certainly the body will have to suffer forever - "He is able to cast both body and soul into hell." We have heard of exquisite torments, but we have never dreamt of any like unto this. Again, we have seen something of the miseries of the soul. Have we never marked the man that we used to know in our childhood who was depressed in spirits. All that ever could be done for him never could evoke

a smile from him - never did the light of cheerfulness light up his eye - he was mournfully depressed. Ay, and it was my unhappy lot to live with one who was not only depressed in spirits, but whose mind had gone so far amiss, that it did brood fancies so mournful and dismal, that the very sight of him was enough to turn the sunlight of summer into the very darkness of a dreary winter. He had nothing to say but dark, groaning words. His thoughts always had a sombre appearance about them. It was midnight in his soul - a darkness that might be felt. Have you never seen yourselves what power the mind has over us to make us full of misery? Ah, brethren and sisters, if ye could go to many of our asylums, and to our sick wards - ay, and dying beds, too, you may know what acute anguish the mind may feel. And remember that the mind, as well as the mortal frame, is to endure damnation. Yes, we must not shirk that word, the Scripture saith it, and we must use it. Oh! men and women, except we repent, except we do each of us cry for mercy to him that is able to save, we must perish. All that is meant by that word "hell" must be realized in me, except I be a believer; and so all that is meant by "Depart, ye cursed," must be thine, unless thou dost turn unto God with full purpose of heart.

But again, he that turneth not at the rebuke of the minister shall die, and he shall die *certainly*. This is not a matter of perhaps or chance. The things we preach, and that are taught in Scripture, are matters of solemn certainty. It may be that death is that bourne from which no traveller returns, but it is not true that we know nothing of it. It is as certain as that there are men, and a world in which they live, that there is another world to come, and that if they die impenitent, that world will be to them one of misery. And mark you - there is no chance of escape, die without Christ, and there is no gate out of which you can escape - forever, oh, forever lost, and not one hope of mercy - cast away, and not one outlet for escape, not one solitary chance of ransom. Oh, if there were hope that in the world to come, men might escape, we need not be so earnest; but since once lost, lost for aye - once cast away, cast away without hope, without any prospect of a hope, we must be earnest. Oh, my God, when I remember that I have to-day some here present who in all probability must be dead before next Sabbath, I must be earnest. Out of so large an assembly, the chances are that we shall not all of us be found pilgrims in this world within another seven days. It is not only possible, but probable,

that some one out of this vast audience will have been launched upon a world unknown. Shall it be myself, and shall I sail to the port of bliss, or must I sail over fiery waves forever, lost, shipwrecked, stranded, on the rocks of woe? Soul, which shall it be with thee? It may be thou shalt die, my gray-headed hearer, or thou young lad, thou boy, thou mayest die - I know not which, nor can we tell - God only knoweth. Then let each one ask himself - Am I prepared, should I be called to die? Yes, you may die where you are, on the benches where you are sitting - you may now die - and whither would you go? for recollect that whither ye go, ye go forever. Oh! eternity - eternity - eternity - must I climb thy topless steeps forever, and never reach the summit, and must my path be ever misery or joy. Oh! eternity, thou depth without a bottom, thou sea without a shore, must I sail over thy boundless waves forever in one undeviating track - and must I either plough through seas of bliss, or else be driven by the stormy winds of vengeance, over gulfs of misery? "Then what am I?" "My soul awake and an impartial survey take." Am I prepared? Am I prepared? Am I prepared? For, prepared or not, death admits of no delay, and if he is at my door, he will take me where I must go forever, prepared or not.

Now, the last thing is, *the sinner will perish* - he will perish certainly, but, last of all, he will perish *without excuse* - his blood shall be on his own head. When a man is bankrupt, if he can say, "It is not through reckless trading - it has been entirely through the dishonesty of one I trusted that I am what I am;" he takes some consolation, and he says, "I can not help it." But oh, my hearers, if you make bankrupts of your own souls, after you have been warned, then your own eternal bankruptcy shall lie at your own door. Should never so great a misfortune come upon us, if we can trace it to the providence of God, we bear it cheerfully; but if we have inflicted it upon ourselves, then how fearful is it! And let every man remember that if he perish after having heard the Gospel, he will be his own murderer. Sinner, thou wilt drive the dagger into thine heart thyself. If thou despisest the Gospel, thou art preparing fuel for thine own bed of flames, thou art hammering out the chain for thine own everlasting binding; and when damned, thy mournful reflection will be this: - I have damned myself, I cast myself into this pit; for I rejected the Gospel; I despised the message; I trod under foot the Son of Man; I would have none of his rebukes; I despised his Sabbaths; I would not hearken to his

exhortations, and now I perish by mine own hand, the miserable suicide of my own soul."

And now a sweet reflection strikes me. A good writer says, "There are, doubtless, spots in the world that would be barren forever, if we recollected what had happened there." Says he, "I was once in St. Paul's cathedral, just under the dome, and a friend just touched me gently and said, 'Do you see that little chisel mark? and I said 'Yes.' He said, 'That is where a man threw himself down, and there he fell, and was dashed to atoms.'" The writer says, "We all started aside from that little spot, where a fellow-creature's blood had been shed. It seemed an awful place when we remembered that." Now, there is many a street, there is many a way-side, there is many a house of God, where men have taken the last decision, and damned their own souls. I doubt not, there are some here this morning, standing or sitting, to whom the voice of conscience says, "Decide for God," and now Satan and the evil heart together are saying, "Reject the message; laugh it off; forget it: take a ticket for the theater tomorrow: do not let this man alarm us: it is his very profession to talk to us like this; let us go away, and laugh it off; and let us spend the rest of this day in merriment." Yes, that is the last warning thou wilt ever have. It is so with some of you. There are some of you that will this hour decide to damn yourselves, and you will look forever throughout eternity, to that place under the gallery, and you will say, "Alas! woe was the day I heard that man, I was half impressed - almost he persuaded me to be a Christian, but I decided for hell." And that will be a solemn spot to angels where you are standing, or where you are sitting, for angels will say to one another, "Stand aside; that is a spot where a man ruined his own soul for ever and ever. But the sweet thought is, that there are some places just the reverse.

Why, you are sitting, my friend, this morning, on a spot where some three weeks ago one sat who was converted to God; and that place where you are sitting you ought to venerate, for in that place there sat one who was one of the chiefest of sinners like yourself, and there the Gospel message met him. And far back there, behind the door, many a soul has been brought to Christ. Many a piece of good news have I heard from some in yonder upper gallery. "I could not see your face, sir, all the sermon

through, but the arrow of the Lord found its way round the corner, and reached my heart notwithstanding that, and I was saved." Ah, well, may God so bless this place, that every seat of it this day may be solemnized by his own grace, and a spot to be remembered in your future history by reason of the beginning of your blessedness, the dawn of your salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved." This is the gospel we are told to preach to every creature - "He that believeth, and is immersed, shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned."

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## **A Warning To Believers**

Let no man beguile you of your reward. - Colossians 2:18

There is an allusion here to the prize which was offered to the runners in the Olympic games, and at the outset it is well for us to remark how very frequently the Apostle Paul conducts us by his metaphors to the racecourse. Over and over again he is telling us so to run that we may obtain, bidding us to strive, and at other times to agonize, and speaking of wrestling and contending. Ought not this to make us feel what an intense thing the Christian life is—not a thing of sleepiness or haphazard, not a thing to be left now and then to a little superficial consideration? It must be a matter which demands all our strength, so that when we are saved there is a living principle put within us which demands all our energies, and gives us energy over and above any that we ever had before. Those who dream that carelessness will find its way to heaven have made a great mistake. The way to hell is neglect, but the way to heaven is very different. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" A little matter of neglect brings you to ruin, but our Master's words are "*Strive* to enter in at the straight gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek"—merely



seek—"to enter in, and shall not be able." Striving is needed more than seeking. Let us pray that God the Holy Spirit would always enable us to be in downright, awful earnest about the salvation of our souls. May we never count this a matter of secondary importance, but may we seek first, and beyond everything else, the kingdom of God and his righteousness. May we lay hold on eternal life; may we so run that we may obtain.

I would press this upon your memories because I do observe, observe it in myself as well as in my fellow-Christians, that we are often more earnest about the things of this life than we are about the things of the life to come. We are all impressed with the fact that in these days of competition, if a man would not be run over and crushed beneath the wheels of the Juggernaut of poverty, he must exert himself. No man seems now able to keep his head above water with the faint swimmer strokes which our forefathers used to give. We have to strive, and the bread that perisheth hath to be laboured for. Shall it be that this poor world shall engross our earliest thoughts and our latest cares, and shall the world to come have only now and then a consideration' No; may we love our God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our strength, and may we lay our body, soul, and spirit upon the altar of Christ's service, for these are but our reasonable sacrifice to him.

Now the Apostle in the text before us gives us a warning, which comes to the same thing, however it is interpreted; but the passage is somewhat difficult of rendering, and there have been several meanings given to it. Out of these there are three meanings which have been given of the text before us which are worthy of notice. "Let no man beguile you of your reward." The Apostle, in the first place, may mean here:—

I. LET NO MAN BEGUILLE ANY OF YOU who profess to be followers of Christ *of the great reward that will await the faithful at the last.*

Now, my brethren, we have, many of us, commenced the Christian race, or we profess to have done so, but the number of the starters is far greater than the number of the winners. "They that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize." "Many are called, but few are chosen." Many commence, apparently, in the Christian career, but after a while, though

they did run well, something hinders them that they do not obey the truth, and they go out from us because they were not of us, for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us. Now we may expect, now that we have commenced to run, that *some will come and try to turn us out of the race course openly*—not plausibly and with sophistry, but with an open and honest wickedness. Some will tell us plainly that there is no reward to run for, that our religion is all a mistake, that the pleasures of this world are the only things worth seeking, that there are delights of the flesh and the lusts thereof, and that we should do well to enjoy them. We shall meet the Atheist with his sneer and with his ringing laugh. We shall meet with all kinds of persons who will to our faces tell us to turn back, for there is no heaven, there is no Christ, or, if there be, it is not worth our while to take so much trouble to find him. Take heed of these people. Meet them face to face with dauntless courage. Mind not their sneers. If they persecute you only, reckon this to be an honour to you, for what is persecution but the tribute which wickedness pays to righteousness, and what is it, indeed, but the recognition of the seed of the woman when the seed of the serpent would fain bite his heel?

But the Apostle does not warn you so much against those people who openly come to you in this way. He knows that you will be on the alert against them. He gives a special warning against some others who would beguile you; that is to say, *who will try to turn you out of the right road, but who will not tell you that they mean to do so*. They pretend that they are going to show you something that you knew not before, some improvement upon what you have hitherto learned. In Paul's day there were some who took off the attention of the Christian from the worship of God to the worship of angels. "Angels," said they, "these are holy beings; they keep watch over you; you should speak of them with great respect"; and then when they grew bolder, they said, "You should ask their protection"; and then after a little while they said, "You should worship them; you should make them intermediate intercessors"; and so, step by step, they went on and established an old heresy which lasted for many years in the Christian church, and which is not dead even now, and thus the worship of angels crept in.

And nowadays you will meet with men who will say, "That bread upon the

Table—why, it represents the body of Jesus Christ to you when you come to the Lord's Supper; therefore, you ought to treat that bread with great respect." By and bye they will get a little bolder, and then they say, "As it represents Christ, you may worship it, pay it respect as if it were Christ." By and bye it will come to this, that you must have a napkin under your chin, lest you should drop a crumb; or it will be very wicked if a drop of the sacred wine should cling to your moustache when you drink; and there will be the directions which are given in some of the papers coming out from the High Church party—absurdities which are only worthy of the nursery—about the way in which the holy bread is to be eaten, and the holy wine is to be drunk—bringing in idolatry, sheer, clear idolatry, under the presence of improving upon the too bare simplicity of the worship of Christ. Have a care of the very first step, I pray you.

Or, perhaps, it may come to you in another shape. One will say to you, "The place in which you worship—is it not very dear to you? That seat where you have been accustomed to sit and listen, is it not dear?"; and your natural instincts will say, "Yes. " Then it will go a little farther. "That place is holy; it ought never to be used for anything but worship " Then a little farther it will be, "Oh! that is the house of God," and you will come to believe that, contrary to the words which you know are given to you of the Holy Ghost, that God dwells not in temples made with hands; that is to say, in these buildings, and you will get by degrees to have a worship of places, and a worship of days, and a worship of bread, and a worship of wine. And then it will be said to you, "Your minister, has he not often cheered you? Well then, you should reverence him; call him 'Reverend.'" Go a little farther, and you will call him "Father"; yet a little farther, and he will be your confessor; get a little farther and he will be your infallible Pope. It is all step by step until it is done. The first step seems to be very harmless indeed. Indeed, it is a kind of voluntary humility. You look as if you were humbling yourselves, and were paying reverence to these things for God's sake, whereas the object is to get you to pay reverence to them, instead of to God, and here the Apostle's words come in, "Let no man setting up other objects of reverence besides those which spiritual men worship.

So, too, they too, by slow degrees try to *insinuate a different way of*

*living from that which is the true life of the Christian.* You who have believed in Jesus are saved; your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. You are accustomed to go to Jesus Christ constantly to receive that washing of the feet of which he spake to Peter when he said, "He that is washed needeth not except to wash his feet, for he is clean every whit." You go to him with "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." But there will be some who will come in and tell you that to live in that way by a simple faith in Jesus Christ is not, perhaps, the best way. Could you not get a little farther? Could you not lead the life of those recluses who mortify the flesh in such a way that at last they come to have no sins, but commence to be perfect in themselves? Could you not begin, at least in some degree, to commit your soul's care to some priest, or to some friend, and instead of making every place holy and every day a holy day, would it not be well to fast on such and such days in the week, to scrupulously observe this rule and the other rule, and walk by the general opinion of the ancient Church, or by some one of those books which profess to show how they used to do it a thousand years ago? All this may have a great show of wisdom, and antiquity, and beauty; there may be a semblance of everything that is holy about it, and names that should never be mentioned without reverence may be appended to it all, but listen to the Apostle as he saith, "Beware lest any man beguile you of your reward," for if they get you away from living upon Christ as a poor sinner from day to day by simple confidence in him, they will beguile you of your reward.

There is another party who will seek to beguile you of your reward *by bringing in speculative notions, instead of the simple truths of God's Word.* There is a certain class of persons who think that a sermon must be a good one when they cannot understand it, and who are always impressed with a man whose words are long; and if his sentences are involved they feel, poor souls, that because they do not know what he is talking about, there is no doubt that he is a very wise and learned man; and after a while when he does propound something that they can catch at, though it may be quite contrary to what they have learned at their mother's knee or from their father's Bible, yet they are ready to be led off by it. There are many men nowadays who seem to spend their time in nothing else but in spinning new theories, and inventing new systems,

gutting the gospel taking the very soul and bowels out of it, and leaving there nothing but the mere skin and outward bones. The life and marrow of the gospel is being taken away by their learning, by their philosophies, by their refinements, by their bringing everything down to the test of this wonderfully enlightened nineteenth century to which we are all, I suppose, bound to defer. But a voice comes to us, "let no man beguile *you* of your reward." Stand fast to the old truths; they will outlast all these philosophies. Stand fast to the old way of living; it will outlast all the inventions of men. Stand fast by Christ, for you want no other object of worship but himself.

The Apostle gives us this warning, "Let no man beguile you of your reward," reminding us that these persons are very likely to beguile us. They will beguile us *by their character*. Have I not often heard young people say of such and such a preacher who preaches error, "But he is so good a man." That is nothing to the point. "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." If the life of the man should be blameless as the life of Christ, yet if he preach to you other than the gospel of Jesus Christ, take no heed of him; he weareth but the sheep's clothing, and is a wolf after all. Some will plead, "But such and such a man is so eloquent". Ah! brethren, may the day never come when your faith shall stand in the words of men. What is a ready orator, after all, that he should convince your hearts? Are there not ready orators caught any day for everything? Men speak, speak fluently, and speak well in the cause of evil, and there are some that can speak much more fluently and more eloquently for evil than any of our poor tongues are ever likely to do for the right. But words, words, words, flowers of rhetoric, oratory—are these the things that saved you? Are ye so foolish that having begun in the spirit by being convinced of your sins, having begun by being led simply to Christ, and putting your trust in him—are you now to be led astray by these poetic utterances and flowery periods of men? God forbid! Let nothing of this kind beguile you.

Then there will be added to these remarks that the man is not only very good and very eloquent, but *that he is very earnest—he seems very humble-minded*. Yes, and of old they wore rough garments to deceive,

and in the connection of the text we find that those persons were noted for their voluntary humility and their worship of angels. Satan knows very well that if he comes in black he will be discovered, but if he puts on the garb of an angel of light, then men will think he comes from God, and so will be deceived. "By their fruits ye shall know them." If they give you not the gospel, if they exalt not Christ, if they bear not witness to salvation through the precious blood, if they do not lift up Jesus Christ as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, have nothing to do with them, speak as they may. "Let no man beguile you of your reward." Though it should happen to be your relative, one whom you love, one who may have many claims on your respect otherwise—let no man, let no man, however plausible may be his speech, or eminent his character, beguile you of your reward.

Recollect, you professors, you lose the reward if *you lose the road to the reward*. He that runs may run very fast, but if he does not run in the course, he wins not the prize. You may believe false doctrine with great earnestness, but you will find it false for all that. You may give yourself up indefatigably to the pursuit of the wrong religion, but it will ruin your souls. A notion is abroad that if you are but earnest and sincere, you will be all right. Permit me to remind you that if you travel never so earnestly to the north, you will never reach the south, and if you earnestly take prussic acid you will die, and if you earnestly cut off a limb you will be wounded. You must not only be earnest, but you must be right in it. Hence is it necessary to say, "Let no man beguile you of your reward." "I bear them witness," said the Apostle, "that they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, but went about to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Oh! may we not be beguiled, then, so as to miss the reward of heaven at the last!

But I must pass on, especially as the light fails us this evening; I hope it is prognostic of a coming shower. Here is a second rendering which may be given to the text:—

II. LET NO MAN DOMINEER OVER YOU.

This rendering, or something analogous to it, is in the French translation. One of the great expositors in his commentary upon this passage refers it to the judges at the end of the course, who sometime would give the reward to the wrong person, and the person who had really run well might thus be deprived of his reward. Now, however close a man may be to Christ, the world, instead of honouring him for it, will, on the contrary, censure and condemn him, and hence the Apostle's exhortation is, "Let no man domineer over you."

And, my brethren, I would earnestly ask you to remember this first *as to your course of action*. If you conscientiously believe that you are right in what you are doing, study very little who is pleased or who is displeased. If you are persuaded in your own soul that what you believe and what you do are acceptable to God, whether they are acceptable to man or not is of very small consequence. You are not man's servant, you do not look to man for your reward, and, therefore, you need not care what man's opinion may be in this matter. Be just and fear not. Tread in the footsteps of Christ, follow what may. Live not on the breath of men. Let not their applause make you feel great, for perhaps then their censure will make you faint. Let no man in this respect domineer over you, but let Christ be your Master, and look to his smile.

So not only with regard to your course of action, *but also with reference to your confidence*, let no man domineer over you. If you put your trust in Jesus Christ, there are some who will say it is presumption. Let them say it is presumption. "Wisdom is justified of all her children," and so shall faith be. If you take the promise of God and rest upon it, there will be some who will say that you are hare-brained fanatics. Let them say it. They that trust in him shall never be confounded. The result will honour your faith. You have but to wait a little while, and, perhaps, they that now censure you will have to hold up their hands in astonishment, and say with you, "What hath God wrought?" Your confidence in Christ, especially, my dear young friend, I trust does not depend upon the smile of your relatives. If it did, then their frown might crush it. Walk with your Saviour in the lowly walk of holy confidence, and let not your faith rest in man, but in the smile of God.

Let no man domineer over you, again, by *judging your motives*. Men will always give as bad a reason as they can for a good man's actions. It seems to be innate in human nature never to give a man credit for being right if you can help it, and often tender minds have been greatly wounded when they have been misrepresented, and their actions have been imputed to sinister and selfish motives, when they have really desired to serve Christ. But do not let your heart be broken about that. You will appear before the judgment-seat of Christ: do not care about these petty judgments-seats of men. Go on with your Master's work dauntlessly and fearlessly. Let them say, as David's brethren said of him, "Because of thy pride and the naughtiness of thy heart to see the battle, art thou come." Go you and get Goliath's head, and bring it back, and that shall be the best answer to these sneering ones. When they see that God is with you, and that he has given you the triumph, you shall have honour, even in the eyes of those who now ridicule you. I think sometimes the Christian should have very much the same bravado against the judgment of men as David had when Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out and said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants," and he said, "It was before the Lord, and I will yet be more vile than thus." Let your eye be to God, and forget the eyes of men. Live so that, whether they know what you do, or do not know, you will not care, for your conduct will bear the blaze of the great Judgment Day, and, therefore, the criticisms of earth do not affect you. Let no man domineer over you.

So may I put it in another light—*let no man sway your conscience so as to lead you*. I am always anxious, my dear hearers, that, whatever respect I may ever win from you—and I trust I may have your esteem and your affection—yet that you will never believe a doctrine simply because I utter it, but unless I can confirm it from the Word of God, away with it. If it be not according to the teaching of the Lord and Master, I beseech you follow me not. Follow me only as far as I follow Christ. And so with every other man. Let it be God's truth, God's Word, the Holy Spirit's witness to that Word in your soul, that you are seeking after, but rest, I pray you, never short of that, for if you do your faith must stand merely in the wisdom of men, and when the man who helped you to believe is gone, perhaps your faith may be gone too, when most you need its comforting



power. No; let no man domineer over you, but press forward in the Christian race, looking unto Jesus, and looking unto Jesus only.

But now a third meaning belongs to the text. A happy circumstance it is, this dark night, that the preacher does not need to use his manuscript, for if he did his sermon must certainly come to an end now. But here is this point, "Let no man beguile you of your reward." It may mean this:—

### III. LET NO MAN ROB YOU OF THE PRESENT REWARD WHICH YOU HAVE IN BEING A CHRISTIAN.

Let no man deprive you of the present comfort which your faith should bring to you. Let me just for a few minutes have your attention while I speak upon this. Dear brethren, you and I, if we are believers in Christ, are this day completely pardoned. There is no sin in God's book against us. We are wholly and completely justified. The righteousness of Jesus Christ covers us from head to foot, and we stand before God as if we had never sinned. Now let no man rob you of this reward. Do not be tempted by anything that is said to doubt the completeness of a believer in Christ. Hold this, and, as you hold it, enjoy it. Do not let the man, yourself, whom you have most to fear, beguile you. Even though conscience should upbraid you, and you should have many grave reasons for doubt, as you imagine, yet if you believe in Jesus, stand to it—"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to me, for I am in Christ Jesus; he that believeth on him is not condemned; I have believed, and I am not condemned, neither will he permit condemnation to be thundered against me, for Christ has borne my sin for me, and I am clear in him." Let no man beguile you of the reward of feeling that you are complete in Christ.

Further, you who have believed in Jesus Christ *are safe in Christ*. Because he lives, you shall live also. Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? *He has* said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Now there are some who will tell you that you are not safe, and that it is dangerous for you to believe that you are. Let no man beguile you of this reward. You are saved. If you are believing on him, he will keep you, and you may sing, "Now unto him that is able to

keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before his presence with exceeding great joy. unto him be glory." Hold to that blessed truth that you are in Jesus—safe in Jesus Christ.

There is a third blessed truth. that not only are you pardoned and safe in Christ, but you are accepted at this moment, in the Beloved. Your acceptance with God does not rest upon anything in you. You are accepted because you are in Christ, accepted for Christ's sake. Now sometimes you will get robbed of this reward if you listen to the voice which says, "Why, there is sin in you still; your prayers are imperfect; your actions are stained." Yes, but let no man beguile you of this conviction that, sinner as you are, you are still accepted in Christ Jesus.

The Lord grant that you may feel this within, and let no man beguile you of your reward as long as you live. May you live and die in the enjoyment of it, beloved, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **Washed To Greater Foulness**

If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. - Job 9:30-31

I feel certain that I am sent on a special errand at this time. Before my mind's eye I see a soul whose awful reflections are hurrying him to despair. He refuses counsel, and will not listen to direction, for dread has made him desperate. I would have a word in the ear of that worried and wearied one. See ye not the man? He has battled long against a dark temptation, but at last he is beaten. He feels that he can hold out no

longer. He can scarcely take breath; the air grows hot and stifling around him, as he faces the question—what next? Accustomed as I am to look down on these crowded aisles and up at these closely-packed galleries, I feel a strange curiosity as I gaze into the mass; for I know that there is one man among all of you to whom I have a private message. I carry despatches from the King of kings to one who is grievously troubled, and is become as a woman forsaken and despised. My Lord and Master described himself in parable as leaving the ninety-and-nine to seek for one lost sheep: I must now copy his example. You will not grudge me for this service, I am sure. I quit the throng that I may find the bewildered one, and bring him safe and sound to the fold.

Turning to my text, let me say, that as one is startled by a shriek, or saddened by a groan, so these sharp utterances of Job astonish us at first, and then awake our pity. How much are we troubled with brotherly compassion as we read the words,—"If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me!" The sense of misery couched in this passage baffles description. Yet this is but one of a series, in which sentence after sentence reveals a fresh chamber of horrors. The similitudes of grief are here piled up in heaps, with what an old author has spoken of as the "rhetoric of sorrow." Physical sufferings had produced a strain on Job's mind, and he sought relief by expressing his anguish. Like some solitary prisoner in the gloomy keep of an old castle, he graves on the walls pictures of the abject despondencies which haunt him. His afflictions are aggravated by vain efforts to alleviate them: he wounds his hand with the rough hammer and nail with which he is engraving his griefs. Of such tortures many of us have had a taste.

From my experience, as a patient myself, smitten down with soul-sickness; and from my observation as a pastor, into whose ears the woes of awakened sinners are constantly poured, I have somewhat learned to understand the imagery of Job. The sufferer is in double straits. While he is tossed about by Satan, his friends are discharging their arrows at him, and the Almighty troubleth him. To help such a sufferer we must be careful to distinguish between the causes of his sorrow, and divide between his affliction itself and the further sorrows which he has brought

upon himself by his unwise efforts to escape from it.

Such, then, is the line of thought we will pursue. I shall make four divisions; three of them are to be found in the text, and the fourth will follow on, as an important consequence. First, we shall notice that *a quickened soul becomes conscious of guilt*; secondly, *the soul that is quickened makes ineffectual attempts to rid itself of the stain of guilt*; thirdly, *to deter his people from self-righteousness it pleases God to plunge deeper into the mire those who attempt to cleanse themselves*; the fourth point is, that *only by severe training are men led to look alone to God for salvation*,—it needs omnipotence to teach us that salvation is of the Lord.

I. At the outset, then, we observe that QUICKENED SOULS ARE CONSCIOUS OF GUILT. They see it; they know it; they feel it; and they blush to find that they are without excuse for it. All men are sinners: to most men, however, sin appears to be a fashion or the times, a necessity of nature, a folly of youth, or an infirmity of age, which a slight apology will suffice to remove. You will scarcely meet with an Englishman who will not acknowledge that he is a sinner. Is it not the General Confession stereotyped in the book of Common Prayer? But it is one thing to call yourself a sinner, and quite another thing to feel it. I have heard of a lady who owned to her minister that she was a great sinner. He questioned her kindly as to which of the ten commands she had broken. Beginning with the first, he asked her, "Did you ever break this?" to which enquiry she indignantly answered, "No." In like manner he dealt with the second, and right through the whole ten. She professed in detail to have observed each one, and yet pretended to confess that she had broken them all. By such equivocations multitudes of men and women deceive themselves; and it is unhappily the custom of many a preacher to address his congregation as if they were all good people, and every one of them knew the Lord, from the least even to the greatest. This is pleasing to the flesh, and clattering to pride; but it is most pernicious. How many are being deceived by this want of marking a difference where a vital difference exists!

Not till men are quickened by divine grace do they truly know that they

are sinners. How is this? Some diseases are so insidious that the sufferers fancy that they are getting better, while in very truth they are hastening to the grave. After such manner does sin deceive the sons of men: they think they are saved when they are still unrenewed. How often have I seen a poor girl, whose pale face, sunken eyes, shadowy hand, and languid step have clearly betokened that she was on the brink of death, yet she mistook the flush of consumption for the ruddiness of health. Slowly she waned; but within a day of her departure she planned cheerful projects which proved that she looked for life. Consumption is not, however, so deceitful as sin. Where it has full power over the soul, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" If sin were not so deceitful it would not be half so destructive as it is.

How is this, you ask again? Few give themselves the trouble to think about these matters at all. Ours is an age in which men's thoughts are keen upon politics and merchandize, practical science and economic inventions, financial schemes and Home Rule, and I know not what beside; but sound doctrine and sincere piety are out of vogue. Few people trouble themselves to think about their souls' everlasting welfare. Men die at the same rate as of yore, but the mortality is reckoned by a percentage; and as for the life hereafter it is ignored. Friend, have *you* ever dedicated ten minutes of your time to a consideration of your destiny? Days to your ledger; hours to your amusements; years to your commercial engagements; would it not be wise to reserve some moments for your soul's outlook beyond the grave? You have made your last will and testament for the world that is fading away, but you have laid up no treasure for the world to come. Is this consistent with your usual prudence? I should have good hope for some of you if I could make you sit for one hour alone, and think of nothing but your souls, your God, and the final judgment. Alas! alas! as the horse rusheth to the battle, so men rush to the heated competition of the hour. They cannot be persuaded to consider. Poor mortals! They concern themselves about everything that does not concern them, but they persistently neglect everything that is needful to their eternal well-being.

How is this? we enquire once more. To natural ignorance we may attribute much of the ordinary indifference of men to their own

sinfulness. They live in a benighted age. In vain you boast the enlightenment of this nineteenth century: the nineteenth century is not one whit more enlightened as to the depravity of human nature than the first century. Men are as ignorant of the plague of their own hearts to-day as they were when Paul addressed them. I know that almost every man you meet with talks as if he were qualified to set up for a doctor of divinity; but is not this the confidence of ignorance? "Vain man would be wise"—or read it, if you please, "vain man is void of understanding—though man be born like a wild ass's colt." Until God the Holy Ghost takes him in hand no spiritual light enters the man's soul. Preaching is an effective means of instructing the mind, arousing the conscience, and impressing the hearts of the people; and faithful preachers are scattered up and down the country within measurable reach of most of your homes. Why, then, is the doctrine of human sinfulness so little understood, and so seldom accepted as an undeniable fact? Many persons seem startled, and try to think that they misunderstand us when we say plainly that in the very best man in the world there is no virtue or grace that can be pleasing to God, unless he has been made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Let me put the truth before you as plainly as I can by speaking of your body in order to describe your soul. You probably imagine that your physical constitution is sound and healthy. I grant you all you ask on that score; yet you are but flesh and blood, like the rest of our mortal race, and therefore you are exposed to every disease which waylays your fellow creatures. Even so, your deceitful heart is capable of as desperate crimes as the vilest of sinners ever committed. The evil propensity lurks within, it needs only the contagion of society, or the temptation of Satan to bring it out. Does not this alarm you? It ought to do so.

Hardly a glimmer of the humbling truth of our natural depravity dawns on the dull apprehension of the worldly-wise, though souls taught from above know it and are appalled by it. In divers ways the discovery comes to those whom the Lord ordains to save. Sometimes a preacher sent of God lets in the dreadful light. Many men, like the false prophet Mokanna, hide their deformity. You may remember the story. Mokanna wore a silver veil upon his forehead: should he ever remove it the brightness of his countenance would blind the astonished world. In truth a foul disease had cankered his brow. God's faithful servants are sent to tear off these

veils, and expose men to themselves. This duty demands courage. Men veil black villainy with self-flattery! Like Jezebel, they paint their eyebrows, and tire their heads, till they think themselves beautiful. It is ours, like Jehu, to cry, "Throw her down." What have they to do with peace who are the servants of sin? How dare they pretend to comeliness whose hearts are not right with God?

How comes it to pass, then, that the best of saints on earth are prone to account themselves the chief of sinners? Their sincerity is unquestionable. This discovery is due to the Holy Spirit. He it is who convinces men of sin. By his mysterious but most blessed agency on the hearts of men, a sense of utter ruin is wrought in the chosen, and this prepares them to accept the full redemption provided by the sacrifice of the Redeemer. We cannot explain to you the mystery of the Spirit's operation. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But this we do know—the Holy Spirit withers all merely human hope and righteousness, and thus makes room for trust in the work of our Lord Jesus. Man by nature is blindly proud, and proudly blind. The moment the Spirit of God comes into a man, the scales fall from his eyes, and he sees himself in quite a different light. To each saved soul it seems a strange miracle. I have heard the story from simple lips full many a time. The new self talks of the old self with a kind of vacant wonderment. Yesterday our friend was on good terms with himself as a virtuous citizen, an honest trader, a sound churchman; in moral worth all that his neighbors could wish. To-day he is vile in his own sight: his hands are filthy, his heart is foul, his thoughts are loathsome. He perceives that he has been walking in a vain show, and therefore he writes himself down a hypocrite. No name too base by which to surname himself.

Have I found you out, my friend? Wandering among the motley throng, I am in quest of a soul that seeks the mercy of the Lord. Am I not upon your track?

Mayhap I am at this moment addressing a person who has been the subject of a mysterious gloom for which he sees no reason whatever. I am

right happy to have found him, for I trust I have met with a recruit for the army of truth. But why, you may enquire, do I make such a remark? I will tell you in a moment. There is a vital connection between soul-distress and sound doctrine. Sovereign grace is dear to those who have groaned deeply because they see what grievous sinners they are. Witness Joseph Hart and John Newton, whose hymns you have often sung, or David Brainerd and Jonathan Edwards, whose biographies many of you have read. You seldom hear much of God's everlasting covenant in these modern times, for few men feel that thorough conviction of sin which comes directly from the teaching of the Holy Spirit. In the economy of redemption the effectual operation of the Spirit in enlightening the heart concerning its own sinfulness is sure evidence of the Father's personal love to his chosen people, and of the special atonement that the Son of God made for their transgressions.

"Ne'er had ye felt the guilt of sin,  
Or sweets of pardoning love,  
Unless your worthless names had been  
Enrolled to life above."

You may walk through a dark cellar without discerning by the eye that anything noisome is there concealed. Let the shutters be thrown open! Bid the light of day stream in! You soon perceive frogs upon the cold clammy pavement, filthy cobwebs hanging on the walls in long festoons, foul vermin creeping about everywhere. Startled, alarmed, horrified, who would not wish to flee away, and find a healthier atmosphere? The rays of the sun are, however, but a faint image of that light divine shed by the Holy Spirit, which penetrates the thickest shades of human folly and infatuation, and exposes the treachery of the inmost heart. Then the soul cries out in agony, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" When brought to feel this, we think our doom is sealed, and everlasting destruction is close upon us. But it is not so. *This is the way of hope.* Through death to life every saved soul must pass. Ask us not to paint the sensations; nor blame us if we usually describe that experience which is most distinct. Sharp conviction, fainting heart, struggling hope, fear that haunts, terror that appalls,—an awful fight of fiercely strange emotions! This is the extreme measure of the life-change.



In milder form, with one decisive pang the true heart is born again. The Slough of Despond lies across every pilgrim's pathway. The years or hours it takes to wade through it must be left an open question. Sudden death is an occasional fact, but more frequently the saints are peacefully welcomed to the realms above; so in the church on earth, sudden conversions happen, but as a rule men pass gradually into the kingdom of God. Between the sensual and the spiritual there is a great gulf, and it must be passed. Of the wind or weather in which you make the passage it is not for me to speak: the voyage may be long or short; but in some sort the gulf must be traversed. Conviction of sin is of the first importance: it cannot be dispensed with.

You will say, "Why?" Well, we might suggest many reasons. It will make mercy the more precious, it will excite horror of sin in the future—burnt children dread the fire, it will teach you patience, for no future trial will be so severe as this; and it will tend to keep you persevering in holiness. But be the reasons what they may, be you sure of this, that no soul is saved without being made conscious of its own sinfulness.

II. We pass on to notice that it often happens that AWAKENED SOULS USE MANY INEFFECTUAL MEANS TO OBTAIN CLEANSING. Job describes himself as washing in snow water, and making his hands never so clean. His expressions remind me of my own labor in vain. By how many experiments I tried to purify my own soul! Like all my fellows, I was always foiled in every attempt. See a squirrel in a cage; the poor thing is working away, trying to mount, yet he never rises one inch higher. In like case is the sinner who seeks to save himself by his own good works, or by any other means: he toils without result. It is astonishing what pains men will take in this useless drudgery. They prevent the dawn of day in their anxiety to attend matins or observe mass; they are austere in their fastings; they say prayers without stint and do penance to the full. We should be sorry to impugn their sincerity. With what exemplary zeal many in the Anglican Church go about to establish their own righteousness! They practice ceremonies, with a claim to catholicity which no Catholic will allow. Untiring is their diligence in one department or another of amateur office, they hope for a reward for doing what God never commanded. Without a Scriptural proof of being right in

anything, they would fain be righteous overmuch in everything. The labor of the foolish in spinning a righteousness of their own, that is neither accredited by the divine law nor by the holy gospel is almost incredible: they would rather give their bodies to be buried and their goods to feed the poor, than submit to salvation by grace, though it is the only possible salvation.

In seeking to obtain absolution of their sins, to establish a righteousness of their own, and to secure peace of mind, men tax their ingenuity to the utmost. Job talks of washing himself *with snow water*. The imagery is, no doubt, meant to be instructive. Why is snow water selected? The reason probably was, first, because *it was hard to get*. Far easier, generally, to procure water from the running brooks than from melted snow. Men set a high value on that which is difficult to procure. Whence comes it that the great majority of the so-called Christian world prefer worship conducted with gorgeous ritual and stately ceremonial? Is it not the rarity of the thing which creates a sense of value? Enter a Popish cathedral, and try, if you can, to understand the services. What are all these persons doing dressed in red and white, or those other persons in more sombre color? Manipulations, genuflexions, prostrations, waving of censers, and elevating of hosts—an array of symbolism which it took ages to conglomerate. What is the value of it all, unless it lies in its complications and expenses? Our Protestant friends have their milder predilections. Organs and orchestras serve them for snow water. In measured accents let me speak of music. For psalms and spiritual songs you all know I have an ardent passion. My spirit wings its way to the very portals of heaven in the words and tunes of our hymns. But for your instrumental melodies I have no mind, when you substitute mere sound for heartfelt prayer and praise. The obvious simplicity of the gospel is the only outward voucher I know of for its inward sincerity. Praise is none the better because of the difficulty of the music; say rather that the more simple and congregational it is the better by far. Forms of worship which are expensive and difficult are greatly affected by many, as snow water was thought in Job's day to be a bath for kings; but, after all, it is an idle fashion, likely to mislead.

Besides, *snow water enjoyed a reputation for purity*. If you would have a

natural filtered water gather the newly-fallen snow and melt it. The figure represents the religiousness which is of the most rigid kind—the cream of the cream. Specimens yet remain among us of piety more than possible to men, religiousness above the range of mortals; which piety is, however, not of God's grace, and consequently is a vain show. Though we should use the purest ceremonies, multiply the best of good works, and add thereto the costliest of gifts, yet we should be unable to make ourselves clean before God. You may wash yourself till you deny the existence of a spot, and yet you may be unclean. You may make rigid rules, and find much content in keeping them, and yet remain in nature's filthiness. With all your shrewdness you have but practiced a human device, and in refusing to trust in the Lord Jesus you have failed to observe a divine ordinance; and therefore you will fail.

Once again, this snow water is probably extolled because *it descends from the clouds of heaven*, instead of bubbling up from the clods of earth. Religiousness which can color itself with an appearance of the supernatural is very taking with many. Some folks are fond of apostolical succession; it professes to come from heaven. No doubt the notion originated in cloudland. Others are fascinated by Popery. His holiness the Pope is accounted to be a great cistern, full of grace, which is distilled in streams, and runs through capacious pipes called cardinals, and then through smaller tubes, styled bishops. At length by the still smaller pipes of the priests it comes to the people. No pretext was ever more paltry than this, and yet many are deceived by it. There is no peace in it for thoughtful minds. For such your snow water has no solace, because they see no connection between outward acts and the purifying of the heart.

Not all the outward forms on earth,  
Nor rites that God has given,  
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,  
Can raise a soul to heaven."

If I "*make my hands never so clean*," is an expression peculiarly racy in the original. The Hebrew word has an allusion to soap or nitre. Such was the ordinary and obvious method any one would take to whiten his hands when they were grimy. Tradition tells that certain stains of blood cleave

to the floor. The idea is that human blood, shed in murder, can never be scrubbed or scraped off the boards. Thus is it most certainly with the dye of sin. The blood of souls is in thy skirts, is the terrible language of Jeremiah (2:34). When ye think that baptism can begin, that confirmation can further, and that other sacraments can complete your purification, ye are mere dupes of your own folly. "Though I wash myself in snow water, and make myself never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." There it stands, it is the testimony of one man, but yet it is true; the Almighty attests it, and all human experience affirms it. These worthless experiments to cleanse yourselves would be ended once for all if you would have regard to the great truth of the gospel: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." God alone can remove sin, and he does so by the blood of Jesus.

III. But AS SURE AS EVER QUICKENED BOWLS TRY TO GET PURITY IN THE WRONG WAY, GOD WILL THRUST THEM DOWN INTO THE DITCH. This is a terrible predicament. I find, on looking at the passage closely, that it means "head over ears in the ditch." It is not merely some filthy puddle in which a man treads till he is splashed all over, it is a slough of despond into which he sinks. His eyes, his ears, and his mouth, are filled with pollution; and his very clothes are so foul that he utterly abhors himself. Old Master Caryl, a rare expositor of the Book of Job, says that the original can only be equalled in English by the expression—we would not touch such an one with a pair of tongs.

Often it happens with those who try to get better by their own good works, that their conscience is awakened by the effort, and they are more conscious of sin than ever. If a chosen man strives to save himself from his sins by his own righteousness the Lord permits him to see his own heart and he ceases from all glorying. The word here rendered "ditch" is elsewhere translated "corruption." So in the sixteenth Psalm: "Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Language cannot paint abasement, reproach, or ignominy in stronger terms. "THOU shalt plunge me in the ditch." Is it not as though God himself would undertake the business of causing his people to know that by their vain ablutions they were making themselves yet more vile in his eyes? We read, in the second

chapter of Jeremiah, of God's remonstrance with Judah: "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God. How canst thou say, I am not polluted?"

May we not regard this as the discipline of our Heavenly Father's love, albeit when passing through the trial we do not perceive it to be so? Thus, in the apocalyptic epistle to the church at Laodicea, exhortation more severe or more tender it would be hard to imagine-"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." Mark the gentle words, "I counsel thee," addressed to a people whose lukewarmness excited nausea! Then follows a sentence of encouragement so sweet and enchanting that it almost sounds like an apology for the fierceness of the former censure. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." A revelation of wretched sinfulness ends in a declaration of love and a visit of grace; for the Lord goes on to say, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." Anyhow, the Lord will end the conceit which is the source of the lukewarmness: he cannot permit his chosen to remain in self-righteous pride; for *that* his soul hateth.

Perhaps, my friend, the experience I am trying to describe will come to you through the preaching of the Word. This sermon may dishearten and distract you. Your hope was thriving like a plant. This sermon shrivels every leaf; and though, at the scent of water, the branch of self-righteousness will bud again, the next sermon you hear may wither even the stem of your confidence. If another sermon soon afterwards cuts it down to the very root, the ministry will be profitable to you; for the root of pride must be cut up. Believe me, this is mild treatment: I trust you may not be left to severer methods.

Frequently our great Lord leaves a poor wayward soul to eat the fruits of its own ways, and this is the severest form of plunging in the ditch. While

striving after righteousness in a wrong way, the man stumbles into the very sin against which he struggled. The young man, of whom I am now thinking, resolved, by the help of God, that he would be different henceforth from what he ever had been. His vows kept pace with his devotions. He started them at early morn -

"And felt, good, easy man, full surely  
His goodness was a-ripening."

To the shop he went, as was his wont; but his thoughts were no longer set on earthly things: he stood, as he supposed, on heavenly ground. Because he had taken snow-water and had washed his hands, he began to think that he was singularly clean. Towards evening a temptation suddenly crossed his path. At first he resisted, but it proved a feeble fight. The argument of another young man, that it was policy to yield, availed to break the covenant he had made with his own conscience. So he was led astray to a place of amusement, where the light of God's countenance never shines. The wretchedness of his reflections on the morrow could not easily be told. He felt that his feet were fast in the miry clay, and his garments foully soiled. His empty conceit might not have been dislodged from its secret lurking-place in his depraved nature without some such perilous downfall.

Mayhap, there sits out yonder a good sister who has grown familiar with spiritual straits. Did you ever happen to hear of Mary Huntington, wife of William Huntington, S.S., the famous Calvinistic preacher? When he prayed for her, which he did with much affection, he confessed before God—"O Lord, I beseech thee, hear me on her behalf. Thou knowest how warmly attached she has ever been to MOSES, and what narrow and vain searches she has made in order to find out his grave, which thou, in infinite wisdom and mercy, hast thought fit to conceal." That prayer, which was published about a century ago, is worth preserving in your memory. For that "Mary," like many worthy housewives of these days, was rather fond of collecting the rags and relics of self. If it had been possible, she would have worn at least an apron of the linsey-woolsey of self-righteousness. The Lord will not have his handmaids thus arranged: they must be quit of self altogether.

Our lives through various scenes are drawn and vexed with petty provocations. Paltry annoyances are the bane of our peace. Some of you, dear sisters, spend your years and your thoughts in a narrow circle, and I deeply sympathize with you therein. Without a wish to be great, or to enlarge your coast, you intensely desire to be good. To do your duty to the best of your ability, is your aim, and therein you are worthy of all honor. The lot of many of you is to pass much of your time in loneliness; your temptations are therefore peculiar. For many a quiet hour you have been busy with domestic employments, distracted by no acute anxiety, but cheered by much quiet meditation. At such seasons you are apt to get on good terms with yourselves. Presently the shades of evening begin to fall. Evening! of which Cowper sweetly sings:

"Come, evening, once again, season of peace,  
Return, sweet evening, and continue long!"

You are prepared to welcome home the husband, brother, son, who will look for his repast, and seek his well-earned repose. Possibly, my sisters, this is your season of temptation. His rough word, his needless complaint, his vacant look, when you pine for sympathy puts you about. A sense of injustice stings you. It may be very natural, but all the same it is very fatal to your sense of superior goodness. What more treacherous than one's temper? In a sudden gust of passion, you utter words of anger. How gladly would you recall them! but they are registered. Down into the ditch of despondency you sink. For days to come you feel that you cannot forgive yourself. Your rich mantle of righteousness after this tumble in the ditch looks mean enough to provoke your own ridicule.

Thus do we, in our different spheres, fly from this to that, and from that to the other. Some hope to cleanse away sin by a supreme effort of self-denial, or of miraculous faith. Men dream of being clean without the blood of Jesus, they even boast of it, and yet their sin remaineth. The eye of the judgment may be deceived till we half think we are clean; but no sooner does the scale grow thin, or the light grow strong, than the conscience perceives its error and learns the lesson that no human endeavor can wash out the accursed spot. Let us not play at purification,

nor vainly hope to satisfy conscience with that which renders no satisfaction to God.

Persons of sensitive disposition, and sedentary habits, are prone to seek a righteousness of inward feeling. Let me describe these good folks to you. They aim at a righteousness that renounces every fault, and they cultivate such graces as are naturally lovely, watching from moment to moment their own feelings of joy or grief. Yet these be they who get to know, with the keenest anguish, the plague of their own hearts. How it happens is sufficiently clear. They try to live by their feelings and frames of mind; and what can be more deceitful than these sensations? Treacherous as the sea on which you sail so smoothly on sunny days, but which, at other times, wrecks your barque without mercy, your frames and feelings are not in the least to be depended on. One day you are all aglow, the flush of fervor is on your face, the next day you feel so dead and cold that prayer would freeze upon your lips. Your evidences are dark. You think you have none, and, seized with despondency, you lament that "there is no hope." Ah, me! the sin-sick soul, given to watch its own symptoms, is brought into perilous straits; trying one nostrum after another, sometimes feeling a little better, and anon feeling itself much worse. Oh, that it could turn from feeling to faith; and look steadily out of inward sensation to the work finished once for all by the Lord Jesus!

Poor Job was smitten with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. No doubt he sent for the doctor—though we are not actually told that he did so. It is likely enough that snow water was prescribed to him for a relief. His hands may not have seemed very sightly when he used it; there may, at least, have been some connection between his physician's prescription and his poetry, when he said, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make *my hands* never so clean." Perfection in any one part of conduct would not secure cleanness for the rest. Washed hands would be a small matter if the boils remained over the rest of the body. This is another aspect of the same unsatisfactory expedient that I am wanting to point out to you. You are under bad treatment until you walk by faith in Jesus. Anything short of grace will prove a mere mockery of your malady. Asa, King of Judah, was diseased in his feet. He sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians. Asa never



recovered; but the Lord restored Job to perfect, health. The gratuitous advice which the patriarch received in the time of his sore sickness was not worth his gratitude. Of his three friends, he said: "Ye are all physicians of no value." Then comes back the metaphor which I have repeated so often: "Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." After all is said and done by the wisest of men the poor sinner is worse off than when they undertook his case. All is vanity till God comes in.

Let us not forget that the man who thus described his own case "was perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil." Such a case is a puzzle to those who are not enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Although Job was renowned for righteousness in his generation, a gleam from God's countenance exposed the faultiness of his soul. Does this prove him to have been a hypocrite? By no means. His friends supposed him to be so, though they had no ground whatever for the suspicion: it was their rough way of solving a hard problem. If the patriarch's integrity had not been so firm, if his refinement had not been so tender, if his piety towards God had not been so invariably accompanied by his pity for his brother men; if, in a word, his character had not been so complete, his trial and his deliverance could not have exhibited the extraordinary lesson which has interested and instructed every succeeding generation. He appears before us at first in the vigor of health, in the height of prosperity, and in the charm of good repute. But oh, the vanity of man! At a touch of God's finger, his flesh develops a festering mass of corruption; at a glance of God's eye, which searched him through and through, the total depravity of human nature at its best estate becomes apparent. "He abhors himself in dust and ashes." What next? Utter ruin? Nay, friend, *it is full redemption.*

IV. By such severe training THE AWAKENED ONE IS LED TO LOOK ALONE TO GOD FOR SALVATION, and to find the salvation he looks for. This is my last point, and I have no time left to enlarge upon it. What I want is that the truth may flash across your mind in a moment. There sits the man who is menaced with despair because every effort to extricate himself from the tangled web of his own strange experience has left him worse than before. Did I attempt to comfort him he would repel

my kindest expressions. And why? He knows that it is God who condemns him. In a British court of justice, when the judge sums up against the prisoner, small cheer can he get from the honeyed words of his counsel. But hark—"It is God that justifieth." Whom does he justify? The ungodly. He first condemns them in their own consciences; and then he justifies them according to his grace. If I receive the sentence of death in myself it is the earnest of deliverance in my Redeemer. My brother, has light beamed on your soul? I hope I have found you, and that the Lord has visited you with his salvation.

I want you to notice a simple fact which seems to me to have escaped your observation. When the Almighty justified Job he commended him, and pronounced a high encomium on his conduct. Whatever mistakes he made about himself or his circumstances, in one matter he was clear as a bell; *He has spoken right of me*, saith the Lord. (Job 42:7.) Eliphaz and his friends transgressed in this respect. Harken unto me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek it in yourselves, you are all on the wrong track. You begin below with *the whole duty of man*, and try to work upward: you are sure to fail. You should begin up yonder, with *the righteousness of God*; and then you could work downward to righteousness of daily life. God give you knowledge of salvation by grace, to the glory of his own name, and to your own sanctification, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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## **The Waterpots At Cana**

Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. - John 2:7

You know the narrative. Jesus was at a wedding feast, and when the wine ran short, he provided for it right bountifully. I do not think that I should do any good if I were to enter upon the discussion as to what sort of wine

our Lord Jesus made on this occasion. It was wine, and I am sure it was very good wine, for he would produce nothing quite but the best. Was it wine such as men understand by that word now? It was wine; but there are very few people in this country who ever see, much less drink, any of that beverage. That which goes under the name of wine is not true wine, but a fiery, brandied concoction of which I feel sure that Jesus would not have tasted a drop. The fire-waters and blazing spirits of modern wine manufacturers are very different articles from the juice of the grape, mildly exhilarating, which was the usual wine of more sober centuries. As to the wine such as is commonly used in the East, a person must drink inordinately before he would become intoxicated with it. It would be possible, for there were cases in which men were intoxicated with wine; but, as a rule, intoxication was a rare vice in the Savior's times and in the preceding ages. Had our great Exemplar lived under our present circumstances, surrounded by a sea of deadly drink, which is ruining tens of thousands, I know how he would have acted. I am sure he would not have contributed by word or deed to the rivers of poisonous beverages in which bodies and souls are now being destroyed wholesale. The kind of wine which he made was such that, if there had been no stronger drink in the world, nobody might have thought it necessary to enter any protest against drinking it. It would have done nobody any hurt, be sure of that, or else Jesus our loving Savior would not have made it.

Some have raised a question about the great quantity of wine, for I suppose there must have been no less than one hundred and twenty gallons, and probably more. "They did not want all that," says one, "and even of the weakest kind of wine it would be a deal too much." But you are thinking of an ordinary wedding here, are you not, when there are ten or a dozen, or a score or two, met together in a parlour? An oriental wedding is quite another affair. Even if it be only a village, like Cana of Galilee, everybody comes to eat and drink, and the feast lasts on for a week or a fortnight. Hundreds of people must be fed, for often open house is kept. Nobody is refused, and consequently a great quantity of provision is required. Besides, they may not have consumed all the wine at once. When the Lord multiplied loaves and fishes, they must eat the loaves and fishes directly, or else the bread would grow mouldy, and the fish would be putrid; but wine could be stored and used months

afterwards. I have no doubt that such wine as Jesus Christ made was as good for keeping as it was for using. And why not set the family up with a store in hand? They were not very rich people. They might sell it if they liked. At any rate, that is not my subject, and I do not intend getting into hot water over the question of cold water. I abstain myself from alcoholic drink in every form, and I think others would be wise to do the same; but of this each one must be a guide unto himself.

Jesus Christ commenced the gospel dispensation, not with a miracle of vengeance, like that of Moses, who turned water into blood, but with a miracle of liberality, turning water into wine. He does not only supply necessaries, but gives luxuries, and this is highly significant of the kingdom of his grace. Here he not only gives sinners enough to save them, but he gives abundantly, grace upon grace. The gifts of the covenant are not stinted or stunted, they are neither small in quantity nor in quality. He gives to men not only the water of life that they may drink and be refreshed, but "wines on the lees well refined" that they may rejoice exceedingly. And he gives like a king, who gives lavishly, without counting the cups and bottles. As to one hundred and twenty gallons, how little is that in comparison with the rivers of love and mercy which he is pleased to bestow freely out of his bountiful heart upon the most needy souls. You may forget all about the wine question, and all about wine, bad, good, or indifferent. The less we have to do with it the better, I am quite sure. And now let us think about our Lord's mercy, and let the wine stand as a type of his grace, and the abundance of it as the type of the abundance of his grace which he doth so liberally bestow.

Now, concerning this miracle, it may well be remarked how simple and unostentatious it was. One might have expected that when the great Lord of all came here in human form he would commence his miraculous career by summoning the scribes and Pharisees at least, if not the kings and princes of the earth, to see the marks of his calling and the guarantees and warrants of his commission; gathering them all together to work some miracle before them, as Moses and Aaron did before Pharaoh, that they might be convinced of his Messiahship. He does nothing of the kind. He goes to a simple wedding among poor people, and there in the simplest and most natural way he displays his glory. When

the water is to be turned into wine, when he selects that as the first miracle, he does not call for the master of the feast even, or for the bridegroom himself or for any of the guests, and begin to say, "You clearly perceive that your wine is all gone. Now, I am about to show you a great marvel, to turn water into wine." No, he does it quietly with the servants: he tells them to fill the waterpots: he uses the baths: he does not ask for any new vessels, but uses what were there, making no fuss or parade. He uses water, too, of which they had abundance, and works the miracle, if I may so speak, in the most commonplace and natural style; and that is just the style of Jesus Christ. Now, if it had been a Romish miracle it would have been done in a very mysterious, theatrical, sensational way, with no end of paraphernalia; but, being a genuine miracle, it is done just as nearly after the course of nature as the supernatural can go. Jesus does not have the waterpots emptied and then fill them with wine, but he goes as far with nature as nature will go, and uses water to make the wine from; therein following the processes of his providence which are at work every day. When the water drops from heaven, and flows into the earth to the roots of the vine, and so swells out the clusters with ruddy juice, it is through water that wine is produced. There is only a difference as to time whether the wine is created in the cluster, or in the waterpots. Our Lord does not call for any strangers to do it, but the ordinary servants shall bring ordinary water; and while they are drawing out the water, or what appears to them to be water, the servants shall perceive that the water has been turned into wine.

Now, whenever you try to serve Jesus Christ do not make a fuss about it, because he never made any fuss in what he did, even when he was working amazing miracles. If you want to do a good thing, go and do it as naturally as ever you can. Be simple hearted and simple minded. Be yourself. Do not be affected in your piety, as if you were going to walk to heaven on stilts: walk on your own feet, and bring religion to your own door and to your own fireside. If you have a grand work to do, do it with that genuine simplicity which is next. akin to sublimity; for affectation, and everything that is gaudy and ostentatious, is, after all, mean and beggarly. Nothing but simple naturalness has a bout it a genuine beauty; and such a beauty there is about this miracle of the Savior.

Let all these remarks stand as a kind of preface; for now I want to draw out the principles which are hidden in my text; and then, secondly, when I have displayed those principles, I want to show how they should be carried out.

I. "Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water." WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES INVOLVED IN OUR LORD'S MODE OF PROCEDURE?

First, that, as a rule, when Christ is about to bestow a blessing he gives a command. This is a fact which your memories will help you to establish in a moment. It is not always so; but, as a general rule, a word of command goes before a word of power, or else with it. He is about to give wine, and the process does not consist in saying, "Let wine be," but it begins by a command addressed to men,—"Fill the waterpots with water." Here is a blind man: Christ is about to give him sight. He puts clay on his eyes, and then says, "Go to the pool of Siloam and wash." There is a man with his arm swinging at his side, useless to him: Christ is going to restore it, and he says, "Stretch forth thine hand." Ay, and the principle goes so far that it holds good in cases where it would seem to be quite inapplicable, for if it be a child that is dead he says, "Maid, arise;" or if it be Lazarus, who by this time stinks, being four days buried, yet he cries, "Lazarus, come forth." And thus he bestows a benefit by a command. Gospel benefits come with a gospel precept.

Do you wonder that this principle which is seen in the miracles is seen in the wonders of his divine grace? Here is a sinner to be saved. What does Christ say to that sinner? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Can he believe of himself? Is he not dead in sin? Brethren, raise no such questions, but learn that Jesus Christ has bidden men believe, and has commissioned his disciples to cry, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." And he bids us go and preach this word—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But why command them? It is his will to do so, and that should be enough for you who call yourself his disciple. It was so even in the olden times, when the Lord set forth in vision his way of dealing with

a dead nation. There lay the dry bones of the valley, exceeding many, and exceeding dry, and Ezekiel was sent to prophesy to them. What said the prophet? "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." Is that his way of making them alive? Yes, by a command to hear; a thing which dry bones cannot do. He issues his command to the dead, the dry, the helpless, and by its power life comes. I pray you, be not disobedient to the gospel, for faith is a duty, or we should not read of "the obedience of faith." Jesus Christ, when he is about to bless, challenges men's obedience by issuing his royal orders.

The same thing is true when we come away from the unconverted to believers. When God means to bless his people and make them blessings it is by issuing a command to them. We have been praying to the Lord that he would arise and make bare his arm. His answer is, "Awake, awake, O Zion." We ask that the world may be brought to his feet, and his reply is, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them." The command is to us the vehicle of the blessing. If we are to have the blessing of converts multiplied, and churches built up, Christ must give us the boon: it is altogether his gift, as much as it was his to turn the water into wine; yet first of all he says to us, "Go ye and proclaim my salvation unto the ends of the earth," for thus are we to fill the waterpots with water. If we be obedient to his command we shall see how he will work—how mightily he will be with us, and how our prayers shall be heard.

That is the first principle that I see here: Christ issues commands to those whom he will bless.

Secondly, Christ's commands are not to be questioned, but to be obeyed. The people want wine, and Christ says, "Fill the waterpots with water." Well, now, if these servants had, been of the mind of the captious critics of modern times, they would have looked at our Lord a long while, and objected boldly: "We do not want any water; it is not the feast of purifications; it is a wedding feast. We do not require water at a wedding. We shall want water when we are going up to the synagogue, or to the temple, that we may purify our hands according to our custom: but we do not want water just now: the hour, the occasion, and the fitness of things,

call for wine." But Mary's advice to them was sound—"Whatsoever he saith to you, do it." Thus, too, let us neither question nor cavil, but do his bidding straight away.

It may sometimes seem that Christ's command is not pertinent to the point in hand. The sinner, for instance, says, "Lord, save me: conquer in me my sin." Our Lord cries, "Believe," and the sinner cannot see how believing in Jesus will enable him to get the mastery over a besetting sin. There does not at first sight appear to be any connection between the simple trusting of the Savior and the conquest of a bad temper, or the getting rid of a bad habit, such as intemperance, passion, covetousness, or' falsehood. There is such a connection, but recollect, whether you can see the connection or not, it is yours "not to reason why," but yours to do what Jesus bids you do; for it is in the way of the command that the miracle of mercy will be wrought. "Fill the waterpots with water," though what you want is wine. Christ sees a connection between the water and the wine, though you do not. He has a reason for the pots being filled with water, which reason, as yet, you do not know: it is not yours to ask an explanation, but to yield obedience. You are, in the first instance, just to do what Jesus bids you, as he bids you, now that he bids you, and because he bids you, and you shall find that his commandments are not grievous, and in keeping of them there is a great reward.

Sometimes these commands may even seem to be trivial. They may look as if he trifled with us. The family were in need of wine; Jesus says, "Fill the waterpots with water." The servants might have said, "This is clearly a mere putting of us off and playing with us. Why, we should be better employed in going round to these poor people's friends, and asking them to contribute another skin of wine. We should be much better employed in finding out some shop where we could purchase more: but to send us to the well to fill those great waterpots that hold so much water does seem altogether a piece of child's play." I know, brethren, that sometimes the path of duty seems as if it could not lead to the desired result. We want to be doing something more; that something more might be wrong, but it looks as if we could thereby compass our design more easily and directly, and so we hanker after this uncommanded and perhaps forbidden course. And I know that many a troubled conscience thinks



that simply to believe in Jesus is too little a thing. The deceitful heart suggests a course which looks to be more effectual. "Do some penance: feel some bitterness; weep a certain amount of tears. Goad your mind, or break your heart": so cries carnal self. Jesus simply commands, "Believe." It does appear to be too little a thing to be done, as if it could not be that eternal life should be given upon putting your trust in Jesus Christ: but this is the principle we want to teach you—that when Jesus Christ is about to give a blessing he issues a command which is not to be questioned, but to be at once obeyed. If ye will not believe, neither shall ye be established; but if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

The third principle is this—that whenever we get a command from Christ it is always wisdom to carry it out zealously. He said, "Fill the waterpots with water," and they filled them up to the brim. You know there is a way of filling a waterpot, and there is another way of filling it. It is full, and you cannot heap it up; but still you can fill it up till it begins almost to run over: the liquid trembles as if it must surely fall in a crystal cascade. It is a filling fullness. In fulfilling Christ's commands, my dear brethren and sisters, let us go to their widest extent: let us fill them up to the brim. If it is "Believe," oh, believe him with all your might; trust him with your whole heart. If it is "Preach the gospel," preach it in season and out of season; and preach the gospel—the whole of it. Fill it up to the brim. Do not give the people a half gospel. Give them a brimming-over gospel. Fill the vessels up to the very brim. If you are to repent, ask to have a hearty and a deep repentance—full to the brim. If you are to believe, ask to have an intense, absolute, childlike dependence, that your faith may be full to the brim. If you are bidden pray, pray mightily: fill the vessel of prayer up to the brim. If you are to search the Scriptures for blessing, search them from end to end: fill the Bible-reading vessel up to the brim. Christ's commands are never meant to be done in a half-hearted manner. Let us throw our whole soul into whatever he commands us, even though, as yet, we cannot see the reason why he has set us the task. Christ's commands should be fulfilled with enthusiasm, and carried out to the extreme, if extreme be possible.

The fourth principle is that our earnest action in obedience to Christ is

not contrary to our dependence upon him, but it is necessary to our dependence upon him. I will show you that in a moment. There are some brethren I know who say, "Hem! you hold what you call revival services, and you try to arouse men by earnest appeals and exciting addresses. Do you not see that God will do his own work? These efforts are just your trying to take the work out of God's hands. The proper way is to trust in him, and do nothing." All right, brother. We have your word for it—that you trust in him and do nothing. I take the liberty not to be so very certain that you do trust him, for if I remember who you are, and I think I have been to your house, you are about the most miserable, desponding, unbelieving person that I know. You do not even know whether you are saved yourself nine times out of ten. Well now, I think you should hardly come and cry yourself up for your faith. If you had such a wonderfully great faith, there is no doubt whatever that according to your faith it would be unto you. How many have been added to your church through your doing nothing this year—that blessed church of yours, where you exercise this, blessed faith without works? How many have been brought in? "Well, we do not have very many additions." No, and I think you are not likely to have. If you go about the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom by inaction, I do not think that you go the way to work which Jesus Christ approves of. But we venture to say to you that we who go in for working for Christ with all our heart and soul, using any means within our reach to bring men in to hear the gospel, feel as much as ever you do that we cannot do anything at all in the matter apart from the Holy Spirit, and we trust in God, I think, almost as much as you do, because our faith has produced rather more results than yours has done. I should not wonder if it turns out that your faith without works is dead, being alone, and that our faith having works with it has been living faith after all. I will put the case thus: Jesus Christ says, "Fill the waterpots with water." The orthodox servant says, "My Lord, I fully believe that thou canst make wine for these people without any water, and by thy leave I will bring no water. I am not going to interfere with the work of God. I am quite certain that thou dost not want our help, gracious Lord. Thou canst make these waterpots to be full of wine without our bringing a single bucket of water, and so we will not rob thee of the glory of it. We will just stand back, and wait for thee. When the wine is made we will drink some of it and bless thy name; but meanwhile we pray thee have us excused, for pails are

heavy carrying, and a good many must needs be brought to fill all those waterpots. It would be interfering with the divine work, and so we would rather take our ease." Do you not think that servants who talked so would prove that they had no faith in Jesus at all? We will not say that it would prove their unbelief, but we will say that it looks very like it. But look at the servant there who, as soon as ever Jesus commands "Fill the waterpots with water," says, "I do not know what he is at. I do not see the connection between fetching this water and providing the feast with wine, but I am off to the well: here, hand me a couple of pails. Come along, brother; come along and help fill the baths." There they go, and soon come joyfully back with the water, pouring it into the troughs till they are full up to the brim. Those seem to me to be the believing servants who obey the command, not understanding it, but expecting that, somehow or other, Jesus Christ knows the way to work his own miracle. By our earnest exertions we are not interfering with him, dear friends; far from it. We are proving our faith in him if we work for him as he bids us work, and trust in him alone with undivided faith.

The next principle I must lay equal stress upon is this,—our action alone is not sufficient. That we know, but let me remind you of it yet again. There are these waterpots, these troughs, these baths: they are full, and could not be fuller. What a spilling of water there is! You see that in their trying to fill them the water runs over here and there. Well, all these six great baths are full of water. Is there any more wine for all that? Not a drop. It is water that they brought, nothing but water, and it remains water still. Suppose that they should take that water into the feast; I am half afraid that the guests would not have thought cold water quite the proper liquid to drink at a wedding. They ought to have done so; but I am afraid they were not educated in the school of total abstinence. They would have said to the master of the feast, "Thou hast given us good wine, and water is a poor finish for the feast." I am sure it would not have done. And yet water it was, depend upon it, and nothing else but water, when the servants poured it into the pots. Even so, after all that sinners can do, and all that saints can do, there is nothing in any human effort which can avail for the saving of a soul till Christ speaks the word of power. When Paul has planted and Apollos watered, there is no increase till God gives it. Preach the gospel, labor with souls, persuade, entreat, exhort; but

there is no power in anything that you do until Jesus Christ displays his divine might. His presence is our power. Blessed be his name, he will come; and if we fill the waterpots with water, he will turn it into wine. He alone can do it, and those servants who show the most alacrity in filling up the waterpots are among the first to confess that it is he alone who can perform the deed.

And now the last principle here is that although human action in itself falls short of the desired end, yet it has its place, and God has made it necessary by his appointment. Why did our Lord have these waterpots filled with water? I do not say that it was necessary that it should have been done. It was not absolutely necessary in itself; but in order that the miracle might be all open and above board, it was necessary; for suppose he had said, "Go to those waterpots and draw out wine," those who watched him might have said that there was wine there before, and that no miracle was wrought. When our Lord had them filled up with water, there remained no room for any wine to be hidden away. It was just the same as with Elijah, when, in order to prove that there was no concealed fire upon the altar at Carmel, he bade them go down to the sea, and bring water, and pour it upon the altar, and upon the victim, till the trenches were filled. He said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time; and he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time, and no possibility of imposture remained. And so, when the Lord Jesus bade the servants fill the waterpots with water, he put it beyond all possibility that he should be charged with imposture; and thus we see why it was necessary that they should be filled with water.

Moreover, it was necessary, because it was so instructive to the servants. Did you notice when I was reading it that the master of the feast, when he tasted the good wine, did not know where it came from. He could not make it out, and he uttered an expression which showed his surprise, mingled with his ignorance. But it is written, "The servants which drew the water knew." Now, when souls are converted in a church, it happens much in the same way with certain of the members, who are good people, but they do not know much about the conversion of sinners. They do not feel much joy in revivals; in fact, like the elder brother, they are rather suspicious of these wild characters being brought in: they consider

themselves to be very respectable, and. they would rather not have the lowest of people sitting in the pew with them: they feel awkward in coming so near them. They know little about what is going on. "But the servants which drew the water knew": that is to say, the earnest believers who do the work, and try to fill the waterpots, know all about it. Jesus bade them fill the vessels with water on purpose that the men who drew the water might know that it was a miracle. I warrant you, if you bring souls. to Christ you will know his power. It will make you leap for joy to hear the cry of the penitent, and mark the bright flash of delight that passes over the new-born believer's face when his sins are washed away, and he feels himself renewed. If you want to know Jesus. Christ's miraculous power you must go and--not work miracles, but just draw the water and fill the waterpots. Do the ordinary duties. of Christian men and women—things in which there is no power of themselves, but which Jesus Christ makes to be connected with his divine working, and it shall be for your instruction, and your comfort, that you had such work to do. "The servants which drew the water knew."

I think that I have said enough upon the principles which lie concealed within my text.

II. You must have patience with me while I try to apply these principles to practical purposes. LET US SEE HOW TO CARRY OUT THIS DIVINE COMMAND, "Fill the waterpots with water."

First, use in the service of Christ such abilities as you have. There stood the waterpots, six of them, and Jesus used what he found ready to his hand. There was water in the well; our Lord used that also. Our Lord is accustomed to employ his own people, and such abilities as they have, rather than angels or a novel class of beings created fresh for the purpose. Now, dear brothers and sisters, if you have no golden chalices, fill your earthen vessels. If you cannot consider yourselves to be goblets of rarest workmanship in silver, or if you could not liken yourselves to the best Sevres ware, it does not matter; fill the vessels which you have. If you cannot, with Elias, bring fire from. heaven, and if you cannot work miracles with the apostles, do what you can. If silver and gold you have none, yet such as you have dedicate to Christ. Bring water at his bidding,

and it will be better than wine. The commonest gifts can be made to serve Christ's purpose. Just as he took a few loaves and fishes, and fed the crowd with them, so will he take your six waterpots and the water, and do his wine-making therewith.

Thus, you see, they improved what they had; for the waterpots were empty, but they filled them. There are a good many brethren here from the College to-night, and they are trying to improve their gifts and their abilities. I think you do right, my brethren. But I have heard some people say, "The Lord Jesus does not want your learning." No, it is very likely that he does not, any more than he needed the water: but then he certainly does not want your stupidity and your ignorance, and he does not want your rough, uncultivated ways of speaking. He did not seek for empty pitchers on this occasion; he would have them full, and the servants did well to fill them. Our Lord to-day does not want empty heads in his ministers, nor empty hearts; so, my brethren, fill your waterpots with water. Work away, and study away, and learn all you can, and fill the waterpots with water. "Oh," somebody will say, "but how are such studies to lead to the conversion of men? Conversion is like wine, and all that these young fellows will learn will be like water." You are right; but still I bid these students fill the waterpots with water, and expect the Lord Jesus to turn the water into wine. He can sanctify human knowledge so that it shall be useful to the setting forth of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. I hope that the day has gone by when it is so much as dreamed that ignorance and coarseness are helpful to the kingdom of Christ. The great Teacher would have his people know all that they can know, and especially know himself and the Scriptures, that they may set him forth, and proclaim his gospel. "Fill the waterpots with water."

Next, to apply this principle, let us all use such means of blessing as God appoints. What are they? First, there is the reading of the Scriptures. "Search the Scriptures." Search them all you can. Try to understand them. "But if I know the Bible, shall I be therefore saved." No, you must know Christ himself by the Spirit. Still, "fill the waterpots with water." While you are studying the Scriptures you may expect the Savior will bless his own word, and turn the water into wine.

Then there is attendance upon the means of grace, and hearing a gospel ministry. Mind you fill that waterpot with water. "But I may hear thousands of sermons and not be saved." I know it is so, but your business is to fill this waterpot with water, and while you are listening to the gospel God will bless it, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Take care to use the means which God appoints. Since our Lord has appointed to save men by the preaching of the word, I pray that he will raise up those who will preach without ceasing, in season and out of season, indoors and in the streets. "But they won't be saved by our preaching." I know that. Preaching is the water: and while we are preaching, God will bless it, and turn the water into wine. Let us distribute religious books and tracts. "Oh, but people won't be saved by reading them." Very likely not, but while they are reading them God may bring his truth to remembrance and impress their hearts. "Fill the waterpots with water." Give away abundance of tracts. Scatter religious literature everywhere. "Fill the waterpots with water," and the Lord will turn the water into wine.

Remember the prayer-meeting. What a blessed means of grace it for it brings down power for all the works of the church: fill that waterpot with water. I have not to complain of your attendance at prayer-meetings; but oh, keep it up, dear brethren! You can pray. Blessed be his name, you have the spirit of prayer. Pray on! "Fill the waterpots with water," and in answer to prayer Jesus will turn it into wine. Sunday-school teachers, do not neglect your blessed means of usefulness. "Fill the waterpots with water." Work the Sunday-school system with all your might. "But it will not save the children merely to get them together, and teach them of Jesus. We cannot give them new hearts." Who said that you could? "Fill the waterpots with water." Jesus Christ knows how to turn it into wine, and he does not fail to do it when we are obedient to his commands.

Use all the means, but take care that you use those means right heartily. I come back to that part of the text—"And they filled them up to the brim." When you teach the young ones in the Sunday-school, teach them well. Fill them to the brim. When you preach, dear sir, do not preach as if you were only half awake; stir yourself up; fill your ministry to the brim. When you are trying to evangelize the community, do not attempt it in a

half-hearted way, as if you did not care whether their souls were saved or not; fill them to the brim; preach the gospel with all your might, and beg for power from on high. Fill every vessel to the brim. Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well. Nobody ever yet served Christ too well. I have heard that in some services there may be too much zeal, but in the service of Christ you may have as much zeal as ever you will and yet not exceed, if prudence be joined therewith. "Fill the waterpots with water," and fill them to the brim. Go in for doing good with all your heart and soul and strength.

Further, in order to apply this principle, be sure to remember when you have done all that you can do, that there is a great deficiency in all that you have done. It is well to come away from tract-distributing and Sunday-school teaching and preaching, and go home and get to your knees, and cry, "Lord, I have done all that thou hast commanded me, and yet there is nothing done unless thou givest the finishing touch. Lord, I have filled the waterpots, and though I could only fill them with water, yet I have filled them to the brim. Lord, to the best of my ability, I have sought to win men for thyself. There cannot be a soul saved, a child converted, or any glory brought to thy name by what I have done, in and of itself; but, my Master, speak the miracle-working word, and let the water which fills the vessels blush into wine. Thou canst do it, though I cannot. I cast the burden upon thee."

And this leads me to the last application of the principle, which is—trust in your Lord to do the work. You see, there are two ways of filling 'waterpots. Suppose these people had never been commanded to fill the waterpots, and their doing it had had no reference to Christ whatever; suppose that it had been a freak of their own imagination, and they had said, "These people have no wine, but they shall have a bath if they like, and so we will fill the six waterpots with water." Nothing would have come of such a proceeding. There would have stood the water. The Eton school-boy said, "The conscious water saw its God and blushed," a truly poetic expression; but the conscious water would have seen the servants, and would not have blushed. It would have reflected their faces upon its shining surface, but nothing more would have happened. Jesus Christ himself must come, and in present power must work the miracle. It was



because he had commanded the servants to fill the waterpots with water that therefore he was bound, if I may use such an expression of our free King, bound to turn it into wine, for otherwise he would have been making fools of them, and they also might have turned round and said, "Why didst thou give us such a command as this?" If, after we have filled the waterpots with water, Jesus does not work by us, we shall have done what he bade us; but if we believe in him, I make bold to say that he is bound to come; for though we should be losers, and dreadful losers too, if he did not display his power, for we should have to lament, "I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for nought," yet we should not be such losers as he would be, for straightway the world would affirm that Christ's commands are empty, fruitless, idle. It would be declared that obedience to his word brings no result. The world would say, "You have filled the waterpots with water because he told you to do it. You expected him to turn the water into wine, but he did not do it. Your faith is vain; your whole obedience is vain; and he is not a fit Master to be served." We should be losers, but he would be a greater loser still, for he would lose his glory. For my part, I do not believe that a good word for Christ is ever spoken in vain. I am sure that no sermon with Christ in it is ever preached without result. Something will come of it, if not to-night, nor tomorrow; something will come of it. When I have printed a sermon, and seen it fairly in the volume, I have before long been delighted to hear of souls saved by its means. And when I have not printed, but only preached, a discourse, I have still thought, something will come of it. I preached Christ. I put his saving truth into that sermon, and that seed cannot die. If it shall lie in the volume for years, like the grains of wheat in the mummy's hand, it will live, and grow, and bear fruit. Consequently, I have heard but lately of a soul brought to Christ by a sermon that I preached twenty-five years ago. I hear almost every week of souls having been brought to Christ by sermons preached at Park Street, and Exeter Hall, and the Surrey Gardens, and therefore I feel that God will not let a single faithful testimony fall to the ground. Go on, brethren. Go on filling the waterpots with water. Do not believe that you are doing much when you have done your utmost. Do not begin to congratulate yourselves on your past success. All must come from Christ; and it will come from Christ. Do not go to the prayer-meeting and say, "Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but "--and so on. That is not how the passage runs. It

says just the contrary, and runs thus,—“Paul planteth, Apollos watereth, but God giveth the increase.” The increase is surely given by God where the planting and sowing are rightly done. The servants fill the waterpots: the Master turns the water into wine.

The Lord grant us grace to be obedient to his command, especially to that command, “Believe and live!” and may we meet him in the marriage-feast above to drink of the new wine with him for ever and ever. Amen and amen.

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## **The Warrant Of Faith**

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. - 1 John 3:23

The old law shines in terrible glory with its ten commandments. There are some who love that law so much, that they cannot pass over a Sabbath without its being read in their hearing, accompanied by the mournful petition, “Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.” Nay, some are so foolish as to enter into a covenant for their children, that “they shall keep all God’s holy commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life.” Thus they early wear a yoke which neither they nor their fathers can bear, and daily groaning under its awful weight, they labour after righteousness where it never can be found. Over the tables of the law in every Church, I would have conspicuously printed these gospel words, “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.” The true believer has learned to look away from the killing ordinances of the old law. He understands that “as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law

to do them." He therefore turns with loathing from all trust in his own obedience to the ten commands, and lays hold with joy upon the hope set before him in the one commandment contained in my text, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ."

We sing, and sing rightly too—

"My soul, no more attempt to draw  
Thy life and comfort from the law,"

for from the law death cometh and not life, misery and not comfort. "To convince and to condemn is all the law can do." O, when will all professors, and especially all professed ministers of Christ, learn the difference between the law and the gospel? Most of them make a mangle, and serve out deadly potions to the people, often containing but one ounce of gospel to a pound of law, whereas, but even a grain of law is enough to spoil the whole thing. It must be gospel, and gospel only. "If it be of grace, it is not of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it be of works, then it is not of grace, otherwise work is no more work."

The Christian then, turning his attention to the one command of the gospel, is very anxious to know first, what is the matter of the believing here intended; and secondly, what is the sinner's warrant for so believing in Christ; nor will he fail to consider the mandate of the gospel.

I. First then, THE MATTER OF BELIEVING, or what is it that a man is to believe in order to eternal life. Is it the Athanasian creed? Is it true, that if a man does not hold that confession whole and entire, he shall without doubt perish everlastingly? We leave those to decide who are learned in matters of bigotry. Is it any particular form of doctrine? Is it the Calvinistic or the Arminian scheme? For our own part we are quite content with our text—believing on "his Son Jesus Christ." That faith which saves the soul is believing on a person, depending upon Jesus for eternal life.

To speak more at large of the things which are to be believed in order to

justification by faith. they all relate to the person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must believe him to be God's Son—so the text puts it—"His Son." We must grasp with strong confidence the great fact that he is God: for nothing short of a divine Saviour can ever deliver us from the infinite wrath of God. He who rejects the true and proper Godhead of Jesus of Nazareth, is not saved, and cannot be, for he believes not on Jesus as God's Son. Furthermore, we must accept this Son of God as "Jesus," the Saviour. We must believe that Jesus Christ the Son of God, became man out of infinite love to man, that he might save his people from their sins, according to that worthy saying, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief. We must look upon Jesus as "Christ," the anointed of the Father, sent into this world on salvation's errand, not that sinners might save themselves, but that he, being mighty to save, might bring many sons unto glory. We must believe that Jesus Christ, Coming into the world to save sinners, did really effect his mission; that the precious blood which is shed upon Calvary is almighty to atone for sin, and therefore, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, since the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. We must heartily accept the great doctrine of the atonement—regarding Jesus as standing in the room, place, and stead of sinful men, bearing for them the terror of the law's curse until justice was satisfied and could demand no more. Moreover, we should rejoice that as Jesus Christ, by his dying, put away for ever the sin of his people, so by his living he gave unto those who trust in him a perfect righteousness, in which, despite their own sins, they are "accepted in the beloved." We are also taught, that if we heartily trust our soul with Christ, our sins, through his blood, are forgiven, and his righteousness is imputed to us. The mere knowledge of these facts will not, however, save us, unless we really and truly trust our souls in the Redeemer's hands. Faith must act in this wise: "I believe that Jesus came to save sinners, and therefore, sinner though I be, I rest myself on him; I know that his righteousness justifies the ungodly; I, therefore, though ungodly, trust in him to be my righteousness; I know that his precious blood in heaven prevails with God on the behalf of them that come unto him; and since I come unto him, I know by faith that I have an interest in his perpetual intercession."

Now, I have enlarged the one thought of believing on God's Son Jesus Christ. Brethren, I would not darken counsel by words without knowledge. "Believing" is most clearly explained by that simple word "trust." Believing is partly the intellectual operation of receiving divine truths, but the essence of it lies in relying upon those truths. I believe that, although I cannot swim, yonder friendly plank will support me in the flood—I grasp it, and am saved: the grasp is faith. I am promised by a generous friend that if I draw upon his banker, he will supply all my needs—I joyously confide in him, and as often as I am in want I go to the bank, and am enriched: my going to the bank is faith. Thus faith is accepting God's great promise, contained in the person of his Son. It is taking God at his word, and trusting in Jesus Christ as being my salvation, although I am utterly unworthy of his regard. Sinner, if thou takest Christ to be thy Saviour this day, thou art justified; though thou be the biggest blasphemer and persecutor out of hell, if thou darest to trust Christ with thy salvation, that faith of thine saves thee; though thy whole life may have been as black, and foul, and devilish as thou couldst have made it, yet if thou wilt honour God by believing Christ is able to forgive such a wretch as thou art, and wilt now trust in Jesus' precious blood, thou art saved from divine wrath.

II. The WARRANT OF BELIEVING is the point upon which I shall spend my time and strength this morning. According to my text, the warrant for a man to believe is the commandment of God. This is the commandment, that ye "believe on his Son Jesus Christ."

Self-righteousness will always find a lodging somewhere or other. Drive it, my brethren, out of the ground of our confidence; let the sinner see that he cannot rest on his good works, then, as foxes will have holes, this self-righteousness will find a refuge for itself in the warrant of our faith in Christ. It reasons thus: "You are not saved by what you do but by what Christ did; but then, you have no right to trust in Christ unless there is something good in you which shall entitle you to trust in him." Now, this legal reasoning I oppose. I believe such teaching to contain in it the essence of Popish self-righteousness. The warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ is not in himself in any sense or in any manner, but in the fact that he is commanded there and then to believe on Jesus Christ. Some

preachers in the Puritanic times, whose shoe latches I am not worthy to unloose, erred much in this matter. I refer not merely to Alleyne and Baxter, who are far better preachers of the law than of the gospel, but I include men far sounder in the faith than they, such as Rogers of Dedham, Shepherd, the author of "The Sound Believer," and especially the American, Thomas Hooker, who has written a book upon qualifications for coming to Christ. These excellent men had a fear of preaching the gospel to any except those whom they styled "sensible sinners," and consequently kept hundreds of their hearers sitting in darkness when they might have rejoiced in the light. They preached repentance and hatred of sin as the warrant of a sinner's trusting to Christ. According to them, a sinner might reason thus—"I possess such-and-such a degree of sensibility on account of sin, therefore I have a right to trust in Christ." Now, I venture to affirm that such reasoning is seasoned with fatal error. Whoever preaches in this fashion may preach much of the gospel, but the whole gospel of the free grace of God in its fulness he has yet to learn. In our own day certain preachers assure us that a man must be regenerated before we may bid him believe in Jesus Christ; some degree of a work of grace in the heart being, in their judgment, the only warrant to believe. This also is false. It takes away a gospel for sinners and offers us a gospel for saints. It is anything but a ministry of free grace.

Others say that the warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ is his election. Now, as his election cannot possibly be known by any man until he has believed, this is virtually preaching that nobody has any known warrant for believing at all. If I cannot possibly know my election before I believe—and yet the minister tells me that I may only believe upon the ground of my election—how am I ever to believe at all? Election brings me faith, and faith is the evidence of my election; but to say that my faith is to depend upon my knowledge of my election, which I cannot get without faith, is to talk egregious nonsense.

I lay down this morning with great boldness—because I know and am well persuaded that what I speak is the mind of the Spirit—this doctrine that the sole and only warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus is found in the gospel itself and in the command which accompanies that gospel,

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." I shall deal with that matter first of all, negatively, and then, positively.

1. First, **NEGATIVELY**; and here my first observation is that any other way of preaching the gospel-warrant is absurd. If I am to preach faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. But you will tell me that I ought to preach it only to those who repent of their sins. Very well; but since true repentance of sin is the work of the Spirit, any man who has repentance is most certainly saved, because evangelical repentance never can exist in an unrenewed soul. Where there is repentance there is faith already, for they never can be separated. So, then, I am only to preach faith to those who have it. Absurd, indeed! Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners. "Nay," saith one, "but we mean that a man must have some good desires towards Christ before he has any warrant to believe in Jesus." Friend, do you not know what all good desires have some degree of holiness in them? But if a sinner hath any degree of true holiness in him it must be the work of the Spirit, for true holiness never exists in the carnal mind, therefore, that man is already renewed, and therefore saved. Are we to go running up and down the world, proclaiming life to the living, casting bread to those who are fed already, and holding up Christ on the pole of the gospel to those who are already healed? My brethren, where is our inducement to labour where our efforts are so little needed? If I am to preach Christ to those who have no goodness, who have nothing in them that qualifies them for mercy, then I feel I have a gospel so divine that I would proclaim it with my last breath, crying aloud, that "Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—sinners as sinners, not as penitent sinners or as awakened sinners, but sinners as sinners, sinners "of whom I am chief."

Secondly, to tell the sinner that he is to believe on Christ because of some warrant in himself, is legal, I dare to say it—legal. Though this method is generally adopted by the higher school of Calvinists, they are herein unsound, uncalvinistic, and legal; it is strange that they who are so bold

defenders of free grace should make common cause with Baxterians and Pelagians. I lay it down to be legal for this reason: if I believe in Jesus Christ because I feel a genuine repentance of sin, and therefore have a warrant for my faith, do you not perceive that the first and true ground of my confidence is the fact that I have repented of sin? If I believe in Jesus because I have convictions and a spirit of prayer, then evidently the first and the most important fact is not Christ, but my possession of repentance, conviction, and prayer, so that really my hope hinges upon my having repented; and if this be not legal I do not know what is. Put it lower. My opponents will say, "The sinner must have an awakened conscience before he is warranted to believe on Christ." Well, then, if I trust Christ to save me because I have an awakened conscience, I say again, the most important part of the whole transaction is the alarm of my conscience, and my real trust hangs there. If I lean on Christ because I feel this and that, then I am leaning on my feelings and not on Christ alone, and this is legal indeed. Nay, even if desires after Christ are to be my warrant for believing, if I am to believe in Jesus not because he bids me, but because I feel some desires after him, you will again with half an eye perceive that the most important source of my comfort must be my own desires. So that we shall be always looking within. "Do I really desire? If I do, then Christ can save me; if I do not, then he cannot." And so my desire overrides Christ and his grace. Away with such' legality from the earth!

Again, any other way of preaching than that of bidding the sinner believe because God commands him to believe, is a boasting way of faith. For if my warrant to trust in Jesus be found in my experience, my loathings of sin, or my longings after Christ, then all these good things of mine are a legitimate ground of boasting, because though Christ may save me, yet these were the wedding-dress which fitted me to come to Christ. If these be indispensable pre-requisites and conditions, then the man who has them may truly and justly say, "Christ did save me, but I had the pre-requisites and conditions first, and therefore let these share the praise." See, my brethren, those who have a faith which rests upon their own experience, what are they as a rule? Mark them, and you will perceive much censorious bitterness in them, prompting them to set up their own experience as the standard of saintship, which may assuredly make us



suspicious whether they ever were humbled in a gospel manner at all, so as to see that their own best feelings, and best repentances, and best experiences in themselves are nothing more nor less than filthy rags in the sight of God. My dear brethren, when we tell a sinner that foul and filthy as he is, without any preparation or qualification, he is to take Jesus Christ to be his all in all, finding in him all that he can ever need, when we dare on the spot to bid the jailor just startled out of sleep, "Believe in Jesus," we leave no room for self-glorification, all must be of grace. When we find the lame man lying at the temple gates, we do not bid him strengthen his own legs. or feel some life in them, but we bid him in the name of Jesus rise up and walk; surely here when God the Spirit owns the Word, all boasting is excluded. Whether I rely on my experience or my good works makes little difference, for either of these reliances will lead to boasting since they are both legal. Law and boasting are twin brothers, but free grace and gratitude always go together.

Any other warrant for believing on Jesus than that which is presented in the gospel is changeable. See, brethren, if my warrant to believe in Christ lies in my meltings of heart and my experiences, then if to-day I have a melting heart and I can pour my soul out before the Lord, I have a warrant to believe in Christ. But to-morrow (who does not know this?) to-morrow my heart may be as hard as a stone, so that I can neither feel nor pray. Then, according to the qualification-theory, I have no right to trust in Christ, my warrant is clean gone from me. According to the doctrine of final perseverance, the Christian's faith is continual, if so the warrant of his faith must be always the same, or else he has sometimes an unwarranted faith which is absurd; it follows from this that the abiding warrant of faith must lie in some immutable truth. Since everything within changes more frequently than ever does an English sky, if my warrant to believe in Christ be based within, it must change every hour; consequently I am lost and saved alternately. Brethren, can these things be so? For my part I want a sure and immutable warrant for my faith; I want a warrant to believe in Jesus which will serve me when the devil's blasphemy comes pouring into my ears like a flood; I want a warrant to believe which will serve me when my lustings and corruptions appear in terrible array, and make me cry out, "O wretched man that I am;" I want a warrant to believe in Christ which will comfort me when I have no good

frames and holy feelings, when I am dead as a stone and my spirit lies cleaving to the dust. Such an unfailing warrant to belief in Jesus is found in this precious truth, that his gracious commandment and not my variable experience, is my title to believe on his Son Jesus Christ.

Again, my brethren, any other warrant is utterly incomprehensible. Multitudes of my brethren preach an impossible salvation. How often do poor sinners hunger and thirst to know the way of salvation, and there is no available salvation preached to them. Personally, I do not remember to have been told from the pulpit to believe in Jesus as a sinner. I heard much of feelings which I thought I could never get, and frames after which I longed; but I found no peace until a true, free grace message came to me, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." See, my brethren, if convictions of soul are necessary qualifications for Christ, we ought to know to an ounce how much of these qualifications are needed. If you tell a poor sinner that there is a certain amount of humblings, and tremblings, and convictions, and heart-searchings to be felt, in order that he may be warranted to come to Christ, I demand of all legal-gospellers distinct information as to the manner and exact degree of preparation required. Brethren, you will find when these gentlemen are pushed into a corner, they will not agree, but will every one give a different standard, according to his own judgment. One will say the sinner must have months of law work; another, that he only needs good desires; and some will demand that he possess the graces of the Spirit—such as humility, godly sorrow, and love to holiness. You will get no clear answer from them. If the sinner's warrant to come is found in the gospel itself, the matter is clear and plain; but what a roundabout plan is that compound of law and gospel against which I contend! And let me ask you, my brethren, whether such an incomprehensible gospel would do for a dying man? There he lies in the agonies of death. He tells me that he has no good thought or feeling, and asks what he must do to be saved. There is but a step between him and death—another five minutes and that man's soul may be in hell. What am I to tell him? Am I to be an hour explaining to him the preparation required before he may come to Christ? Brethren, I dare not. But I tell him, "Believe, brother, even though it be the eleventh hour; trust thy soul with Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." There is the same gospel for a living man as for a dying man. The thief on

the Cross may have had some experience, but I do not find him pleading it; he turns his eye to Jesus, saying, "Lord, remember me !" How prompt is the reply, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He may have had ongoing desires, he may have had deep convictions, but I am quite sure he did not say, "Lord, I dare not ask thee to remember me, because I do not feel I have repented enough. I dare not trust thee, because I have not been shaken over hell's mouth." No, no, no; he looked to Jesus as he was, and Jesus responded to his believing prayer. It must be so with you, my brethren, for any other plan but that of a sinner's coming to Christ as a sinner, and resting on Jesus just as he is, is utterly incomprehensible, or, if it is to be explained at all, will require a day or two to explain it ill; and that cannot be the gospel which the apostles preached to dying men.

Yet again, I believe that the preaching of alarms of conscience and repentance as qualifications for Christ, is unacceptable to the awakened sinner. I will introduce one, as Saltmarsh does in his "Flowings of Christ's Blood Freely to the Chief of Sinners." Here is a poor brother who dares not believe in Jesus. I will suppose him to have attended a ministry where the preaching is "If you have felt this, if you have felt that, then you may believe." When you went to your minister in trouble, what did he say to you? "He asked me whether I felt my need of Christ, I told him I did not think I did, at least I did not feel my need enough. He told me that I ought to meditate upon the guilt of sin, and consider the dreadful character of the wrath to come, and I might in this way feel my need more." Did you do so? "I did; but it seemed to me as if while I meditated upon the terrors of judgment, my heart grew harder instead of softer, and I seemed to be desperately set, and resolved in a kind of despair to go on in my ways; yet, some-times I did have some humblings and some meltings of heart." What did your minister tell you to do to get comfort then? "He said I ought to pray much." Did you pray? "I told him I could not pray; that I was such a sinner that it was of no use for me to hope for an answer if I could." What did he say then? "He told me I ought to lay hold upon the promises." Yes, did you do so? "No; I told him I could not lay hold upon the promises; that I could not see they were meant for me, for I was not the character intended; and that I could only find threatenings in the Word of God for such as I was." What did he say then? "He told me to be diligent in the use of the means, and to attend his ministry." What did

you say to that? "I told him I was diligent, but that what I wanted was not means, I wanted to get my sins pardoned and forgiven." What did he say then? "Why, he said that I had better persevere and wait patiently for the Lord; I told him that I was in such a horror of great darkness, that my soul chose strangling rather than life. Well then, he said, he thought I must already be truly penitent, and was therefore safe, and that sooner or later I should have hope But I told him, a mere hope was not enough for me, I could not be safe while sin lay so heavy upon me. He asked me whether I had not desires after Christ. I said I had, but they were merely selfish, Carnal desires; that I sometimes thought I had desires, but they were only legal. He said if I had a desire to have a desire, it was God's work, and I was saved. That did prop me up for a time, sir, but I went down again, for that did not do for me, I wanted something solid to rest on." And sinner, how is it now with you? where are you now? "Well, sir, I scarce know where I am, but I pray you, tell me what I must do?" Brethren, my reply is prompt and plain; hear it. Poor soul, I have no questions to ask you; I have no advice to give you, except this, God's command to you is, whatever you may be, trust to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Will you do it or no? If he rejects that, I must leave him; I have no more to say to him; I am clear of his blood, and on him the sentence comes, "He that believeth not shall be damned." But you will find in ninety-nine Cases out of one hundred, that when you begin to talk to the sinner, not about his repentings and his desirings, but about Christ, and tell him that he need not fear the law, for Christ has satisfied it; that he need not fear an angry God, for God is not angry with believers; tell him that all manner of iniquity was Cast into the Red Sea of Jesus' blood, and, like the Egyptians, drowned there for ever; tell him that no matter however vile and wicked he may have been, "Christ is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him;" and tell him that he has a right to come, be he who he may, or what he may, because God bids him come; and you will find that the suitability of such a gospel to the sinner's case, will prove a sweet inducement in the hand of the Holy Spirit, to lead that sinner to lay hold on Jesus Christ. O my brethren, I am ashamed of myself when I think of the way in which I have sometimes talked to awakened sinners. I am persuaded that the only true remedy for a broken heart is Jesus Christ's most precious blood. Some surgeons keep a wound open too long; they keep cutting, and cutting, and

cutting, till they cut away as much sound flesh as proud flesh. Better by half heal it, heal it at once, for Jesus Christ was not sent to keep open the wounds, but to bind up the broken in heart. To you, then, sinners of every sort and hue, black, hard-hearted, insensible, impenitent, even to you is the gospel sent, for "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," even the chief.

I might here pause, surely, but I must add yet one other point upon this negative mode of reasoning. Any other warrant for the sinner's faith than the gospel itself, is false and dangerous.

It is false, my brethren, it is as false as God is true, that anything in a sinner can be his warrant for believing in Jesus. The whole tenour and run of the gospel is clean contrary to it. It must be false, because there is nothing in a sinner until he believes which can be a warrant for his believing. If you tell me that a sinner has any good thing in him before he believes, I reply, impossible—"Without faith it is impossible to please God." All the repentings, and humblings, and convictions that a sinner has before faith, must be, according to Scripture, displeasing to God. Do not tell me that his heart is broken; if it is only broken by carnal means, and trusts in its brokenness, it needs to be broken over again. Do not tell me he has been led to hate his sin; I tell you he does not hate his sin, he only hates hell. There cannot be a true and real hatred of sin where there is not faith in Jesus. All the sinner knows and feels before faith is only an addition to his other sins, and how can sin which deserves wrath be a warrant for an act which is the work of the Holy Spirit?

How dangerous is the sentiment I am opposing. My hearers, it may be so mischievous us to have misled some of you. I solemnly warn you, though you have been professors of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for twenty years, if your reason for believing in Christ lies in this, that you have felt the terrors of the law; that you have been alarmed, and have been convinced; if your own experience be your warrant for believing in Christ, it is a false reason, and you are really relying upon your experience and not upon Christ: and mark you, if you rely upon your frames and feelings, nay, if you rely upon your communion with Christ, in any degree whatever, you are as certainly a lost sinner as though you relied upon

oaths and blasphemies; you shall no more be able to enter heaven, even by the works of the Spirit—and this is using strong language—than by your own works; for Christ, and Christ alone, is the foundation, and "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Take care of resting in your own experience. All that is of nature's spinning must be unravelled, and everything that getteth into Christ's place, however dear to thee, and however precious in itself, must be broken in pieces, and like the dust of the golden calf, must be strawed upon the water, and thou wilt be made sorrowfully to drink of it, because thou madest it thy trust. I believe that the tendency of that preaching which puts the warrant for faith anywhere but in the gospel command, is to vex the true penitent, and to console the hypocrite; the tendency of it is to make the poor soul which really repents, feel that he must not believe in Christ, because he sees so much of his own hardness of heart. The more spiritual a man is, the more unspiritual he sees himself to be; and the more penitent a man is, the more impenitent he discovers himself to be. Often the most penitent men are those who think themselves the most impenitent; and if I am to preach the gospel to the penitent and not to every sinner, as a sinner, then those penitent persons, who, according to my opponents, have the most right to believe, are the very persons who will never dare to touch it, because they are conscious of their own impenitence and want of all qualification for Christ. Sinners, let me address you with words of life: Jesus wants nothing of you, nothing whatsoever, nothing done, nothing felt; he gives both work and feeling. Ragged, penniless, just as ye are, lost, forsaken, desolate, with no good feelings, and no good hopes, still Jesus comes to you, and in these words of pity he addresses you, "Him that cometh to me I will in no Wise cast out." If thou believest in him thou shalt never be confounded.

2. But now, POSITIVELY, and as the negative part has been positive enough, we will be brief here. The gospel Command is a sufficient warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus Christ. The words of our text imply this—"This is the commandment." My brethren, do you want any warrant for doing a thing better than God's command to do it? The children of Israel borrowed jewels of silver and jewels of gold from the Egyptians. Many, as they read the Bible, find fault with this transaction; but, to my mind, if God bade them do it, that was enough of justification

for them. Very well; if God bid thee believe—if this be his commandment that thou believe—canst thou want a better warrant? I say, is there any necessity for any other. Surely the Lord's Word is enough.

Brethren, the command to believe in Christ must be the sinner's warrant, if you consider the nature of our commission. How runs it? "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." It ought to run, according to the other plan, "preach the gospel to every regenerate person, to every convinced sinner, to every sensible soul." But it is not so; it is to "every creature." But unless the warrant be a something in which every creature can take a share, there is no such thing as consistently preaching it to every creature. Then how is it put?—"He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Where is there a word about the pre-requisites for believing. Surely the man could not be damned for not doing what he would not have been warranted in doing. Our reaching, on the theory of qualifications, should not be, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" but "Qualify yourselves for faith, be sensible of your sin, be regenerated, get marks and evidences, and then believe." Why, surely, if I am not to sow the good seed on the stony places and among the thorns, I had better give up being a sower, and take to ploughing, or some other work. When the apostles went to Macedonia or Achaia, they ought not to have commenced with preaching Christ; they should have preached up qualifications, emotions, and sensations, if these are the preparations for Jesus; but I find that Paul, whenever he stands up, has nothing to preach but "Christ, and him crucified." Repentance is preached as a gift from the exalted Saviour, but it is never as the cause or preparation for believing on Jesus. These two graces are born together, and live with a common life—beware of making one a foundation for the other. I would like to carry one of those who only preach to sensible sinners, and set him down in the capital of the kingdom of Dahomey. There are no sensible sinners there! Look at them, with their mouths stained with human blood, with their bodies smeared all over with the gore of their immolated victims—how will the preacher find any qualification there? I know not what he could say, but I know what my message would be. My word would run thus—"Men and brethren, God, who made the heavens and the earth; hath sent his Son Jesus Christ into the world to suffer for our sins, and

whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." If Christ crucified did not shake the kingdom of Dahomey, it would be its first failure. When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland, you remember that they were months and months teaching the poor Greenlander about the Godhead, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the doctrine of sin and the law, and no converts were forthcoming. But one day, by accident, one of the Greenlanders happening to read that passage, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God," asked the meaning, and' the missionary, hardly thinking him advanced enough to understand the gospel, nevertheless ventured to explain it to him, and the man became converted, and hundreds of his countrymen received the Word. Naturally enough, they said to the missionaries, "Why did not you tell us this before? We knew all about there being a God, and that did us no good; why did not you come and tell us to believe in Jesus Christ before?" O my brethren, this is God's weapon, God's method; this is the great battering-ram which will shake the gates of hell; and we must see to it, that it be brought into daily use.

I have tried, on the positive side, to show that a free-grace warrant is consistent with the text—that it accords with apostolic custom, and is, indeed, absolutely necessary, seeing the condition in which sinners are placed. But, my brethren, to preach Christ to sinners, as sinners, must be right; for all the former acts of God are to sinners, as sinners. Whom did God elect? Sinners. He loved us with a great love, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. How did he redeem them? Did he redeem them as saints? No; for while we were yet enemies, he reconciled us unto God by the death of his Son. Christ never shed his blood for the good that is in us, but for the sin that is in us. "He laid down his life for our sins," says the apostle. If, then, in election and redemption, we find God dealing with sinners, as sinners, it is a marring and nullifying of the whole plan if the gospel is to be preached to men as anything else but sinners.

Again, it is inconsistent with the character of God to suppose that he comes forth and proclaims, "If, O my fallen creatures, if you qualify yourselves for my mercy, I will save you; if you will feel holy emotions—if you will be conscious of sacred desires after me, then the blood of Jesus



Christ shall cleanse you." There would be little which is godlike in that. But when he comes out with pardons full and free, and saith, "Yea, when ye lay in your blood, I said unto you Live"—when he comes to you, his enemy and rebellious subject, and yet cries, "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities." Why, this is divine. You know what David said, "I have sinned." What did Nathan say? "The Lord has put away thy sin, thou shalt not die," and that is the message of the gospel to a sinner as a sinner. "The Lord has put away thy sin; Christ has suffered; he has brought in perfect righteousness; take him, trust him, and ye shall live." May that message come home to you this morning, my beloved.

I have read with some degree of attention a book to which I owe much for this present discourse—a book, by Abraham Booth, called "Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners." I have never heard any one cast a suspicion upon Abraham Booth's soundness; on the contrary, he has been generally considered as one of the most orthodox of the divines of the last generation. If you want my views in full, read his book. If you need something more, let me say, among all the bad things which his revilers have laid to his door, I have never heard any one blame William Huntingdon for not being high enough in doctrine. Now, William Huntingdon prefaced in his lifetime a book by Saltmarsh, with which he was greatly pleased; and the marrow of its teaching is just this, in his own words, "The only ground for any to believe is, he is faithful that hath promised, not anything in themselves, for this is the commandment, That ye believe on his Son Jesus Christ." Now, if William Huntingdon himself printed such a book as that, I marvel how the followers of either William Huntingdon or Abraham Booth, how men calling themselves Calvinistic divines and high Calvinists, can advocate what is not free grace, but a legal, graceless system of qualifications and preparations. I might here quote Crisp, who is pat to the point and a high doctrine man too. I mention neither Booth nor Huntingdon as authorities upon the subject, to the law and to the testimony we must go; but I do mention them to show that men holding strong views on election and predestination yet did see it to be consistent to preach the gospel to sinners as sinners—nay, felt that it was inconsistent to preach the gospel in any other way.

I shall only add, that the blessings which flow from preaching Christ to sinners as sinners, are of such a character as prove it to be right. Do not see that this levels us all? We have the same warrant for believing, and no one can exalt himself above his fellow.

Then, my brethren, how it inspires men with hope and confidence; it forbids despair. No man can despair if this be true; or if he do, it is a wicked, unreasonable despair, because if he has been never so bad, yet God commands him to believe. What room can there be for despondency? Surely if anything could cut off Giant Despair's head, Christ preached to sinners is the sharp two-edged sword to do it.

Again, how it makes a man live close to Christ! If I am to come to Christ as a sinner every day, and I must do so, for the Word saith, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him;" if every day I am to come to Christ as a sinner, why then, how paltry all my doings look! what utter contempt it casts upon all my fine virtues, my preachings, my prayings, and all that comes of my flesh! and though it leads me to seek after purity and holiness, yet it teaches me to live on Christ and not on them, and so it keeps me at the fountain head.

My time flies, and I must leave the last head, just to add, sinner, whoever thou mayst be, God now commands thee to believe in Jesus Christ. This is his commandment: he does not command thee to feel anything, or be anything, to prepare thyself for this. Now, art thou willing to incur the great guilt of making God a liar? Surely thou wilt shrink from that: then dare to believe. Thou canst not say, "I have no right:" you have a perfect right to do what God tells you to do. You cannot tell me you are not fit; there is no fitness wanted, the Command is given and it is yours to obey, not to dispute. You cannot say it does not come to you—it is preached to every Creature under heaven; and now soul, it is so pleasant a thing to trust the Lord Jesus Christ that I would fain persuade myself thou needest no persuading. It is so delightful a thing to accept a perfect salvation, to be saved by precious blood. and to be married to so bright a Saviour, that I would fain hope the Holy Spirit has led thee to cry, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

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## **The Way Of Salvation**

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. - Acts 4:12

It is a very happy circumstance when the servants of God are able to turn everything to account in their ministry. Now, the apostle Peter was summoned before the priests and Sadducees, the chief of his nation, to answer for having restored a man who was lame from his mother's womb. Whilst accounting for this case of cure, or, if I may use the expression, for this case of temporal salvation, the apostle Peter had this thought suggested to him, "While I am accounting for the salvation of this man from lameness, I have now a fine opportunity of showing to these people, who otherwise will not listen to us, the way of the salvation of the soul." So he proceeds from the less to the greater, from the healing of a man's limb to the healing of a man's spirit; and having informed them once that it was through the name of Jesus Christ that the impotent man had been made whole, he now announces that salvation,—the great salvation, must be wrought by the selfsame means; "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

What a great word that word "salvation" is! It includes the cleansing of our conscience from all past guilt, the delivery of our soul from all those propensities to evil which now so strongly predominate in us; it takes in, in fact, the undoing of all that Adam did. Salvation is the total restoration of man from his fallen estate; and yet it is something more than that, for God's salvation fixes our standing more secure than it was before we fell. It finds us broken in pieces by the sin of our first parent, defiled, stained, accursed: it first heals our wounds, it removes our diseases, it takes away

our curse, it puts our feet upon the rock Christ Jesus, and having thus done, at last it lifts our heads far above all principalities. and powers, to be crowned for ever with Jesus Christ, the King of heaven. Some people, when they use the word "salvation," understand nothing more by it than deliverance from hell and admittance into heaven. Now, that is not salvation: those two things are the *effects* of salvation. We are redeemed from hell because we are saved, and we enter heaven because we have been saved beforehand. Our everlasting state is the effect of salvation in this life. Salvation, it is true, includes all that, because salvation is the mother of it, and carrieth it within its bowels; but still it were wrong for us to imagine that that is all the meaning of the word. Salvation begins with us as wandering sheep; it follows us through all our mazy wanderings; it puts us on the shoulders of the shepherd; it carries us into the fold; it calls together the friends and the neighbors; it rejoices over us; it preserves us in that fold through life; and then at last it brings us to the green pastures of heaven, beside the still waters of bliss, where we lie down for ever, in the presence of the Chief Shepherd, never more to be disturbed.

Now our text tells us there is only one way of salvation. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." I shall take first of all *a negative truth taught* here, namely, that there is no salvation out of Christ; and then, secondly, *a positive truth inferred*, namely, that there is salvation in Jesus Christ whereby we must be saved.

I. First, then, A NEGATIVE FACT. "Neither is there salvation in any other." Did you ever notice the intolerance of God's religion? In olden times the heathen, who had different gods, all of them respected the gods of their neighbors. For instance, the king of Egypt would confess that the gods of Nineveh were true and real gods, and the prince of Babylon would acknowledge that the gods of the Philistines were true and real gods: but Jehovah, the God of Israel, put this as one of his first commandments, "Thou shalt have none other gods besides me;" and he would not allow them to pay the slightest possible respect to the gods of any other nation: "Thou shalt hew them in pieces, thou shalt break down their temples, and cut down their groves." All other nations were tolerant the one to the

other, but the Jew could not be so. One part of his religion was, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God;" and as the consequence of his belief that there was but one God, and that that one God was Jehovah, he felt it his bounden duty to call all pretended gods by nicknames, to spit upon them, to treat them with contumely and contempt. Now the Christian religion, you observe, is just as intolerant as this. If you apply to a Brahmin to know the way of salvation, he will very likely tell you at once, that all persons who follow out their sincere religious convictions will undoubtedly be saved. "There," says he, "are the Mohammedans; if they obey Mohammed, and sincerely believe what he has taught without doubt, Alla will glorify them at last." And the Brahmin turns round upon the Christian missionary, and says, "What is the use of your bringing your Christianity here to disturb us? I tell you our religion is quite capable of carrying us to heaven, if we are faithful to it." Now just hear the text: how intolerant is the Christian religion! "Neither is there salvation in any other." The Brahmin may admit, that there is salvation in fifty religions besides his own; but we admit no such thing. There is no true salvation out of Jesus Christ. The gods of the heathens may approach us with their mock charity, and tell us that every man may follow out his own conscientious conviction and be saved. We reply—No such thing: there is no salvation in any other; "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"

Now, what do you suppose is the reason of this intolerance—if I may use the word again? I believe it is just because there is the truth both with the Jew and with the Christian. A thousand errors may live in peace with one another, but truth is the hammer that breaks them all in pieces. A hundred lying religions may sleep peaceably in one bed, but wherever the Christian religion goes as the truth, it is like a fire-brand, and it abideth nothing that is not more substantial than the wood, the hay, and the stubble of carnal error. All the gods of the heathen, and all other religions are born of hell, and therefore, being children of the same father, it would seem amiss that they should fall out, and chide, and fight; but the religion of Christ is a thing of God's—its pedigree is from on high, and, therefore, when once it is thrust into the midst of an ungodly and gainsaying generation, it hath neither peace, nor parley, nor treaty with them, for it is truth, and cannot afford to be yoked with error: it stands upon its own

rights, and gives to error its due, declaring that it hath no salvation, but that in the truth, and in the truth alone, is salvation to be found.

Again, it is because we have here the sanction of God. It would be improper in any man who had invented a creed of his own, to state that all others must be damned who do not believe it; that would be an overweening censoriousness and bigotry, at which we might afford to smile; but since this religion of Christ is revealed from heaven itself, God, who is the author of all truth, hath a right to append to this truth the dreadful condition, that who so rejecteth it shall perish without mercy; and in proclaiming that, apart from Christ, no man can be saved. We are not really intolerant, for we are but echoing the words of him that speaketh from heaven, and who declares, that cursed is the man who rejects this religion of Christ, seeing that there is no salvation out of him. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Now I hear one or two persons saying, "Do you imagine then, sir, that none are saved apart from Christ?" I reply, I don't imagine it, but I have it here in my text plainly taught. "Well but," saith one, "how is it concerning the death of infants? Do not infants die without actual sin? Are they saved? and if so, how?" I answer, saved they are beyond a doubt; all children dying in infancy are caught away to dwell in the third heaven of bliss for ever. But mark this—no infant was ever saved apart from the death of Christ. Christ Jesus hath with his blood bought all those who die in infancy; they are all regenerated, not in sprinkling, but probably in the instant of their death a marvellous change passes over them by the breathing of the Holy Spirit, the blood of Jesus is applied to them, and they are washed from all original corruption which they had inherited from their parents, and thus washed and cleansed they enter into the kingdom of heaven. Otherwise, beloved, infants would be unable to join in the everlasting song, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood." If infants were not washed in the blood of Christ, they could not join in that universal song which perpetually surrounds the throne of God. We believe that they are all saved—every one of them without exception—but not apart from the one great sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Another says, "But how about the heathen? They know not

Christ; are any of the heathen saved?" Mark, Holy Scripture saith but very little concerning the salvation of the heathen. There are many texts in Scripture which would lead us to infer that all the heathen perish; but there are some texts which, on the other hand, lead us to believe that there are some out of the heathen race who, led by God's secret spirit, are seeking after him in the dark, endeavoring to find out something they cannot discover in nature; and it may be that the God of infinite mercy who loves his creatures, is pleased to make to them these revelations in their own heart—dark and mysterious revelations concerning the things of heaven—so that even they may be made partakers of the blood of Jesus Christ, without having such an open vision as we have received, without beholding the cross visibly elevated, and Christ set forth crucified among them. It has been observed in many heathen lands, that before the missionaries have gone there, there has been a strong desire after the religion of Christ. In the Sandwich Islands, before our missionaries went there, there was a strange commotion in the minds of those poor barbarians; they did not know what it was, but they were all on a sudden discontented with their idolatries, and had a longing desire after something higher, better, and purer, than anything they had hitherto discovered; and no sooner was Jesus Christ preached, than they willingly renounced all their idolatries, and laid hold upon him to be their strength and their salvation. Now, we believe this was the Work of God's Spirit secretly inclining these poor creatures to seek after him; and we cannot tell but that in some sequestered spots where we had thought the gospel never has been preached, there may be some lone tract, some chapter of the Bible, some solitary verse of Holy Writ remembered, which may be sufficient to open blind eyes, and to guide poor benighted hearts to the foot of the cross of Christ. But this much is certain; no heathen, however moral—whether in the days of their old philosophy, or in the present time of their barbarism—ever did or ever could enter the kingdom of heaven apart from the name of Jesus Christ. "Neither is their salvation in any other." A man may seek after it and labor after it in his own way, but there he cannot possibly find it, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

But after all, my dear friends, it is a great deal better, when we are dealing with these subjects, not to talk upon speculative matters, but to come

home personally to ourselves. And let me now ask you this question, have you ever proved by experience the truth of this great negative fact, that there is no salvation in any other? I can speak what I do know, and testify what I have seen, when I solemnly declare in the presence of this congregation, that it is even so. Once I thought there was salvation in good works, and I labored hard, and strove diligently to preserve a character for integrity and uprightness; but when the Spirit of God came into my heart, "sin revived and I died," that which I thought had been good proved to be evil; wherein I thought I had been holy I found myself to be unholy. I discovered that my very best actions were sinful. that my tears needed to be wept over, and that my very prayers needed God's forgiveness. I discovered that I was seeking after salvation by the works of the law, that I was doing all my good works from a selfish motive, namely to save myself, and therefore they could not be acceptable to God. I found out that I could not be saved by good works for two very good reasons: first, I had not got any and secondly, if I had any, they could not save me. After that I thought, surely salvation might be obtained, partly by reformation, and partly by trusting in Christ; so I labored hard again, and thought if I added a few prayers here and there, a few tears of penitence, and a few vows of improvement, all would be well. But after forging on for many a weary day, like a poor blind horse toiling round the mill, I found I had got no farther, for there was still the curse of God hanging over me: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them;" and there was still an aching void in my heart the world could never fill—a void of distress and care, for I was sorely troubled because I could not attain unto the rest which my soul desired. Have you tried those two ways of getting to heaven? If you have, I trust the Lord, the Holy Spirit, has made you heartily sick of them, for you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven by the right door, until you have first of all been led to confess that all the other doors are barred in your teeth. No man ever will come to God through the straight and narrow way until he had tried all the other ways; and when we find ourselves beaten, and foiled, and defeated, then it is, that pressed by sore necessity, we betake ourselves to the one open fountain, and there wash ourselves, and are made clean.

Perhaps I have in my presence this morning some who are trying to gain



salvation by ceremonies. You have been baptized in your infancy; you regularly take the Lord's Supper; you attend your church or chapel; and if you knew any other ceremonies you would attend to them. Ah! my dear friends, all these things are as the chaff before the wind in the matter of salvation; they cannot help you one step towards acceptance in the person of Christ. As well might you labor to build your house with water, as to build salvation with such poor things as these. These are good enough for you when you are saved, but if you seek salvation in them, they shall be to your soul as wells without water, clouds without rain, and withered trees, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Whatever is your way of salvation—for there are a thousand different inventions of men whereby they seek to save themselves—whatever it may be, hear thou its death. knell tolled from this verse: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

II. Now, this brings me to the POSITIVE FACT which is inferred in the text, namely, that there is salvation in Jesus Christ. Surely, when I make that simple statement I might burst forth with the song of the angels, and say—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Here are a thousand mercies all bound up in one bundle, in this sweet, sweet fact, that there is salvation in Jesus Christ. I shall endeavor now merely to deal with any soul here present who entertains a doubt as to his own salvation in Jesus Christ; I shall single him out, and address him affectionately and earnestly, and endeavor to show him that he may yet be saved, and that in Christ there is salvation for him.

I know thee, sinner! Thou hast long been trying to find the road to heaven, and thou hast missed it. Hitherto thou hast had a thousand dazzling cheats to deceive thee, and never yet one solid ground of comfort for thy poor weary foot; and now, encompassed about by thy sins, thou art not able to look up. Guilt, like a heavy burden, is on thy back, and thy finger is on thy lip, for thou darest not yet cry for pardon; thou art afraid to speak, lest out of thine own mouth thou shouldst be condemned. Satan whispers in thine ear, "It is all over with thee; there is no mercy for such as thou art: thou art condemned, and condemned thou must be; Christ is able to save many, but not to save thee." Poor soul! what shall I

say unto thee but this—Come with me to the cross of Christ, and thou shalt there see something which shall remove thine unbelief. Seest thou that man nailed to yonder tree? Dost thou know his character? He is without spot or blemish, or any such thing: he was no thief, that he should die a felon's death: he was no murderer and no assassin, that he should be crucified between two malefactors. No; his original was pure, without a sin; and his life was holy, without a flaw. Out of his mouth there proceeded only blessing; his hands were full of good deeds, and his feet were swift for acts of mercy; his heart was white with holiness. There was nought in him that man could blame; even his enemies, when they sought to accuse him, found false witnesses, but even they "agreed not together." Dost thou see him dying? Sinner, there must be merit in the death of such a man as that; for without sin himself, when he is put to grief, it must be for other men's sins. God would not afflict and grieve him when he deserved it not. God is no tyrant that he should crush the innocent; he is not unholy that he should punish the righteous. He suffered, then, for the sins of others.

"For sins, not his own, he died to atone."

Think of the purity of Christ, and then see whether there is not salvation in him. Come now With thy blackness about thee, and look at his whiteness; come with thy defilement, and look at his purity; and as thou lookest at that purity, like the lily, and thou seest the crimson of his blood overflowing it, let this whisper be heard in thine ear,—he is able to save thee, sinner, inasmuch as though he was "tempted in all points like as we are," yet he was "without sin;" therefore, the merit of his blood must be great. Oh, may God help thee to believe on him!

But this is not the grand thing which should recommend him to thee. Remember, he who died upon the cross, was no less than the everlasting Son of God. Dost see him there? Come, turn thine eye once more to him. Seest thou his hands and feet trickling with streamlets of gore? That man is Almighty God. Those hands that are nailed to the tree, are hands that could shake the world; those feet that are there pierced have in them, if he willed to put it forth, a potency of strength that might make the mountains melt beneath their tread. That head, now bowed in anguish

and in weakness, has in it the wisdom of the Godhead, and with its nod it could make the universe tremble. He who hangs upon the cross yonder, is he without whom was not anything made that was made: by him all things consist—Maker, Creator, Preserver, God of providence, and God of grace—he who died for thee is God over all, blessed for ever. And now, sinner, is there any power to save in such a Saviour as this? If he were a mere man, a Socinian's Christ, or an Arian's Christ, I would not bid thee trust him; but since he is none other than God himself incarnate in human flesh, I beseech thee cast thyself upon him;

"He is able,  
He is willing, doubt no more."

"He is able to save unto the uttermost, them that come unto God by him."

Will you recollect again, as a further consolation for your faith that you may believe that God the Father has accepted the sacrifice of Christ. It is the Father's anger that you have the most cause to dread. The Father is angry with you, for you have sinned, and he has sworn with an oath that he will punish you for your offenses. Now, Jesus Christ was punished in the room, place, and stead of every sinner who hath repented. or ever shall repent. Jesus Christ stood as his substitute and scapegoat. God the Father hath accepted Christ in the stead of sinners. Oh, ought not this to lead you to accept him? If the Judge has accepted the sacrifice, sure you may accept it too; and if he be satisfied, sure you may be content also. If the creditor has written a full and free discharge; you, the poor debtor, may rejoice and believe that that discharge is satisfactory to you, because it is satisfactory to God. But do you ask me how I know that God has accepted Christ's atonement? I remind you that Christ rose again from the dead. Christ was put into the prison-house of the tomb after he died, and there he waited until God should have accepted the atonement.

"If Jesus ne'er had paid the debt,  
He ne'er had been at freedom set."

Christ would have been in the tomb at this very day, if God had not accepted his atonement for our justification; but the Lord looked down

from heaven, and he surveyed the work of Christ, and said within himself, "It is very good; it is enough;" and turning to an angel, he said, "Angel, my Son is confined in prison, a hostage for my elect; he has paid the price; I know he will not break the prison down himself; go, angel, go and roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher, and set him at liberty." Down flew the angel, and rolled away the massive stone; and rising from the shades of death the Saviour lived. "He died and rose again for our justification." Now, poor soul, thou seest God has accepted Christ; surely then, thou mayest accept him and believe on him.

Another argument, which may perhaps come nearer to thine own soul is this—many have been saved who were as vile as thou art. and therefore there is salvation. "No," sayest thou, "none are so vile as I am." It is a mercy that thou thinkest so, but nevertheless it is quite certain that others have been saved, who have been as filthy as thyself. Have you been a persecutor? "Yes," you say. Ay, but you have not been more blood-thirsty than Saul! And yet that chief of sinners became the chief of saints. Have you been a swearer? Have you cursed the Almighty to his face? Ay; and such were some of us who now lift up our voices in prayer, and approach his throne with acceptance. Have you been a drunkard? Ay, and so have many of God's people been for many a day and many a year; but they have forsaken their filthiness, and they have turned unto the Lord with full purpose of heart. However great thy sin, I tell thee, man, there have been some saved as deep in sin as thou art. And if even none have been saved, who are such great sinners as thou art, so much the more reason why God should save thee, that he may go beyond all that he ever has done. The Lord always delights to be doing wonders; and if thou standest the chief of sinners, a little ahead of all the rest, I believe he will delight to save thee, that the wonders of his love and his grace may be the more manifestly known. Do you still say that you are the chief of sinners? I tell you I do not think it. The chief of sinners was saved years ago; that was the Apostle Paul: but even if you should exceed him, still that word "uttermost" goes a little beyond you. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." Recollect, sinner, if thou dost not find salvation in Christ it will be because thou dost not look for it, for it certainly is there. If thou shalt perish without being saved through the blood of Christ, it will not be through a want of power in that blood to

save thee, but entirely through a want of will on thy part—even that thou wilt not believe on him, but dost wantonly and wilfully reject his blood to thine own destruction. Take heed to thyself, for as surely as there is salvation in none other, so surely there is salvation in him.

I could turn to you myself, and tell you that surely there must be salvation in Christ for you, since I have found salvation in Christ for myself. Often have I said, I will never doubt the salvation of any one, so long as I can but know that Christ has accepted me. Oh! how dark was my despair when I first sought his mercy seat, I thought then that if he had mercy on all the world, yet he would never have mercy on me; the sins of my childhood and my youth haunted me; I sought to get rid of them one by one, but I was caught as in an iron net of evil habits, and I could not overthrow them; and even when I could renounce my sin, yet the guilt still did cling to my garments—I could not wash myself clean; I prayed for three long years, I bent my knees in vain, and sought, but found no mercy. But, at last, blessed be his name, when I had given up all hope, and thought, that his swift anger would destroy me, and that the pit would open its mouth and swallow me up, then in the hour of my extremity did he manifest himself to me, and teach me to cast myself simply and wholly upon him. So shall it be with thee, only trust him, for there is salvation in him—rest assured of that.

To quicken thy diligence, however, I will conclude by noting that if you do not find salvation in Christ, remember you will never find it elsewhere. What a dreadful thing it will be for you if you should lose the salvation provided by Christ! For "how shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation?" To-day, very probably I am not speaking to very many of the grossest of sinners, yet I know I am speaking to some even of that class; but whether we are gross sinners or not, how fearful a thing it will be for us to die without first having found an interest in the Saviour! Oh sinner! this should quicken thee in going to the mercy seat; this thought, that if thou findest no mercy at the feet of Jesus, thou canst never find it any where else. If the gates of heaven shall never open to thee, remember there is no other gate that ever can be opened for thy salvation. If Christ refuse thee thou art refused; if his blood be not sprinkled on thee thou art lost indeed. Oh! if he keeps thee waiting a little while, still continue in

prayer; it is worth waiting for, especially when thou hast this thought to keep thee waiting, namely, that there is none other, no other way, no other hope, no other ground of trust, no other refuge. There I see the gate of heaven, and if I must enter it, I must creep on my hands and knees, for it is a low gate; there I see it, it is a strait and narrow one, I must leave my sins behind me, and my proud righteousness, and I must creep in through that wicket. Come sinner, what sayest thou? Wilt thou go beyond this strait and narrow gate, or wilt thou despise eternal life and risk eternal bliss? Or wilt thou go through it humbly hoping that he who gave himself for thee will accept thee in himself, and save thee now, and save thee everlastingly?

May these few words have power to draw some to Christ, and I am content. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

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## **The Way To God**

No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. - John 14:6

There are many men in this world, who so far from coming to God, are going as far as they can from him. Nothing would delight such men so much as to be clean rid of his presence, and to be entirely escaped from the bounds of his dominions. They would be content to make their bed in hell, if they could thus find a satisfactory answer to the question, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" Their hearts are at enmity with God; they hate his words and his ways. They know that God is angry with them; and they in return are angry with God. There is another class, who are but very little in advance of these. It cannot be said of them, with the same emphatic meaning, that

they actually hate God, but nevertheless they run from him. Perhaps they would indignantly repel a charge of abhorring God, but nevertheless, it is true of them, that they live in utter disregard of him. They say in their hearts "No God." God is not in all their thoughts. They may have sublime thoughts of nature, but few yearnings after him who made nature. They think much of time, and sense, and of the things that are below; but as to eternity and its substantial realities, the things that are unseen and everlasting, these they scarce can think upon. "Beware, ye that forget God," for your state is no better than the state of those I first described. "The wicked shall be turned into hell." those who hate God shall feel his torment, but so shall their companions, for thus runs the text, "The wicked shall be cast into hell with all the nations that forget God." It is not needful that you should hate God; that you should go to war with him in order to destroy yourself; the simple neglect of him is enough to ruin you. Thus has the apostle put it, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Ye need not fly upon the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler, ye need not rush upon the point of his glittering spear. Stand still and do nothing; regard him not; shut your eyes to his existence, and engross yourself with the grovelling toys of earth, and ye have as surely destroyed yourselves, as if ye had defied him to his face. Neglect of God is the open gate of damnation. To forget God is to ensure a portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. There is to be found, however, upon the face of the earth a third class of men, who would not like to be classed among the enemies of God and who can truly say that they are not utterly indifferent with regard to his favor. They would prefer to be numbered with those who are seeking God. Their desire is to go to their Father. They may not as yet, perhaps, be brought to that only way at coming which he has ordained, but still their profession is that they desire to worship God, and to come before him with thanksgiving, and show themselves glad in him. It is to this very character, one that has so much that is hopeful in it, that I shall address myself particularly this morning; but indeed, to every one in this assembly, would I desire to preach the great truth of the text. No man - desire he never so earnestly, labor he never so diligently - no man cometh unto the Father, but by Jesus Christ.

When Adam was perfect in the garden of Eden, God walked with him in

the cool of the day. God and man held the most intimate and affectionate intercourse with one another. Man was a happy creature, God was a condescending Creator, and the two met together and held sweet converse and communion. But from the moment when Adam touched the forbidden fruit, the way from God to man became blocked up, the bridge was broken down, a great gulph was fixed, so that if it had not been for the divine plan of grace, we could not have ascended to God, neither could God in justice come down to us. Happily, however, the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, had provided for this great catastrophe. Christ Jesus the Mediator had in old eternity been ordained to become the medium of access between man and God. If you want a figure of him, remember the memorable dream of Jacob. He laid him down in a solitary place, and he dreamed a dream, which had in it something more substantial than anything he had seen with his eyes wide open. He saw a ladder, the foot whereof rested upon earth, and the top thereof reached to heaven itself. Upon this ladder he saw angels ascending and descending. Now this ladder was Christ. Christ in his humanity rested upon the earth, he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. In his divinity he reaches to the highest heaven, for he is very God of very God. When our prayers ascend on high they must tread the staves of this ladder, and when God's blessings descend to us, the rounds of this marvellous ladder must be the means of their descent. Never has a prayer ascended to God save through Jesus Christ. Never has a blessing come down to man save through the same Divine Mediator. There is now a highway, a way of holiness wherein the redeemed can walk to God, and God can come to us. The king's highway, -

"The way the holy prophets went -  
The road that leads from banishment."

Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life.

Let us think for a moment of Jesus Christ as the way to God. The reason why man cannot come to God as he did in the garden is, that God is the same, but man is changed. God is as affectionate and as condescending as ever, but man is unholy and impure. Now, God is as pure as he is affectionate, while God is love it is just as true that God is infinitely just



and holy. His holy eyes cannot endure iniquity. If, then, a sinful creature could obtain access to God, if a rebellious creature could come into the immediate presence of the Most High, the effect must be disastrous in the extreme, for it would be a necessity of God's nature that he must utterly devour the creature in which he sees sin to be. Come into the presence of God, O sinner, and thou mightest as well march into a consuming fire. As Nebuchadnezzar's furnace burned the men who came to throw in the three holy children so must God, the consuming fire, burn and destroy us, even if we approach him with our prayers and thanksgivings, were it not for the interposition of Jesus Christ the Mediator. I say, this is a necessity of his nature. God is necessarily just, and justice cannot endure a sin. God is necessarily pure and holy: he might sooner cease to be God than cease to be pure. Now, the approach of impurity to him he must repel. Though no laws can bind him, yet the law of his nature never can be broken. His nature is, "I will by no means clear the guilty." He is slow to anger, he is great in power, and he is ready to forgive, but so long as guilt lies unforgiven he is also ready to punish, nay, he must punish or else cease to be. Consequently, no man can come to God as a sinner, unless he comes to him to be utterly destroyed, and that without remedy. You do not wish so to come to God. Happy is it, then, that we are enabled to tell to all our fellow-creatures of a way whereby we can come with joy and gladness to the Father, through Jesus Christ.

Now, this morning I shall have to divide my subject into three or four heads, and notice. -

I. Some men have a desire to come to God in worship, but there are many who desire to come to him the wrong way. You will sometimes meet with men who say, "Well, I do not go up to a church or chapel it is all ridiculous. I do not read the Bible; I have no faith in Christ; but I spend my Sunday in the open air - in that glorious temple which God has built. How divinely can I worship him there, while 'the lark, singing, up to heaven's gate ascends;' while every flower tells me of him whose breath perfumes it, and whose pencil paints; while all the cattle on a thousand hills are lowing forth his his; praise feel that in his temple doth everyone speak of his glory. What need for me to go and hear what you call the gospel, to join in the united song of praise, or bend my knee in prayer? I

worship the god of nature," says such a man, "not the God of revelation, but the god of nature." To this man we reply in the words of our text. Your thanksgiving and your praise are unacceptable to the God you worship, for that God has declared that no man cometh to him except through his Son, Jesus Christ. If then, you reject the way of access, and persist in bringing your prayers and your thanksgivings to him in a way which he does not acknowledge, remember, this shalt thou have as the answer to thy prayers and thy thanksgivings; thou shalt lie down in sorrow when God shall come to judge thee at the last great day. The true Christian can "go from nature up to nature's God," because he has come from nature's God down to nature. No man can climb the steeps, and "go from nature up to nature's God," unless he has first descended. God must take thee up into the mount where he dwells, first, and then thou canst come down, as Moses did from the top of Sinai; but, until he hath caught thee up thither, thy weary feet shall be exhausted, and thy strength decay, ere thou canst reach the God of nature through his works. Not my friend, you may be very sincere, as you imagine, in all your prayers and thanksgivings offered to the unpropitiated God of nature, in your garden, or in the fields, but, sincere though they be, they miss the mark; they are not shot from a bow which is strong enough to carry them to their desired target. They miss the mark, I say, and they shall fall back on thine own head to thy injury, but they shall not reach the throne of God.

But I observe here, that those men who talk about natural religion, as far as I know them, have no religion at all. I have noticed that the people who say, "I can worship God without attending any religious service, or believing in Jesus," do not really do so. I have sometimes had an opportunity on a Sunday of seeing many worshippers of the god of nature come down the lane where I reside. They consist, for the most part, of men who carry cages with them in which to catch birds on the common. There is another very respectable confraternity of men, who go to a boxing-place somewhere about there, where they spend their day in the bowling alley, and divers pugilistic encounters. These might adopt the cry of our genteel sinners, "We don't want to go into a church or chapel: we spend our Sunday in the worship of the god of nature." And very fine worship it is. I mostly find that those people who worship the "god of nature" worship the god of fallen nature - that is, the devil: not the God of

the glorious nature which is spread about us in the roaring sea, the rolling flood and the blooming meads - no, for the most part, the men who talk like that, know in their own conscience, that the god they worship, is their belly, their own lusts; and they glory in their shame. Don't believe all the nonsense that you hear from the Sunday league and all that, when they talk about worshipping the god of nature. Do they do it? Follow any of them into their privacy, and see whether any of this fine devotion of theirs, has any existence whatever, and I think you will discover at once, that they are greater hypocrites than the men they call hypocrites.

But again, is it not rather a suspicious circumstance, that these men who are so much ahead of us, that they worship the god of nature prefer the company, according to their own confession, of sheep, and bullocks and horses, and skylarks, to the presence of the saints of God? It looks rather suspicious, when a man finds more congenial company in a sheepfold than he does in an assembly of intelligent beings. It looks as if his own mind were brutish, when he can never get his spirit wound up into devotion till he gets into the midst of brutes. For my part, I feel more able to worship God in the great congregation, in the assembly of the saints, than anywhere else: "In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem; praise ye the Lord!" I know that all his works praise him. It is my joy to feel, that the changing seasons are but the varied God: that spring speaks of his tenderness and love, summer of his majesty, autumn of his bounty, and winter of his awful power: but still I know, that in his sanctuary I behold his glory yet more fully, and there I discover him to my heart's solace and delight. The true Christian can worship God in nature; but a man who has not learnt to worship God in his house, I am quite sure has not learnt to worship God anywhere. Natural religion is just a lie; men may say much about it, but it does not exist. Trace these Pharasaic members of the synagogue of Satan to their homes, and you will find that they make this natural religion an excuse for religion. It is an utter impossibility for any man to come to God in worship, save through Jesus Christ.

See, then, how my text shuts out of all acceptance with God all those who do not receive Christ to be the Son of God, the Mediator. Men sometimes say, "All are right; whether they are Jews or Gentiles, whatever they may

be, they are all right." Now, be it understood once for all, that the religion of Christ gives no heed to such a fancy. It claims for itself alone the solitary throne in the kingdom of religious truth. It uses no chains and racks to obtain an unwilling profession of its faith; but the unbeliever is not flattered with promises of security, but, rather, he is threatened with a doom dreadful beyond all thought. There is not, in this book of God, one single sentence which could lead me to believe that there is a way to God for the Mahomedan, for the Jew, or for any one who does not come to him through Jesus Christ. The religion of Christ is exclusive in this. It declares, that other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. It declares that no man can come to God except through Jesus. All the charity of which some men talk is deceitful and valueless. We can have no hope for those who receive not Christ. We pity them, we love them, we pray for them, we plead for them that they may be brought to this; but we dare not deceive them, we dare not tell them that God will hear their prayers, if they will not come to him through Jesus Christ. No, we will be as tolerant as Jesus was, but Jesus himself said, "He that believeth not must be damned," and whatever thou mayest be, - Unitarian, Socinian, infidel, deist, theist, or what-not, however sincere thy prayers, God abhors and hates them if thou dost not offer them through Jesus Christ, the one way between the sinner and God.

II. Other men there are who, conselous that they cannot come to God as perfect beings in the crazy of worship, desire to approach him in the way of penitence. But mark, even in the way of penitence, no man can come to God except through Jesus Christ. Those tears in thine eyes, when Jesus the sun of righteousness shines on them, are as diamonds in the esteem of the God of mercy; but even thy tears, and sighs, and groans, cannot prevail with the heart of God, unless they be mingled with a humble faith in Jesus Christ his only Son. In vain thou weepest till thine eyes are red to blindness; in vain thou groanest till thy ribs burst with thine expanding heart of agony, in vain thou kneelest till thy knees are stiff with prayer: God hears thee not, he accepts thee not, until thou makest mention of Jesus the crucified, his Son, the Saviour of mankind. Oh! it is mournful to see how men try to approach God in any way but through Jesus Christ. You have the Romish church putting men to penance, in order that they may so come to God. It was but one day this week I went into a Romish

cathedral, and there, to my disgust and horror, I saw poor women on their knees, going entirely round the cathedral having as a penance to pray before a whole set of pictures that were exhibited upon the walls. Well, I thought, if this be acceptable to their God, I am sure it would not be to mine. To give these poor women the rheumatism, or something worse, in order that God might be pleased with them, is the most extraordinary way of going to work that I know of. What a God must theirs be, that is pleased with poor souls when they torture themselves. Behold the monk - if he would gratify his god, he must not wash himself; for their god is a god of filth, and according to their own confession, cleanliness is not acceptable to him. Again, he must fast - their god is a god of starvation; it is quite clear he is not our God, - for he is a God of bounty. The poor monk must flog himself: he must flagellate his poor back till the blood runs down in streams, their god delights in the blood of his creatures, evidently and nothing pleases him so much, according to their own confession, as for his creatures to torture themselves. Happily however, their god has nothing whatever to do with our God. Their god is an old Romish pagan demon that was cursed of old and is cursed now; but our God is a God who takes delight in the happiness of his creatures, who, if there be any merit anywhere, would sooner see it in our happiness than in our sorrow, although, mark you, there is no merit in either. When we come to God in penitence we must bring but one oblation, for there is but one way of offering acceptable penitence to God, and that is through Jesus Christ our Lord. We will imagine there is a man over yonder who is feeling that he has been guilty, but he desires to be forgiven. "Oh!" says he, "I know I am guilty; I feel that I deserve God's wrath. Well, I will promise I will never be drunk again; I will not swear make a resolution that I will be better." Ah! friend; ah! friend! you will never come to God in penitence that way. O man, that way - that way of works - is a way of death. The very first time thou putteth thy foot on it I can hear the low mutterings of the thunder-curse: "Cursed is every man that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Go on with thy resolves; try to carry them out; thou shalt find that this road of thine will grow more difficult every day. The more thou dost the more thou wilt have to do; when thou hast climbed a hill, thou wilt see a mountain beyond, when thou hast forded a stream, thou wilt see a sea before thee, and no means of crossing it. The way to heaven through good

works would be a very hard one, even if it were a possible one. Conscience is like the horse-leech - it always cries, "Give, give, give." Conscience is never satisfied with the best works that we can do; it always wants more. But ah, I remind thee, man, that if thou goest on in that way of works, and seekest to be forgiven through it, thy destruction is as sure as if thou didst run in the way of sin. Mark thee, man, the Jews of old would not accept the righteousness of Christ, and they went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit themselves to the righteousness of Christ, and hence they perished, and that without mercy. And so shall you. O turn from that way! God will not receive thee in it; turn from it! then. If you were perfect, and had never broken God's law at all, then might you be saved by the law; but one sin breaks the law to shivers, and thou canst not mend the breach. Thou art lost if thou standest on the footing of works. Come away! then, come away! come to the cross of Christ! There is no way to heaven but by Jesus Christ; come! both from thy works and thy sins; look to him and live; look to him and see thy sins forgiven; look to him, and behold thy penitence accepted, and a gracious answer given.

III. There are other men who feel, "Well, we know Jesus must forgive our sins, it is through his sufferings that I must be pardoned; but," say they, "we desire now to be acceptable to God all the days of our life; we will therefore endeavor to come to God in a way in which he shall accept us." Many there are that light upon a way like this, "We will be very scrupulous," say they, "in all our transactions, exact in our dealings with men, and bountiful in our liberality to God; in this way shall we be accepted. Christ," say they, "shall be trusted to take away our sins but we will have the clothing of ourselves with a robe of righteousness; we will let Christ wash us, and wash our works too, if he pleases; but at least we will be the manufacturers of our own virtues and excellencies. God shall accept us through what we do; Jesus shall make up the deficiency he shall darn a hole or two that may occur in the garment, but nevertheless we will stick to the old cloth throughout and though we do hear that our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, yet we will have them washed, and wear them over again, rags though they be." Now, mark, my hearers, as when we come to God first we must bring nothing with us but the blood of Christ, so when we come to him afterwards, we must still bring nothing

but the same offering. A guilty sinner, when he approaches God's throne, can never be pardoned, except by pleading the blood once shed by Christ, and the highest saint, the most eminent believer, can no more be accepted by God than the meanest sinner, unless he still pleads the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Arminian, despite his denial of it, has in his own mind, a notion that his acceptance with God in some measure depends upon his own actions. Although many Arminian divines say, that they do not believe this, yet they must nevertheless believe it; it lies at the very root and basis of their fallen doctrine. They do believe, that let the Christian fall into sin, God will cast him out of his family, and I say it follows as a necessary influence, that the acceptance of a Christian must on that theory, depend on good works; so that in coming to God he comes through his own good behavior, and not through what Jesus did. Now, mark, this is an egregious falsehood, and as damnable an error as if I were to preach that salvation was entirely by works. There is no part of the Christian's experience in which a Christian can deal with God otherwise than through Christ. At the beginning it is all through Christ; in the middle it is all through Christ; and in the end it must be the same. If it were possible for thee, my brother, to be clean rid of sin, yet thou couldst not come to God except through Christ. When thy faith shall grow into assurance, when the follies of thy life shall all be expunged, when thy character shall be saintly, when thy heart shall be perfectly sanctified, even then the means of access and the mode of acceptance of thy soul before God will remain unalterable and unchanged. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, the path for the sinner and the way for the saint. No road to God - even for the holiest man - no road to God's acceptance, but through Jesus, and through Jesus only.

Do we not each of us in ourselves at times an aptness to come to God in some other way than through Jesus Christ? "Now you have preached well," says Satan; "you have been successful in such-and-such a labor. Ah!" says the devil, "how liberal you have been in such-and-such a cause. Now go to God in prayer." And we go, and we pray with such assurance; we think we are sure to be heard. But perhaps without our knowing it, there is lurking at the bottom of our excellent fluency in prayer an evil thought that surely God will hear us, for we have been so diligent, and liberal. And on the other hand, when we have been committing sin, when

conscience chides us, then we go to the throne, and we are half afraid, because we say God will not hear us. Is not that still pride? Why, were we ever better than we are now? Were we not always, and are we not now, as bad as ever we can be? In ourselves is there anything that can commend us to God? Is not the very fact that when in our good state we come boldly, and when in our low state we come timidly, proof that there is lurking in us a secret suspicion that we are to come to God by something that is in us? Oh! if we could but learn this truth and stand to it, that our acceptance with God depends upon nothing that we do or can do, nothing that we can think, or feel, or be, but depends wholly and entirely and solely upon what Jesus is, and what he has done, and what he has suffered, let us once get that thought - and it is in the text - we shall then be able, by the divine assistance of the Holy Spirit, to come to God at all times with boldness, knowing that we were so coming through Christ, and therefore we might always come boldly to the throne of grace.

Have I here to-day? - I am sure I have - some timid soul that is afraid to come to God through Christ? Ah! my dear brother, I know thy fear, and I can pity thee; but I know thy fear, and I can blame thee too. What! art thou afraid to come to God through Christ, and dost thou want some one to speak to Christ for thee? Oh! foolish heart! You do need a Mediator in coming to God, but you do not need any in coming to Christ. Go to him just as you are, without making yourself any better; go straight away, rags, and sin, and leprosy, and blotches, and sores, and all, straight away to him. Do not be afraid that the Father will reject you if you come alone through him. Let me lead you my poor timid brother to this way. Come with me. Do you see yon cross? Do you mark that glorious man dying on it in agonies that cannot be described? Do you not think that those sufferings are enough to expiate the wrath of God? Why, hear him! Will you not believe what he says? - "It is finished!" he cries ere he gives up the ghost. Now, if Jesus thought it finished, do you not think it so? If he himself thought that he had done enough, is not that enough for you that is enough for him? Come boldly, for Jesus smiles upon you. His blood is dropping; his heart is still flowing with the blood and water. Come! none ever were cast out; shalt thou be the first? Those arms that are nailed to the cross are wide open, as if they would show thee that they can receive the biggest of sinners. Those feet that are nailed to the cross are fastened



there as if they meant to stop there, and wait to be gracious to thee. O see you his pierced side, it seems as if it said to thee, "My heart is not hard to reach. See there is a straight road to it opened by the Roman spear. Come, breathe thy sighs into my heart, and I will hear and answer." Come, soul! Come to this way. How safe it is, for o'er it hangs the banner of Jehovah's love; and on the ground is the bloodmark of the Saviour's footsteps. This gory pathway to the throne of God, I now entreat thee to enter. Jesus made it; Jesus smoothed it; Jesus dyed it with his blood. The stain ran; all along a purple clue. to guide thee through the labyrinths of all thy doubts and fears. Come, come away poor soul! Come put thy trust alone in Jesus, and then, thou need'st not come to God the Father with trembling and with dismay. God help thee, timid one, God help thee. Thou hast no need to despond: Jesus saith he will cast out none that come to him by faith.

IV. I shall not keep you much longer, but I must now observe, that there are others who desire to come to God in communion. You will meet every now and then with a devout man who has but very imperfect notions of the gospel, and who, nevertheless, has a kind of reverence for the living God. He is an astronomer, and he will tell you that an undevout astronomer is mad; he says, that while his eyes look through the telescope glass upon the wondrous worlds that float in ether, he communes with God, marvels at his power, and admires his matchless benevolence and skill. The geologist, too, will tell you, that when digging into the deep foundations of the world and bringing out those old inhabitants, who in days of yore stalked through gigantic forests, he feels he can talk with God the Eternal One; that those grey hairs of an ancient world remind him of the Ancient of days, and the bones of a buried generation, all remind him of the Eternal One, who was before all things, and by whom all things consist. Now, these men are sincere; but do not imagine for an instant that their devotion is acceptable, or that their communion is true and real, unless in this they tincture and savor their communion with the knowledge, that Jesus Christ is the only way of access to God. Oh, soul, if thou wouldest walk with God, as Adam did in Eden, and it is quite possible; if thou wouldest walk with him as Enoch did, and that is quite possible, too; if thou wouldest see him face to face, and talk to him as a man would talk with his friend, remember thou must be set in the cleft of the rock Christ Jesus, or else thou canst not do it. Once let a man stand in

that cleft and see Jesus' blood, then he can commune with God in nature readily enough. Standing at the foot of the mountain he may see that hill like a wedge piercing the ebon darkness, and his soul may climb the summit and enter into the invisible; he may look upon that awful summit as upon an ambassador sent from earth to heaven; and his spirit may seem to rise on the mountain top, until it appears to grasp the hand of the Almighty One. But mark, the steep summit of fellowship cannot be climbed, except Jesus Christ lend himself to be the sacred ladder, and gives strength to the weary footsteps of our faith. He is the way to God; he is the truth to guide us; he is the life to enable us to run in the road. Without Christ there is no way to communion, no truth in communion, and no life in our pretended fellowship. Christian, take heed that thou never triest to commune with God except through Jesus Christ. Never try to commune with him even through the Holy Spirit, if thou forgettest Christ. The Holy Spirit acts the communion; but still Christ is the medium through which it flows. The Holy Spirit runs through Christ as through a channel. As water from the conduit runs through the pipe, so fellowship must run through Jesus Christ. There can be no coming of God to us, and no going of our soul to God, except through the highway of communion, Jesus Christ, the man and yet the God.

V. And lastly, to conclude: Who is there among us who does not desire to come to God in heaven? Lives there a man with soul so dead that he has no pantings for another and a better world? Is there a heart so seared that it never longs to be at rest - an eye so blind that it never looks into the hereafter, and a soul so stolid that it never leaps with exulting spirit, in the prospect of a world of joy and happiness? The wild untutored savage of the woods looks to another world, and when some beloved one is buried, he lights a fire upon the grave, to light the spirit through the dreary shades of death, that it may find its way to paradise; and then he sits upon the grave, when the fire is quenched, and days of the spirit that is gone, and hopes for it that it has gone to the kingdom of the blessed, to the land of the hereafter. Never is he content, unless he hopes that the spirit of his beloved one is gone to a better land. And shall it be imagined that any of us who are living in a Christian country are shutting our eyes to the future, and never think of looking beyond the grave there are many here - nay, all of us are longing for another and a better world. O world of

woe, what wert thou, if thou wert not a stepping-stone to a world of bliss? O land of graves and shrouds, of pick-axe and of spade, what wert thou if we did not dive through thee into the land of light? O vale of tears, what wert thou, if it were not that thou art the pathway to the mountain of transfiguration? O valley of Baca, filled with tears of sorrow, till the pools thereof are overflowing! what wert thou, if thou didst not lead to the tabernacles of our God, the peaceful sanctuary in which we hope to dwell?

But there is no way to heaven, whatever our hopes may be, but through Christ. O spirit of man, there is no way to the gates of pearl but through the bleeding side of Jesus. These are the gates of paradise - these bleeding wounds. If thou wouldst find thy way to God's bright throne, find first thy way to Jesus' shameful cross; if thou wouldst know the way to happiness, tread in that path of misery which Jesus trod. What! attempt another way? Man, art thou mad enough to think that thou canst rend the posts, and bars, and gates of heaven from their perpetual places, and force thy way by thy created strength? The arm of God shall dash thee down to the nethermost pit. Or dost thou think to purchase with thy riches and thy gold a foothold in paradise? Fool! what is thy gold where streets are made of it, and where the gates are solid pearl - where the foundations are of jasper, and the walls whereof are precious gems? And dost thou think to get there by thy merits? Ah! fool that thou art, by pride fell the angels, and by thy pride thou fallest. In thy talking of merit thou confessest that thou art Lucifer himself incarnate. Away with thee! Heaven is not for such as thou art. But dost thou say, "I will leave my wealth after I have gone. I will build an hospital, or feed the poor." Then let men pay thee. Thou hast wrought for thy nation, let them pay the debt; let them rear the stony pillar, and set thy effigy upon the top thereof. If thou hast wrought for thy country, let thy country pay thee what they owe to thee. But God, what does he owe to thee? Thou hast forgotten him, thou hast despised his Son, thou hast rejected his gospel. Be thou warrior, statesman, patriot - let men pay thee; God owes thee nothing, and all thou canst do will not bribe him to admit thee to his palace, if thou comest not in the right way through Jesus Christ, who lived and died, and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of heaven at his girdle.

Come, now, ye that have nothing to bring, come to Christ this morning,

ye perishing, ye guilty, and ye lost. God a ambassador stands before you, and as though Christ did woo you, he pleads with you to come to Jesus now. Ye that are under conviction of sin, and want salvation, believe on him now. In thine heart poor sinner, say -

"Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come."

The invitation is freely given, the proclamation is openly made. My God is not a God of hatred and of anger; he is a God of love. He bids you who are thirsty, who are longing to see his face, he bids you now come; and he tells you, and he confirms the same with an oath - "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Come now! "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." O Spirit of God! draw sinners to Christ! O glorious One! do thou be pleased now to draw them to the Father, through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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## Weak Hands And Feeble Knees

Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. - Isaiah 35:3

It is the duty of all men to be careful of the sons of sorrow. There be some who from their very birth are marked by melancholy as her own. The silent shades of sorrow are their congenial haunts; the glades of the forest of grief are the only places where their leaf can flourish. Others there are who through some crushing misfortune are brought so low that they never hold up their heads again, but go from that time forth mourning to their graves. Some there be, again, who disappointed in their early youth, either in some fond object of their affections, or else in some project of their young ambition, never can dare to face the world, but shrink from contact with their fellows, even as the sensitive plant curls up its tendrils at the touch. In all flocks there must be lambs, and weak and wounded sheep; and among the flock of men, it seems that there must necessarily be some who should more than others prove the truth of Job's declaration, "man is born to trouble even as the sparks fly upwards." It is the duty then of those of us who are more free than others from despondency of spirit, to be very tender to these weak ones. Far be it from the man of courageous disposition, of stern resolve, and of unbending purpose, to be hard towards those who are timid and despairing. If we have a lion-like spirit, let us not imitate the king of beasts in his cruelty to those timid fallow deer that fly before him, but let us place out strength at their service for their help and protection. Let us with downy fingers bind up the wounded heart; with oil and wine let us nourish their fainting spirits. In this battle of life, let the unwounded warriors bear their injured comrades to the rear, bathe their wounds, and cover them from the storm of war. Be gentle with those that are desponding. Alas, it is not every man that has learned this lesson. There are some who deal with others with rough-handed thoughtlessness. "Ah," they say, "if such a one be so foolish as to be sensitive let him be." O speak not thus; to be sensitive, timid, and desponding, is ill enough in itself, without out being hard and untender

towards those who are so afflicted. Go ye forth, and do to others as ye would that they should do to you; and as ye would that others should in your hours of despondency deal with you tenderly and comfortably, so deal ye tenderly and comfortably with them.

But my text, especially commands the minister to deal tenderly with those of Christ's people who are in such a condition, and these are not a few, for although religion changes the moral temperament of men, it does not change the physical. A man who is weak in health before conversion will probably be as weak afterwards, and many a spirit that has a tendency to despondency, has exhibited that tendency after conversion. We do not profess that the religion of Christ will so thoroughly change a man as to take away from him all his natural tendencies; it will give the despairing something that will alleviate that despondency, but as long as that is caused by a low state of body, or a diseased mind, we do not profess that the religion of Christ will totally remove it. No, rather, we do see every day that amongst the best of God's servants, there are those who are always doubting, always looking to the dark side of every providence, who look at the threatening more than at the promise, are ready to write bitter things against themselves, and often put the bitter for sweet, and the sweet for bitter, erring against their own spirits and robbing themselves of comforts which they might enjoy. To those then, I shall have to speak this morning in the words of our text, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees."

There is a figure used in the text, and I shall keep to it. First, I shall attempt to show *the importance of hands and knees in going to heaven*. In the second place, I shall observe *the ill effect of having weak hands and feeble knees*; then note *the causes of those weak hands and feeble knees*; for in so doing I hope I shall be able to apply a cure.

I. And, now, first, we find in our text hands and knees mentioned. We may be quite sure that **THEY ARE VERY IMPORTANT IN GETTING TO HEAVEN**. The hands and knees, we must remember, are those parts of the body in which the effects of fear are the most easily seen. Of course the root of despondency and fear must lie in the heart; it is that which is first moved with terror. But afterwards these extremities, these limbs of

action, these modes of expressing the will of the heart begin to feel the weakness also. The hands hang down in terror, and the knees begin to tremble. We are always accustomed to describe a man when he is in a great fright, when some overwhelming danger appals him, as hanging down his hands or wringing them in despair, and as feeling his knees knocking together in the moment of his terror. Just so the prophet means, that wherever the Christian displays most his timidity and his dismay there we must be careful to apply the remedy of comfort. Now, it is the fact that when the Christian's heart begins to tremble, his hands of action grow weak, and his knees of prayer begin to tremble also; he becomes unable to do and unable to pray. He is weak in active service, and he becomes weak also in wrestling with his God. Hands and knees are the exhibitors of inward power. Now, there are some men whose fears are so great that they have become visible, and can no longer be concealed. There was a time when these sons of mourning were able to mask their sorrow with an outward cheerfulness, but now they cannot. The fear of the heart has glided into their hands and descended into their knees; and we see them hiding from us, as the hind, when smitten by the arrow, retires from the herd to bleed alone. To such as these, ye sons of consolation, are ye sent with words of pity and deeds of love.

But, note, the hands and knees are of the first importance because they represent active duty and supplication. The way to heaven is, through faith in Christ; but after we have believed in Christ the legitimate tendency of faith is active service. Although the Christian shall go to heaven through the blood of Christ, yet as a pilgrim he must walk there; and although he overcomes through the blood of the Lamb, yet as a warrior he must fight if he would reign. Active service is expected of every Christian. Christ does not put his children on a bed, and then carry them to heaven along a lazy road; but he gives them life and bids that life develop itself; he gives them strength, and commands them to use the strength in working out their own salvation. While he works in them, they are passive; but he then bids them be active and work out what he has beforehand wrought in. He is no Christian who does not seek to serve his God. The very motto of the Christian should be "I serve." Christ's people are Christ's servants, and as the angels in heaven delight to fly at God's behests, so do the children of God delight to run in the way of his

commands. Hence, then, if the knees be weak and the hands be weak, it is little that we can do. We cannot run with the weak knee; we cannot labour with the weak hand. How can ye, the servants of Christ, how can ye lift the heavy burdens which ye have to carry, if your hands be weak and your knees totter? How can ye pull down the walls of your enemies if your hands tremble? How can ye smite your foemen with the sword of faith if your arm be weak? Look well, then, to this, for herein ye suffer exceeding loss; if in active service ye lose power and strength.

Again, the knees may signify power. When a man becomes timid and desponding, his closet very soon becomes the chamber of woe. Our closets are either Bethels of Bochims, - the house of God or else the house of weeping. Let a man become timid, distrustful, doubting, fearing, trembling - what little power has he when he comes before the mercy seat! He would believe in God, but he cannot appropriate the promise. He would lay hold of the angel, but all his sinews shrink, and he cannot wrestle. He would plead the promise, but his hand refuses to clutch it with an iron grasp. And he goes away crying, "Oh that I could pray! oh that I could believe in God! oh that I could succeed with God in prayer, and become as a prevailing prince. Alas! I am as weak as water, and I can do nothing." Herein lies the importance of having a strong hand that we may serve God, and of having a strong knee that we may wrestle with him in prayer, and get the blessing from him.

Note, again, that we may readily see what the prophet means by hands and knees, if we observe that a Christian, although his hopes are in heaven, stands upon the earth. It is with the hand of faith that the Christian lays hold upon that which is not seen, and endeavours to climb upwards to the skies; it is with his foot that he spurns the earth and all that it calls good or great. Let the Christian's foot be weak, and he cannot then despise the things that are seen: but he will be fixing his affection on things on earth and not on things above. Let his hand of faith, on the other hand, grow weak, and he cannot lay hold of the things that are in heaven. He will find it difficult to fix his hold above the stars, and feel that he is surely anchored; and very hard to climb the ladder Jacob saw. The foot represents the manner in which we deal with earth, we tread upon it boldly and courageously, despising its threats, contemning its



riches, contemning its honours. The weak knee cannot do this; we are then apt to bend, and cringe, and fawn before a wicked world to be slaves, where we ought to be freemen, and vile where we ought to be noble. Here again we see the importance of the hands and the knees.

But you will remember also that there are certain parts of the spiritual pilgrimage where hands and knees are absolutely required. John Bunyan represents Christian as coming to the foot of the hill Difficulty, and he says, "I looked then after Christian, to see him go up the hill, where I perceived he fell from running to going, and from going to clambering upon his hands and knees, because of the steepness of the place." Many such a place you and I have had to pass, brother Christians. Once we could run along the walls of salvation with triumphant faith; at other times we could walk even through the valley of the shadow of death with quiet confidence: but we have come to a place of trial and of extraordinary difficulty, where all speed failed us, and strength did not suffice. Then always on our knees in agony of prayer, and always on our hands in simplicity of faith, we climbed our weary way, often fearing lest we should fall backward to our destruction, but crying out, "Lord, let my knee find a resting place, let my hand hold on some projecting crag of promise, that there I may get a fast hold, lest I totter and fall. I can but ascend slowly. My heart followeth hard after thee, my spirit crieth after thee; Lord, help me! help me to climb this way, for back I cannot go." Every Christian who knows much about divine experience will understand what this means. He will often be brought into such a position that he can make but little progress; and he must think it quite enough if he can hold his ground against the desperate difficulties of his path. Hands and knees, then, in many ways, are essential for a Christian's comfort, his help, and his advance in the road to heaven.

II. Now, I shall have in the second place to show THE ILL EFFECT OF WEAK HANDS AND KNEES.

And, first, we have already hinted that one ill fruit of a Christian having weak hands and knees is this, that he will not himself be able to make much progress in the divine life. Christian men have never attained to what they are to be. They have only started on their pilgrimage, and after

they have gone their furthest, there is a yet-beyond towards which they must press with earnest heart, though with weary footsteps. How is it that some of you have made but little progress on the road to heaven? In looking back on your lives, come of you must acknowledge that you do not know much more about Christ now than you did six years ago. You do not enjoy greater nearness of access to him now than you did then. You are not more diligent in his service, or more fearless in his defence, than you were at a period which has long since elapsed. Perhaps you are compelled to feel that you have made no advance, or even have gone backward. Why is this? Is it not because your hands have become weak, your knees have become feeble? You have neglected prayer: you have forsaken your closets, you have not poured out your hearts before God with that frequency which once distinguished you, and you have not the faith you once possessed. You have not believed the promise as you ought to have done. You have not taken God at his naked word, and trusted to him as he deserved. And do you expect ever to make any progress in the road to heaven if you doubt your God? Do you imagine that you shall ever go far along in the heavenly pilgrimage if you neglect prayer? As well could you expect a plant to grow without air and water as to expect your heart to grow without prayer and faith. A poor blanched thing may be produced in a dark cellar; and so may you maintain a poor, blanched miserable existence, if you live absent from your God, and apart from that strength which faith can give you, but you can never attain the healthy verdure of grace. Oh, man, if thou wouldst grow in grace, if thou wouldst comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, look well to thy knees that they be strong, look well to thy hands that they hang not down.

The Christians of this age seem to me to be content with themselves, though there is infinite reason for the reverse. When I sit down and read the biographies of saints who have gone to heaven, I am astonished at myself, and I can only weep to think how far I am behind these men, and then how much further I must be behind my divine Master. Surely the examples of eminent saints should spur us onward. If Henry Martin could unreservedly devote his life and energies to Christ's service, why may not we? If Martin Luther with holy boldness could face the danger, why should not we? If Calvin with clear and eagle eye could read the

doctrines of the gospel amid the mists of error, why should not we? If men of more modern times have been able to endure opprobrium and disgrace for Christ's sake, or if they in private have been able to reach to the seventh heaven of communion with God, and have lived on earth as if they were in paradise, why should not we? There is no reason why the least saint in God's family should not outrun the greatest. Why look upon the saints of olden time as if they were so far above us that we can never equal them? Oh, dream not so! What Abraham was you may be. What the mightiest saint of that former life was, that ought you to be. You should never rest satisfied until you labour to surpass them all; yea, not even them, for you have not yet attained to the perfection which is in Christ. I know this age is one which is always satisfied if it gets barely enough to carry it to heaven. Where is that holy ambition which ought to stir the Christian soul to noble deeds? But few of us have felt it. We are drivelling dwarfs, content with the small height to which we have attained, forgetful of the steeps which tower above our heads. Up! Christian, up! The mount of holiness may be steep to climb, but, man, the hill of God is a high hill, even as the hill of Bashan. Up! up! for it is only on its summit that the calm air of heaven can be breathed, and the mists of earth entirely swept away. But weak hands and feeble knees, I know, in this age, are the reasons why so few Christians attain to any eminence in the ways and works of God.

Yet, again, weak hands and feeble knees have another ill effect. They prevent our doing any great wonder for the good of the world. Oh! what work there is to do in this poor world of ours. Imagine the first colonist landing in Australia. If it had been revealed to him in a vision that, in process of time, the whole of that huge island should be ploughed, and sown, and built upon, and inhabited, he would have said, "How is this to be done? how can it ever be effected?" And, even now, great as has been the progress in that country, if we were assured that in a few short years the whole of it would be brought under tillage, we should be apt to ask, but how shall it be done? We should, however, very readily perceive that there must be strong knees to dig, and strong hands to delve and plough, or else the work never could be accomplished. Many there must be, and the many must be strong, else the work cannot be done. And now, lift up your eyes, this day! behold, the whole world lies before you like one huge

untilled country. Who is to drive the ploughshare of divine grace through all the continents of this world? Who is to make this desert blossom like the rose? Who shall sow it with the good seed-corn of the kingdom of God? Where are the labourers who shall afterwards reap the whitening fields? Not weak and feeble knees; they cannot do it. Our knees must be strong and our sinews must be well braced, or else so great a work can never be accomplished. I believe one reason why the religion of Christ makes such little progress at this time, is because most of us are so weak. We find, a few centuries after Christ's death, his name was preached in every land; there was not one region of the known globe which had not heard the marvellous story of the cross. But, then, the followers of Christ were men who knew not what it was to tremble. They counted not their lives dear unto them; but leaving houses, and land, and families, for his name's sake, they went everywhere preaching the Word. But at this day we are not strong. We must all be assured of a livelihood before we will go forth to preach the Word; and, even then, if no one shall smile on us, how soon we cease the work. We commence an enterprise, but little difficulties appal us. How many does the pastor have to see, of little men and little women who come creeping to him, and whining because they find difficulties in serving Christ. Is not this because ye have weak hands and feeble knees? If ye had the strong knees of the apostles, and the mighty hands of the ancient martyrs, nothing could stand against you. Let God's children once become strong, and woe unto thee, Babylon, woe unto thee, O Rome; down must ye fall, ye castles of the enemy. The weakness of God's children is your hope, but their strength is your despair. Let them once believe firmly, let them pray earnestly, and behold Victory waits upon their banners, and dismay will seize your hearts ye enemies of Christ. We are at this time blessing God that great doors have been opened for the spread of the gospel. Hindostan, China, Japan, many lands we hope shall soon be visited by the Christian missionary. But are we not conscious that our opportunities are greater than our strength? Must not the Christian church confess that she has now a greater field, but she has, perhaps, fewer labourers than ever? The harvest is greater, but the labourers are fewer. Whence comes it? It comes from this fact, that through the church of Christ the weak hand and the feeble knee have become the general rule. "Oh," says one, "but surely there might be found some men to go out." And so say others as well as you, why are *you* not

the man to go? You say others should be thrust into the vineyard, and why stand back yourself? That torpor which seizes upon us, has seized upon others too. Let us not be hasty in condemning the rest of the church, till we have first tested ourselves. Do *we* not owe our all to Christ? Are we not *personally* his debtors? If we felt this debt, if we felt the value of souls, should not each of us give more towards the spread of this gospel? should we not pray more agonisingly? and would there not be found many of us who would be ready to labour more indefatigably. If the minister of Christ be weak, rest assured it is because the church itself is not strong. The ministry is but the index of the church. If we often fail in our pulpits, because they are not filled with fervent men, we may reply to you, if the pews were fervent, the pulpit would catch the flame. I am not speaking of water; I know that water runs down hill; but I am now speaking of fire, and fire ascends. Let the fire begin with you, be you in earnest, supplicating, striving, and wrestling with God in prayer, and the fire shall ascend to the pulpit, and we too, shall become as earnest as yourselves. Let us use no mutual recriminations. The whole church is alike at this present moment; it is all weak. There are but few and noble exceptions; but few who are strong in prayer, who are mighty in serving their God. And hence it is that Satan still retains the throne, still darkness broods over the nations, and still men are not saved. May God strengthen us, or what shall become of the world we wot not.

Again, weak hands and feeble knees very much dishonour Christ. I would say nothing to grieve the heart of any weak believer here present this morning, but still we must speak the truth. Want of faith and weakness in prayer dishonour Christ. Suppose you have a friend, and you say to him, "My friend, I have such confidence in you, that I will trust you with the title-deeds of my estate, and with all I have. Nay, more; I will trust you with my health, I will trust you with my life. Do what you will with me; I have such faith in your goodness and your wisdom that I am sure you will not be unkind, and will not err. I trust you." There is something honourable in faith to the object in whom it is reposed. Now, if you are able, with the strong hand of faith, to bring all you have and give it entire unto God, and say, "There, Lord, I surrender all to thee; do with me as thou wilt, and with mine too; take what thou wilt away; give me what thou pleasest, or withhold what thou choolest; I leave all in thy hand; I

can trust thee entirely; I know thou wilt make no mistake; I know thou wilt not treat me harshly; I leave all to thee; without word, or thought, or wish, I surrender all." If you can do this, then Christ is glorified; but if your hand is weak, and you are hiding away some choice thing that you cannot give up to him, if you do not stand fully to the surrender, but keep back something from him, then that weak hand brings dishonour upon God. So also does the feeble knee. Some one has given you a promise, that if you are in need and go to him, he will give whatever you want. You go up to his door, you knock timidly; and when he comes to meet you, you rush into the street and hide yourself, for you are ashamed that he should see you. Driven by necessity, however, you knock again; at last he comes, and you stand trembling before him. "Well," says he, "what do you want?" "You have given me a promise, sir, that when I am in need you will do so-and-so for me, and I really do not believe it: I have no confidence in you, and I do not like to ask." There would be nothing honorable in that to any man. How far different was the example of Alexander's courtier. The king said to him, "I will give to thee whatever thou requesteth;" and the man asked such a gift as almost emptied Alexander's coffers. "Ay," says the monarch, "it was a great thing for him to ask, but it is only a little thing for Alexander to give. I like the man's confidence in me, in using my word to its fullest extent." Now when the believer goes to his closet and bows there with feeble knee, and asks God to bless him and does not half believe that he will, he dishonours God. But, when a man goes up to his chamber, saying in his heart, "There is something that I want, and I am going to get it;" and he falls on his knees, and cries, "Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that such a thing is necessary to me; there is thy promise; 'do as thou hast said,' Lord; I know thou wilt give it me." And when he rises from his knees, and goes down and says to his friend, "The blessing will come; I have asked for it; I have prayed the prayer of faith, and God will hear me;" why, such a man honours God. I would remind you again of a great proof of all this. Look at Mr. Miller, at Ashleydown, near Bristol. Could he have built that house for orphans if he had a weak hand and a feeble knee? No. But he had a strong hand; he meant to serve his God by feeding and clothing orphans. On the other hand he had a strong knee. "Lord," he said, "I will do this enterprise - give me the means to do it." And he went to God, and did not doubt that he would do it. And, lo! thousands have rolled into his treasury, and he has never known lack;

and now, seven hundred children live under his care, and are fed and clothed to the honour of God. Let us also seek to have strong hands and mighty knees, and so shall we honour God. If we do not build an orphan house to his name, yet shall we raise our Ebenezer, and leave some trophy to the honour of his grace. These are some reasons why we should look well to hands and knees.

III. And, now, the last point was this: THERE ARE CERTAIN CAUSES OF WEAK HANDS AND FEEBLE KNEES, and in mentioning them, I shall endeavour to correct them.

Some Christians have weak hands and feeble knees because they are only infants. They are young Christians, they have not been converted long. God's family is like every other family; we do not expect the new-born convert to run alone at first. Perhaps, it will be months, say sometimes years, before he will be able to feel his feet. We thank God that there is a very comfortable promise for those who are babes in Christ, and cannot run alone: - "He shall carry the lambs in his bosom." "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms," says God, by the prophet Hosea. So ye, just born to God, must not despair because ye cannot as yet play the man with the promise; if ye cannot now wrestle with the angel, remember, God does not require wrestling from infants. He will not overdrive his lambs. He will not overdrive his lambs. He does not expect long marches from feeble feet. As you are but weak, you shall have lighter duties. As you are at present but tender, and young, you shall not have heavy labours to perform. But seek to grow in grace. Feed upon the unadulterated milk of the Word of God, and pray that he would bring you up from babes into young men, and from young men into perfect men in Christ Jesus.

A more frequent cause, however, of weak hands and feeble knees, is starvation, absolute starvation. Is there such a thing known in England as starvation? Yes, there is of a spiritual kind. There are many houses which are dedicated to the worship of God, that certainly never were dedicated to the profit of man. There are places into which a Christian might enter all the year round, without ever getting any understanding of the doctrines of God at all. Many a minister, in these days, of fine language,

and of polished rounded periods, resembles Nero, who when the city of Rome was starving, sent his galleys to Alexandria to bring back sand for the wrestlers, but not corn for hungry mouths. We have heard many a discourse that has been very fine indeed, as a moral essay, but it has had no food in it for the poor hungry mouths of God's people. One has but very little opinion of the present race of professing Christians when you see their frequent changes. I know men at this day who hear an Arminian with the greatest possible delight - "Such a dear, good, earnest man!" And if a Calvinist preaches the next Sunday, who contradicts every word the other man said - "Oh, he is such a precious creature!" because he happens to have a great flow of words. And then comes another who happens to be a hyper-Calvinist, and who says most extraordinary things - "He is a precious child of God, he preaches admirably!" And then there comes afterwards a Pelagian, or almost an Arian, and it is just the same - they take it all in, and delight in it. The reason is, because these people never taste the word of God at all. They look at it, but so long as they do not taste it and feed on it they know nothing of it. If they fed on the Word, they would have their senses exercised by reason of the use, and they would be able to discern between the good and the evil, the precious and the vile. Many of our Calvinistic preachers do not feed God's people. They believe in election, but they do not preach it. They think particular redemption true, but they lock it up in the chest of their creed, and never bring it out in their ministry. They hold final perseverance, but they persevere in keeping quiet about it. They think there is such a thing as effectual calling, but they do not think they are called effectually to preach it. The great fault we find with many is, that they do not speak right out what they do believe. You could not know if you heard them fifty times what were the doctrines of the gospel, or what was their system of salvation. And hence God's people get starved. And all the while the only remedy they have for the poor, weak, starving child of God, is a long whip. They are always cracking this whip with the loud sound of "do this! do that! and do the other!" If they would put the whip in the manger and feed God's people, then they would be able run the heavenly race. But now it is all whip and no corn, and no creature can subsist upon that. No child of God can ever grow strong in grace with mere exhortation, if it be not associated with good old-fashioned doctrine. I should like to hear all our pulpits sounding with the old-fashioned doctrine of John Owen, and



of such men as Bunyan, and Charnock, and Goodwin, and those men of olden times who knew the truth and dared to preach it fully. There were giants in those days. In every parish church in the city of London, and in this borough, too, you might have found men who were no children in divinity, but masterly men, each of them able to declare the word of God with the authority of a master in Israel. Now where find we such? We labour and we strive, we dig, we toil, we seek to be something, and we end in being nothing. And so it must be as long as hands are weak and knees are feeble; and so also must this be as long as good doctrine is denied us, and truth is kept back in the ministry. Feed God's children well; give them comfort; give them much to feed upon of the sweet things of the kingdom of God; and then they will grow strong, then they will begin to work.

But, again, fear is the great weakness of men's knees; doubt and distrust are the great relaxers of the strength of men's hands. He that hath faith in God is almost omnipotent; he that hath might in prayer (through the Holy Spirit), is quite so. He that believeth God with all his heart, there is none in the world that can match with him; and he that prayeth to God with all fervency of soul, may overcome the divine omnipotence itself, and move the arm that moves the world. Give a man faith, and he is in the midst of his enemies, like a lion amid a herd of dogs, he sweeps them away. With what an easy motion of his gigantic strength he rips them open and lays them dead. Nothing can stand against the man who believes. He plants his standard in the midst of rocks: he stands up to it and draws his sword, and cries, "Come one, come all: this rock shall fly from its firm base as soon as I; I am a match for you; I believe, and therefore have I spoken; I believe still, and therefore do I speak again; and I will not move though hell and earth come against me." But when a man becomes doubting and timid, where is his strength? The moment you doubt away goes your might. Strong feet make a man mighty, but a strong knee makes him mightier still. Christ's soldiers always win their battles on their knees. On their feet they may be conquered, but on their knees they are invincible. The praying legion is the thundering legion. Napoleon sent out his old guard in the last extremity of the battle of Waterloo. They had always carried victory with them, but they were at last defeated. But the old guard of the church of Christ is the legion of

prayer. The men that are mighty on their knees, these never have been defeated. When they march on in steady phalanx,, they are mightier than the push of bayonet, though British arms and British hearts should drive the bayonet home. Nothing can stand against men that pray. Let the church but once fall on its knees, and it shall have might to make the enemy fall on ITS knees - not in prayer, but in terror and dismay. Other warriors cry, "Up guards and at them!" Our cry is, "Down, guards, on your knees, and at them!" There, on your knees you become mighty; you draw near to the great seat of God, and then you draw near to the fountain of your strength and of your triumph. Fear, then, must be got rid of. We must labour with God, that he would be pleased to give us strong faith; that we may not doubt the word of God, nor doubt our interest, nor doubt his love, nor doubt our perseverance, but may believe and become mighty, having no longer weak hands and feeble knees.

Let me add one more thought only; namely this, that sloth may make a man weak in his hands and in his feet. Arms become strong by using them. The blacksmith gets a brawny hand by constantly using his hammer. He who climbs the mountain, or walks many a mile a day, becomes strong in his feet. Those who sit still and walk but a little while are wearied with a few miles; but those who have tramped through continents are not speedily to be wearied. Use makes us strong, but sloth enfeebles us. There are many of you who might be stronger if you laboured more. What a lazy corporation the church of Christ is! Taking it all round there must be, I think, more lazy people in the church of Christ than there is to be found in any other body of men. There are some that do valiantly and serve God, but how many of you there are who are quite content to occupy your seats and hear sermons without doing anything for God's cause. I do not hesitate to say that I believe there are many of you here who never won a soul to Christ in your lives, and scarcely ever tried to do so. You never lay poor souls to heart; you never go to God in heart and prayer for your poor perishing neighbours. Now and then, if you see a drunken man, you say "it is a great pity;" and if you hear of a murder, you say "it is a dreadful thing." But very little you care about it. You do not agonize and cry for the iniquity of this land. What do you do? You put a sixpence in the plate now and then, and that is your gift to God's cause; you sing a hymn or join in prayer, and that is your service to God. The custom with religious people

is, they pay their seat-rent, they attend the chapel, and then they have done their duty. And even in the ministry itself, you hear of a clergyman speaks of doing his duty, when he reads his prayer and when he has done his preaching. But we want to have warmer hearts, and more active lives, or else, surely, the church must die of sloth. Oh that every one of you would think you had something to do for Christ in this life, and that you must do it. If your knees are feeble, serve God the best you can with them; if your hands hang down, then do the best you can with the hands hanging down, and pray God to strengthen them, until you become mighty, and then you will be able to do more. But do something every one of you. If England expects every one to do his duty, how much more may the church demand of every professor that he should be doing something for his Master. Do not think it is enough to get good; *do good*. The candle must soon be extinguished that is shut up without fresh air. Give your light plenty of air, and it will burn all the brighter; and others seeing your light will be able to rejoice in it. You are not to eat your morsel alone; if you do you will become weak, for God hath so ordained it; that if we keep our religion to ourselves it will become feeble. The man who hoards his gold grows no richer, but he who puts it out to usury, will grow richer himself and help to enrich other men. Do so with your religion; put it out to usury, and you will grow richer, water men's souls, and you shall be watered. The most practical way for religious people is to do something; visit the sick, help the poor, teach the ignorant, succour the distressed; and in all these ways you will find that God will bless you, and your hands shall become strong, and your knees shall not totter. Above all, cry for the Holy Spirit to strengthen you, for without him all is vain.

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## **The Wedding Garment**

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how

camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen. - Matthew 22:11-14

Apparently the parable of the marriage feast would have been complete without this addition, but there was infinite wisdom in appending this sequel. This is seen practically in the experience of the church of God. Those who are permitted to see large additions to the church will find this parable of the wedding garment to be singularly appropriate and timely. Whenever there is a revival and many are brought to Christ, it seems inevitable that at the same time a proportion of unworthy persons should enter the church. However diligent may be the oversight there will be pretenders creeping in unawares who have no true part or lot in the matter, and hence, when the preacher is most earnest for the ingathering of souls to Christ, he needs to couple therewith a holy jealousy, lest those who come forward to make a profession of faith should be moved by carnal motives, and should not really have given their hearts to God. We must use the net to draw in the many, but all are not good fishes that are taken therein. On the threshing floor of Zion the heap is not all pure wheat, the chaff is mingled with the grain, and therefore the winnowing fan is wanted. God's furnace is in Zion, and there is good need for it, for the gold is yet in the ore and needs to be separated from the dross. Wood, hay, and stubble building is quick work, but it is a waste of effort; we need continually to examine our materials, and see that we use only gold, silver, and precious stones. It is most needful in times of religious excitement, to remind men that godliness does not consist in profession, but must be proved by inward vitality and outward holiness. Everything will have to be tested by a heart-searching God, and if, when he comes to search us, we are found wanting, we shall be expelled even from the marriage feast itself; for there is a way to hell from the very gates of heaven. In a word, it is well for all to be reminded that the enemies of the great King are not only outside the church, but they are even in it; while a part refuse to come to the wedding of his Son, others press into the banquet and are still his foes. May God grant that this subject may have a heart-searching effect. May it be as the north wind when it blows through

the marrow of the bones. May it lead us to desire to be searched and tried of God, whether we are truly in the faith, or are reprobates in his esteem.

The parable may be discoursed upon under five heads. Here is an enemy at the feast; here is the king at the feast; that king becomes the judge at the feast; and hence the enemy becomes the criminal at the feast; and swiftly is removed by the executioner at the feast.

#### I. We see in the text AN ENEMY AT THE FEAST.

He came into the banquet when he was bidden, but he came only in appearance, he came not in heart. The banquet was intended for the honour of the son, but this man meant not so; he was willing to eat the good things, but he intended no respect to the prince. He did not, like others, say, "I will not come, for I will not have this man to reign over me"; but he said, "I will come, but it shall be in such a way that the royal purpose shall not be served, but rather hindered. I shall be present as an onlooker, but take no share in the ceremony; I will, on the contrary, show that I have no care for the business in hand, except so far as it serves my turn." The man came in full exercise of self-will and self-love. He resolved to yield no homage, but to assert his independent self-sovereignty. He would show the king even at his table, where his bounties were so largely dispensed, that he was not afraid to affront him. When he came to the door of the feast, he found the guests all putting on the garment suitable for the marriage banquet. As here, in our own country, at a funeral, each mourner is expected to put on the articles of mourning which are provided, so at the wedding feast each person was expected to wear the bridegroom's favours, the garment which, as a badge, marked him as an attendant at the wedding, and as one who rejoiced in it. While others cheerfully put on this wedding dress the traitor would not; he resolved to defy the rules of the palace, and to insult the king by appearing in his own garments. He scorned to wear the livery of respectful joy, he preferred to make himself conspicuous by his daring insolence. The badge was intended to show that the wearer was a real participator in the joy of the feast, and for that very reason he would not put it on. He did not acknowledge the king nor the prince, nor care one atom about the gladsome event. He had no objection to be there, to eat the dainties, or

recline upon the seats, and see the pomp and the show, but he was only in it, and not of it; he was there in body, but not in spirit. Are there not crowds of people whose union to the church is nothing better than an insult to God? Custom sways them, and not sincere faith. They have no regard to the great Head of the church or to the heart-searching God. They treat church membership as a trifle, and have no tenderness of heart touching the matter. They, in effect, say, "The table of the Lord is contemptible." "Spots are they in our feasts, feeding themselves without fear."

Many a time the question has been asked: "What was the wedding garment?" It is a question which need not be curiously pried into. So many answers have been given that I conclude that if our Saviour had intended any one specific thing he would have expressed himself more plainly, so that we would have been able, without so much theological disputing, to have understood what he meant. It seems to me that our Lord intended much more than any one thing. The guests were bidden to come to the wedding to show their respect to the king and prince; some would not come at all, and so showed their sedition; this man came, and when he heard the regulation, that a certain garment should be put on, comely in appearance and suitable for the occasion, he determined that he would not wear it. In this act of rebellion, he went as far in opposition as they did who would not come at all, and he went a little further, for in the very presence of the guests and of the king he dared to declare his disloyalty and contempt. Alas, how many are willing enough to receive gospel blessings, but they are still at enmity with God and have no delight in the only Begotten Son. Such will dare to use the forms of godliness, and yet their hearts are full of rebellion against the Lord. The wedding garment represents anything which is indispensable to a Christian, but which the unrenewed heart is not willing to accept, anything which the Lord ordains to be a necessary attendant of salvation, against which selfishness rebels. Hence it may be said to be Christ's righteousness imputed to us, for alas, many nominal Christians kick against the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of the Saviour and set up their own self-righteousness in opposition to it. To be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but having the righteousness which is of God by faith, is a very prominent badge of a real

servant of God, and to refuse it is to manifest opposition to the glory of God, and to the name, person, and work of his exalted Son. But we might with equal truth say that the wedding dress is a holy character, the imparted righteousness which the Holy Spirit works in us, and which is equally necessary as a proof of grace. If you question such a statement, I would remind you of the dress which adorns the saints in heaven. What is said of it? "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Their robes therefore were such as once needed washing; and this could not be said in any sense of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; that was always perfect and spotless. It is clear then that the figure is sometimes applied to saints in reference to their personal character. Holiness is always present in those who are loyal guests of the great King, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Too many professors pacify themselves with the idea that they possess imputed righteousness, while they are indifferent to the sanctifying work of the Spirit. They refuse to put on the garment of obedience, they reject the white linen which is the righteousness of saints. They thus reveal their self-will, their enmity to God, and their nonsubmission to his Son. Such men may talk what they will about justification by faith, and salvation by grace, but they are rebels at heart, they have not on the wedding dress any more than the self-righteous, whom they so eagerly condemn. The fact is, if we wish for the blessings of grace, we must in our hearts submit to the rules of grace without picking and choosing. It is idle to dispute whether the wedding garment is faith or love, as some have done, for all the graces of the Spirit and blessings of the covenant go together. No one ever had the imputed righteousness of Christ without receiving at the same time a measure of the righteousness wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. Justification by faith is not contrary to the production of good works: God forbid. The faith by which we are justified is the faith which produces holiness, and no one is justified by faith which does not also sanctify him and deliver him from the love of sin. All the essentials of the Christian character may be understood as making up the great wedding garment. In one word, we put on Christ, and he is "made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

The wedding garment is simply mentioned here as being a test of loyalty to those who came to the marriage feast, and as a mode by which

rebellion was avowed and loyalty made apparent. Here was a man then who came into the gospel feast, and yet refused to comply with the command which related to that feast. He willfully preferred self to God, his heart was full of enmity and pride, he despised the gifts of grace, he scorned the rule of love, he stood a defiant rebel even at the banquet of mercy which his king had spread.

His sin lay, first of all, in coming in there at all without the wedding garment. If he did not mean to be of one heart with his fellow guests and his lord, why did he come? If a man does not intend to yield himself up to God's will, why does he profess to be of God's church? If a man is not saved by the righteousness of Christ, why does he profess to be a believer in Christ? If he will not be obedient to Christ's holy will, why does he pretend to be follower of Christ? It is a grave mistake for any person to imagine that he can be in the church of God to his own advantage unless his heart is renewed, unless he means what he declares, and sincerely loves the rule under which he professes to put himself.

The intruder's sin was aggravated by the fact that after he had unlawfully come into the feast he still continued there without the wedding robe. He does not appear to have had any compunction, or to have thought of amending his error. Only when the king came in and said, "Take him away," had the insolent rebel any idea of removing. Had he come in there, as I fear some of you have come into the church, under a mistake, thinking that there was no need of the wedding dress, when he looked around and saw all other persons wearing it, and observed that it was the peculiar mark of a guest, he would have felt uneasy and have gone to those who kept the royal wardrobe to get such a robe for himself; and then his sin in the matter would not have been laid to his charge. But he persisted in remaining where he was, and as he was. O my dear hearers, if you have already perpetrated the sin of union with the visible church of God without having the prerequisites, without being indeed submissive to God in heart and desirous to honour Christ, I entreat you, seek what is wanted, seek faith in God, seek a new heart, seek holiness of life, seek to become a loyal subject of the King, and be not content until you have these things, for the King will soon come in: he gives you time as yet, may he also give you grace to see to it that, being now where you ought never



to have been, you may yet make your position a right one by obtaining that which will justify you in remaining where you are. The guest in his own clothes was a speckled bird amongst that company, it was possible for him even then to have become one of them; but he would not, he continued to defy the King.

This persistence he retained though he probably knew the fate of those who had refused to come. He knew that the king had sent forth his armies and destroyed those wicked men who had molested his messengers, and yet he dared to recline at his ease in the very teeth, and defying the terrible power of the monarch. He made his brow as brass and hardened his heart as adamant, and forced his way into a position where his seditious spirit would be able to display itself conspicuously. He said within his soul, "I care nothing for this marriage. I will make sport of it; I will intrude myself into that feast and show my contempt. I will take the provisions, but the son shall have no honour from me, and the king shall not find me bend my will to his command." Thus he had the audacity to disport himself as a willful rebel at the feast of mercy. Are there any such among you here? The tendency will be for those who are not so to begin to condemn themselves. I know already one who has said, "I am that guest that had not on a wedding garment." She is not that one, for she is not even a member of the church, and therefore it cannot concern her; but many like her write bitter things against themselves. Another will be saying, "I am that one," whereas, if there be one that lives near to God and whose desire is to be like Christ, and to be in all things conformed to the divine will, he is the man. You who are most assuredly right will probably be suspicious that you are not, and you who are insincere and have never submitted yourselves to the will of God will probably say, "What does it matter? I am doing as well as others, I give as much, I attend the means as much, surely there can be no cause for concern in me." God grant that you may feel anxiety and fear before the Lord.

II. We pass on to the next point—THE KING AT THE FEAST.

"The king came in to see the guests." What an honour and privilege this was to the poor creatures whom his royal munificence had brought together! Was it not indeed the chief point of the entire festival? One of

our greatest joys is to sing -

The king himself comes near  
And feasts his saints today!

What would church fellowship be if it had not the fellowship of God with it? To sit with my dear brethren and rejoice in their love is exceedingly delightful; but the best wine is fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. The king did not provide the banquet and leave his guests to eat by themselves, but he "came in," and into every gospel church gathered according to his command the King will come. I am sure the most fervent desire of this church is that the King may personally visit us. We trust he is with us, but we want him yet more fully to reveal himself. Our cry is, "Come, great King, with all thy glorious power, with thy Spirit and with thy glorious Son, and manifest thyself to us as thou dost not unto the world."

When the king came into the banqueting chamber he saw the guests, and they also saw him. It was a mutual revelation. Ever sweet is this to the saints, that their God looks upon them; his look brings no terror to our minds when we are loyal and loving. "Thou God seest me" is sweet music. We desire to abide for ever beneath the divine inspection, for it is an inspection of unbounded love. He sees our faults, it is to remove them; he notes our imperfections, it is to cleanse them away. Behold me, O great King, and lift up thine eyes upon me, accepting me in the Beloved. What joy it is to us who are saved in Christ Jesus that we also can see him! "Through a glass darkly," I grant you we behold him, for as yet we are not fit to behold the full splendour of his Godhead! but yet how sweetly doth he reveal himself to our souls and unveil his eternal love. Then it is that the feast is most fully a banquet of wine, when the banner of love waves over us, and the king's voice fills us with unspeakable delight.

"The king came in to see his guests." This, I say, was the crowning point of the entire banquet. Observe that he came in after they were in their places. They did not see him before they had entered his halls. When an inferior entertains a superior he always advances to the door to meet him and waits until he comes. If her Majesty the Queen were entertained by

one of her nobles, he would be in waiting, and at the threshold would meet her; but when a superior entertains an inferior the inferior may take his seat at the table, and when all is ready the noble host will come in. It is so in the banquet of mercy. You and I see nothing of God, by way of communion with him, until first we have been brought in by the message of mercy to the marriage-feast of the gospel; for, indeed, until then a sight of God would strike us with terror -

"Till God in human flesh I see,  
My thoughts no comfort find;  
The holy, just, and sacred Three  
Are terrors to my mind;

But when Immanuel's face appear,  
My hope, my joy, begins;  
His name forbids my slavish fear,  
His grace removes my sins."

When I get to the banquet of mercy, then it is that I can dare to look at the King of kings, but not until then. What a joyous sight, a vision of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory as he appears in the gospel, feasting us upon his fatlings. An incarnate God makes God visible to us and makes us happy in the sight. "How canst thou see my face and live?" was the old question, but, behold, it is answered this day. At the marriage union of Christ with his people we see the face of the King in his beauty, and our souls not only live, but we have life more abundantly.

Observe, dear brethren, that the King has special times for this. He is not always in the festal chamber; to our sorrow we sometimes miss the King's presence at his table. We have the ordinances always, but we do not always enjoy the God of ordinances. The means of grace are abiding, but the grace of the means will come and go according to the sovereign good pleasure of our God. The King has his times of coming in. These are glad times to his people, but they are trying times to the mass of professors. When are these times? So far as unworthy guests are concerned, the times of God's visitation are those seasons when character is manifested.

All times and periods do not reveal character. A lion may lie all day asleep, you may scarce know but what it is tame; but when the night brings the time for it to go forth to its prey, then it howls, and displays its ferocity. And so an ungodly man may lie down in the church of God with the lambs of the flock, and nothing may lead you to suspect his true character, but when the time comes for him to make profit by sin, or to get pleasure by sin, or to escape from persecution by sin, then you find out what he is. These providences are the King's coming in to scrutinize the guests. Changes in the conditions of the church, changes in the condition of the individual, all sorts of providential events go to make up the great sieve by which the wheat and the chaff are separated.

A great and most solemn coming in of the King to see the guests is, when having looked over the church, unknown to us, he decides that such and such a hypocrite has had space enough for repentance and time enough for mischief, and must now be summoned to the dread tribunal by death. The time when the King comes in to see his guests is not the last judgment, for that is the coming of the Son and not of the Father, and if it were intended in the parable, we would read that the prince came in to see his guests. We are led to view the King himself as continually judging professors and detecting the rebels who place themselves among the saints; by this judgment of God men are taken away from the church in their transgressions, bound hand and foot, and cast into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. I do not know, my dear brethren, when God may be visiting this church, and taking away the men that are rebels in our midst, but I do know that when professors die it is not certain that all of them sleep in Jesus; but some of them are rooted up, like tares from among the wheat, and are bound up in bundles to burn. The division is going on constantly. The King's presence is known to believers in the joy which they feel, but it is made known to hypocrites by his cutting them off and appointing them their portion in eternal woe.

If, however, there is any one time when we may be quite sure that the King comes in to see the guests, it is after large ingatherings from the world, for notice here, when the servants had gathered in guests in large numbers, it was then that the king came in. Now it will be after the time

of revival which we are feeling just now, when I hope a great many will be added to the church, that the Lord will search and sift us. If there has been no visitation of the church before for purposes of love or judgment—for they go together—we shall be quite sure to have such a visit from the great Lord himself at this time.

### III. Solemnly think of THE JUDGE AT THE FEAST.

To all the rest at the festival he was the king, the beloved monarch, the munificent donor of a splendid banquet, and all eyes feasted as they looked at him: it was joy enough to behold the king in his beauty, and to see his Son with all his royal jewels on, attired for the wedding feast; but he was a judge to the hypocritical intruder. The day of comfort to his saints is also the day of vengeance of our God. He who comes to comfort all that mourn comes at the same time to smite the rebellious with a rod of iron.

The judge begins, as you perceive, by seeing, "He saw there a man." What eyes are those of Omniscience! The parable represents but one such man as present, yet the All-seeing King saw him at once, he fixed his flaming eyes on that one. I suppose it was a greater crowd than this, but the king fixed his eyes on the solitary offender at once. Does the parable speak of only one because we may expect to find only one hypocrite in a church? Alas! there have been many such at the wedding feast, but one only is mentioned to show us that if there were but one, God would find him out; and, being many, the sinners in Zion may be the more sure that they will not escape. It is possible that none of the guests may have noticed the man's garments; the parable makes no remark upon any expostulations made to him by others; perhaps they were all so taken up with the sight of the king, and so glad to be at the feast themselves, that they had no heart to make remarks upon others. But this is certain, that the king detected at once the absence of what was requisite to the marriage feast. It was not the presence of anything offensive, but the absence of something which was requisite. He did not say to the unworthy guest, "Thou hast rags upon thee," or "thou art filthy." or "thou hast an unwashed face"; he enquired solely into the absence of the peculiar badge which denoted a loving guest. God will judge, and does continually judge his church upon this

question, the absence of what is absolutely necessary to being a Christian, the absence of honouring the Son, and obeying the Father. O soul, if thou art a professor of religion, and yet dost not love Jesus, and dost not fear the great King of kings, thou lackest the wedding robe, and what dost thou here? The King will see at once that thou lackest it. Thy morality, thy generosity, thy high sounding prayers, ay, and even thine eloquent discoursings, these cannot conceal from him the fact that thy heart is not with him. The one thing needful is to accept loyally the Lord as King.

The king next began to deal with the rebel. Note how he spoke with him. He took him on his own ground. It was too high a day for the king to use rough speech; the man pretended to be a friend, and he addressed him as such, but though the word I doubt not was uttered softly, it must have stung him if he had any feeling left. Judas exemplified in his own person this character. When he gave the Saviour the traitor's kiss, our Lord addressed him as "friend." He pretended to be a friend. A friend, indeed, to insult his king at his own table, and to select for the insult the delicate occasion of the prince's marriage to which he had been hospitably invited! This was infamous! Friend indeed! Where will you find enemies if such shall be called friends? The king put it to him, "How camest thou in hither?" What business hast thou here? What could have induced thee so maliciously to defy me? To smite me in my tenderest point, and mock my guests, and trample on my son? Didst thou intend such daring insolence? "How camest thou in hither? In hither? Was there nowhere else to pour forth thy sedition, no other spot in which to play the traitor? Needest thou come into my palace, and to my table, and before my son on his wedding day to reveal thy enmity? Was there a need to do this?" So may the Lord say to some of us. "Were there no other ways to sin, but that you must profess to be my servant when you were not so? Were there no other bowls that you could drink from, that ye must profane the cups of my table? Was there no other bread that you could put into your wicked mouths but the bread that represents the body of my Son? Had you nowhere else to sin in that you must needs sin in the church? Could you do nothing else to show your spite but that you must make a lying profession of faith in my Son, who bled upon the cross to redeem the sons of men? Could you assail me nowhere else but through the wounds of my only-begotten Son? Could you vex my Spirit by no other means than by

pretending to be my friend, and thrusting yourself in hither, while defiantly rejecting that which was necessary to do me honour, and to do my Son honour, at the festival of my grace?" I dare not dwell upon the topic. I give you the text; I pray that your conscience may preach the sermon.

Notice however, one thing, and that is, that the king, when he thus turned a judge, dealt with this man only about himself. "How camest thou in hither?" Did I hear a whisper in some one's mind, "Well, if I am unfit to be a church member, there are a great many others who are in the same condemnation." What is that to you? See to thyself! When the king came in to see the guests he did not say to this man, "How came yonder persons here without the wedding garment?" His dealings were personal with him alone: "How camest thou in hither, not having on the wedding garment?" Professor, look to thyself, look to thyself. Let thy charity begin at home. Cast out the beam from thine own eye, and then mayst thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye. He fixed on the one man, made him his entire audience, and directed to him the solemn question, "Friend, how camest thou in hither?" Ah, my dear hearers, as the pastor of this church it has been a very great joy to me to see our numbers increased; many have been added to us, and many have gone forth from us to form other churches; my joy has been constant in God concerning this matter. Our beloved brethren associated with me in office have done their best to keep any of you back who have sought membership in whom we could see no fruits corresponding. We have not used our office deceitfully; as in the sight of God we have tried to be neither too severe nor too lax, but for all that I cannot but know that there are some of you who are not Christians though you bear the name. Like those of old, you say you are Jews and are not, but do lie. I am not now speaking of any who have fallen into sin and have suffered our rebuke, or have been separated from us by excommunication and yet remain in the congregation; I mean others of you whose lives are all that could be desired openly, and yet there is a worm at the heart of your profession; you are not vitally godly, you have a name to live, and you keep that name untarnished as yet, but you are dead. Search ye yourselves; do not from this tabernacle descend into hell; let your prayer be, "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men." I am

as concerned about myself as about you, that I should be found "accepted in the Beloved;" lest after having preached to others I myself should be a castaway! Do let it be a matter of solemn anxiety with each one. If you have never come to Jesus, come now; if you have never sought holiness of life, seek it now. If you have never had the wedding garment, it is yet procurable; go ye to him who freely gives it, the Lord will not refuse you; go to-day and he will accept you.

IV. He who was the unworthy guest is now THE CRIMINAL AT THE FEAST. The king has now become a judge to him; the question has been personally put to him, and he is speechless. Why is he silent? Surely it was because he was convicted of open, undeniable disloyalty. No evidence was required; he had come there on set purpose with malice aforethought to display his disloyalty, and had done so in the presence of the King. I do not think he represents at all a person who enters the church through ignorance, with a sincere but ignorant intention, but he portrays one who makes a profession without care to make it true—willfully despising the Lord's commands. He is a man willing to be saved by grace, and professing to be so, but refusing to acknowledge his duty to God and his obligations to the Son. He was speechless; he could not have chosen a worse place, nor a more impertinent method of ventilating his disloyalty than that which he selected; there was nothing he could say in self-defense. At that moment, when the King looked him through and through, he saw the full horror of his position; his loins were loosed, like Belshazzar of old when he saw the handwriting on the wall; he saw now that his time to insult was over, and the day of retribution had come. He was taken in the very fact, and could not escape. He had been guilty of a superfluity of naughtiness, of an unnecessary extravagance of wickedness in coming into the feast to air his pride. He had committed a suicidal intrusion. He might have kept himself away at any rate, and not have thrust himself into the Judge's presence. He saw now that the cause of sedition was hopeless, the King was there and he was in his power and none could rescue him. Why did he not burst into tears? Why did he not confess the wrong? Why did he not say, "My king, I have insulted thee, have pity upon me"? His proud heart would not let him. Sin made him incapable of repentance. There is a verse in one of Hart's hymns which runs thus -



"Fixed is their everlasting state:  
Could they repent, 'tis now too late."

That is true enough, but it supposes an impossibility, and I think it would have been far better to have said -

"Fixed is their everlasting state;  
They can't repent, 'tis now too late."

Because the sinner goes on to sin he continues still to suffer; he will not turn, he cannot turn. As the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots, so when sin has reached its height the man cannot bend, or bow, or retrace his steps. Oh, if he could have repented even then! But he could not; and the tears that came after the king had pronounced the sentence were not tears of penitence, but only of despairing pride. He stood speechless. It was not only that he had no excuse, but he would not confess his wrong. Have I anyone here in such a condition of heart, that while he has been sinning by making a false profession, and knows it, yet he sullenly refuses to confess his fault? Yield thee, man! Yield at once. Fall at the King's feet at once. Even if you are not a hypocrite, if you have any suspicion that you are, fall down and say, "My King, make me sincere; I submit myself to thy will, and am ready to put on the wedding badge; if there is any method by which I can honour thy Son, I cavil not at it; let me wear his colours, and be known by all men to be truly a lover of the great Prince."

But now, lastly, while he stood speechless in the king's presence, the king gave place to THE EXECUTIONER, for he uttered these words, "Bind him hand and foot." He was lawless, make him feel the law; he said, "I am free, and I will do as I like," let him never be free again; bind him, pinion him. Executioner, do your duty, prepare him for death. Alas, there are some who are bound and pinioned even before the breath is out of their bodies. In their dying hours false professors have often found that they could not pray, and could not repent; like dying Spira, that arch-hypocrite and apostate, they have been sensible of misery, but not penitent, and no gospel promise has availed to comfort them. Their hearts were seared,

they were twice dead before they were dead. Then came the sentence, "Take him away," which is sometimes executed by the church in her excommunications—deceivers are taken away from the gospel feast by just discipline; but which is more fully carried out in the hour of death when the man's hope fails him. Ah, sirs, what will ye do if ye have no true grace in your hearts when you are taken away from the Lord's table, taken away from the baptism in which you gloried, taken away from the doctrines of the gospel which you understood so well by head, but which you did not know in your heart. John Bunyan's description of the man dragged by seven devils, bound with cords, comes up before my mind. "Bind him hand and foot and take him away." How thankful I am that the servants who brought them in are not the same who were commanded to take them away. The Douloi brought them in, the diakonoi took them away, the King has a special order of servants for the taking of deceivers away; his angels do that in the hour of death—they execute his vengeance. He gives us ministers a better office, he bids us be his heralds of mercy. Then the judge said, "Cast him," fling him like a useless, worthless thing. That wretch has dared pollute my marriage feast, cast him away, as men fling weeds over the garden wall or shake off vipers into the fire. There is none in heaven or earth thought more despicable, more fit to be thrown away as rubbish and offal, than a man who had a Christian name, but had not the essentials of the Christian nature. Cast him away. Where? "Into outer darkness" far from the banquet hall where torches flame and lamps are bright; drive him out into the cold, chilly midnight air. He has once seen the light, it will be all the darker now for him when he is driven into the dark. There is no darkness so dark as the darkness of the man who once saw light. Cast him into outer darkness. What will he do there? We are not told what would be done to him, it was not needful; we learn elsewhere as much as could be revealed to us, but we are told what he did, for "there shall be weeping," not the gush of tears which gives relief but the everlasting dropping of scalding tears which create fresh sorrow and enlarge their own source. The outcast shed no tears of regret, but of sullen disappointment, because he could not after all dishonour the king, and had even served to illustrate the royal justice and power, and so had brought glory to the king whom he hated in soul. Then came the "gnashing of teeth," caused by wrath and envy because he could do no more mischief. No sorrow is equal to that of a malicious spirit, that

having attempted a daring deed of atrocious wickedness, has been defeated and has contributed to the triumph of the good and excellent. The misery of hell is not a misery which God arbitrarily creates, it is the necessary result of sin, it is sin itself come to ripeness. Here you see the picture of the man who was insolent enough to come into the church without being a Christian, and now for ever he gnashes with his teeth against that glorious Majesty of heaven which it will never be in his power to injure, but which it will always be in his heart to hate; and this will be his hell—that he hates God, this his darkness—that he cannot see beauty in God, and this the outerness of the darkness—that he cannot enter into God's will. "Depart ye cursed," is only love repelling that which is not lovely, it is only justice giving to man what his fallen nature craved after. "Get away from me, ye did not honour me; when ye did come to me it was with your lips only. Go where your hearts were; depart from me, you cursed." Oh, may God grant that not one here may come under the lash of this terrible parable, but may we be found of the Lord in peace in the day of his appearing. You see, then, how the Lord sifts us. First we are sifted by the preaching of the gospel, and many will not come—there is one heap of chaff: next, by the judgment of God in his church, and others are found wanting—there is another heap of chaff. Ah, when this is done, and the two great sieves are used, shall we be found among the wheat?

Do you say, "the sermon has nothing to do with me, I never made a profession, I shall go home easy enough." Come hither friend, I must not let you go. There is a vagabond brought before the magistrate accused of theft, he says he is perfectly innocent, but he is convicted and has to suffer for it; after him comes a bragging fellow, who says, "I do not make any profession of being honest, I rob anybody I can, and I mean to do so, I do not pretend to keep the law." Why, methinks the magistrate would say, "I condemned the one who did at least pretend to something decent, but to you I give double punishment, you are evidently incorrigible, and your case needs no consideration." You who do not say you are Christians, who confess you are not, you avow yourselves the enemies of Christ; get no comfort therefore out of this parable I pray you, but yield yourselves to the Saviour, and believe in him, for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.

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## **The Welcome Visitor**

And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary, her sister, secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. - John 11:28-32

It seems that Martha had heard of Christ's coming, and Mary had not. Hence Martha rose up hastily and went to meet the Master, while Mary sat still in the house. From this we gather that genuine believers may, through some unexplained cause, be at the same time in very different states of mind. Martha may have heard of the Lord and seen the Lord; and Mary, an equally loving heart, not having known of his presence, may, therefore, have missed the privilege of fellowship with him. Who shall say that Martha was better than Mary? Who shall censure the one, or approve the other? Now, beloved, you may be tonight yourselves, though true believers in Jesus, in different conditions. I may have a Martha here whose happiness it is to be in rapt fellowship with Christ. You have gone to him already and told him of your grief: you may have heard his answer to your story, and you may have been able by faith to say, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world"; and you may be full of peace and full of joy. On the other hand, sitting near you may be a person equally gracious as yourself who can get no farther than the cry, "Oh! that I knew where I might find him,

that I might come even to his seat!" Dear Martha, condemn not Mary. Dear Mary, condemn not yourself. Martha, be ready to speak the word of comfort to Mary. Mary, be ready to receive that word of comfort, and, in obedience to it, to rise up quickly and, in imitation of your sister, go and cast yourself, as she has done already, at the Saviour's feet. I must not say, because I have not all the joy my brother has, that I am no true child of God. Children are equally children in your household, though one be little and the other be full grown, and they are equally dear to you, though one be sick and the other in good health—though one be quick at his letters and another be but a dull scholar. The love of Christ is not measured out to us according to our conditions or attainments. He loves us irrespective of all these. Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus. He loves all his own, and they must not judge of him by what they feel, nor measure his love by a sense of their own want of love.

Hoping that the Lord will now bless the word to all of us who are his own people, I shall speak of two things—a visit from the Master—a visit to the Master.

## I. HERE IS A VISIT FROM THE MASTER.

Martha came and said to Mary, "The Master is come"—or as we might read it truly, "The Master is here and calleth for thee." "The Master is come." "The Master is here."

Beloved friends who are just now without the present fellowship with Christ, which you could fondly desire, permit me to whisper this in your ear. "The Master is here! The Master is here!" We cannot come round and whisper it secretly as Martha did, but take the message each one of you to himself—"The Master is here."

He is here, for he is accustomed to be where his word is preached with sincerity of heart. He is accustomed to be wherever his saints are gathered together in his name. We have his own dear word for this—the best pledge we can have—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." We have met in his name, we have met for his worship, we have met to preach his gospel; and the Master is here. We are sure he is

here, for he always keeps his word; he never fails of his promise.

He is here, for some of us feel his presence. Had Mary said to Martha, How do you know that the Master is come? she would have answered, "Why I have spoken with him, and he has spoken to me." Well, there be some among us who can say, "He has spoken to us." Did we not hear him speaking when we were singing that hymn just now?

"My God, the spring of all my joys,  
The life of my delights,  
The glory of my brightest days,  
The comfort of my nights."

Did not we perceive him to be near some of us, when we were singing:—

"Oh! see how Jesus trusts himself  
Unto our childish love,  
As though, by his free ways with us,  
Our earnestness to prove"?

I, for one, did, if none besides; I can bear good witness to you that are languishing for his company, "The Master is here."

And mark, he is here none the less surely because you have not, as yet, found it out, for a fact does not depend upon our cognisance of it, though our comfort may be materially affected thereby. The Master was at Bethany, though Mary had not heard an inkling of the good tidings; there she sat, her eyes red with weeping, and her whole soul in the grave with her brother Lazarus. Yet Jesus was there for all that. Make the case your own; though you may have come here troubled with all the weeks' cares—though while you have been sitting here the thought of something that will happen tomorrow has been depressing you—though some bodily weakness has been holding you down when you would lift up your spirit towards God, yet that does not alter the fact. "The Master is come"; the Master is here. Oh! there was Mary sighing, "If only Christ had been here! Oh! if only Christ would come!" And there he was! And perhaps you are saying, "Oh! that he were near me!" He is near you now. You sigh for

what you have, and pine for that which is near you. You think not, like Mary Magdalene, that he standeth in this garden. You are asking, "Where have ye laid him?" While your joy and comfort seem to you dead, he, whose absence you mourn, stands present before you. Oh! that he would but open those eyes of yours, or rather than he would open your heart, by saying to you, "Mary!" Let him but speak one word right home to you personally, and you will answer with gladness, "Rabboni!" The Master is come here, though you as yet have not perceived him.

That word "The Master" has a sweet ring about it. He is the Master. He that is come is earth's Master. What are your cares? He can relieve them. What are your troubles? He can overcome them, and sweep them out of the way. The Master has come. "Cast thy burden on the Lord: he will sustain thee." He is hell's Master. Art thou beset with fierce temptations and foul insinuations of the arch-fiend? The Master has come. Oh! lift thy head, thou captive daughter of Zion, for thy bands are broken. The Breaker is come up before them; their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them. He who hath come is no menial servant, but the right royal Master himself. The Master is come. What though your heart now seem cold as a stone, and your spirit is cast down within you? What though death hath set up its adamant throne in thy breast? The Master has come, and his presence can thaw the ice, dissolve the rock, bring thee all the graces of the Spirit and all the blessings of heaven that thy soul can possibly require. "The Master is come"—does not that touch your soul and fire your passions? Whose Master is he but your own? And what a Master! No taskmaster, no slave's master, but such a Master that his absolute sovereignty inspires you with sweetest confidence; for he binds you with the bonds of love, and draws you with the cords of a man. Master indeed is he! Aye, Lord and sole Master of your soul's inmost core if you be what you profess to be; the Master whose sceptre is the sceptre of reed which he carried in his hand when he was made a scorn and scoffing for you; the Master whose crown is the crown of thorns which he wore for your sins when he accomplished your redemption. Your Master. Thou shalt call him no more Baali, but Ishi shall his name be called. He is only Master in that same sense in which the tender loving husband is the master of the house. Love makes him supreme, for he is Master in the art of love, and, therefore, Master of our loving hearts. How sweetly doth "my

Master" sound! "My Master." Why, if nothing else might bestir us to get up and run to meet him, it should be the sound of that blessed word, "The Master is here: the Master has come."

But Martha added—and it is a very weighty addition (may the Holy Ghost make application of it to your heart)—"and calleth for thee." "But is that true?" says one; "doth he call for me?" Dear brother, dear sister, I know that if I say he does I shall not speak without his warrant, for when he comes into a congregation he calls for all his own. He speaketh, and he saith to all whom he loves, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." I know he does, because love always delights in fellowship with the object that is loved. Jesus loved you or ever the earth was. His delights were with the sons of men from old eternity. He loved you so well that he could not keep in heaven without you, and he came here to seek you and to save you. And now it gives his heart joy to be near you. He said, "Let me hear thy voice; let me see thy face: for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." I tell you it is Christ's nether heaven to hear the voices of his people. It is that for which he left heaven—that he might give them voices with which to praise him. Do you think he loved you so, and will live without you? Nay, he calls for you.

What is his Word, indeed, all through, but a call to his own beloved to come to him? What are Sabbath-days but calls in which he says, "Come away! come away, my beloved, from the noise and turmoil of the city, and come into the quiet places where my sheep lie down and feed"? What are your troubles but calls to you in which, with somewhat of harshness as it seems to you, but with an inner depth of love, he says, "Away, my beloved, from all earthly delights, to find thy all in me"? What is the Communion of the Lord's Supper but another call to you, "Come unto me"? The bread which you shall eat, and the wine which you shall drink, these are for yourself, and the call which is encompassed by them as by symbols is for each one of you. The Master is here, and calleth for thee—for each one. "Oh! but" saith Mary, "my eyes are bleared with weeping." He calleth for thee, thou red-eyed sorrower. "Ay, but my heart is heavy with a sad affliction." He calleth for thee, thou burdened sufferer. "Ay, but I have been full of levity all the week, and have forgotten him." He calleth thee that he may cleanse thee yet again. "Ah! but I have denied him."



What saith he but, "Go, and tell my disciples, and Peter"? He calleth for thee that he may forgive thee yet again, and may say unto thee, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" I care not who you are, if you are one of his, the Master is come and calleth for thee. "Why," says one, "no Christian has spoken to me for a long while." But the Master calleth for thee. "But I seem so solitary in this great metropolis, and though I know my Master, I do not know any of his people." Never mind his people: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Ay, but I think if I am one of his I must be at the very tail-end of the catalogue, and the last of all." He calleth for thee—for thee. Oh! may that word now come home, and may each one feel, "If he calls for me, there is such condescension in that call, such tender memories of my weakness, such consideration for my distance and my forgetfulness, that I will loiter no longer. Is the Master come? Lo, I am ready for him. Doth the Master call? Lo, my spirit answers, 'Come, Master, my heart's doors are flung wide open. Come and sit on the throne of my heart. Enter in and sup with me and I with thee, and make this a gladsome season of intimate fellowship between my soul and her Lord.'" Turning now to our second part, let us talk awhile of:—

## II. A VISIT TO THE MASTER.

It follows on the first as a fit sequence. We never come to Christ till Christ comes to us. "Draw me: I will run after thee." That is the order. It is not, "We will run after thee: Lord, draw us." Neither is it thus. When a soul is saying, as we sung in the hymn just now:—

"If thou hast drawn a thousand times,  
'Oh! draw me yet again,"

—then, beloved, he is drawing us. When we are praying to be drawn, we are being drawn all the while.

In answer to the Lord's visit, you will notice the conduct of Mary. She rose up quickly. She bestirred herself. Oh! let each one of our souls now say, "Has the Lord called for me? Why, then, should I loiter or linger for a single moment? I will get me up this very moment; I will say, 'My Lord, I am come to thee. Thou hast called me, and here I am.'" Oh! for grace to

shake off the sorrow that makes some hearts sit still! Mary's dear brother was newly laid in the tomb, but she rose up quickly to go and meet her Master. Dear mother, forget for a few minutes that dear unburied child still in the house. Forget awhile, dear husband, that sick wife of yours towards whom your heart so naturally flies. Forget, beloved, just now, all that you have suffered, all that you expect to suffer, all that you have lost or may be losing. The Master is come, and calleth for thee. Rise up quickly. Let not these things constrain thee to inactivity of spirit, but rise up now, and by his grace come away from them. She bestirred herself; she put on her best efforts, that she might not tarry when he called. And then she went, we find, just as she was. She rose up quickly, it is said, and she went: she came unto him. No sooner said than done. She arose and she came. Well, but should not she have washed her face? Tears add but little beauty to the maiden's visage. And that hair of hers, I doubt not all dishevelled—might she not have arranged that a little, and prepared her dress, and made herself trim for the Lord? Ah! that is a temptation for the mass of us: "I cannot expect to have fellowship at the table, because I have not come prepared." Brother, you ought to have come prepared, but, at the same time, if you have not, rise up quickly and come to the Master as you are. The Master had seen Mary with tears before, for he had felt her tears upon his feet. He had seen her with dishevelled hair before, for she had wiped his feet with the hairs of her head. If you are out of order, it is not the first time Christ has seen you so. I do not think a mother's love depends upon seeing her child in its Sunday clothes. She has seen it, I warrant you, in many a trim in which she would not wish anybody else to see it, but she has loved it none the less. Come, then, thou unprepared one. Come to him who knows just what thou art, and in what state thou art, and he will not cast thee out; only make brave to believe that, when Christ calls, his call is a warrant to come, however unfit we may be. And oh! how promptly she left all other comforters to come to Christ. There were the Jews that came to comfort her. I dare say they did their best, but she did not stop for the rabbi to finish his fine discourse, nor for the first scholar of the Sanhedrin to complete that dainty parable by which he hoped to charm her ear and assuage her sorrow. She went straight away to the Master there and then. So would I have you forget that there are other comforters: forget your joys as well as your griefs: leave all for him, and let your soul be only taken up with that Great Master of yours who

calls for you, for all your faculties, for all your emotions, for all your passions, for your entire self. Come right away, by his help, from everything else that would absorb any part of your being. Rise up, and draw near to him.

But it seems, beloved, that when Mary had reached the Master's feet she had done all she could, for it is said that she fell at his feet. Ah! you remember she had knelt once at his feet when she washed his feet: she had sat once at his feet, when she heard his words; this time she fell at his feet. She could neither kneel to do him service, nor sit to pay him the reverence of a disciple. She fell all but in a swoon, life gone from her. She fell at his feet. Never mind, if you are at his feet, if you do but fall there. Oh! to die there—it were life itself! Once get to Jesus, and you may say, like Joab at the altar when Benaiah said, "Come away, for Solomon has sent me to slay thee." "Nay," said Joab, "but I will die here"; and at the horns of the altar there he died. And if we must die, we will die there at his feet. Fall down at his feet. Beloved, if you do not feel you have got strength for communion tonight, never mind: it does not want any.

"Oh! for this no strength have I:  
My strength is at his feet to lie."

Some of us do know what it is to be scarcely able to get together two consecutive thoughts—not to be able to master a text or lay hold of a promise; still we could say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"; we could lie down at the feet that were pierced, and feel how sweet it is to swoon at the Saviour's feet. Only get there. Let your will and heart be good to get at him now, for the Master is here, and calls for you. Come, though in the coming you should utterly fail to get enjoyment, come and fall at his feet. Do I hear any of you saying, "Ah! but I have a heavy thought pressing at my heart, and if I come to him it is not much that I can say in his honour. I feel but little love, and gratitude, and joy. I could not pour out sweet spikenard from the broken box of my heart." Be it so, only pour out what you have; for what did Mary do? She said—and the Master did not chide her, though he might have done—"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Oh! it was half cruel, for she seemed to say, "Why wast thou not here?" It was unbelieving in part, and

yet there is a deal of faith in it—a sweet clinging to him. Martha had the same; and it shows how often those two sisters had said to one another, "Would God the Master was here." When the brother was very sick and near to death, they were saying to one another, "Oh! if we could get the Master here!" That had been the great thought with them, so they pour it out. Beloved, when you are at Jesus' feet, if you have an unbelieving thought, if you have something that half chides him, pour out your heart like water before the Lord:—

"Let us be simple with him then—  
Not backward, stiff, and cold;  
As though our Bethlehem could be  
What Sinai was of old."

Tell him the weakness; tell him the suspicion; tell him all the sin that has been, and all the sin that is haunting you. Tell it all to him; and at his feet is the place to tell it. You will be eased of your burden then. Beloved, you know how Mary received consolation. It was a great day for her when she got to Christ's feet, and then the Master began to do wondrously, and very soon Lazarus was restored. So now, your first business, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, is to get to Jesus. "Oh! but Lazarus is dead." Never mind Lazarus. You get to Jesus and he will see to Lazarus. "Oh! but my business fails me." Never mind the business just now. Get to Jesus. "Oh! but there is sickness in my house." Leave the sickness for awhile now. The one thing is to get to Jesus and to his feet. "Oh! but my own heart is now as it should be." Forget thine own heart, too, and remember Jesus; he is to thee all that thou canst need. He is made, of God, unto thee, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"; and do thou come to him quickly, and thou shalt have all thou wantest. "Ah!" says one, "I cannot bear to think of God, for I do not love him." "Ah!" says another, "but I can bear to think of him, for though I did not love him, he loved me." And now you may say, "I cannot bear to think of coming to Jesus, for I do not love him as I should." Ah! but think of him, for he loves thee. His grace to thee is boundless. Now let thine own self be put aside awhile, and remember this "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners." Come, then, in the strength of that!

I must close by saying a few words to those whom hitherto I have not addressed. Perhaps there are some here to whom this message has never come—"The Master is come and calleth for thee." If it were to reach them tonight, it would be the first time they ever heard it. O dear heart, I pray it may come to you, that this may be the beginning of days with you. The Master has come. This is certain. From the highest throne in glory to the manger, to the cross, and to the grave, the Master has come. That he calls for thee, this is also certain, I think. Let me give you a text in which, I think, he calls for you. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." "Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." Calls he not for you, too, in this text, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"? Calls he not for you in this verse, where he bids all that labour and are heavy-laden come unto him, that they may rest; or in that other, "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as snow." He calleth for thee. Do not disbelieve him. It is certainly matchless grace, but he is a God and none is like unto him. "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his thoughts above your thoughts." But does your heart say, "Why, if I thought Jesus called for me, I would come"? Then he does call thee; that speech of thine, "I would come," proves it; 'tis he that makes thee feel willing. Dost thou long for him? Oh! he is putting his hand in at the door of thy heart, and making thy bowels yearn for him. Does a tear drop on the floor, and do you say, "It cannot be that such a one as I should ever live and be saved, and be Christ's"? Why, thy very admiration at his grace shows that some of his grace is at work upon thee. Trust thou that that arm can save: trust thou that that pierced hand can grasp thee; trust thou that that heart that was gashed with a spear can feel for thee. Trust thyself wholly to him. "Go thy way; thy sins which are many are forgiven thee." If thou hast trusted him, thou art saved. Come and cast thyself at Jesu's feet tonight. Is there no young man here to whom this shall be Christ's voice? You say you cannot believe, and cannot repent, and cannot do anything. Then fall like dead at Jesu's feet, and look up to him—to him alone, and you shall have life. Is there no young woman here burdened in heart, to whom the

Saviour's feet may become a place of refuge from all her fear? I trust there is. And if I speak to someone far advanced in years, who imagines that he, at least, must be given up by mercy, it is not so. Thou hast but a few days more to live, but the Master calleth for thee. Rise up quickly! May tonight witness thy forsaking of thy sins, and thy clinging to his cross; and one day thou shalt see his face in heaven without a veil between.

The Lord bless you, beloved, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **What And Whence Are These?**

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. - Revelation 7:13-14

Towards some subjects even the best of men need that their attention should be drawn. Certain themes need an introduction to our contemplations. We often see and yet do not see: we see that which upon the surface attracts the eye, but we fail to penetrate into the inner and more precious truth. Even in heaven, it would seem that the mind needs directing, and wants a friend to suggest inquiry; he who sees the whiterobed host may yet need to be led to the consideration of who and what they are. It is very gracious on the part of our heavenly Father that he condescends to send us messengers of different kinds to awaken our attention, to guide our inquiry, and to lead us to search deeper than we might otherwise have done. John looked at the long ranks of triumphant spirits and admired their glory, but his thoughts had not penetrated deep enough, and therefore an elder was sent to speak with him. That personage asked him a question, and this he did that John might confess his ignorance, might feel a desire to know more, and might be led to

inquire upon the point which it was most needful for him to consider. While we are dwellers here below our minds are very apt to be engrossed with the things which surround us, and we want some one to direct our thoughts to the upper world; and in the same way the mind of a person dwelling above would naturally be most occupied with the things around it in the glory land, and it might be needful to bid him remember facts concerning the lower world. We generally take that view of a matter which is most consistent with our own present circumstances, whereas to see a thing completely we need to view it from many angles. Hence the elder suggests to John that he should see these glorified spirits from another point than that which naturally suggested itself to him. He was led to consider them, not as they then were, but as they had been. The question was therefore suggested him, "Who are these, whence came they? What was their earthly character? What manner of men were they in the days of their pilgrimage? Were they cherubim, or children of men? Did they come hither on wings of fire, or came they hither as do the sons of Adam? Who are these that now have attained to such dignity and bliss, as to be now wearing the white robe of innocence, and waving the palm of victory?" To that enquiry I hope to lead your attention this morning; may it be as profitable to you as doubtless it was to John.

We are frequently tempted to think that our Lord Jesus was not in very truth a man like ourselves. His actual and proper humanity is believed among us, but not fully realized. We are apt to fancy that his was another flesh and another manhood from our own, whereas he was in all things made like unto his brethren, and was tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin. It is, therefore, needful again and again and again to set out the true brotherhood and kinship of Christ. The same spirit of error leads us into the feeling that those holy men who have attained to felicity must have been something different from ourselves. We set the apostles up in twelve niches, and look upon them as very superior beings. We can hardly imagine that they were partakers of our flesh and blood; and, as we see the whole white-robed host, we imagine in our hearts that they must have been far different from ourselves. They did well and valiantly we admit, and we rejoice that they have attained to a blessed reward; but we dream that we ourselves cannot do as well, nor win as great a recompense. Without exactly defining the feeling, we in some way

persuade ourselves that something in their persons or in their circumstances entirely separated the glorified saints from us, and gave them an advantage over us, and therefore we despair of ever achieving their triumphs. Now, this error must be overcome, because it furnishes convenient excuses for indolence, and represses those holy ardours which are the life of elevated piety. Brethren, the point to which the elder drew John's attention is the one we are now driving at; he would have him note that those were glorified in heaven who were once tried and tempted as we are; they were, in fact, men of like passions with us. I grant you it would be very delightful for us to contemplate the present condition of joy and immortality possessed by yonder bright spirits, but for the moment it will be more practically useful for us to consider what they were and how they came to be what they now are, so that finding that they were of old what we now are, we may follow in their track, and may obtain to the same blessed rank as that which they now enjoy.

Our sermon on this occasion will consist of an answer to these two questions,—“Whence come they?” for though that was the second question asked, it was the first answered; and, secondly, “Who are these?” Our third point shall be, “What of all this?”

I. Concerning the bright spirits in heaven—WHENCE CAME THEY? These bearing the palms—whence came they? Reason itself suggests that they came from battle. It is not according to the wont of God to use emblems without a meaning. The palm, the ensign of triumph, indicates most certainly a conflict and conquest. As on earth palm would not be given if not won, we may conclude that the Lord would not have distributed the prize unless there had been a preceding warfare and victory. A conflict for a temporal crown is severe; how much more for an unfading palm in heaven. The winners of these palms must have passed through a battle of battles, an agony of agonies, a great tribulation. Palms which may be waved even before the throne of the august majesty of heaven are not easily come by. From the very fact that the glorified carry palms, we may infer that they did not come from beds of sloth, or gardens of pleasure, or palaces of peace, but that they endured hardness, and were men trained for war. The inference is well warranted, for it is even so; and the answer to the question, “Whence came they?” is this: “These are they



which came out of great tribulation."

1. They were then like ourselves, for, in the first place, they were tried like others. They came out of great tribulation. Note, then, that the saints now glorified were not screened from sorrow. I saw to-day a number of lovely flowers they were as delightful in this month of February as thee would have been in the midst of summer; but I did not ask, "Whence came they?" I know very well that they were the products of the conservatory; they had not been raised amid the frosts of this chill season, else they had not bloomed as yet. But when I look upon God's flowers blooming in heaven, I understand from the voice of inspiration that they enjoyed no immunity from the chill breath of grief; they were made to bloom by the master hand of the Chief Husbandman, in all their glory, amid the afflictions, and adversities, and catastrophes which are common to men. God's elect are not pampered like spoiled children, neither are they like "the tender and delicate woman who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness." They are, it is true, secured from all fatal injury, but they are not protected from the rough winds and rolling billows which toss every barque which bears a son of Adam. Turn over the roll of the worthies of the Lord from the first hero of faith to the last, and you shall not meet with a sorrowless name. Great are their privileges, but immunity from trouble is not among them. Was Adam God's elect? We hope he was, but certainly in the sweat of his face he ate his bread, and through his tears he saw the mangled body of his second son. Did God honor Abraham, and call him his friend? He was not without family afflictions, among the chief of which was the call to take his son, his only son, and offer him up for a sacrifice. Moses was king in Jeshurun, but his yoke, as a servant of the Lord, was a very heavy one; for all the day long was he vexed with the rebellions of a wayward people. Was David, the man after God's own heart? You know how deep called unto deep, while all God's waves and billows went over him. Speak ye of the prophets; which of them escaped without trial? Come ye to the apostles; which of these enjoyed a life of ease? Did they not all of them but one pass through the gates of death, wearing the martyr's crown? And he who died of old age, had not he been an exile in Patmos? Where, from their day down to this, among the elect of heaven do you find a single child of God unchastened, a solitary branch of the heavenly vine

unpruned, or one ingot of precious gold untried with fire? Through flood, and through the fire, lies the pathway of the chosen. Through troops we must cut our way, and over walls we must leap, for to none is there a luxurious path to heaven. We must fight if we would reign.

True, God's people have been found in all ranks, but; in every position they have had their sorrows. You find Esther, a queen beloved of God, but what were the tremblings of her heart when, with her life in her hand, she went in unto the king to plead against that wicked Haman? Lazarus was in the opposite stage of human circumstance, but he lay suffering at the gate of his ungenerous neighbor, and the dogs came and licked his sores. In palace or in cottage the rod is the sure portion of all the heirs of salvation. Each state to the believer produces bitter herbs peculiar to itself, he shall never need to search far for the appointed accompaniments to the paschal lamb. I have heard that a great statesman once stopped his horse on a plain to speak with a shepherd who was resting in the midst of his flock. Thinking of his own heavy anxieties, he expressed his envy of the shepherd, because his life was so free from vexation. "Sir," said the shepherd, "I may not be troubled exactly as you are, but I have my own worries; do you see that black ewe there?" "Yes." "If she were dead," continued the shepherd, "I might be a perfectly happy man; but she is a plague to me, for every now and then she takes to going astray, and all the rest are sure to follow her." Rest assured, that there is a black ewe in every flock. Man is born to trouble. All the sons of God in heaven passed by "weeping-cross." Such burdens as we are now carrying on earth once pressed the shoulders of those now in glory. Our crosses are reproductions of the old yoke of Christ. Under our personal and relative griefs the glorified have smarted, and our sinkings of heart and fears of soul they have experienced. "Through much tribulation" they have inherited the kingdom.

Note, next, that they were not even screened from temptation. To the child of God, temptation to sin is a greater grievance than the suffering of pain. The saint has often said, "I could endure adversity, but it is misery to be day after day solicited to evil, to have the bait perpetually dangling before me, and to feel something in my soul which half consents to sin, and would altogether surrender were it not for watchful grace." Brethren,

temptation to the pure mind is very grievous; to be sifted in Satan's sieve is a sore trial. Storms on any sea are to be dreaded; but a whirlwind raised by Satan on the black sea of corruption is horrible beyond conception. Yet do not say you cannot enter heaven because you are tempted, for all those snowwhite bands attained their glorious standing through much temptation, as well as through much affliction. They, like their Master, were tempted in all points as you are. Let me take you again to the old records, and ask you whether you find a single saint untempted? Oh, ye young men, who lament that you are so often allured to evil, have ye forgotten Joseph in Potiphar's house? Ye who dread the persecutor's frown, have ye forgotten Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Ye of riper years, who feel your feet almost gone, do ye not remember David, and how he was tempted; ay, and worse, how he fell, and with broken bones had to limp his way to heaven? Which of the saints has been unassailed by the fiery darts of the wicked one? Has not the fowler spread his nets to entangle every one of them? Has he not laid snares for every faithful soul? Review all the ranks of the white-robed squadrons, and enquire of every glorified spirit. Say to each one, "And thou? wert thou also tempted? Did the world seek alternately to fascinate and frighten thee? Hadst thou a body of sin and death to drag thee down? Hadst thou foes among thine own household? Didst thou also cry, 'Woe is me, for I dwell in Meshech?'" To such questions each one of the perfected saints would reply that their perils were such as ours, and had it not been for Almighty grace, they would have utterly perished from the way. The shields of the mighty, which are now so highly exalted, were once battered by the blows of temptation, even as ours are at this hour.

We may add to all this, again, that they were men who as keenly felt trial and temptation as we do. Too frequently, when we are forced to admit that the trials of the saints were similar to our own, we persuade ourselves that their natures were less tender, their feelings less sensitive, their spirits less vulnerable than our own. We imagine that these ancient heroes wore some secret armor, or had their hearts steeled within, or wore a charmed life; and yet we know right well that all flesh of man has the same power to suffer, that a wound in another man's body bleeds even as it would in our own, and that reproach is as bitter to one spirit as to another. As face answereth to face in water, so the heart of man to

man. Good men, because they are good, are not the less sorrowful when their beloved ones are taken from them: gracious men are not by grace petrified so as to despise the chastening, of the Lord. Jacob mourned for Rachel, and David for Jonathan. You do not find the saints less troubled than other men when friendship turned to treachery, and love to hate. Tears flowed as readily from holy eyes as from the eyes of the ungodly. They were sons of men, born of women as we are, and subject to the same passions and emotions. Oh, no, they were not Stoics, nor men of iron, but, made of the same earth as ourselves, their hearts palpitated to the same tune. Daughter of grief, dost thou say, "I wish I were as the holy women of old, that in my trouble I might not be so cast down?" Read thou the history of Hannah, and mark how her adversary "vexed her sore to make her fret." She, too, was a woman of a sorrowful spirit. That story in the commencement of the First Book of Samuel I am sure must often have cheered the daughters of affliction when they have prayed in the bitterness of their souls, for they have said, here was a woman, tempted like as we are and smarting as we do under unkind remarks and slanderous reports and ungenerous treatment, and yet she rejoiced in God's salvation. If your spirit is constitutionally sorrowful, and its wounds are often wantonly opened by those about you, read the story of Jeremiah, and his plaintive notes in the Lamentations will both help you to express your woes and furnish you with sympathy in them. Read, too, the sorrowful bemoanings of Job. That grand old patriarch of Uz is very stout, and plays the man right gloriously; he is no puling child, whining and wincing, at a gentle touch of the rod; but patient as he is and a very king, among men, yet how bitterly he curses the day of his birth, and how heavily he complains. Nor were New Testament saints less tender, for Mary and Martha wept, Magdalene was bowed down with sorrow at her Lord's death, and the heart of the Virgin was pierced as with a sword. Peter wept bitterly, and Paul had continued heaviness. Tribulations abounded and afflictions were multiplied to the first disciples, and we wrong both themselves and us if we dream that it was easier for them to suffer than for us. I grant you that they possessed a secret something which enabled them to endure, but that something was not homeborn in their nature any more than it is in ours. They were fortified by a secret strength which they found at the throne of God in prayer, a patience which the Holy Ghost wrought in them, and which he is equally ready to

work in us.

But, perhaps, it may be thought by some that those holy men who now wave the palm-branch were spared some of the keener and more refined tribulations; to which I reply, it certainly was not so. David especially appears to have compassed the whole round of affliction. He could say, "all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." From all quarters his trials arose; and from his youth to his death they assailed him. Let me remind you of that special grief which came upon him when his darling son excited rebellion against him, and his own chosen friend and counsellor, Ahithophel, betrayed him, and to this add the scene when that same darling son was slain in red-handed rebellion against his father, and David cried aloud, "O Absalom, my son, my son! would God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!" I should not feel that I had ventured too far if I said that there is no trouble known to any person in this audience which would not find its parallel in the case of the afflicted writer of the Psalms. But, perhaps, you tell me that yours is a spiritual grief, and that such a wound is the deepest of all. Turn, then, to the life of the apostle Paul, and, as far as he unveils his experience, you shall find him to be the subject of internal strifes and spiritual contentions of the sharpest kind. Remember, especially, when with the thorn in his flesh he prayed thrice to God to have it taken away, but it was not removed; sufficient grace was given him, but he had to bear the inward smart; for, through much tribulation even of that kind must the chief of the apostles follow his Lord. What need of multiplying words? It is plain to every man that understandeth, that the children of God have been tried like others, and they who have won the victory fought a real battle, armed only as we may be, and assailed neither more nor less as we are, by the same enemies and the same weapons. As the church militant we claim indisputable kinship with the church triumphant. We are their companions in tribulation.

2. Next, we believe that the saints who are not in heaven needed trial like others. The word used in our translation is "tribulation," and you know that the word tribulatio is used by the Romans to signify a threshing instrument. When they beat out the corn from the straw, they called it tribulatio; and so tribulation is sent to us to separate our chaff from our

wheat. Since the same tribulation happened to those who are now in heaven, we infer that they needed it as much as ourselves. To what end do men need tribulation? We reply, they often require it to arouse them; and yonder saints who serve God day and night in his temple, once slept as do others, and needed to be bestirred. Were they not apostles who slept Gethsemane? Yea, were they not three of the chief of the apostles who slumbered within a stone's cast of their Master in his agony? The best of men are prone to slumber, and need to be awakened by the buffetings of sorrow. They needed trial to chasten them. What son has God ever had, save his firstborn and well-beloved, that did not need chastening? Inasmuch as we are all sinners, we have need in our Father's house to suffer from the rod. They wanted tribulation as we do to loosen them from the earth, else they would have struck their roots into this poor soil, and tried to live as if this world were their portion. Affliction was also necessary to develop their graces; even as spices need bruising to bring forth their smell, and rose leaves require distilling to draw forth their sweetest perfume. They required adversity to educate them into complete manhood, for they too were once babes in grace. It is in the gymnasium of affliction that men are modelled and fashioned in the beauty of holiness, and all their spiritual powers are trained for harmonious action. It was meet also that they should suffer, in order to complete their service. Like their Lord, they had to be made perfect through suffering; and if they had not suffered they had not finished the work which he had given them to do. They needed tribulation, moreover, that they might be made like their Savior; for a saint untroubled, how can he be like the man who wore the thorn crown? Never smitten, never slandered, never despised, never mocked at, never crucified, then how could we be like our Head? Shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord? They who are in heaven passed through tribulation, and they needed it as much as we do. Let us think of all this, for it may encourage us to press forward. They were knights of the same order as ourselves, and by the self-same methods obtained the honors which they wear.

3. Again, the children of God who are in heaven in their trials had no other support than that which is still afforded to all the saints. A miracle was here and there wrought I grant you; but then there are other things to be said on our side, for the Spirit of God was not given then as fully as we

possess him now, and Christ had not then brought life and immortality to light through the gospel so that what little advantage they had in miracle is far outweighed by the advantage we have in the gospel dispensation. What was it that upheld the saints of old who are now before the throne? Their faith was sustained by the promise of God, but we have the promise too. They rested on God's faithful word; that word is faithful still. We have more promises by far than most of them had received. They had but here and there a word of inspiration, we have the whole volume of consolation; yea, we have a double portion, for we have two books full of choice and gracious words. We have, therefore, more to cheer us than they had. They had the Spirit of God, you say; but, I reply, so have we. They had him with them, we have him in us. He visited them occasionally; he dwelleth in us; he never removeth from his people but abideth in them for ever. You will tell me that God worked with them: God works with us. Providence was on their side; and is not providence on our side also? All things worked together for their good; they work together for our good in the same manner. The Lord who was at the helm of their vessel when storms assaulted it, still stands at the helm for us and holds the tiller with a strong hand. He who walked the waves of Gennesaret, and came to the rescue of the storm-tossed disciples, still saith to us, "It is I; be not afraid." I see no point in which they had superior resorts to those which are open to ourselves, for the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Their rest lay where our rest still lies; their peace and comfort were the same as our own. The Prince of Wurtenberg on one occasion in the midst of certain kings and great men heard them boasting, one of the mines which enriched his dominions, another of his forests, another of his vineyards. Now the Prince of Wurtenberg was poor, but he said, "I have a jewel in my country which I would not exchange for all your wealth," and, when they questioned him, he said, "If I were lost in any forest of my territory, or could not find my way along a lonesome road, if I said to the first peasant that I met that I was his king, I could lean my head upon him and lie down to sleep, and sleep securely there, feeling certain that he would watch over his king as he would over his child." So we feel, and so the saints of old felt a delightful security any where beneath the blue heavens of God. If we have not riches, if we have not honor, if we have nothing that flesh could desire, we can lie down anywhere and feel that we are

perfectly safe in the divine keeping. The angels watch over us and protect us, for we are the children of God: all things work for our good; the beasts of the field are our friends, and stones of the field are in league for our defense. This was the portion of those who are now above; it is our portion still.

4. Very hurriedly I must notice, before I leave this first point, that if there was any difference between those saints and our selves, it lay in their enduring superior tribulations, for "these are they that came out of great tribulation." If, I say, we must distinguish them from ourselves at all, it lies in this, that some of them were martyred as we are not, resisted unto blood as we have not, and were put to death by cruel torments as probably we shall not be. Theirs was the battle's brunt. For them the furnace was heated seven times hotter. My brethren, if their faith sustained them and won them the palm branch, why should not ours do the like for us? The text says, "These are they that come out of the great tribulation," for so it is in the original. It may mean some peculiarly severe tribulation which has befallen, or is about to befall the church; and, if so, it is consoling to observe that the saints shall come out of it unscathed: but I rather take it to mean the one long tribulation of God's Saints in all ages. It is all one; it is all a part of the sufferings of the body of Christ; the saints in glory have had their share in the great tribulation, and, if anything, a greater share than we. We feel persuaded then, that as they were men like ourselves, who suffered as we suffer, and were supported as we are supported, we shall, through the same grace, win the same victory.

II. I will not detain you longer on that point, though there is much to be said, but I must take you to the second, and that is, **WHAT ARE THESE?** John beheld them all in white robes; and the question to be answered was, "Who are these,—these in heaven?" The reply was "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" from which we gather, first, that all those in heaven were sinners, for they all needed to wash their robes. No superfluity would have been written down in this book; but had the robes been perfectly white, there had been no necessity to cleanse them, certainly not to cleanse them in, Jesus' blood. They were sinners then, those glorious ones were sinners like ourselves.



Look up at them now! Observe their ravishing beauty! See how guiltless they are! And then, remember what they were. Oh, ye trembling sinners, whose bruised hearts dare not indulge a hope of the divine favor, those fair ones were once like you, and you are to-day what they were once. They were all shapen in iniquity as you were: they were everyone of them of woman born, and, therefore, conceived in sin. They were all placed in circumstances which allured them to sin; they had their temptations, as we have shown, and they lived in the midst of an ungodly generation, even as you do. What is more, they all sinned, for mere temptation would not have soiled their robes, but actual sin defiled them. There were thoughts of sin, there were words of sin, there were acts of sin in all of them. Did you observe that bright one who sang most sweetly of them all? Shall I tell you a part of his earthly history? He was one of the chief of sinners; he takes rank now amongst the chief of choristers, because he has most to sing about, since he had most forgiven and loved most. He will not tell you that he was naturally a saintly spirit, and that by mortification, and self-denial, and diligent perseverance he won his place in heaven. No, he will confess that his salvation was all of grace, for he was like others a sinner, and had transgressed above many. You will say, perhaps, that none of the saints had committed sins like yours, but there I must flatly contradict you. Amongst that illustrious company there are those who were once sinners of the deepest dye—the adulterer, the thief, the harlot, the murderer; some who were such are now glorified, for we have such characters mentioned in infallible Scripture as having been forgiven, sanctified, and at length glorified. Whatever your sin may be, and I will not mention it, for the mention of sin does not help to purify us from it; whatever it is, all manner of sin and blasphemy have been forgiven unto men, and the precious blood of Jesus has brought into eternal glory men stained with every form of sin. Jesus has cleansed crimson sinners, deep ingrained with iniquity, and scarlet sinners, whose crimes were of the most glaring hue. They all in heaven were sinners, such as we are.

Secondly, they all who are in heaven needed an atonement, and the same atonement as we rely upon. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Not one of them became white through his tears of repentance, not one through the shedding of the

blood of bulls or of goats. They all wanted a vicarious sacrifice, and for none of them was any sacrifice effectual, except the death of Jesus Christ the Lord. They washed their robes nowhere but in the blood of the Lamb. O sinner, that blood of the Lamb is available now. The fountain filled with blood, drunk from Immanuel's veins, is not closed, nor is its efficacy diminished. Every child of Adam now in heaven came there through the blood of the great substitute. This was the key that opened heaven's door, —the blood, the blood of the Lamb, it was the one purification of them all, without one exception. If I were in thy case, O sinner, God helping me, I would in the blood as they did, and enter heaven as they have done.

You will further notice that the saints in haven realised the atonement in the same way as we must do. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The act which gave them the virtue which lies in the atonement was the act of faith. They did not bring anything to the blood, any merit, or feeling, or preparation; they only brought their filthy garments to the blood, and nothing else. They washed and were clean. That was all. They did not give, they took; they did not impart, but they received. In this same way I have realised the merit of my Savior's passion, and I know that every believer here will confess that this is his hope, he has washed and he is clean. There is nothing to do, and nothing to feel, and nothing to be, in order to forgiveness; we have but to wash and the filth is gone. Every child of God in heaven whether he were king or prophet, or seer, or priest, came there through simply relying and depending upon the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb, and that is all,—all. You must not dare to add to it, or you will sin against the all-sufficient sacrifice.

The text tells that the sole reason for the saints being in heaven at all was because they washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb: "Therefore are they before the throne of God." But, is not one of them there because he had not sinned? There is no answer from all the shining hosts. Is not one of them glorified because a long life of consecration wiped out the small offenses of his youth? No response comes to the enquiry. But, if you ask whether they were there because they have washed in the blood, the "Yes" which comes from them all is like the voice of many waters, and like great thunders.

III. Now, beloved, WHAT OF ALL THIS? Why, first of all, we must not draw the conclusion that trouble and temptation are any argument that a man will get to heaven. Perhaps I may be misunderstood this morning and therefore I add a caution. There is a groundless notion abroad, that those who are badly off in this world will certainly have it made up to them in the world to come; and I have heard the parable of Lazarus and Dives quoted as though it taught that those who are poor here will be rich hereafter. There is not a shadow of reason for any such belief. You may go through much tribulation to hell as well as to heaven; and as a man may have two heavens, here and hereafter, by living near to God, so may a man have two hells, the hell which he bringeth upon himself in this life by his extravagances, his wickedness, and his lust, and the hell that shall be his punishment for ever in the world to come. Believe me, many a ragged, loathsome beggar has been damned; he was as poor as Lazarus, but not as gracious as he, and therefore no angels carried him to Abraham's bosom. There is no efficacy in the tongues of dogs to lick away sin, neither can a hungry belly atone for a guilty soul. Many a soul has begged for crumbs on earth, and has afterwards craved in vain for water in hell. You must take care not to suck poisonous error out of the flowers of truth.

I would, however, have you learn that no amount of trial which we have to suffer here, if we are believers in Jesus, should lead us to anything like despair, for however trouble may encompass us to-day, those in heaven came through as great a tribulation, and why may not we? If messengers should come one after the other with swift feet to bring us heavy tidings, if all our property should melt, and our children should die, and even the partner of our bosom should tempt us to curse God, we must still hold fast our confidence. Our faith's motto should be, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." God may smite his children, but he never can cast off his children. He must love them, and he will love them for ever and for ever. Let us also understand that no amount of sin of which we may have been guilty ought to lead us to despair of pardon, salvation, and ultimate entrance into heaven, if we also wash our robes in the blood of the Lamb. Those who are in heaven have washed their robes white by faith in Jesus, and so may we. I may be addressing some one who has written his own death warrant. I thank God that the Lord has never written it. You may

have said, "I know that I never shall have mercy." Who told thee that God had set a limit to his grace? Who has been up to heaven and found that thy name is not written among his chosen? Oh, do God the justice to believe that he delighteth in mercy, and that it is one of his greatest joys to pass by iniquity, transgression, and sin. And, suppose this day you should have in your own person trouble and sorrow united; suppose you should be going through the great tribulation, and at the same time you should have committed sin which has defiled your garment most conspicuously; though the gall and the wormwood be both in your cup and both be bitterest of the bitter, yet do not despair, for the saints whom John saw had the double blessing of deliverance and cleansing, and why should not you? I make bold to tell you that if your troubles were tenfold what they are, and your sins also were multiplied ten times, yet there is power in the eternal arm to bear you up under the tribulation, and there is efficacy in the precious blood to remove your sinful stains. By an act of faith cast yourselves upon God in Christ Jesus. If you do so, you shall take your place amongst the white-robed bands when this life ends.

I was led to these reflections this morning by the remembrance of the few short days ago since our beloved brother, Mr. Dransfield, whose mortal remains we committed to the tomb last Monday, was among us. You remember his accustomed seat, just here, at the prayer meeting; you remember how there was never an empty seat just over yonder at any of our public services. He was always among us, and he was just like ourselves. I am sure we all felt at home in his presence. He did not walk among us at all as a stilted personage or a supernatural being; he was a father among us; we loved him, esteemed him, revered him, but he was a man of men among us. I have tried to realize the same spirit before the throne of God, and I think I have been able to grasp the thought. I know he was like ourselves; I am equally certain that he is yonder, and that he is rejoicing in Christ; none of us doubt that. Now let us make a practical, common sense use of that fact and feel, I, too, resting, where he rested—for, oh, how sweetly did he rest in his dying Lord—I, too, hoping as he hoped, shall bear up under troubles as he did during his painful illness, and I, too, shall have a joyful death as he did, for his soul triumphed in his God beyond measure. Why should not all of us, his brethren, enter where he is gone? Dear sister, why should not you? You who are

consumptive, you who know that death is drawing near to you, because you carry a disease about you which will take you home? Just realize the fact now before us. Our dear and well-known friend is really gone to the better land. You shook hands with that dear brother a few days ago, and now he is with God, and is waving the palm and wearing the white robe. It is not a dream, a fiction, or a fancy. It is not the delusion of high-blown fanaticism. It is not a wondrous attainment for some few special and renowned saints. Oh, no, it is for every one of us who believe in Jesus. They in heaven are those who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is not said, "These are they that were emperors," not "These are they who were reared in marble halls," not "these are they who were great scholars," not "These are they who were mighty preachers," not "These are they who were great apostles," not "These are they who lived spotless lives;" no, but these are they who came through the tribulation of life, and were cleansed from their sins, as others must be, in the precious blood of Jesus; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.

Dear brother Dransfield, thou wast bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and yet thou art perfected before the throne. We thy brethren are on the way and shall be with thee soon. Amen.

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## **What Are The Clouds?**

That clouds are the dust of his feet. - Nahum 1:3

It is possible for a man to read too many books. We will not despise learning, we will not undervalue erudition, such acquisitions are very

desirable; and, when his talents are sanctified to God, the man of learning frequently becomes in the hands of the Spirit far more useful than the ignorant and the unlearned; but at the same time, if a man acquire his knowledge entirely from books, he will not find himself to be a very wise man. There is such a thing as heaping so many books on your brains that they cannot work - pouring such piles of type, and letters, and manuscripts, and papers, and prints, and pamphlets, and volumes, and tomes, and folios, upon your weary head, that your brains are absolutely buried and cannot move at all. I believe that many of us, whilst we have sought to learn by books, have neglected those great volumes which God has given us; we have neglected to study this great book, the Bible! moreover, perhaps, we have not been careful enough students of the great volume of nature, and we have forgotten that other great book, the human heart. For my own part, I desire to be somewhat a student of the heart; and I think I have learned far more from conversation with my fellow-men than I ever did from reading, and the examination of my own experience, and the workings of my own heart, have taught me far more of humanity than all the metaphysical books I have ever perused. I like to read the book of my fellow creatures; nothing delights me so much as when I see a multitude of them gathered together, or when I have the opportunity of having their hearts poured into mine, and mine into theirs. He will not be a wise man who does not study the human heart, and does not seek to know something of his fellows and of himself. But if there be one book I love to read above all others, next to the book of God, it is the volume of nature. I care not what letters they are that I read, whether they be the golden spellings of the name of God up yonder in the stars, or whether I read, in rougher lines, his name printed on the rolling floods, or see it hieroglyphed in the huge mountain, the dashing cataract, or the waving forest. Wherever I look abroad in nature I love to discern my Father's name spelled out in living characters; and if we had any fields a little greener than Moorfields, Smithfield, and Spafields, I would do as Isaac did, go into the fields at eventide and muse and meditate upon the God of nature. I thought in the cool of last evening. I would muse with my God, by his Holy Spirit, and see what message he would give me. There I sat and watched the clouds, and learned a lesson in the great hall of Nature's college. The first thought that struck me was this, as I saw the white clouds rolling in the sky - soon shall I see my Saviour mounted on a

great white throne, riding on the clouds of heaven, to call men to judgment. My imagination could easily picture the scene, when the quick and the dead should stand before his great white throne, and should hear his voice pronounce their changeless destiny. I remembered, moreover, that text in the Proverbs, "He that observeth the wind shall not sow and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." I thought how many a time myself and my brother ministers have regarded the clouds. We have listened to the voice of prudence and of caution we have regarded the clouds, we have stops when we ought to have been sowing because we were afraid of the multitude, or we refused to reap and take in the people into our churches, because some good brother thought we were too hasty about the matter. I rose up and thought to myself, I will regard neither the clouds nor the winds, but when the wind blows a hurricane I will throw the seed with my hands, if peradventure the tempest may waft it further still; and when the clouds are thick, still I will reap, and rest assured that God will preserve his own wheat, whether I gather it under clouds or in the sunshine. And then, when I sat there musing upon God, thoughts struck me as the clouds careered along the skies thoughts which I must give to you this morning. I trust they were somewhat for my own instruction, and possibly they may be for yours. "The clouds are the dust of his feet."

I. Well, the first remark I make upon this shall be - *the way of God is generally a hidden one*. This we gather from the text, by regarding the connection, "the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet." When God works his wonders he always conceals himself. Even the motion of his feet causes clouds to arise; and if these; clouds are but the dust of his feet," how deep must be that dense darkness which veils the brow of the Eternal. If the small dust which he causes is of equal magnitude with our clouds - if we can find no other figure to image "the dust of his feet" than the clouds of heaven, then, how obscure must be the motions of the Eternal one, how hidden and how shrouded in darkness! This great truth suggested by the text, is well borne out by facts. The ways of God are hidden ones. Cowper did not say amiss when he sang, -

"He plants his footsteps in the sea,

And rides upon the storm."

His footsteps cannot be seen, for, planted on the sea, the next wave washes them out; and placed in the storm, rioting as the air then is, every impression of his chariot wheels is soon erased. Look at God, and at whatever he has deigned to do, and you will always see him to have been a hidden God. He has concealed himself, and all his ways have been veiled in the strictest mystery. Consider his works of salvation. How did he hide himself when he determined to save mankind? He did not manifestly reveal himself to our forefathers. He gave them simply one dim lamp of prophecy which shone in words like these "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head;" and for four thousand years God concealed his Son in mystery, and no one understood what the Son of God was to be. The smoking incense beclouded their eyes, and while it showed something of Jesus, it did hide far more. The burning victim sent its smoke up towards the sky, and it was only through the dim mists of the sacrifice that the pious Jew could see the Saviour. Angels themselves, we are told, desired to look into the mysteries of redemption, yet though they stood with their eyes intently fixed upon it, until the hour when redemption developed itself on Cavalry, not a single angel could understand it. The profoundest sage might have sought to find out how God could be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly; but he would have failed in his investigations. The most intensely pious man might meditate, with the help of that portion of God's Spirit which was then given to the prophets, on this mighty subject, and he could not have discovered what the mystery of godliness was - "God manifest in the flesh." God marched in clouds, "He walked in the whirlwinds;" he did not deign to tell the world what he was about to do; for it is his plan to gird himself in darkness, and "the clouds are the dust of his feet." Ah! and so it always has been in Providence as well as grace. God never condescends to make things very plain to his creatures. He always does rightly; and therefore, he wants his people always to believe that he does rightly. But if he showed them that he did so, there would be no room for their faith.

Turn your eye along the page of history, and see how mysterious God's dealings have been. Who would conceive that a Joseph sold into Egypt would be the means of redeeming a whole people from famine? Who



would suppose that when an enemy should come upon the land, it should be after all but the means of bringing glory to God? Who could imagine that a harlot's blood should mingle with the genealogy from which came the great Messiah, the Shiloh of Israel? Who could have guessed much less could have compassed, the mighty scheme of God? Providence has always been a hidden thing.

"Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never failing skill,  
He treasures up his bright designs,  
And works his sov'reign will."

And yet, beloved, you and I are always wanting to know what God is about. There is a war in the Crimea. We have had some great disasters at Sebastopol, and we are turning over the papers, and saying, "Whatever is God doing here?" What did he do in the last war? What was the benefit of it? We see that even Napoleon was the means of doing good, for he broke down the aristocracy and made all monarchs respect for the future, the power, and the rights of the people. We see what was the result even of that dread hurricane, that it swept away a pestilence which would have devoured full many more. But we ask, "What is God doing with this world?" We want to know what will be the consequences. Suppose we should humble Russia, where would it end? Can Turkey be maintained as a separate kingdom? And ten thousand other questions arise. Beloved, I always think, "let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth," and - as a good old friend of mine says - let them crack themselves, too, if they like. We will not interfere. If the potsherds will go smashing one another, why, then they must. We pray that old England may come off the safest of them all. But we are not much concerned to know the result. We believe that this war, as well as everything else, will have a beneficial tendency. We cannot see in history that this world ever went a step backwards. God is ever moving it in its orbit; and it has always progressed even when it seemed retrograding.

Or, perhaps, ye are not agitated about Providence in a nation, you believe that there God does hide himself; but then there are matters concerning yourself, which you long to see explained. When I was in Glasgow. I went

over an immense foundry, one of the largest in Scotland, and there I saw a very powerful steam engine which worked all the machinery in the entire building. I saw in that foundry such numberless wheels running round, some one way and some another, I could not make out what on earth they were all about. But, I daresay, if my head had been a little wiser, and I had been taught a little more of mechanics, I might have understood what every wheel was doing, though really they seemed only a mass of wheels very busy running round and doing nothing. They were all, however, working at something; and if I had stopped and asked "What is that wheel doing?" A mechanic may have said, "It turns another wheel." "Well, and what is that wheel doing?" "There is another wheel dependent upon that, and that again is dependent on another." Then, at last, he would have taken me and said, "This is what the whole machinery is doing." Some ponderous bar of iron, perhaps, being grooved and cut, shaped and polished - "this is what all the wheels are effecting: but I cannot tell separately what each wheel is doing." All things are working together for good; but what the things separately are doing, it would be impossible to explain. Yet, thou child of Adam, with thy finite intellect, art continually stopping to ask, "Why is this?" The child lies dead in the cradle. Wherefore, was infancy snatched away? Oh, ruthless death, couldst thou not reap ripe corn; why snatch the rosebud? Would not a chaplet of withered leaves become thee better than these tender blossoms? Or, you are demanding of Providence, why hast thou taken away my property? Was I not left, by a parent, well-to-do, and some ravenous leech has swept all my substance away! It is all gone; why this, O God? Why not punish the unjust? why should the innocent be allowed thus to suffer? Why am I to be bereft of my all? Says another, "I launched into a business that was fair and honorable; I intended, if God had prospered me, to devote my wealth to him. I am poor, my business never prospers. Lord, why is this?" And another says, "Hero I am toiling from morning till night; and all I do I cannot extricate myself from my business, which takes me off so much from religion. I would fain live on less if I had more time to serve my God." Ah! finite one! dost thou ask God to explain these things to thee? I tell thee, God will not do it, and God cannot do it - for this reason: thou art not capable of understanding it. Should the emmet ask the eagle wherefore it dasheth aloft in the skies? Shall leviathan be questioned by a minnow? These creatures might

explain their motions to creatures; but the Omnipotent Creator, the uncreated Eternal, cannot well explain himself to mortals whom he hath created. We cannot understand him. It is enough for us to know that his way always must be in darkness, and that we must never expect to see much in this world.

II. This second thought is - GREAT THINGS WITH US ARE LITTLE THINGS WITH GOD. What great things clouds are to us! There we see them sweeping along the skies! Then they rapidly increase till the whole firmament gathereth blackness and a dark shadow is cast upon the world; we foresee the coming storm, and we tremble at the mountains of cloud, for they are great. Great things are they? Nay, they are only the dust of God's feet. The greatest cloud that ever swept the face of the firmament, was but one single particle of dust starting from the feet of the Almighty Jehovah. When clouds roll over clouds and the storm is very terrible, it is but the chariot of God, as it speeds along the heavens, raising a little dust around him! "The clouds are the dust of his feet." Oh! could ye grasp this idea my friends, or had I words in which to put it into your souls, I am sure you would sit down in solemn awe of that great God who is our Father, or who will be our Judge. Consider, that the greatest things with man are little things with God. We call the mountains great, but what are they? They are but "the small dust of the balance." We call the nations great, and we speak of mighty empires, but the nations before him are but as "a drop in the bucket." We call the islands great and talk of ours boastingly - "He taketh up the isles as a very little thing." We speak of great men and of mighty - "The inhabitants of the earth in his sight are but as grasshoppers." We talk of ponderous orbs moving millions of miles from us - in God's sight they are but little atoms dancing up and down in the sunbeam of existence. Compared with God there is nothing great. True, there are some things which are little with man that are great with God. Such are our sins which we call little, but which are great with him; and his mercies, which we sometimes think are little, he knows are very great mercies towards such great sinners as we are. Things which we reckon great are very little with God. If ye knew what God thought of our talk sometimes, you would be surprised at yourselves. We have some great trouble - we go burdened with it, saying, "O Lord God! what a great trouble I am burdened with." Why, methinks, God might smile at us, as

we do sometimes at a little child who takes up a load too heavy for it (but which ye could hold between your fingers), and staggereth, and saith, "Father, what a weight I am carrying." So there are people who stagger under the great trouble which they think they are bearing. *Great, beloved!* There are no great troubles at all: "the clouds are the dust of his feet." If you would but so consider them, the greatest things with you are but little things with God. Suppose, now, that ye had all the troubles of all the people in the world, that they all came pouring on your devoted head: what are cataracts of trouble to God? - "Drops in the bucket." What are whole mountains of grief to him? Why, "he taketh up the mountains as the dust of the balance." And he can easily remove your trials. Sit not down then thou son of weariness and want, and say, "My troubles are too great." Hear the voice of mercy: "Cast thy burden on the Lord and he will sustain thee, he will never suffer the righteous to be moved." You shall hear two Christians talk. One of them will say, "O my troubles, and trials, and sorrows, they are so great I can hardly sustain them; I do not know how to support my afflictions from day to day." The other says, "Ah! my troubles and trials are not less severe, but, nevertheless, they have been less than nothing. I could laugh at impossibilities, and say they shall be done." What is the reason of the difference between these men? The secret is, that one of them carried his troubles, and the other did not. It does not matter to a porter how heavy a load may be, if he can find another to carry it all for him. But if he is to carry it all himself, of course he does not like a heavy load. So one man bears his troubles himself and gets his back nearly broken; but the other cast his troubles on the Lord. Ah! it does not matter how heavy troubles are if you can cast them on the Lord. The heavier they are so much the better, for the more you have got rid of, and the more there is laid upon the Rock. Never be afraid of troubles. However heavy they are, God's eternal shoulders can bear them. He, whose omnipotence is testified by revolving planets, and systems of enormous worlds, can well sustain you. Is his arm shortened, that he cannot save, or is he weary, that he cannot hold you fast? Your troubles are nothing to God, for the very "clouds are the dust of his feet."

And this cheers me, I assure you, in the work of the ministry; for any man who has his eyes open to the world at large, will acknowledge that there are many clouds brooding over England, and over the world. I received

lately a letter from a gentleman at Hull, in which he tells me that he sympathizes with my views concerning the condition of the church at large. I do not know whether Christendom was ever worse off than it is now. At any rate, I pray God it never may be. Read the account of the condition of the Suffolk churches where the gospel is somewhat flourishing, and you will be surprised to find that they have had scarcely any increase at all in the year. So you may go from church to church, and find scarcely any that are growing. Here and there a chapel is filled with people; here and there you find an earnest minister; here and there an increasing church; here and there a good prayer-meeting; but these are only like green spots. Wherever I have gone through England, I have been always grieved to see how the glory of Zion is under a cloud; how the precious saints of Zion, comparable to fine gold have become like earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter. It is not for me to set myself up as universal censor of the church, but I must be honest and say, that spiritual life, and fire, and zeal, and piety, seemed to be absent in ten thousand instances. We have abundance of agencies, we have good mechanism but the church, now-a-days is very much like a large steam engine, without any fire, without any hot water in the boiler, without any steam. There is everything but steam, everything but life. England is veiled in clouds. Not clouds of infidelity. I care not one fig for all the infidels in England, and I do not think it worth Mr. Grant's trouble to go after them. Nor am I afraid of popery for old England. I do not think she will go back to that - I am sure she never will. But, I *am* afraid of this deadness, this sloth, this indifference, that has come over our churches. The church wants shaking, like the man on the mountain-top does when the cold benumbs him into a deadly slumber. The churches are gone to sleep for want of zeal, for want of fire. Even those who hold sound doctrine are beginning to slumber. Oh may God stir the church up! One great black cloud, only broken here and there by a few rays of sunlight, seems to be hanging over the entire of this our happy island. But, beloved, there is comfort, "for the clouds are the dust of his feet." He can scatter them in a moment. He can raise up his chosen servants, who have only to put their mouth to the trumpet, and one blast shall awaken the sleeping sentinels, and startle the sleeping camp. God has only to send out again some evangelist, some flying angel, and the churches shall start up once more, and she who has been clothed in sackcloth, shall doff her

garments of mourning and put on a garment of praise, instead of the spirit of heaviness. The day is coming, I hope, when Zion shall sit, not without her diadem, crownless; but with her crown on her head, she shall grasp her banner, take her shield, and, like that heroic maiden of old who roused a whole nation, shall go forth conquering and to conquer. We hope thus much, because "the clouds are the dust of his feet."

Aye, and what clouds rest on the world at large! What black clouds of Catholic superstition, Mahommedanism, and idolatry. But what are all these things? We do not care about them at all, brethren. Some say that I am getting very enthusiastic about the latter-day glory, and the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Well, I don't know. I get all the happier the more enthusiastic I am, so I hope I shall keep on at it, for I believe there is nothing so comforts a servant of God as to believe that his Master is coming. I hope to see him. I should not be surprised to see Jesus Christ to-morrow morning. He *may* come then. "In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." He who learns to watch for Christ, will never be surprised when he cometh. Blessed shall that servant be, whom, when his Lord cometh, he shall find busy about his duty. But some say he cannot come yet; there are so many clouds, and so much darkness in the sky, it cannot be expected that the sun will rise yet. Is that a fair reason? Do the clouds ever impede the sun? The sun moves on despite all the mists; and Jesus Christ can come clouds or no clouds. We do not want light before he appears; he will come and give us light, afterwards, scattering the darkness with the glory of his own eyes. But you say, "How are these idolatrous systems to be cast down?" God could do it in an hour if he pleased. Religion never moves by years and weeks. Even false religions grow like mushrooms; much more true ones. False religions attained colossal proportion in a very few years. Take the case of Mahommedanism - the new-born faith of Islam became the religion of millions in an incredible short period and if a false religion could spread so quickly, shall not a true one run along like fire amidst the stubble, when God shall speak the word? Clouds are but "dust of his feet." A little while ago some of us were fretting about this Mormonism, and we said, "It will never be broken up." Some stupid fellows in America began to kill the poor Mormonites, and so carve them into saints, which was the very way to establish them. Christians trembled, and said, "What can this

be? We shall have Sodom over again." But did you read the *Times* newspaper of Thursday last? You will there see a wonderful instance of how God can scatter the clouds and make them dust of his feet. He has caused to come out of the ground, near Salt Lake, at Utah, thousands of crickets, and all kinds of noxious insects, that devour the crops; creatures that have not been seen in Utah before, with swarms of locusts, have made their appearance; and the people, being so far from civilized nations, cannot of course carry much corn across the desert, so that they will be condemned to starve or else separate and break up. It seems to all appearance that the whole settlement of the Mormonites must entirely be broken up, and *that* by an army of caterpillars, crickets, and locusts.

III. Now, one more remark. "The clouds are the dust of his feet." Then we learn from that, that **THE MOST TERRIBLE THINGS IN NATURE HAVE NO TERROR TO A CHILD OF GOD**. Sometimes clouds are very fearful things to mariners; they expect a storm when they see the clouds and darkness gathering. A cloud to many of us, when it forebodes a tempest is a very unpleasant thing. But let me read my text, and you will see what I mean by my remark that the most terrible things in nature are not terrible to the saints. The clouds are the dust of HIS feet," - of God's feet. Do you not see what I mean? There is nothing terrible now, because it is only the dust of my Father's feet. Did you ever know a child who was afraid of the dust of his father's feet? Nay; if the child sees the dust of his father's feet in the distance, what does he do? He rejoices because it is his father, and runs to meet him. So the most awful things in nature, even the clouds, have lost all their terror to a child of God, because he knows they are but the dust of his Father's feet. If we stand in the midst of the lightning storm, a flash rives yon cedar, or splits the oak of the forest; another flash succeeds, and then another, till the whole firmament becomes a sea of flame. We fear not, for they are only the flashes of our Father's sword as he waves it in the sky. Hark to the thunder as it shakes the earth, causes the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests; we shake not at the sound.

"The God that rules on high,  
And thunders when he please,  
That rides upon the stormy sky,

And manages the seas.

"This awful God is ours,  
Our Father and our love."

We are not afraid, for we hear our Father's voice. And what favored child ever quaked at his Father's speech. We love to hear that voice; although it is deep, bass, sonorous, yet we love its matchless melody, for it issues from the depths of affection. Put me to sea, and let the ship be driven along, that wind is my Father's breath let the clouds gather, they are the dust of my Father's feet; let the waterspout appear from heaven, it is my Father dipping his hand in the laver of his earthly temple. The child of God feareth nothing. All things are his Father's; and divested now of everything that is terrible, he can look upon them with complacency, for he says, "The clouds are the dust of his feet."

"He drives his chariot through the sky,  
Beneath his feet his thunders roar;  
He shakes the earth, he veils the sky,  
My soul, my soul, this God adore -  
He is thy Father, and thy love."

Fall down before his feet and worship him, for he hath loved thee by his grace. You know there are many fearful events which may befall us; but we are never afraid of them, if we are saints, because they are the dust of *his* feet. Pestilence may ravage this fair city once again; the thousands may fall, and the funeral march be constantly seen in our streets. Do we fear it? Nay; the pestilence is but one of our Father's servants, and we are not afraid of it, although it walketh in darkness. There may be no wheat, the flocks may be cut off from the herd and the stall; nevertheless, famine and distress are our Father's doings, and what our Father does we will not view with alarm. There is a man there with a sword in his hand - he is an enemy, and I fear him My father has a sword, and I fear him not; I rather love to see him have a sword, because I know he will only use it for my protection.

But there is to come a sight more grand, more terrific, more sublime, and



more disastrous than anything earth hath yet witnessed; there is to come a fire before which Sodom's fire shall pale to nothingness; and the conflagration of continents shall sink into less than nothing and vanity. In a few more years, my friends, Scripture assures us, this earth and all that is therein, is to be burned up. That deep molten mass which now lies in the bosom of our mother earth is to burst up - the solid matter is to be melted down into one vast globe of fire; the wicked - shrieking, wailing, and cursing, shall become a prey to these flames that shall blaze upward from the breast of earth; comets shall shoot their fires from heaven; all the lightnings shall launch their bolts upon this poor earth, and it shall become a mass of fire. But does the Christian fear it? No. Scripture tells us we shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air, and shall be forever with the Lord.

IV. To conclude. The fourth observation is, ALL THINGS IN NATURE ARE CALCULATED TO TERRIFY THE UNGODLY MAN. Ungodly men and women now present in this place of worship, it is a very solemn fact that you are at enmity with God; that having sinned against God, God is angry with you - not angry with you today, but angry with you every day, angry with you every hour and every moment. It is, moreover, a most sad and solemn fact that there is a day coming, I, ungodly men, when this anger of God will burst out, and when God will utterly destroy and devour you. Now listen to me for a moment, while I try to make all nature preach to you a solemn warning, and the wide world itself a great high priest, holding up its finger and calling you to flee for mercy to Jesus Christ, the King of kings. Sinner, hast thou ever seen the clouds as they roll along the sky? Those clouds are the dust of the feet of Jehovah. If these clouds are but the dust, what is he himself? And then, I ask thee, O man, art thou not foolish in the extreme to be at war with such a God as this? If "the clouds are the dust of his feet, now foolish art thou to be his enemy. Dost thou think to stand before his majesty? I tell thee, he will snap thy spear as if it were but a reed. Wilt thou hide thyself in the mountains? They shall be melted at his presence; and though thou cry to the rocks to hide thee, they would fail to give thee aught of concealment before his burning eyes. O do but consider, my dear fellow creatures, you who are at enmity with God, would it not be folly if you were to oppose yourself to an angel? Would it not be the utmost stupidity if you were to commence a war even

with her majesty the Queen? I know it would, because ye have no power to stand against them; but consider how much more mighty is the Eternal God. Why, man, he could put his finger upon you at this moment and crush you as I could an insect. Yet this God is your enemy; you are hating him, you are at war with him! Consider, moreover, O man, that thou hast grievously rebelled against him; that thou hast incensed his soul, and he is angry, and jealous, and furious against every sinner. Consider what you will do in that great day, when God shall fall upon you. Some of you believe in a god that has no anger, and no hatred towards the wicked. Such a god is not the God of Scripture? He is a god who punishes the ungodly. Let me ask the question of inspiration: Canst thou stand before his indignation? Canst thou abide the fierceness of his anger? When his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him, bethink thee, sinner, will it be a good thing to be in the hands of the Almighty, who will rend thee in sunder? Wilt thou think it easy to lie down in hell with the breath of the Eternal fanning the flames? Wilt thou delight thyself to think that God will invent torments for thee, sinner, to make thy doom most cursed if thou dost not repent and turn to him? What, man! are the terrors of Jehovah nothing to thee? Dost thou not tremble and shake before the fierceness of his fury? Ah! thou mayest laugh now; thou mayest go away, my hearer, and smile at what I have said; but the day shall declare it: the hour is coming - and it may be soon - when the iron hand of the Almighty shall be upon thee; when all thy senses shall be the gates of misery, thy body the house of lamentation, and thy soul the epitome of woe. Then thou wilt not laugh and despise him.

But now to finish up, let me just give you one word more; for, beloved, wherefore do we use these threats; wherefore do we speak of them? It is but the word of the angel, who, pressing Lot upon the shoulder, said, "Look not behind thee stay not in all the plain," and then pointing to the fire behind, said, "On! on! lest the fiery sleet overtake thee, and the hail of the Eternal shall overwhelm thee!" We only mentioned that fire behind, that the Spirit might make you flee to the mountain lest ye should be consumed. Do you ask where that mountain is? We tell you there is a cleft in the Rock of Ages where the chief of sinners may yet hide himself - "Jesus Christ for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven;"

and whoever here this morning is a sinner, we now invite to come to Christ. Ye Pharisees who do not own the title, I preach no gospel to you; ye self-righteous, self-sufficient ones, I have nought whatever to say to you, except what I have said - the voice of threatening. But, whoever will confess himself a sinner, has the warrant this morning to come to Jesus Christ. Sinnership is the only title to salvation. If you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners, Christ died for you. And if you put your trust in him, and believed that he died for you, you may rely upon him, and say, "Lord, I will be saved by thy grace." Your merits are good for nothing; you can get no benefit by them. Your own work is useless; you err like the man in the prison working the treadmill - you never get anything by it - grinding oyster shells without any benefit to yourself. Come to Jesus Christ. Believe in him; and after you have believed in him, he will set you working - working a new work. He will give you works, if you will have but faith - even faith is his gift. O may he give it to you now, my hearers, for; he giveth liberally and upbraideth not." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved."

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## **What Self Deserves**

Ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations. - Ezekiel 36:31

It has been the supposition of those who know not by experience that if a man be persuaded that he is pardoned, and that he is a child of God, he will necessarily become proud of the distinction which God has conferred upon him. Especially if he be a believer in predestination, when he finds that he is one of God's chosen, it is supposed that the necessary consequence will be that he will be exceedingly puffed up, and think very highly of himself. This however, is but theory; the fact lies quite another way; for if a, man be truly subjected to the work of grace in the heart, and

if he be then brought to trust in Jesus, and to see his sin put away by the great sacrifice, instead of being lifted up, he will be exceedingly cast down in his own sight, and as he goes on to perceive the singular mercy and peculiar privileges which God's grace has bestowed upon him, instead of being exalted, he will sink lower and lower in his own esteem, until, when he shall make a full discovery of divine love, he will become nothing, and Christ will be all in all. Mercy never makes us proud. As mercy is given to the humble, it has a humbling effect. Wherever it comes, it makes a man lie low before the throne of the heavenly grace, and leads him to ascribe all honour and glory to the God from whom the mercy comes.

It appears from our text that when Israel shall be forgiven her long years of departure from God, one of the effects of the mercy will be that she will loathe herself, and that same effect has already been produced in some of us, to whom God's abounding mercy has come. In fact, in every man here who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, there has been one uniform experience upon this matter—we have been led to loathe ourselves in our own sight for all the sin we have done before the Lord our God. I shall try to go into this matter, trusting to be rightly guided to say fitting and useful words at this time.

First, my brethren, what is it that we have come to loathe in ourselves?; secondly, why do we loathe it?; and thirdly, what is the necessary result in us, or should be, of this self-loathing? First, then:—

## I. WHAT IS IT THAT THE PARDONED SINNER LOATHES?

You will perceive that he is a pardoned sinner. The verse is inserted here in a position where it plainly belongs to those whom God has renewed in heart, whose sins are forgiven, who are fully justified and accepted. It is consistent with the full enjoyment of salvation to loathe yourself. This is the strange paradox of the Christian faith. He who justifies himself is condemned, he who condemns himself is justified. He who magnifies himself, God breaks down and casts in pieces; he who throws himself prostrate before the throne of God's justice, he it is that God lifteth up in due time. What is it, then, that we loathe in ourselves to-day?

Our reply is, first of all, we loathe every act of our past sin. Look back, ye that have been brought to Jesus; look back upon the past. Your lives have differed. Some here have, by God's mercy, been kept from gross outward sin before their conversion; others have run wantonly into it to great excess of riot. Whichever may have been our pathway before conversion, we do now unfeignedly loathe all the sin of it, whether it were the open sin or the sin of the heart. Especially do we loathe to-night those sins which we excused at the time (which we did excuse afterwards). because we said, "Others did so," because we could not see we did any hurt to our fellow-men thereby. We loathe them because, if they did not relate to man, but only to God, it was the more vicious of us that we should rebel altogether against him. "Against thee thee only, have I sinned," is a part of the bitterness of our confession to-night. There were some sins that were sweet to us at the time: we rolled them under our tongue, poisonous though they were. and we called them sweet morsels. We would revolt against them to-night with abhorrence. Begone, ye damnable sins! By your very sweetness to me, I detect you. Fool that I must have been that such a thing as thou, could have been sweet to me. What eyes must I have had to have seen any beauty in thee! How estranged from God to love the things so foul and vile! We would recall to-night those greater sins of our life, sins perhaps which entangled others. sins which we perpetrated in the face of knowledge, after many warnings, desperate. atrocious sins. Oh! what mercy that we were not cut down while we were living in them! We turn them over and remember them, not, I trust, as some do, I am afraid, when they speak of their past lives, as if they were talking about their battles and they were old soldiers—never mention your sins without tears. Do not write much about them, if at all; it is best to do with them as Noah's sons did with their father's nakedness, go back and cast a mantle over all. God has forgiven them. Remember them only that you may repent, and that you may bless his name, but never mention them without loathing them—utterly loathing them as if they were disgusting to your spirit, and you could not speak of them without the blush mantling on your cheek.

My brethren, in addition to loathing every act of sin, I think I can hope, if our acts are right, we do, through God's mercy, loathe all the sins of omission. I will put them in this form. The time we wasted before our

conversion. Perhaps some of you were not brought to Christ until you were thirty, or forty, or fifty years of age. It is a very, very happy circumstance to be saved while yet you are younger—a case for eternal thankfulness but let us think of the time we wasted, precious time, in which we might have served God, time in which we might have been learning more of him, studying his Word, and making ourselves more fit to be used by him in after years. How much of our time ran to waste! I would especially loathe wasted Sabbaths. Some of us wasted them at home in idleness; some wasted them abroad in company. others of us wasted them in God's house. I would loathe my elf for having wasted Sabbaths, under sermons, hearing as though I heard them not—joining in devotions in the posture, and not in the heart. And what is this but to break the Sabbath under the very garb of keeping it'—thinking other thoughts and caring for other things while eternal matters were being proclaimed in my hearing. Oh! let us loathe ourselves to think that even twenty years should have gone to waste, much more thirty, or forty, or fifty years even sixty—should have been suffered to glide by, bearing nothing upon their bosom but a freight of sin, carrying nothing to the throne of God that we would wish to have remembered there. Those of us who have been converted to God would this night loathe every refusal which we gave to Christ. in those days of our unregeneracy. Dost thou remember, my brother in Christ, those early knockings at the door of thy heart by a gentle mother's word, or was it a father, or was it perhaps a Sunday School teacher, or perhaps some dear one now in glory? Oh! that ever I should have refused the Saviour, had he but presented himself to me but once! Infatuation not to be excused, to close the heart against even one of these! But many times! Some of us were very favourably circumstanced. Our mother's tears fell thick and fast for us when we were children. She would pray with us; when we read the Scriptures with her' she talked to us. Her words were very faithful, very tender, and her child could not help feeling them, but waywardly he pushed aside the tears, and still forgot his mother's God. Then you know with many of us the entreaties of our youth melted into the instructions of cur riper years. Do you not remember many sermons under which Christ has knocked with his pierced hand at the door of your heart? You that sit here from time to time, I know the Lord does not leave you without some strivings of heart; at least, I hope he does not I do pray the Master to help me to put the

word so that it may disturb you, and not let you make a nest in your sins, but as yet you have said "No" to Christ, and given him the go-by, even until now. As for such as are now saved, I am sure they have among their most bitter pangs of regret this, that they should ever at any time, and that they should so often and so many times have said to the Saviour, "Depart from me; I will not know thee, neither do I desire thy salvation." And if, my brethren, in addition to having refused Christ, we have come into actual collision with him by setting up our own Pharisaic estimate of ourselves, we ought to loathe ourselves to-night. We did say in our heart, "I am good enough." The filthy rags of our own righteousness have had the impertinence to compare with the fair white linen of Christ's righteousness. We thought we could put away our own sins by some method of our own, and that cross, which is heaven's wonder and hell's terror, are despised so as to think we could do without it. We might well loathe ourselves for this, if we had never committed any other transgression than this. Oh! foul pride, oh! base and loathsome pride that can make a sinner think he can do without a Saviour, and so presumptuously imagine that Christ was more than was needful, and the cross was a work of supererogation.

Did any of us go further than this? And did we ever commit persecuting acts against Christ and his people? Perhaps some of you did, and now you are his servants. You laughed at that Christian woman; why, you would go down upon your knees now if you could find her, to beg a thousand pardons, now you know her to be a child of God. You did then act very harshly and severely towards one who was a true lover of the Saviour. Perhaps you spoke opprobrious words, or did worse. As Cranmer put his hand into the fire and said, "Oh! unworthy right hand," because it had written a recantation of Christ and his truth years before. I am sure you would say it now if you have written one unkind word, or said one ungenerous word concerning a believer in Christ. And oh! if you have ever openly blasphemed, I know you loathe yourself, standing here to-night, to think those lips once cursed God, and, joining in the prayer-meeting with your prayers, to think that those lips once imprecated curses upon your fellow-men. I know your feeling must be one of very deep prostration of spirit. And even if we have not gone so far, we feel, as you do, that we loathe ourselves for our iniquities and for our

abominations. Thus might I continue to speak to your hearts, but I trust, my brethren, it will be needless to do so, for you do already loathe yourselves for your sins.

Let me close this first part of the subject by just remarking that there are some persons here who, if the Lord should ever convert them, would ever have a strong loathing for themselves. I mean, first, hypocrites. There are such in this church, there never was a church without them. They come to the communion table, and yet have no part nor lot in the matter. We know of some that have been here Sabbath after Sabbath, and they are habitual drunkards, undiscovered by us—who intrude themselves into the assemblies of the faithful, and yet at the same time make much mock and sport of our holy religion. Oh! if you are ever saved, what heart-breakings you will have! How you will hate yourselves! I shall not say one hard word about you, but I do pray God's grace will make you feel a great many hard things about yourself, and while you look up into the dear face of the crucified, and find pardon there, may you afterwards cover your face with shame, and weep to think of the mercy you have found. So, too, those who once professed Christ and have gone away altogether—they may be here. I should not wonder but what in this throne there are some that used to be religious people—put on an appearance and did run well. Now for years they have neglected prayer. That woman, once a church member, married an ungodly husband, and many a bitter day she has had since then, and to-night she has strayed in here. Ah! woman, may God bring thee back and thou wilt loathe thyself for having given up Christ for the love of a poor dying man. And others that have gone into the world for Sunday trading, or for some sort of gain, given up Christ, like Judas, who betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver. Oh! if you are ever saved, you will hate yourselves. I am sure this will be your cry within yourself, "Saviour, thou hast forgiven me, but I shall never forgive myself; thou hast blotted out my sins like a cloud, but I shall always remember them, and lay very low at thy feet all my praises while I think of what thou hast done for me." Yes, and you there have a dear one that is a persecutor, a blasphemer, an opposer of the gospel, an infidel; may you become one of those who shall abundantly loathe yourself when you shall taste of the rich, free mercy of God. Thus I have set forth what it is that a man loathes; but let me remark it is not merely his actions he loathes, but



himself, to think that he could do such things. He loathes the fountain to think that it could yield such a stream; he loathes his own evil nature, the deep corruption and depravity of his heart, to think he should be so ungrateful and treat the Lord of mercy in so ungenerous a way. But now we must turn to the second part of the subject.

## II. HOW IS IT, AND WHY, THAT PARDONED SOULS DO LOATHE THEMSELVES?

Reply first. Their nature is changed. God, in conversion, makes us new men. We are not altered, improved, or mended, but a new life is given us; we become new creations in Christ Jesus. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make us to be born again, and as that which is born of the flesh is flesh, so that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and it hates the old corrupt nature, loathes it, and fights against it to the death. And further, the moving cause for loathing ourselves is the receipt of divine mercy. "Oh!" saith the soul when it finds itself forgiven, "did I rebel against such a God as this! What! has he struck out all my sins from the roll, cast them all behind his back, and does he declare that he loves me still? Then wretch that I am that I should have revolted and rebelled against such a God as this." It is just as John Bunyan puts it. There is a city besieged, and they determine that they will fight it out to the last. They will make every street to run with blood but what they will hold it out against the king who claims the city for himself; but when his troops march up and set their ranks around the city, and it is all surrounded, the trumpet sounds for a parley, and the messenger comes forward with the white flag, and they find to their surprise that the conditions offered are so honourable, so generous, so much to their own advantage, that the king appears not to be their enemy at all, but, in fact, to be their best friend. He will enlarge their liberties far above what they were. He will beautify their city—it was mean before. He will come and dwell in it; he will make it the metropolis of the country; he will give it markets; he will give it all it wanted. "Why," saith John Bunyan, "whereas before they were going to fortify the walls and die to a man, they fling open the gates, and they are ready to tumble over the walls to him, they are so glad to find that he treats them so generously." And it is, even so with us when we find that he blots out our sin, that he is all love and all compassion, we yield to him at once, and

then shame comes, to think that it should ever have been needful for us to yield, that we should ever have taken up arms against him at all. It is a beautiful incident in English history when one of our kings was carrying on war against his rebellious son. and they met in battle, and the son was, just about to kill the father, when the father's visor was lifted up and he saw that it was his father whom he was about to kill. So the sinner, fighting against his God, thinks he is his enemy, but on a sudden he beholds it is his own Father that he has been fighting against, and he drops the weapon of his rebellion, feeling ashamed that he should have rebelled against such mercy and such favour. That is why we are ashamed, and I do pray that some here may be ashamed in the same way, for I think I hear Jehovah bewailing himself to-night. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Your God is good, be ready to repent and be forgiven; rebel no more.

Now after the receipt of divine mercy has brought in this feeling, the feeling is continued and promoted by everything that happens to us. For instance, every doctrine a Christian man learns after he is converted makes him loathe himself. Suppose he learns the doctrine of election. "What!" saith he, "was I chosen of God from before the foundation of the world, and did go after filthiness and uncleanness with this body? Was I dishonest and a liar, and yet loved of God before the stars began to shine?" That doctrine makes a man loathe himself. Then he learns the doctrine of redemption, and he reads, "These are they that are redeemed from among men"—a special and particular redemption. Did Jesus then die for me, as he did not die for all? Had he a special eye to me in that sacrifice of himself upon the cross? Oh! then I will smite my breast to think there ever should have been such a hard heart towards a Saviour who loved me so. There is no doctrine but what, when the heart learns it, the spirit bows down with deep shame to think it ever should have rebelled. So it is with every fresh mercy the Christian enjoys. Surely he wakes up every morning with a fresh mercy, but especially at peculiar times when our prayers have been heard, when we have been rescued out of deep distress, we lift up our eyes to heaven, and as we bless God for all his favours to us we say, "And can it be that I was once a rebel, in arms

against such a God as thee? My God, my Father, did I ever blaspheme thy name? Did I ever read thy Book as a common book? Did I ever neglect thy mercy, Saviour? Then shame on me when thou hast ever been so good, so kind to me." And as the Christian grows in grace and mounts to more elevated platforms of experience, this self-loathing gets deeper when the spirit bears witness with him that he is a child of God. When he rises as a child to feel that he is an heir, and that, being an heir, he claims his heritage to sit with Christ in the heavenly places, the more he sees of God's marvellous kindness to him, the more he looks back to his past life and to the depravity of the heart within, and he says, "Shame on thy head; cover thy face with confusion; silence me before thee, oh! thou Most High, to think that after such mercy as this I should have remained so ungrateful to thee." And I suppose that as long as the Christian lives, and the further he goes in the grace of God, the deeper he goes in a disestimate of himself; it will ever be so until, as he gets to the gates of heaven, among all his joys and the growing sense of divine favour, there will be a still deeper sense of repentance for all the transgressions of his heart.

And now I shall need your attention still a few moments longer while I dwell upon the third and last point. When a soul is thus made to loathe itself:—

### III. WHAT FOLLOWS?

Well, there follows, first of all, self-distrust. A man who remembers what he has been, and has a due sense of what his sin was, will never trust himself again. He thought at one time that he could resist sin; he imagined that it would be possible for him to fight against iniquity, and by daily perseverance to make something of himself. Now he has fallen so often, he has proved his own weakness so thoroughly, that all he can do now is just to look up to God, and ask for strength from on high. He cannot by any possibility rest in himself; his own weakness is so thoroughly proved. A man who knows what he used to be is conscious of what his former estate was, and will by no sort of means rely upon his own strength for a single hour. "Lead us not into temptation" will be his constant prayer, and "Deliver us from evil" will follow close upon it.

When I see a man going into sinful company, a Christian professor going on to the verge of sin and saying, "I shall not fall, I can take care of myself," I feel pretty certain that that man's experience is a very flimsy one, and that it is altogether a very grave question whether he ever was pardoned and has tasted of divine grace; for if he had, he would have known what it was to loathe himself a great deal more, and to distrust himself more.

The next result in a man will be that he will not serve himself any longer. Before, he could have lived for his own honour, but now he has such a disestimate of himself that he must have a different object. Spend my life for my own honour and glory? "No," saith he, "I am not worthy of it. I, who could blaspheme heaven, or could live so long an enemy to God—I serve such a monster as myself! No! By God's grace, I will serve him who has changed my nature, forgiven my sin, and made me to be a new creature in Christ Jesus. Self-loathing is quite sure to make a man have a better object than that of seeking to honour myself."

And then a man who has once loathed himself will never loathe his fellow-men. He will be free from that pride which is found in many, which disqualifies them for Christian service, because they do not know the hearts of sinners, and do not enter into communion with them. I have known some who fancy there ought to be a great distance between themselves and what they call common people; who talk of sin as though it were a strange thing, in which they had no participation, they themselves having been highly elevated above ordinary folks. Oh! we know of some that would scorn the harlot, and look down upon a man whose character has been once destroyed, and think he never ought to be spoken to again. The Christian loathes himself for not having had pity on others. He knows how readily his feet might have gone in the same way; how easily, too, he might have fallen. even to the same extent, if circumstances had been the same with him as with them, and, as far as he can, he seeks to uplift them. The man who is once as he should be, thrusts his arm to the elbow in every mire to bring up one of God's precious jewels. He has put off the kid gloves of self-sufficiency, so he works like a true labourer. He knows what Christ has done for him—how Jesus poured out his very heart's blood for his redemption—and he feels he

cannot do too much, if by any means he can pluck a single firebrand from the flame. Brethren, it is good to loathe ourselves. for it makes us have sympathy with others.

Yet, once again, this self-loathing in every case where it comes makes Jesus Christ very precious, and makes sin very hateful. Whoever bath loathed himself at all sees how Jesus Christ has been a great Saviour, and he admires and adores him. You know you measure the height of the Saviour's love by the depth of your own fall. If you don't know anything about your ruin, you won't be likely to prize much the remedy. A man that has got a desperate disease, and is dealt with by the physician, if he does not know what the disease is, is not able to feel the measure of gratitude, even if he is healed, that another man would, who knew how fatal the disease was in itself. If I think I am not poor, if I be befriended, I shall not have that gratitude which a bankrupt would have had if he had nothing left, to whom someone had generously given a large estate. No! a sense of need helps us to glorify God. Amongst the saints, and when on earth, the sweetest voices are those that have been made sweet by repentance. Amongst those that sing in heaven, and sing with the most sweet and lofty praise to God, are those who bless the grace that lifted them up from the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set their feet on a rock and established their goings. This blessed shamefacedness, which Christ gives us, is not to be avoided; may we have it more and more, and it shall be a fit preparation for the service of God on earth and the enjoyment of his presence in heaven.

And now, dear friends, it will be a very suitable season for every Christian just to look back and let his shame for many things mantle on his cheeks. Oh! how little progress have we made in the divine life through all the years! We call each year a "year of grace," but we might call it a year of sorrow. "The year of our Lord," we call it! Too often we make it the Year of ourselves. God save us for not living to him, working more for him, and growing more like him! Let us close every year with repentance, not because the sin abides, for, blessed be God, it is all forgiven—we are saved. Before the sin was perpetrated, Christ carried it into the sepulchre where he was buried; he, cast it there; it cannot be laid against us to condemn us, yet do we hate it, and yet do we loathe ourselves to think we

have fallen into it. But would not this also be an admirable opportunity to show how we hate sin by seeking to bring others to Christ? Do watch for other souls. As you prize your own, seek the conversion of others, and God grant that you may bring many to Jesus.

And you that are not saved, oh! suffer not this occasion to pass, let not the days go by without your seeking for that mercy which God so fully gives through his only-begotten Son. Then when you receive it you will be ashamed, and you, too, will magnify the grace that pardoned even you. God bless you, dear friends, very richly, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## What Have I Done?

What have I done? - Jeremiah 8:6

Perhaps no figure represents God in a more gracious light than those figures of speech, which represent him as stooping from his throne, and as coming down from heaven to attend to the wants and to behold the woes of mankind. We must have love for that God, who, when Sodom and Gomorrah were reeking with iniquity, would not destroy those cities, although he knew their guilt and their wickedness, until he had made an actual visitation to them and had sojourned for awhile in their streets. Methinks we can not help pouring out our heart in affection to that God, of whom we are told that he inclines his ear from the highest glory, and puts it to the lip of the faintest that breathes out the true desire. How can we resist feeling that he is a God whom we must love, when we know that he regards everything that concerns us, numbers the very hairs of our heads, bids his angels protect our footsteps lest we dash our feet against stones, marks our path and ordereth our ways. But especially is this great truth brought near to man's heart, when we recollect how attentive God is, not merely to the temporal interests of his creatures, but to their spiritual concerns. God is represented in Scripture as waiting to be gracious, or, in the language of the parable, when his prodigals are yet a great way off he sees them; he runs and falls upon their neck and kisses them. He is so attentive to everything that is good, even in the poor sinner's heart, that to him there is music in a sigh, and beauty in a tear; and in this verse that I have just read, he represents himself as looking upon man's heart and listening - listening, if possibly he may hear something that is good. "I hearkened and heard; I listened; I stood still, and I attended to them." And how amiable does God appear, when he is represented as turning aside, and as it were with grief in his heart, exclaiming, "I *did* listen, I *did* hearken, but they spake not aright; no man repented of his wickedness, saying, "What shall I do?" Ah! my hearer, thou never hast a desire toward God which does not excite God's hope;

thou dost never breathe a prayer toward heaven which he does not notice; and though thou hast very often uttered prayers which have been as the morning cloud and as the early dew that soon passeth away, yet all these things have moved Jehovah's bowels; for he has been hearkening to thy cry and noticing the breathing of thy soul, and though it all hath passed away, yet it did not pass away unnoticed, for he remembers it even now. And oh! thou that art this day seeking a Saviour, remember, that Saviour's eyes are on thy seeking soul to-day. Thou art not looking after one who can not see thee; thou art coming to thy Father, but thy Father sees thee even in the distance. It was but one tear that trickled down thy cheek, but thy Father noticed that as a hopeful sign; it was but one throb that went through thy heart just now during the singing of the hymn, but God, the Loving, noticed even that, and thought upon it as at least some omen that thou wast not yet quite hardened by sin, nor yet given up by love and mercy.

The text is "What have I done?" I shall just introduce that by a *few words of affectionate persuasion*, urging all now present to ask that question: secondly, I shall give them a *few words of assistance in trying to answer it*; and when I have so done, I shall finish by a *few sentences of solemn admonition to those who have had to answer the question against themselves*.

I. First, then, a few words of EARNEST PERSUASION, requesting every one now present, and more especially every unconverted person, to ask this question of himself, and answer it solemnly: "What have I done?"

Few men like to take the trouble to review their own lives, most men are so near bankruptcy that they are ashamed to look at their own books. The great mass of mankind are like the silly ostrich, which, when hard pressed by the hunters, buries its head in the sand and shuts its eyes, and then thinks, because it does not see its pursuers, that therefore it is safe. The great mass of mankind, I repeat, are ashamed to review their own biographies; and if conscience and memory together could turn joint authors of a history of their lives throughout, they would buy a huge iron clasp and a padlock to it, and lock the volume up, for they dare not read it. They know it to be a book full of lamentation and woe, which they dare



not read, and still go on in their iniquities. I have therefore a hard task in endeavoring to persuade you one and all to take down that book, and be its pages few or many, be they white or be they black, I have some difficulty in getting you to read them through. But may the Holy Spirit persuade you now, so that you may answer this question, "What have I done?" For remember, my dear friend, that searching yourself can do you no hurt. No tradesman ever gets the poorer by looking to his books; he may find himself to be poorer than he thought he was, but it is not the looking to the books that hath hurt him; he hath hurt himself by some ill trading before. Better, my friend, for you to know the past whilst there is yet time for repairing it, than that you should go blindfolded, hoping to enter the gates of Paradise and find out your mistake when alas! it is too late, because the door is shut. There is nothing to be lost by taking stock; you can not be any the worse for a little self examination. This of itself shall be one strong argument to induce you to do it; but remember you may be a great deal the better; for suppose your affairs are all right with God, why then you may make good cheer and comfort yourself for he that is right with his God has no cause to be sad. But ah! remember there are many probabilities that you are wrong. There are so many in this world that are deceived, that there are many chances that you are deceived too. You may have a name to live and yet be dead; you may be like John Bunyan's tree, of which he said "'twas fair to look upon and green outside, but the inside of it was rotten enough to be tinder for the devils tinder box." You may this day thus stand before yourself your fellow creatures well whitewashed, and exceeding fair, but you may be like that Pharisee of whom Christ said, "Thou art a whited sepulcher, for inwardly thou art full of rottenness and dead men's bones." Now, man, however thou mayest wish to be self-deceived, for my own part I feel that I would a thousand times rather know my own state really than have the most pleasing conceptions about it and find myself deceived. Many a time have I solemnly prayed that prayer, "Lord, help me to know the worst of my own case; if I be still an apostate from thee, without God and without Christ, at least let me be honest to myself and know what I am." Remember, my friend, that the time you have for self-examination is, after all, very short. Soon thou wilt know the great secret. I perhaps may not say words rough enough to rend off the mask which thou now hast upon thee, but there is one called Death who will stand no compliment.

You may masquerade it out to-day in the dress of the saint, but death will soon strip you, and you must stand before the judgment seat after death has discovered you in all your nakedness, be that naked innocence or naked guilt. Remember, too, though you may deceive yourself, you will not deceive your God. You may have light weights, and the beam of the scale in which you weigh yourself may not be honest, and may not therefore tell the truth; but when God shall try you he will make no allowances; when the everlasting Jehovah grasps the balances of justice and puts his law into one scale, ah, sinner, how wilt thou tremble when he shall put thee into the other; for unless Christ be thy Christ thou wilt be found light weight - thou wilt be weighed in the balances and found wanting, and be cast away for ever.

Oh! what words shall I adopt to induce every one of you now to search yourselves! I know the various excuses that some of you will make. Some of you will plead that you are members of churches, and that, therefore, all is right with you. Perhaps you look across from the gallery, and you say to me, "Mr. Spurgeon, your hands baptized me but this year into the Lord Jesus, and you have often passed to me the sacramental bread and wine. Ah, my hearer, I know that, and I have baptized, I fear, many of you that the Lord hath never baptized; and some of you have been received into the church fellowship on earth who were never received by God. If Jesus Christ had one hypocrite in his twelve, how many hypocrites must I have here in nearly twelve hundred? Ah! my hearers, in this age it is a very easy thing to make a profession of religion: many churches receive candidates into their fellowship without examination at all; I have had such come to me, and I have told them, "I must treat you just the same as if you came from the world," because they said, "I never saw the minister; I wrote a note to the Church, and they took me in." Verily, in this age of profession, a man may make the highest profession in the world, and yet be at last found with damned apostates. Do not put off the question for that; and do not say, "I am too busy to attend to my spiritual concerns; there is time enough yet." Many have said that, and before their "time enough" has come, they have found themselves where time shall be no more. O! thou that sayest thou hast time enough, how little dost thou know how near death is to thee. There are some present that will not see New Year's Day; there is every probability that a very large number will

never see another year. O, may the Lord our God prepare us each for death and for judgment, and bless this mornings exhortation to our preparation, by leading us to ask the question - "What have I done?"

II. Now, then, I am to help you to answer the question - "What have I done?"

Christian, true Christian, I have little to say to thee this morning. I will not multiply words, but leave the inquiry with thine own conscience. What hast thou done? I hear thee reply, "I have done nothing to save myself; for that was done for me in the eternal covenant, from before the foundation of the world. I have done nothing to make a righteousness for myself, for Christ said, 'It is finished;' I have done nothing to procure heaven by my merits, for all that Jesus did for me before I was born." But, say, brother, what hast thou done for him who died to save thy wretched soul? What hast thou done for his church? What hast thou done for the salvation of the world? What hast thou done to promote thine own spiritual growth in grace? Ah! I might hit some of you that are true Christians very hard here; but I will leave you with your God. God will chastise his own children. I will, however, put a pointed question. Are there not many Christians now present who can not recollect that they have been the means of the salvation of one soul during this year? Come, now; turn back. Have you any reason to believe that directly or indirectly you have been made the means this year of the salvation of a soul? I will go further. There are some of you who are old Christians, and I will ask you this question: Have you any reason to believe that ever since you were converted you have ever been the means of the salvation of a soul? It was reckoned in the East, in the time of the patriarchs, to be a disgrace to a woman that she had no children - to have none born unto God through his instrumentality! And yet, there are some of you here that have been spiritually barren, and have never brought one convert to Christ; you have not one star in your crown of glory, and must wear a starless crown in heaven. Oh! I think I see the joy and gladness with which a good child of God looked upon me last week, when we had heard some one who had been converted to God by her instrumentality. I took her by the hand and said, "Well, now, you have reason to thank God." "Yes, sir," she said, "I feel a happy and an honored woman now. I have never, that I know of,

before been the means of bringing a soul to Christ." And the good woman looked so happy; the tears were in her eyes for gladness. How many have you brought during this year? Come, Christian, what have you done? Alas! alas! you have not been barren fig-trees, but still your fruit is such that it can not be seen. You may be alive unto God, but how many of you have been very unprofitable and exceedingly unfruitful? And do not think that while I thus deal hardly with you I would escape myself. No, I ask myself the question, "What have I done?" And when I think of the zeal of Whitfield, and of the earnestness of many of those great evangelists of former times, I stand here astounded at myself, and I ask myself the question, "What have I done?" And I can only answer it with some confusion of face. How often have I preached to you, my hearers, the Word of God, and yet how seldom have I wept over you as a pastor should? How often ought I to have warned you of the wrath to come, when I have forgotten to be so earnest as I might have been. I fear lest the blood of souls should lie at my door, when I come to be judged of my God at last. I beseech you, pray for your minister in this thing, that he may be forgiven, if there has ever been a lack of earnestness, and energy, and prayerfulness, and pray that during the next year I may always preach as though I ne'er might preach again.

"A dying man to dying men."

I heard the moralist whilst I was questioning the Christian, say, "What have I done? Sir, I have done all I ought to have done. You may, as a Gospeller, stand there and talk to me about sins; but I tell you, Sir, I have done all that was my duty; I have always attended my church or chapel regularly every Sunday as ever a man or woman could; I have always read prayers in the family, and I always say prayers before I go to bed and when I get up in the morning. I don't know that I owe anybody anything, or that I have been unkind to anybody; I give a fair share to the poor, and I think if good works have any merit I certainly have done a great deal." Quite right, my friend, very right, indeed, *if* good works have any merit; but then it is very unfortunate that they have not any; for our good works, if we do them to save ourselves by them, are no better than our sins. You might as well hope to go to heaven by cursing and swearing, as by the merits of your own good works; for although good works are infinitely

preferable to cursing and swearing in a moral point of view, yet there is no more merit in one than there is in the other, though there is less sin in one than in the other. Will you please to remember, then, that all you have been doing all these years is good for nothing? "Well, but, sir, I have trusted in Christ." Now, stop! Let me ask you a question. Do you mean to say, that you have trusted partly in Christ, and partly in your own good works? "Yes, sir." Well, then, let me tell you, the Lord Jesus Christ will never be a make weight; you must take Christ wholly, or else no Christ at all, for Christ will never go shares with you in the work of salvation. So, I repeat, all you have ever done is good for nothing. You have been building a card-house, and the tempest will blow it down; you have been building a house upon the sand, and when the rains descend and the floods come, the last vestige of it will be swept away forever. Hear ye the word of the Lord! "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them;" and in as much as you have not continued in all things that are written in the law you are transgressors of the law, and you are under the curse, and all that the law has to say to you is, "Cursed, cursed, cursed! Your morality is of no help to you whatever, as to eternal things."

I turn to another character. He says, "Well, I don't trust in my morality nor in anything else; I say,

'Begone dull care, I pray thee begone from me.'

I have nothing to do with talking about eternity, as you would have me. But, sir, I am not a bad fellow after all. It is a very little that I ever do amiss; now and then a peccadillo, just a little folly, but neither my country, nor my friends, nor my own conscience, can say anything against me. True, I am none of your saints; I don't profess to be too strict; I may go a little too far sometimes, but it is only a little; and I dare say we shall be able to set all matters straight before the end comes." Well, friend, but I wish you had asked yourself the question, "What have I done?" - it strikes me that if each of you would just take off that film, that films your heart and your life over, you might see a grievous leprosy lurking behind what you have done. "Well, for the matter of that," says one, "perhaps I

may have taken a glass or two too much sometimes." Stop a bit! What is the name of that? Stutter as much as you like! Out with it! What is the name of it? "Why, it is just a little mirth, sir." Stop, let us have the right name of it. What do you call it in any one else? "Drunkenness, I suppose." Says another, "I have been a little loose in my talk sometimes." What is that? "It has been just a merry spree." Yes, but please to call it what it ought to be called - lascivious conversation. Write that down. "Oh! no, sir; things are looking serious." Yes, they are indeed; but they do not look any more serious than they really are. Sometimes you have been out on the Sabbath day haven't you? "Oh! yes; but that has been only now and then - just sometimes." Yes, but let us put it down what it is, and we will see what the list comes to. Sabbath-breaking! "Stop," you say, "I have gone no further, sir; certainly I have gone no further." I suppose in your conversation, sometimes during your life, you have quoted texts of Scripture to make jokes of them, haven't you? And sometimes you have cried out, when you have been a little surprised, "Lord, have mercy upon me, and such things. I don't venture to say you swear; though there is a Christian way of swearing that some people get into, and they think it is not quite swearing, but what it is besides nobody knows, and so we will put it down as swearing - cursing and swearing. "Oh! sir, it was only when somebody trod on my toes, or I was angry." Never mind, put it down by its right name: we shall get a pretty good list against you by and by. I suppose that in trade you never adulterate your articles. "Well that is a matter of business in which you ought not to interfere." Well, it so happens I am going to interfere - and if you please we will call it by its right name - stealing. We will put that down. I suppose you have never been hard with a debtor, have you? You have never at any time wished that you were richer, and sometimes half wished that your opposite neighbor would lose part of his custom, so that you might have it? Well, we will call it by its right name: that is "covetousness, which is idolatry." Now, the list seems to be getting black indeed. Besides that, how have you spent all this year; and though you have pretended sometimes to say prayers, have you ever really prayed? No, you have not. Well, then there is prayerlessness to put down. You have sometimes read the Bible, you have sometimes listened to the ministry but have you not, after all, let all these things pass away? Then I want to know whether that is not despising God, and whether we must not put that down under that name.

Truly we need go but very little further; for the list already when summed up is most fearful, and few of us can escape from sins so great as these, if our conscience be but a little awake.

But there is one man here who has grown very careless and indifferent to every point of morality, and he says, "Ah! young man, I could tell you what I have done during the year." Stop, sir, I don't particularly wish to know just now; you may as well tell it to yourself when you get home. There are young people here: it would not do them much good to know what you have done perhaps. You are no better than you should be, some people say; which means, you are so bad they would not like to say what you are. Do you suppose in all this congregation we have no debauched men - none that indulge in the vilest sin and lust? Why, God's angel seems even now to be flying through our midst, and touching the conscience of some, to let them know in what iniquities they have indulged during the year. I pray God that my just simply alluding to them may be the means of startling your conscience. Ah! ye may hide your sins; the coverlet of darkness may be your shelter; you may think they shall never be discovered; but remember, every sin that you have done shall be read before the sun, and men, and angels shall hear it in the day of final account. Ah! my hearer, be thou moral or be thou dissolute, I beseech thee, answer this question solemnly to-day: "What have I done?" It would be as well if you took a piece of paper when you went home, and just wrote down what you have done from last January to December; and if some of you do not get frightened at it I must say you have got pretty strong nerves, and are not likely to be frightened at much yet.

Now I specially address myself to the unconverted man and I would help him to answer this question in another point of view. "What have I done?" Ah! man, thou that livest in sin, thou that art a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God, what hast thou done? Dost thou not know that one sin is enough to damn a soul for ever? Hast thou never read in Holy Scripture that cursed is he that sins but once? How damned then, art thou by the myriad sins of this one year! Recall, I beseech thee, the sins of thy youth and thy former transgressions up till now; and if one sin would ruin thee for ever, how ruined art thou now! Why, man, one wave of sin may swamp thee. What will these oceans of thy guilt do? One witness

against thee will be enough to condemn thee: behold the crowds of follies and of crimes now gathered round the judgment-seat that have gone before thee into judgment. How wilt thou escape from their testimonies, when God shall call thee to his bar. What hast thou done? Come, man, answer this question. There are many consequences involved in thy sin, and in order to answer this question rightly thou must reply to every consequence, what hast thou done to thine own soul? Why, thou hast destroyed it; thou hast done thy best to ruin it for ever. For thine own poor soul thou hast been digging dungeons; thou hast been piling faggots; thou hast been forging chains of iron - faggots with which to burn it, and fetters with which to bind it for ever.

Remember, thy sins are like sowing for a harvest. What a harvest is that which thou hast sown for thy poor soul! Thou hast sown the wind, thou shalt reap the whirlwind; thou hast sown iniquity, thou shalt reap damnation. But what hast thou done against the gospel? Remember, how many times this year thou hast heard it preached? Why, since thy birth there have been wagon-loads of sermons wasted on thee. Thy parents prayed for thee in thy youth; thy friends instructed thee till thou didst come to manhood. Since then how many a tear has been wept by the minister for thee! How many an earnest appeal has been shot into thine heart! But thou hast rent out the arrow. Ministers have been concerned to save thee, and thou hast cast never been concerned about thyself. What hast thou done against Christ? Remember, Christ has been a good Christ to sinners here; but as there is nothing that burns so well as that soft substance, oil, so there is nothing that will be so furious as that gentle-hearted Saviour, when he comes to be your Judge. Fiercer than a lion on his prey is rejected love. Despise Christ on the cross, and it will be a terrible thing to be judged by Christ on his throne.

But again: what have you done for your children this year? Oh! there be some here present that have been doing all they could to ruin their children's souls. 'Tis solemn what responsibility rests upon a father; and what shall be said of a drunken father? - the father that sets his children an example of drunkenness. Swearer, what have you done for your family? Haven't you, too, been twisting the rope for their eternal destruction? Will they not be sure to do as you do? Mother, you have



several children, but this year you have never prayed for one of them, never put your arms round their necks as they kneeled at their little chair at night, and said, "Our Father;" you have never told them of Jesus that loved children, and once became a child like them. Ah, then, you too have neglected your children. I remember a mother who was converted to God in her old age, and she said to me - and I shall never forget the womanly grief - "God has forgiven me, but I shall never forgive myself. For sir," she said, "I have nourished and brought up children but I have done it without any respect to religion." And then she burst into tears, and said, "I have been a cruel mother, sir; I have been a wretch!" "Why," said I, "my good woman, you have brought your children up." "Yes," said she, "my husband died when they were young, and left me with six of them, and these hands have earned their bread and found them clothes; no one," she said, "can accuse me of being unkind to them in anything but this; but this is the worst of all; I have been a cruel mother to them, for while I fed their bodies I neglected their souls. But some have gone further than this. Ah, young man, you have not only done your best this year to damn yourself, but you have done your best to damn others! Remember, last January, you took that young man into the tavern for the first time, and laughed at all his boyish scruples, as you called them, and told him to drink away, as you did. Remember, when in the darkness of night you first led astray one young man whose principles were virtuous, and who had not known lust unless you had revealed it to him; you said at the time, "Come with me; I'll show you London life, I'll let you see pleasure!" That young man, when he first came to your shop, used to go to the house of God on Sunday, and seemed to bid fair for heaven - "Ah," you say, "I have laughed religion out of Jackson, he doesn't go any where on a Sunday now except for a spree, and he is just as merry as any of us." Ah! sir, and you will have two hells when you are damned; you will have your own hell and his too, for he will look through the lurid flames upon you, and say, "Mayhap, I had never been here if you had not brought me here!" And ah! seducer, what eyes will be those that will glare at you through hell's horror? - The eyes of one whom you led into iniquity! what double hells they will be to you as they glare on you like two stars, whose light is fury, and wither your blood for ever! Pause, ye that have led others astray, and tremble now. I paused myself, and prayed to God when I first knew a Saviour, that he would help me to lead those to Christ that I

had ever in any way led astray. And I remember George Whitfield says when he began to pray, his first prayer was that God would convert those with whom he used to play at cards and waste his Sundays. "And blessed be God," he says, "I got every one of them."

O my God, can I not detect in some face here astonishment and terror. Doth no man's knees knock together? Doth no man's heart quail within him because of his iniquity? Surely it cannot be so, else were your hearts turned to steel, and your bowels become as iron in the midst of you. Surely, if it be so, the words of God are most certainly true, wherein he saith, in the seventh verse of this chapter - "The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord;" and certainly that prophet was true who said, "The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass his masters crib; but my people doth not know, Israel doth not consider." Oh, are ye so brutish as to let the reflections of that guilt pass over you without causing astonishment and terror? Then, surely we who feel our guilt have need to bend our knees for you, and pray that God might yet bring you to know yourselves; for, living and dying as you are, hardened and without hope, your lot must be horrible in the extreme.

How happy should I be if I might hope that the great mass of you could accompany me in this humble confession of our faith; may I speak as if I were speaking for each one of you? It shall be at your option, either to accept what I say, or to reject it; but, I trust, the great multitude of you will follow me. "Oh, Lord! I this morning confess that my sins are greater than I can bear; I have deserved thy hottest wrath, and thine infinite displeasure; and I hardly dare to hope that thou canst have mercy upon me; but inasmuch as thou didst give thy Son to die upon the cross for sinners, thou hast also said, 'Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth,' Lord, I look to thee this morning, though I never looked before, yet I look now; though I have been a slave of sin to this moment, yet Lord, accept me, sinner though I be, through the blood and righteousness of thy Son, Jesus Christ. Oh Father, frown not on me; thou mayest well do so, but I plead that promise which says, 'Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. Lord, I come -

Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come.

My faith doth lay its hand,  
On that dear head of thine,  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess my sin.

"Lord accept me, Lord pardon me, and take me as I am, from this time forth and for ever, to be thy servant whilst I live, to be thy redeemed when I die." Can you say that? Did not many a heart say it? Did I not hear many a lip in silence utter it? Be of good cheer, my brother, my sister, that if that came from your heart, you are as safe as the angels of heaven, for you are a child of God, and you shall never perish.

III. Now I have to address a few words of AFFECTIONATE ADMONITION, and then I have done. It is a very solemn thing to think how years roll away. I never spent a shorter year in my life than this one, and the older I grow, the shorter the years get; and you, old men, I dare say, look back on your sixty and seventy years, and you say, "Ah, young man, they will seem shorter, soon!" No doubt, they will. "So teach us to number our days, O God, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." But, is it not a solemn thing, that there is another year nearly gone; and yet many of you are unsaved? You are just where you were last year. No, you are not, you are nearer death, and you are nearer hell, except you repent; and, perhaps, even what I have said this morning will have no effect upon you. You are not altogether hardened, for you have had many serious impressions. Scores of times you have wept under discourses, and yet all has been in vain, for you are what you were. I beseech you, answer this question, "What have I done?" for, remember, there will be a time when you will ask this question, but it will be too late. When is that - say you - on the death bed? No, it is not too late there.

"While the lamp holds out to burn,

The vilest sinner may return."

But it will be too late to ask, "What have I done?" when the breath has gone out of your body. Just suppose the monument as it used to be, before they caged it round. Suppose a man going up the winding staircase to the top, with a full determination to destroy himself. He has got on the outside of the railings. Can you imagine him for a moment saying, "What have I done?" just after he has taken his leap. Why, methinks some spirit in the air might whisper, "Done? you have done what you can never undo. You are lost - lost - lost!" Now, remember that you that have not Christ, are to-day going up that spiral stair-case; perhaps, to-morrow you will be standing in the article of death upon the palisading, and when death has gotten you, and you are just leaping from that monument of life down to the gulf of despair, that question will be full of horror to you. "What have you done?" But the answer for it will not be profitable, but full of terror. Methinks, I see a spirit launched upon the sea of eternity. I hear it say, "What have I done?" It is plunged in flaming waves, and cries, "What have I done?" It sees before it a long eternity; but it asks the question again, "What have I done?" The dread answer comes; thou hast earned all this for thyself. Thou knewest thy duty, but thou didst it not; Thou wast warned, but thou didst despise the warning. Ah! hear the doleful soliloquy of such a spirit. The last great day is come; the flaming throne is set, and the great book is opened. I hear the leaves as with terrible rustle they are turned over. I see men motioned to the right or to the left, according to the result of that great book. And what have I done? I know that to me sin will be destruction, for I have never sought a Saviour. What is that? The Judge has fixed his eye on me. Now, it is on me turned. Will he say, "Depart ye cursed," unto me? Oh! let me be crushed for ever, rather than bear that sight. There is no noise, but the finger is lifted, and I am dragged out of the crowd, and singly I stand before the Judge. He turns to my page, and before he reads it, my heart quakes within me. "Be it so," says he, "it has never been blotted with my blood. You despised my calls; you laughed at my people; you would have none of my mercy; you said that you would take the wages of unrighteousness. You shall have them, the wages of sin is death." Ah! me, and is he about to say, "Depart, ye cursed?" Yes, with a voice louder than a thousand thunders, he says, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his

angels." Ah! it is all true now. I laughed at the minister, because he preached about hell; and here am I in hell, myself. Ah! I used to wonder why he wanted to frighten us so. Ah! I would to God he had frightened me more, if he might but have frightened me out of this place. But now, here am I lost, and there is no escape. I am in darkness so dark, there is not a ray of light can ever reach me. I am shut up so close, that not one of the bolts and bars can ever be removed. I am damned for ever. Ah! that is a dreary soliloquy. I cannot tell it to you. Oh! if you were there, yourselves, if you could only know what they feel, and see what they endure, then would you wonder that I am not more earnest in preaching the Gospels and you would marvel, not that I wish to make you weep, but that I did not weep far more myself, and preach more solemnly. Ah! my hearers, as the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, I shall one day stand acknowledged by our conscience as having been a true witness unto you this morning; for there is not one of you here today, but will be without excuse, if you perish. You have been warned, I have warned you as earnestly as I can. I have no more powers to spend, no more arts to try, no more persuasion that I can use. I can only conclude by saying, I beseech you, fly to Jesus. I entreat you, as immortal spirits that are bound for endless weal or woe, fly ye to Christ; seek for mercy at his hands; trust in him, and be saved; and, at your peril, reject my solemn warning. Remember, ye may reject it, but ye reject not me, but him that sent me. Ye may despise it, but ye despise not me, but a greater than Moses, even Jesus Christ the Lord; and when ye come before his bar, piercing will be his language, and terrible his words, when he condemns you for ever, for ever, for ever, without hope, for ever, for ever, for ever. May God deliver us from that, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **What Meanest Thou, O Sleeper?**

But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. - Jonah 1:5-6

Of all the men in the ship, Jonah was the person who ought most to have been awake; but nevertheless, he was not only asleep, but fast asleep; all the creaking of the cordage, the dashing of the waves, the howling of the winds, the straining of the timbers, and the shouting of the mariners, did not arouse him; he was fast locked in the arms of sleep. See here, in Jonah's heavy slumber, the effect of sin. No noxious drug can give such deadly sleep as sin. The body never knows so dread a sleep when under the influence of opiates, as the soul does when sin hath cast it into a slumber. If men could be awake to the evils, to the danger, to the desperate punishment of sin, sin were not half so deadly as it is; but when it puts its sweet cup of nightshade to the lip, that cup soon blinds the eye and "steeps the senses in forgetfulness," and man knoweth not what or where he is. Nor is sin the only cradle in which evil rocks the soul, the world too, casteth men into slumber. I do not know that Jonah ever slept so soundly anywhere as when he had gotten into the midst of busy mariners who were going to Tarshish. Ah, it is comparatively easy for us to keep awake in the midst of God's Church; 'tis easy for us to maintain our stedfastness and integrity when we meet with those who rejoice in His name; but the world is an enchanted ground, and happy is that Christian who is able to survive the deadening influence of business, the soporific influence which creeps over the minds of men whose merchandise increaseth, whose houses are filled with the riches of nations. What downy pillows doth the world sew to all armholes! What beds of ease she spreads for those whom she entraps.

See also, the slumbering effects of the flesh. It was to spare himself a little toil, it was to avoid personal dishonor that Jonah fled. Ah, flesh! when thou art yielded to, into what follies wilt thou not drive us, into what prostration of strength dost thou not hurl us? Pleasures and comforts, if sought as ends, are desperate drains upon the vigor of the spirit. When body is indulged, then the soul lies cleaving to the dust. It is not possible

for us to pamper the flesh without, at the same time starving the soul. If we sacrifice unto our own lusts, we are quite certain to get the sacrifices by robbing God's altar. The body shall not have pleasure in sin, except the soul shall soon be in a state of misery and decay.

See also, in our text, one of the devices of Satan. He seeks to lull God's prophets into slumber, for he knows that dumb dogs that are given to sleep will never do any very great injury to his cause. The wakeful watchman he always fears, for then he cannot take the city by surprise; but if he can cast God's watchman into slumber, then he is well content, and thinketh it almost as well to have a Christian asleep as to have him dead: he would certainly sooner see him in hell, but next to that, he is most glad to see him rocked in the cradle of presumption, fast asleep. May we be delivered from Jonah's condition; but since like Jonah, we are infested by sin, incumbered by the flesh, surrounded by the world, and tempted by the devil, we have good cause occasionally that the shipmaster should come round and shake us by the shoulders, or even roughly strike us with the rope, lest we should sleep as do others, and so fall into spiritual decays.

I shall this morning act the shipmaster's part, and, as captain of this vessel, I will cry both to slumbering saints and to sleepy sinners, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God."

I. First of all, we will deal with the SLEEPING SAINTS, those poor Jonahs who are God's true servants, but are yet asleep.

To break their bands of sleep asunder, let me remind them, first, that the ship is in danger. It was ill for Jonah to sleep when all hands were at the pumps. When every other man was doing his best to lighten the ship, and save her if possible from the terrific tempest, it was a shame that he should be asleep. The peril of human life demanded of every generous spirit prompt and earnest action. Every groaning timber would upraid the lazy, sleepy prophet. Member of this Church, professed Christian, is it not a shame, think you, to be slumbering, to be dilatory in your Master's service when the souls of men are in danger? It is marvellous to me how men can be so careless about the ruin of men's souls. Let us hear the cry

of "Fire! fire!" in the streets, and our heart is all in trepidation lest some poor creature should be burned alive; but we read of hell, and of the wrath to come, and seldom do our hearts palpitate with any compassionate trembling and fear. If we are on board a vessel, and the shrill cry is heard, "A man overboard!" whoever hears of a passenger wrapping his plaid around him, and lying down upon a seat to contemplate the exertions of others? But in the Church, when we hear of thousands of sinners sinking in the floods of ruin, we behold professed Christians wrapping themselves up in their own security, and calmly looking on upon the labors of others, wishing them no doubt all success, but not even lifting a finger to do any part of the work themselves. If we heard to-morrow in our streets the awful cry—more terrible than fire—the cry of "Bread! bread! bread!" and saw starving women lifting up their perishing children, or hungry men imprecating curses upon those who should keep back their necessary food from them, would we not empty out our stores? Who among us would not spend our substance to let the poor ravenous creatures satisfy the pangs of hunger? And yet, here is the world perishing for lack of knowledge. Here we have them at our doors crying for the bread of heaven, and how many there are that hoard their substance for avarice, give their time to vanity, devote their talents to self-aggrandisement, and center their thoughts only on the world or the flesh! Oh! could ye once see with your eyes a soul sinking into hell, it were such a spectacle that ye would work night and day, and count your life too short and your hours too few for the plucking of brands from the burning. I suppose if we had once seen a drop drowning man, or a wretch borne over the rapids of Niagara, or if we had seen a person stabbed in the street, we should scarce ever forget it. Death's doings are painted in very red colors upon the memory. O that God would give some of you the sight of a lost soul! O that you could see it in its naked condition when it steps behind the curtain into the world unknown. O that you could behold its first horrors, when it discovers itself exposed to the anger of Almighty God. Would that you could see that soul when the awful hell-sweat shall stand upon its brow as God proclaims—"Depart, thou cursed one!" that the vision of hell were sometimes before our eyes, that some few of the sighs of a damned soul were ringing in our ears! Would God we had a vision of the judgment, the tremendous crowd, the flaming heavens and the rocking earth, the open book, the eyes that flash with lightning and



the voice that speaks with thunder! Would that we could see the crowds as they descend into the pit that hath no bottom, for then, starting up like men that have long been given to a foolish slumber, we should gird up our loins, and using both our hands we should seek to pluck men from the burning, and deliver them from going down into the pit. Men are dying! Men are perishing! Hell is filling! Satan is triumphing! Poor souls are howling in their agonies, and do ye sleep? I, as the shipmaster, shake ye yet again. O that the Holy Spirit may quicken and arouse you, perhaps he may do it through my voice, while again I adjure you. "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God," that the multitudes perish not!

A second time I would arouse you, by reminding you that in the halcyon times in which we live, men are earnestly craving for our prayers—men are longing for deliverance. In Jonah's ship every man was a pleader; every person was praying; and though I cannot say this of the world that lieth in the wicked one, yet, to a very great extent, it is true that the masses are longing to hear the words of this life. There was never an age like this for hearing sermons. I marvel, every Sabbath day, as I see the crowd willing to stand outside waiting by the hour, and then rustling in like a mountain torrent, even treading upon one another to hear the Word. Is not this an encouragement to labor? See the theater on a Sunday; no actors could attract greater multitudes! How they throng the doors, to listen to some simple-minded man, who is going to tell the story of the cross! I have seen this thirst for the Word all over England; but this present week I have seen in a village, thinly populated, some ten thousand people crowding the cliffs, drinking in every word from the preacher's lips—earnest to listen to the message of mercy. We have not now to stir up the people to attend the means, for there is all around us a desire to hear. This is a hearing age; this is a time when men are willing to listen—when they are only too glad to hear the Word faithfully preached. I say not that it is so in every place, but certainly it is in London; and a man with but very moderate gifts, if his tongue be but on fire, will soon command an audience. If there be an empty place of worship in London, it is generally the preacher's fault; and, in nine cases out of ten, you will find that empty benches are evidences that the man does not preach the gospel; for, if he preached the gospel, the people would soon throng to

listen to him. What, shall we sleep now? What, shall we be idle now? Ministers of Christ, shall we relax our efforts, or shall we be dull and cold about immortal souls when every omen urges us to zealous labor? My fellow workers—deacons and elders, honored Church officers—will you draw back in this day of hopefulness, and refrain to sow the seed, when the field is ploughed and ready for the grain? Church members—ye young men that can speak in public, ye women that can in your households talk of Christ—will any of you be dull and lethargic now? Now is the moment when we may carry the fortress by storm, and if armed and carrying bows we turn our backs in the moment of victory, when triumph trembles in the scales, how shall we throughout life regret our wicked folly and idleness. What meanest thou, O sleeper, to sleep now? Arise, for 'tis a happy and auspicious hour—"Arise, and call upon thy God."

Yet further, let us remember that as Jonah was the only man in the ship whose prayer could be of any avail, so the children of God are the only men who can do any real spiritual service to the perishing world. All the cries of the shipmaster and his crew were addressed to the gods of their various countries, who had ears which could not ear, and hands which could afford no aid. Jonah was the only man who worshipped the Lord that made the sea and the dry land; hence, his prayers alone could save the ship. Now, the salvation of the world under God lies with the Church. Christ has finished the atonement; it is for the Church to finish the ingathering. Christ hath paid the purchase-price, and completed redemption by blood; it is for the Church to seek the Holy Spirit, and fully to redeem the world by power. Suppose, then, that you who fear God say, "This is no case of mine; I am not my brother's keeper;" suppose that you waste opportunities, and throw precious time to the dogs, then the world must go down to its awful doom; but, mark you, its blood shall be upon your skirts. This generation, under God, must have salvation given to it through our ministry, through our evangelists, through our Sunday-schools, through our missionaries, through our preachings and teachings; and if we do it not, the world will not stay from perishing while we are staying from laboring. Men will not live on until another generation worthier than we are shall have taken our places, but this generation must go down to the tomb, muttering curses between its lips against the faithless, wicked, unbelieving, inactive Church; and we must go down too,

to meet the doom of those who had no real faith in Christ, or else they would have had a love for the souls of men; who had not the spirit of Jesus, or else they would with wooing entreaties, and with earnest efforts have brought men to the cross of Christ. Ah, beloved! I know that we have some in the Church who are but a drag to it. There are some in all Churches who are of this kind, but let me solemnly remind you—we must address the Church as a body—let me again remind the Church that it is with her and with no one else that the world has to deal as to its conversion. We must never think of leaving Christ's work to societies. They have had their day, and have supplied a great lack created by the loss of the apostolic spirit, but it is now time that the aroused and revived Church should assume her true position and do her own work. Fifty years or more, missionary societies have been trying to convert the world, and albeit that many souls have been saved, and therefore the effort has been far from useless, yet, compared with apostolic success, they have been a miserable failure. All these years we have spent ten times the money, with not a tenth of the success, of early evangelistic effort. In my inmost soul, I believe that the Lord is not with the most of our foreign missions. And why? Because God never called the missionary societies to the work. He never bade the missionary society become the spouse of Christ, and bring forth sons unto him. His offspring, his seed which shall reward him for his soul's travail, must spring from his own well-beloved bride. Much as I value all good societies, I cannot hesitate to declare that the Church is the ordained agent, and that all beside is human, and derives authority only from man. Hence I say of a society for the conversion of the heathen, it is a man-constituted body, and not of God. The Lord will work, not by committees, but by his Churches. The Church must do her own work, and when all our Churches are thoroughly aroused to this fact, and every congregation shall send out its own men, pray for their own men, and support their own men, we shall see greater things than we have ever dreamed of, and "the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." But it lies with the Church. O ye that are in the Church and sleep, what mean ye? Arise, and call upon your God.

Further, and here I more especially address such members of this Church as may have been hitherto careless about the good work. Remember, sleeper, that you are in the ship yourself, that you enjoy its privileges, and

therefore, you ought to take your quota of the work. It is said of Lepidus, a Roman officer, that one day, when all the soldiers were at drill he laid down out of the sunshine, and said, he wished it were all the duty of a soldier to lay under a tree for ever. We have some such soldiers. The breed is not extinct. The enlisting officer, however exact he may be, cannot help it, there will lie some such introduced into all our little armies, who like to lie in the shade, and take matters easy, and wish this were all that ever a Christian soldier had to do. Oh, rise, man! for if the battle is to be won, it must not be fought by soldiers lying in the shade, but by men who can bear the heat of the sun, wear their heavy armor without weariness, and rush to battle against the foe for God and for the truth, fearless and dauntless, in the face of leaguered hosts. There is an old story told of Philip, last king of Macedon. Before the last disastrous battle by which his monarchy was destroyed, it is said that he stood up to harangue his soldiers upon a sepulcher, and it was interpreted by the augurs to be a sign of sure defeat, because he stood upon a tomb to speak. And I, your minister, if it should ever be my unhappy lot to stand upon a dead Church to preach the Word, cannot expect anything but the most disastrous defeat. Let but the minister of God be supported by a living Church, let him be borne up in the arms of a loving and a praying people, and who can stand against his word? Nothing but victory must follow. But let us have dead, careless deacons and elders, let us have idle Church-members, and the omens are against us, and the result of our battle must be a terrible calamity. There is more than we think for of mischief done by the presence of one unconverted person in a Church. We are told by anatomists, that there is no part of the body which is dead. Even the teeth and bones are alive. Life abhors alliance with death; and if a dead substance once gets into the body, all the enfolds of nature are directed to the one point where the foreign body is found, to drive it out; and often ulcers and running sores, and such like things, are but the effects of nature seeking to expel the dead substance from the body. Now, there is nothing in Christ's real Church that is dead; and if ever dead substances get into the Church, they will not lie there still and quiet, but the Church shall be aware of it in her every nerve and pore, and she shall soon begin to exert her strength and vitality to expel the foreign substance from her living body—would that this energy could be spared for other works, for the saving of souls for Jesus.

Now, I address some pretended Christians here who are not alive to God. Let me beg of them to relinquish their profession, or if not, to make it real. Either be what you profess to be, or drop your profession. Lie not unto God, for in so doing you injure the Church of which you are a part, and, which since you are a part of it, it is your duty to serve. I should not expect if I were a member of a commercial firm, to take half the profits, and to do nothing. It is mean to the very last degree to share the benefits without uniting in the toil. And yet some professors are guilty of this miserable conduct. As it was in the days of Job, so it is even until now—"the oxen were ploughing, and the asses were feeding beside them;" there is always a large proportion of the latter class in the Churches, too glad to feed, but quite unwilling to work. To every Jonah, then, I say, "either arise and pray with us or get out of the ship, for sooner or later we shall be compelled to throw you out if you do not."

Furthermore, and here let me conclude this point, the honor of our God is mightily concerned in every Jonah being aroused. How could Jehovah be glorified, if the only worshipper of Jehovah in the vessel should sleep? If he did not cry to God, how could the mariners know whether Jehovah did hear prayer or not? Now, mark you, the honor of Christ—of his doctrines, of his blood, of his person, the dignity of everything that we hold sacred—rests, in the eyes of the sons of men, in the keeping of the Church. When a Church grows proud, worldly, and idle, what does the world say? "That's your religion! says the world; and then, "Aha! aha! aha!" it says, "what a lie religion is!" But let the world see a really earnest Church, it grows very angry, it finds all the fault it can; but down, deep in its heart, it reverences those it hates, and it secretly confesses, "There is a power here." They gaze and admire, even though they hate the might with which God surrounds such a Church as this. The Christian religion was at one time looked up to by the heathens with awe and reverence, for they saw its martyrs dying without a tear; its poor content in their poverty, without murmuring: its great men humble, not giving way either to lust or covetousness; they saw the purity and chastity of Christian matrons; they beheld the diligent industry of Christian bishops; they saw as though they beheld the face of an angel, when they looked upon Christ's fair Church on earth. But she became degenerate—she committed fornication by

being allied with the State; she lost her dignity, and turned aside from her high position as queen of the Lord, and a spiritual body quickened by a spirit from above. What then did the world do? It mocked and jeered; and while it paid an outward homage to a bejewelled Church glittering with gold and silver, yet in its soul it loathed and despised her. Men no longer needed to dread the omnipotence of Christian zeal. An excellent historian thus speaks of believers in the martyr age—hear it, and judge whether men have such reasons to fear us now. He describes the common opinion of the Roman pagans concerning the followers of Jesus: "They were intensely propagandist. While ever unseen they were at work. Every member was a missionary of the sect, and lived mainly to propagate a doctrine for which they were ever ready to die. Thus the infection spread by a thousand unsuspected channels. Like a contagion propagated in the air, it could penetrate, as it seemed, anywhere, everywhere. The meek and gentle slave that tends your children, or attends you at table, may be a Christian; the favourite daughter of your house, who has endeared herself to you by a tenderness and grace peculiarly her own, and which seems to you as strange as it is captivating, turns out to be a Christian; the captain of the guards, the legislator in the senate-house, may be a Christian! In these circumstances who or what is safe? What power can defend the laws and majesty of Rome, and the peace of domestic life, against an enemy like this? Then it was often as hateful for its absence as for its presence. With sullen moroseness this strange people studiously absented themselves from all places and scenes of public entertainment and festivity. Games, shows, gladiatorial contests, public fetes of every kind, military or civil, they eschewed as they would have done the plague. Such scenes, forsooth, were so mixed up with idolatry, and so steeped in licentiousness and sin, that though consecrated by the presence and express sanction of their country's gods, they were not good enough for them!" O my brethren, how I wish that we could be thus happily reviled. If we cannot reach so high, at least, let us keep our garments spotless.

Would you make this Church, my fellow members, to become a stink in the nostrils of the wicked? We have, brethren, a power among men. When they have followed us with their hootings and their jeers, we have borne patiently, and have been too glad to bear every slander if we might arouse lazy generation from their lethargy. We have seen success follow our

efforts. We have beheld the opening of places for the preaching of the gospel which had been closed for centuries. We have seen the theater devoted to God on the Sabbath-day—and now, now, shall we stay in our course? God forbid! for, if we do, what shall the enemy say, but, "Lo! God hath forsaken them, the gospel can but create a temporary excitement, truth is evanescent in its influence." Instead thereof, let us hold hard to God and to his Word, for the glory of the truth, and for the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But, I hear some self-satisfied people say, "We do not want this sermon this morning; we are not asleep. The members of this Church are not a slothful people." Well, dear friends, I cheerfully admit that, as a body, we are not given to slumber, but I am not so sure that this is true of you all. At any rate, those who are awake will find it a good thing to have a jog, lest they should unawares fall like Eutychus into a sleep; but I am sure that some of you are asleep, and I shall not hesitate to treat you as such. But you will reply to me, Why, sir, we talk about religion." Many people talk in their sleep. I have heard of a man who preached an excellent sermon when he was asleep. "Well, but is not our walk consistent?" Yes, but when I was a small boy, I used to walk in my sleep, and then I could venture in my sleep where I should not have wandered when I was awake, and I should not wonder but this may be your case. "Yes, but do we not feel religious influences? Do we not weep under a sermon?" Yes, and I have heard people cry in their sleep. Such things are quite possible. "But do we not rejoice very much when we hear the gospel?" Yes, and some folks will laugh in their sleep. John Bunyan tells of Mercy, who did laugh because of the beauty of her dream; and your dreams may be so pleasant that they make you laugh. "Ah, well," says one, "but I do not see that we are so very sound asleep, for we think a great deal about religion." Yes, and people think when they are asleep; for what are their dreams but unconnected thoughts? and so you may have some straying thoughts of God and of right, and yet after all you may be fast asleep. "Then, what do you mean by a man's being really awake?" I mean two or three things. I mean, first, his having a thorough consciousness of the reality of spiritual things. When I speak of a wakeful man, I mean one who does not take the soul to be a fancy, nor heaven to be a fiction, nor hell to be a tale, but who acts among the sons of men as though these were the only substances,

and all other things the shadows. I want men of stern resolution, for no Christian is awake unless he stedfastly determines to serve his God, come fair, come foul. I would have you, young Christians, dedicated to God's service. Just as Hamilcar led his two children to the altar, and made them swear by the gods that they would never cease their enmity to Rome while they lived, I want you to feel that the vows of God are upon you, so that you cannot cease from attacking sin and winning souls as long as you live.

And I do not think you are awake, moreover, unless you are moved by a passionate earnestness to win souls for Christ. A man who labors, and sees no success attending his efforts, may be awake if he mourns, and groans, and sighs before God; but an idle preacher, a preacher without converts—a Sunday school teacher in whose class there is no conversion—a man who never saw a sinner brought to Christ by his means, and yet is happy and content—such a man is asleep; let him take heed that he sleep not the sleep of death. I had sooner the Lord would send claps of thunder to this Church, in the form of heavy trials and troubles—the removal of your pastor, the taking away of our best men, the riot of mobs, or the slander of the press—than that we should continue to multiply and increase, and should make this place a huge dormitory wherein we snored out God's praises in our sleep, instead of an armoury where we sharpen our swords on the Sabbath to go out the whole week long, contending for God and for the good of men. Never may these benches be beds, nor these seats couches for sluggards to recline upon. "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God."

I have now said enough, I hope, to the slumbering Christians, only that there are some who are asleep who will not hear what say. I do not mean that there are any in the congregation asleep with their eyes shut; but if they are asleep with their hearts, it is probable that what I say may do good to those who are awake; but those who are asleep and given to slumber, will say, "A little more rest and a little more folding of arms; we are saved ourselves, let us sleep on." May the Lord vouch safe you a better mind, and constrain you to act as holy gratitude and love demand of you.

II. Very solemnly and earnestly would I now address myself to  
SLUMBERING SINNERS.



What crowds are there, this morning, of these careless ones, who are at ease on the brink of ruin. Unconverted and yet unconcerned; exposed to the wrath of God, but fearless, as though all were peace; on the edge of perdition, but merry as a marriage bell; condemned already, but mirthful as revellers at a feast.

Let me attempt to disturb your quiet, by remarking, first, that your sleep is utterly incomprehensible to those who are awake. Convinced souls, who feel the danger of their own state, cannot understand how you can be so careless. We were as foolish as you are once, but when we first began to perceive things in their true light, it was the wonder of wonders to us how we could have been so much at ease in so perilous a position. The man who sports upon the gallows, or laughs when consuming in the fire, or jests with his head upon the block, is not more a marvel than you.

You are a sinner—a sinner! You can hear that title applied to you without any sort of fear, whereas a sinner is a thing abhorred of God. The God that made thee loathes thee. The sinner is one whom God must smite. He bears with thee long, but he must smite thee soon. The sword may sleep in its scabbard, but it must leap forth to smite thee even to the death. A sinner! Why, thou art one whose life is a continued miracle, for the heavens would fall upon thee, if long-suffering, did not restrain them; the very stones of the field would smite thee, if God did not bind them over to keep the peace; and the beasts of the field are in league against thee, and would devour thee if he did not hold them in from thee. Why, thou art one that has no friend anywhere; thou art a blot upon nature; thou art a dishonor to creation; thou art loathsome in thyself; thou art contagious to others; thou art grievous to the best of men; thou art harmful even to the bad; thou art a weed ripening for the burning, a pool of foul waters breeding miasma, a monster to be hunted out of the universe of God. A felon, a criminal, a traitor, a sinner, which is all these things in one, and yet, under such an accusation, thou art at ease! Man, remember again, thou art a mortal. Time eats away thy life and hurries thee to thy grave. The sun doth not stand still for thee; speeding on his everlasting course, day after day, bears thee to the tomb. Every tick of yonder clock, sounds as the footfall of approaching Death. The rider upon the pale horse is

pursuing thee, his charger is foaming with speed. Perhaps thou mayest never see another day; the light of 1863 may never shine into thine eyes; or, if thou shouldst not yet expire, how short is the longest life! how certain is thy death! A mortal man, and yet thou sleepest! Bethink thee, man, of that upper chamber where thou shalt play the leading part, pale and languid, stretched out upon the bed. The curtains shall be drawn about thee, and every voice shall be hushed in sad anxiety; weeping relatives shall gaze upon thy brow, clammy with the death-sweat, and life shall be a thing of seconds with thee. Heavily heave the lungs, languidly beats the pulse; the awful moment is at hand. It is yourself, you strong man, grappling with a stronger than you are. Those are your eyes which shall be glazed in the darkness of death, and those are your limbs which shall be gathered up in the last mortal agony. And do you, knowing, feeling that you must die, and having the sentence of death in your members already—do you sleep still? Alas! alas! how dire the stupor which death cannot startle. But, man, remember you are an immortal, and this makes it the more grievous that you should sleep. You shall not die when you die, but you shall live again for ever! for ever! for ever! Oh, eternity! eternity! a deep without a bottom and with out a shore! My hearer, thou must sail over it for ever and for ever never reaching a port; and that eternity must be to thee, if unsaved, a sea of fire, lashed to eternal storm. Eternity, eternity, thou mountain without a summit! Up its sides thou must climb, O sinner, and find it an ever-burning volcano. On, on, on, must thou ascend, for summit there is none—for ever! for ever! for ever! for ever! And yet dost thou sleep on, sinner? What madness do I see in you? It is madness without method, insanity exaggerated, to despise the warnings of eternity. Remember, man, as thou art immortal, there is a heaven, and dying as thou are living, thou wilt lose it. For thee no harps of angels, no songs of saints, no melodies of joy, for thee no face of Christ to be seen with rapture, no embraces of the ever-loving husband; for thee no sunshines of the father's face, no bliss ineffable, no rivers of pleasure at his right hand. Thou art losing all these! Eternal and exceeding weights of glory thou art spurning, and yet thou sleepest! O sleeper, what meanest thou? If this bestir thee not, I would have thee remember, man, as surely as thou lovest heaven, so certainly thou are gaining hell. For thee the flames that never can be quenched, the thirst without a drop of water; for thee an angry God, a fiery law, a flaming Tophet; for thee the

company of blaspheming fiends and despairing spirits; for thee unutterable agony, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

"What meanest thou, O sleeper," when this must be thy doom if thou sleep on. Were it not that we know that man is dead in trespasses and sins, this sleeping would be utterly incomprehensible to those who have once been awakened. I marvel that I can preach about these awful themes without an agony of earnestness. These are no trifles, no themes for an orator's idle hour, or a hearer's curious ear. These matters may well make both the ears of him that heareth thereof to tingle. O that they might make your hearts tremble before the Lord, that with contrition you might seek his face. Further would I press this matter home. I am sure that you frivolous, thoughtless men and women, can give no justifiable cause for carelessness. Sinner, wherefore sleepest thou? Perhaps you tell me you do not believe there is this danger; I reply to you, you do believe it, you know you do. I reason not with you if you pretend to be infidels; there is that in you which makes you know that there is a God, and that he must punish sin; you may boast that you have no fears of the hereafter, but when you are alone, or sick, or in your sober senses, you tremble at the judgment to come. You know it man, and at the bayonet point, I charge home upon you. O that I could carry your heart as readily as your conscience. You know that these things are not fictions nor falsehoods. If you should have some honest doubts, you have but to open your eyes to see, and use your common sense to be convinced. Do but listen to the utterances of your fellow sinners, as they have passed from time into eternity, and have felt the foretaste of eternal wrath, and surely you must confess that there is a God that visiteth transgression and sin upon the ungodly. But you will tell me perhaps, there is time enough, and therefore you may sleep; but there is no time, man, there is no time to spare. If I were in a fever I would not say, "There is time enough to be healed," but I would say "Let me be delivered from this consuming heat." If I stood just now upon the edge of a burning mountain and felt the lava giving way beneath my feet, I would not say "There is time enough yet," but I would long now to make my escape. Sinner, thou standest to day over the mouth of hell upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten; you are swinging over the jaws of perdition by a solitary rope, and the strands of that rope are snapping

now. Now! now! thou art in danger! Thou mayest die this morning. Many places of worship have been made places of death. God save thee, that this may not happen to thee, but still this is thy time of danger, and there is no time to spare.

Do you say, "Well, we may as well sleep, for there's no hope for us?" No! sinner, no! Blessed be God, you cannot say that! You that sit under my ministry constantly know I never taught you that, I never said of any one of you that you could not be saved. I have preached to you no impossible gospel; I have not shut the gates of mercy on mankind in proclaiming Christ; have I not rather told you that "He is willing to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him?" I have set the door open before you and I have entreated you to come in; nay, I have labored to compel you to come in that his house may be filled. Ever now again I utter the same message, "Whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely." Trust in Jesus; trust in Jesus, and thou shalt be saved. Thy despair is wicked, for it gives God the lie; thy despondency is sinful, for it doubts the truth of him who cannot be false to himself or to thee. Sinner, trust him and thou shalt be saved this morning. God help thee to throw thyself flat to-day upon the covenanted promises of God in Christ, and trusting his precious blood he will save thee now and save thee for ever. O wherefore, wherefore sleepest thou? If you can cite no good cause, if you can offer no cogent reason, what meanest thou then, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God.

But soul, soul, we remind thee yet again, as we cannot understand thy sleep, and thou canst not justify it, we would solemnly beg thee to consider that thy sleep will soon end in ruin. Ah, there are some of you whose hearts I shall never reach. Let me live as long as I may, I shall never see you saved. There are some of you—I have often made you weep, but the Lord has not made you hate your sins. Some of you love drunkenness, and though you leave it for a little season, yet all the entreaties of: the minister and all the pleadings of your conscience cannot keep you from returning like a dog to your vomit, and like a cow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire. Oh, my hearers, there are some of you—I have not quite despaired of you, but I tell you solemnly it has almost come to that. O that ye would know even now in this your day the

things which make for your peace. Oh, how I fear, and think I have just cause to fear, that there are some of you who will sit in this Tabernacle till you die, and you will go from this place to hell with my voice of entreaty ringing in your ears. I have prayed for you, and you are not saved; I have levelled sermons at you, and you have not been moved; I have preached plainly to your face against your iniquity, and laid your sin before your eyes, and ye have not repented; I have held up my Master's bleeding body and ye have not been wooed to love. Ye have been convicted for a season, and ye have hushed the voice of conscience; ye have vowed, and ye have broken your vows; ye have turned again to your folly, and ye are still what you were, senseless, stolid, hardened, dead in sin. I shall not for ever hammer at this granite; not always shall the horses run upon the rock, nor shall we plough there with oxen, for God shall lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and where are ye then? Oh! if we knew by express revelations, concerning any man here present that he would be one day in hell, if looking into his eyes we could read there, "That man will dwell for ever in torments," should we not weep over him? Yet I fear me there are such here. I fear me—may God remove the fear by his grace—I fear me there are such. "Lord, is it I?" let each one say—"Lord, is it I?" Well, sinner, thou shalt go sleeping on. Thou wilt go home to thy house to-day and forget all that I have said; thou wilt come again to-night, but the result will be the same; like the door on its hinges thou wilt turn in and out without a change all thy days. See man, thou wilt listen to my voice, it will be to thee as a pleasing song but nothing more; thou wilt be all thy life as the deaf adder which cannot be charmed. Thou wilt now and then murmur in thy sleep, "The preacher is too earnest, and makes too much noise about these melancholy matters, or he is too prone to dwell on these hard threatenings." You will return to a deeper sleep, and so continue year by year. How do you approve of the prospect? But stay, let me finish the story. One day there will run a rumor among us, "So-and-so who sat in that pew is dead." "Did he die in the Lord?" will be our solemn question. And the answer will be, "We fear not; he showed no signs of repentance or of faith in Christ." Ah then, what must our conclusion be. Well sinner, well, do me this one favor. If thou wilt be damned, let me be clear of thy blood. Do me but this one service—if thou wilt perish let it not be laid to the door of my unfaithfulness. If there be anyone here present, stranger or regular attendant, who will

choose his own perdition, I charge thee pay some regard to my earnest protest, for I enter it now before the Lord. Be damned if thou wilt, but do let me first of all stand before you and tell you what damnation means, and tell you that there is a way of salvation. Let me stretch out these hands again and plead with you that ye would come to Christ, that ye might live. "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God," for it may soon be too late for thee to arise. None will be able to warn thee soon, none will weep for thee soon, none will entreat thee soon. When once the iron gates are shut, and the brazen bolts are drawn; all the friendship of earth or the fury of hell cannot unlock them; the awful gratings of those bolts that shut in souls for ever in fell despair, shall be ever in thine ears, covering thee with hopeless dismay. Now I pray you while yet there is hope. "Awake! arise, or be for ever fallen!"

Lastly, I think I may call upon those present here, who know what it is to be fully awakened, to do their best to awaken others. We read in ancient history of the Sybarites, who were a people so given to slumber that they killed their dogs lest their barking should arouse them, and would have no crowing of the cock to awake them at morn; there are some sinners who would desire to banish every warning friend and faithful monitor far away from them. But I pray you, even though it should be unpleasant, do your best to keep your friends from ruin. We know that when persons are likely to perish through laudanum, and they are falling to sleep, the physician does not hesitate to thrust pins into the flesh, or walk them up and down even though they cry and long to go to sleep. So with you, be not too careful about wounding the feelings or shocking the nerves if you may but win the soul. Better that you should get into discredit for being impertinent with your friends than let their souls perish through your politeness. Be ye not like Agag, who cometh delicately, with "surely the bitterness of death is past." Like the old Puritans, who availed themselves of every opportunity to rebuke sin and uphold righteousness, so be you instant in season and out of season. If you should save a soul through being too zealous, neither your Master nor the saved one will blame you for it, and at least in heaven it will never be a source of regret to you that you were too active and too diligent. You may have an opportunity to-day. Who can tell whether God may not bless you in it, if you use it? But I pray you use it, whether he bless you or not, lest the neglect of that

opportunity should leave blood upon your skirts. By him that bought you with his blood, live to his service—by him that called you unto a holy calling, give yourselves wholly to the winning of souls—by him who from the beginning hath chosen you unto salvation, live as the elect of God, having bowels of compassion. By your life, for which you are responsible —by your death, which may be so near—by Jesus, whose face you hope to see—by hell, into which lost souls are sinking—by heaven, to which the penitent shall rise, which is your hope and your joy—proclaim the word everywhere to men. Tell it, tell it till the skies shall echo it. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "Cast thy bread upon the waters"—labor, toil, seek, strive, agonize—and God give you his own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **Where Is The Lord?**

Then he remembered the days of old Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name. -  
Isaiah 63:11-14

I told you, in the reading, that Israel had a golden age, a time of great

familiarity with God, when Jehovah was very near to his people in their sufferings, and was afflicted in their affliction, when he helped them in everything they did, and the angel of his presence saved them. But after all that the Lord had done for them, there came a cold periods. The people went astray from the one living and true God. They fell into the ritualism of the golden calf. They must have something visible, something that they could see and worship. Even after they were brought into the promised land, and the Lord had wrought great wonders for them, they turned aside to false gods, till they worshipped strange deities, that were no gods; and provoked Jehovah to jealousy. "They rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." Not that he ceased to love his chosen, but he must be just, and he could not patronize sin, so he sent their enemies against them, and they were sorely smitten, and brought very low. Then it was that they began to remember the days of old, and to sigh for him whom they had treated so ill, and they said one to another, "Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord cause him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people to make thyself a glorious name."

I have but a short time, as the communion service is to follow, and therefore I must leave much unsaid that I think your own imaginations will make up to you at home.

But I shall ask you to notice, first, that the text contains a sacred, loving remembrance. It dwells very much upon what God did in the old times, when he was familiar with his people, and they walked in the light of his countenance. After that, I shall call your attention to an object clearly shining in the text. We get it twice over. In the twelfth verse, we read, "To make himself an everlasting name." In the fourteenth verse, "To make thyself a glorious name." When I have spoken of those two things, I shall dwell more at length upon an anxious enquiry, which is put here twice: "Where is he?" In the eleventh verse you get this repeated question,



"Where is he? Where is he?"

I. So then, to begin with, we go back to God's dealings with his people, and with us, and we have A SACRED, LOVING REMEMBRANCE. The people remembered what God did to them. What was it?

As it is here described, he first of all gave them leaders. "Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock?" Moses and Aaron, and a band of godly men who were with them, were the leaders of the people, through the sea and through the wilderness. Brethren, we are apt to think too little of our leaders. First of all we think too much of them, and afterwards we think too little of them. We seem to swing like a pendulum between these two extremes. Man is reckoned as if he were everything to some, and God becomes nothing to such; but, without unduly exalting man, we can truly say that it really is a great blessing to the church when God raises up men who are qualified to lead his people. Israel did not go out of Egypt as a mob; they were led out by their armies. They did not plunge into the Red Sea as an undisciplined crowd; but Moses stood up there with his uplifted rod, and led them on that memorable day. We may as well sigh for the glorious days of old, when God gave his people mighty preachers of his Word. There have been epochs in history that were prolific of great leaders of the Christian church. No sooner did Luther give his clarion call, than God seemed to have a bird in every bush; and Calvin, and Farel, and Melancthon, and Zwingle, and so many besides that I will not attempt to make out the list, joined with him in his brave protest against the harlot-church of Rome. "The Lord gave the Word: and great was the company of those that published it." The church remembers those happy days, with earnest longing for their return. They were giants in those days; mighty men of renown, well fitted by the Lord to lead his people.

We are next told that God put his spirit within these shepherds. They would have been nothing without it. Where is he that put his Holy Spirit within them? A man with God's Holy Spirit within him, can anybody estimate his worth? God says that he will make a man more precious than the gold of Ophir; but, to a man filled with his Spirit, mines of rubies or of diamonds cannot be set in comparison. When the eleven apostles went

forth, on the day of Pentecost, endowed by the Spirit of God, there were forces in the world whose very tramp might make it quiver beneath their feet. God send us once more many of his servants, within whom he has put his Spirit in an eminent and conspicuous manner, and then we shall see bright days indeed! The command to such still is, "Tarry until ye be endued with power from on high."

Then there was, in the next place, as a happy memory for the church, a great manifestation of the divine power. "That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name." "The right hand of Moses," by itself, was no more than your right hand or mine; but when God's glorious arm worked by the right hand of Moses, the sea divided, and made a way for the hosts of Israel to pass over. As the Psalmist sings, "He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as a heap." The right hand of Moses could not have wrought that miracle; but the glorious arm of the Lord did. What we want to-day, brethren, is a manifestation of divine power. Some of us are praying for it day and night. We have expected it. We do expect it. We are longing for it with a hunger and a thirst insatiable. Oh, when will Jehovah pluck his right hand out of his bosom? When will he make bare his arm, as one that goeth to his work with might and main? Pray, O ye servants of God, for leaders filled with the Spirit, and with the power of God working with them, that multitudes may be converted unto Christ, and the sea of sin be dried up in the advance of his kingdom!

Then, there came to God's people a very marvellous deliverance: "That led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble." Understand by the word "wilderness" here, an expansive grassy plain; a place of wild grass and herbs, for so it means. And as a horse is led where it is that and level, and he does not stumble, so were the hosts of Israel led through the Red Sea. The bottom of the sea may be stony or gravelly, or it may be full of mire and mud. Probably, there will be huge rocks standing up in the middle of the stream. There may be a sudden fall from one stratum of rock to the other; and to come up from the sea on the further bank would be hard work for struggling people carrying burdens, as these Israelites did; for they went out of Egypt

harnessed and laden, bearing their kneading-troughs in their clothes upon their shoulders. But God made that rough sea bottom to be as easy travelling for them as when a horse is led across a flowery meadow. Beloved, God has done so with his church in all time. Her seas of difficulty have had no difficulty about them. He has come in all the glory of his power, and smoothed the way for the ransomed to pass over. Has it not been so with you, my brethren?

And, as a blessed ending to their trials, God brought them into a place of rest: "As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord causeth him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people." In the desert they rested a good deal; but in Canaan they rested altogether. As the cattle come down from the mountains, where they have been picking up their food, when the plains are fat with grass, and they feed to their full, and lie down and rest, so did God deal with his people, bringing them from all the mountains of their trouble into a sweet valley, a land that flowed with milk and honey, where they might rest. This is a memorial, a sketch of the past.

I read it, first, literally as a sketch of Israel's history. I read it, next, as a sketch of the church's history. There have been times with the church as at Pentecost, and the Reformation, when, though she had wandered, God returned to her, and made bare his arm, and raised up shepherds, and put his Spirit upon them, and then led his people straight ahead through every difficulty, and gave them rest. You are most of you acquainted with the history of the period before Luther's day. It did not seem likely then that the gospel would be preached everywhere throughout Northern Europe; but it was so, and God singularly preserved the first Reformers' lives when they were very precious. Zwingli died in battle; but he should not have been fighting, and he might have died a natural death. But Calvin, and Luther, and the rest of them, for the most part, remained until their work was done, and they quietly passed away; and the churches, despite long persecution, had comparative rest. It was so here, and it was so across the border in our sister church of Scotland. She cannot forget the covenanting blood, and the putting to death of those who were for the Crown Rights of King Jesus; but, at last, she had her time of rest. Time would not fail me to tell you the long list of shepherds

that God gave to his covenanting church, the mighty men who, being dead, yet speak to us by their works, and who, while they lived, made the church of God in Scotland to be glorious with the presence of her Lord.

Well now, the same thing has happened also to us as individuals. We have had our cloudy and dark day, but God has appeared for our help. Some of you could tell how God led you through the deep as through a prairie. You went a way that you never knew, a new way, an untrodden path, as though it were the bottom of a sea but newly dry; but the Lord led you as a groom leads a horse, so that you did not stumble, and before long you came up out of the depths unharmed. With Moses and the children of Israel, you sang the praises of him who had triumphed gloriously; and then you began to learn another song, not so martial, but very sweet: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." In conflicts for the God of Israel, and his everlasting truth, some of us have been counted as the mire of the streets; but therein we do rejoice, and will rejoice; for Jehovah liveth, and he will bring up his people again from Bashan. He will bring them up from the depths of the sea, and there shall be rest again in the midst of Israel, if men are but faithful to God, and faithful to his truth.

Thus much upon the sacred memory of the past.

II. But now, in the second place, I want you to notice, AN OBJECT CLEARLY SHINING, like the morning star. I see, through the text, God's great motive in working these wonders for his people. It was God who did it all; my text is full of God. He brought them up out of the sea. He put his Holy Spirit within them. He led them with his glorious arm. He led them through the deep. He caused them to rest. He did it all. When the history of the church is written, there will be nothing on the page but God. I know that her sin is recorded; but he hath blotted that out; and at the end, there will remain nothing but what God has done. When your life and mine shall ring out as a psalm amid the harps of glory, it will be only, "Unto him that loved us and laved us, be glory and dominion for ever and ever." "Non nobis, Donine." "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." So will sing all of us who are the Lord's redeemed,

when we have come up out of the great tribulation, and have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

But then, why had God done all this? Did he do it because of his people's merits, or numbers, or capacities? He tells them, many a time, "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." God finds in himself the motive for blessing men who have no merits. If God looked for any motive in us, he would find none. He would see in us many reasons why he should condemn us; but only in himself could he discover the motive for his matchless mercy.

God works his great wonders of grace with the high motive of making known to his creatures his own glory, manifesting what he is and who he is, that they may worship him. He tells us in the text that he "led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name." So he has done, for to this day the highest note of praise to God that we know of, is the one that tells of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and when this world is burnt up, the song will go up to God in heaven will be the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb. Still, if we want a figure and a foretaste of the ultimate victories of God over all his people's enemies, we have to go back to the Red Sea, and look at Miriam's twinkling feet, and hear her fingers making the timbrel sound as she cries, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." He did it to make himself an ever-enduring name, and he has succeeded in that object.

Isaiah adds that the Lord led his people, and brought them into their rest, to make himself "a glorious name." God is glorious in the history of Israel. God is glorious in the history of his church. God is glorious in the history of every believer. The life of a true believer is a glorious life. For himself he claims no honour, but by his holy life he brings great glory to God. There is more glory to God in every poor man and woman saved by grace, and in the one unknown obscure person, washed in the Redeemer's blood, than in all the songs of cherubim and seraphim, who know nothing of free grace and dying love. So you see, beloved, the motive of God in all

that he did; and I dwell upon it, though briefly, yet with much emphasis, because this is a motive that can never alter. What if the church of to-day be reduced to a very low condition, and the truth seems to be ebbing out from her shores, while a long stretch of the dreary mud of modern invention lies reeking in the nostrils of God; yet he that wrought such wonders, to make himself a name, still has the same object in view. He will be glorious. He will have men know that he is God, and beside him there is none else. Thus saith the Lord God, "All flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." "The earth shall be full of knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." O brethren, he is a jealous God still; and when the precious blood of Christ is insulted, God hears it, and forgets it not. When the inspiration of the blessed Book is denied, the Holy Ghost hears it and is grieved, and he will yet bestir himself to defend his truth. When we hear the truth that we love, the dearest and most sacred revelations from our God, treated with a triviality that is nothing less than profane, if we are indignant, so is he, and shall not God avenge his own elect. Which cry day and night unto him? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily, though he bear long with his adversaries. God's motive is his own glory. He will stand to that, and he will vindicate it yet; and we need to have no doubt, nor even the shadow of a fear, about the ultimate result of a collision between God and the adversaries of his truth. Shall not the moth, that dashes at the candle, die in that flame? How shall the creatures of a day stand out against our God, who is a consuming fire? Here, then, is the hope of the people of God, the constant persistent, invariable motive of God to make himself glorious in the eyes of men.

III. My third point is, AN ANXIOUS ENQUIRY, which I find twice over in my text. Believing in what God has done, and believing that his motive still remains the same, we begin to cry, "Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him?"

This question suggests that there is some faith left. "Where is he?" He is somewhere. Then, he lives. Beloved, the Lord God omnipotent still liveth and reigneth. Many usurpers have tried to turn him from his throne; but he still sits upon it, and reigns amongst his ancients gloriously. He was,

and is, and is to come, the Almighty; "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

He is; but where is he? The question implies that some were beginning to seek him. Where is he? Those were brave days when he was here on the moors, or on the hills of Scotland, or at the stakes of Smithfield, or the prisons of Lambeth Palace. Those were glorious days when Christ was here, and his people knew it, and rejoiced in him. Then the virgin daughter of Zion shook her head at the harlot of Rome, and laughed her to scorn; for she lay in the bosom of her King, and rejoiced in his love. O beloved, do we begin to long after him again? I hope that we do. I trust the cry of many loyal hearts is, "Come back, king Jesus! When thou art away, all things languish. Adown the streets of Mansoul ride again, O Prince Emmanuel! Then shall the city ring with holy song, and every house shall be bedecked with everything that is beautiful and fair. Only come back!" If the King may but have his own again, I shall be content to sing old Simeon's song, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word!" The church longs for the King's coming. Where is he? Where is he?

It shows now, dear friends, that she has begun to mourn over his absence. I like the reduplicated word. "Where is he? Where is he?" Not, "Where is Moses? Where are the leaders? The fathers, where are they?" Let them keep where they are. But where is he that made the fathers? Where is he that sent us Moses and Aaron? Where is he that divided the waters, and led his people safely? Where is he? Oh, it is a question that I put to all your hearts! Oh, if he were here! One hour of his glorious arm; just a day of his almighty working; and what should we not see? We will not ask for tongues of fire, or mighty rushing winds. Let him be here as he may; but if he only be here, the battle is turned at the gate, and the day of his redeemed is come. We sigh for his appearing.

Where is he, then? As the text asks. Well, he is hidden because of our sins. The church has been tampering with his truth. She has given into the hands of critics the Word of God, to cut it with a penknife, to rend away this and tear out that. She has been dallying with the world. She has tried to gain money for her objects by the basest of means. She has played

the harlot in what she has done; for there are no amusements too vile or too silly for her. Even her pastors have filled a theatre of late, to sit there and mark with their applause the labours of the play-actors! To this pass have we come at last, to which we never came before—no, not in Rome's darkest hour; and if you, who profess to be God's servants, do not love Christ enough to be indignant about it, the Lord have mercy upon you! The time has surely come when there should go up one great cry unto the Lord Jehovah that he would make bare his arm again; for well may we say, "Where is he? Where is he?"

For your comfort, the next verse to my text tells you where he is. He is in heaven. They cannot expel him from his throne. "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." By every possible contrivance, in these modern days, they have tried to drive Christ out of his own church. A Christless, bloodless gospel defiles many a pulpit, and Christ is thus angered; but he is in heaven still. At the right hand of God he sits; and let this be our continual prayer to him, "Look down from heaven, O Lord! Cast an eye upon thy failing, faltering, fickle church. Look down from heaven."

"Where is he?" Well, he is himself making an enquiry; for, as some read the whole passage, it is God himself speaking. He remembered the days of old, Moses and his people; and when he his himself, and would not work in wrath, yet he said to himself, "Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock?" When God himself, who is always a stranger here,—for are we not strangers with him and sojourners, as all our fathers were?—When God himself begins to ask where he is, and to regret those happier days, something will come of it. "Ye that make mention of the Lord—ye that are the Lord's remembrances—keep not silence, and give him no rest,—take no rest, and give him no rest,—till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." "That little cloud", said one of old, when Julian the apostate threatened to extirpate Christianity, "That little church will soon be gone." All that I see to-day of darkness, is but a wave of smoke. Behold, the Lord God himself shall chase it away with a strong west wind. He doth but blow with his wind, and the clouds disappear; and what stands before us to-day shall be as nothing.



I thought, as I came here to-night, that the man who drives the tram car gave me a lesson on how I should look upon all future time. He starts, say at Clapham, with his car. If he could have a view of all that was on the road between Clapham and the Elephant and Castle, the carts, the waggons, and other traffic that are exactly where he wants to go, and he were to add all those obstacles together, he might be foolish enough to say, "I shall not complete my course to-night;" but, you see, he starts, and if anything is on the rails, it moves off; and if, perhaps, some sluggish, heavily-laden coal waggon is slow to move, he puts his whistle to his mouth, and gives a shrill blast or two, and lo, it is gone! So when the church, serving her God, begins to look far ahead through prophecy, which she never did understand, and never will, she will think she will never reach her journey's end. But she will; for God has laid the line. We are on the rails, and the rails do not come to an end till the journey's end is reached; and as we go along, we shall find that everything in our way will move before us; and if it does not, we will pray a bit. We will blow our whistles, and the devil himself will have to move, though all his black horses shall be dragging along the brewer's dray, or what else belongs to him. He will have to get off our track, assuredly as God lives; for if Jehovah sends us on his errands, we cannot fail. The old Romans picture Jove as hurling thunderbolts. Sometimes God makes his servants thunderbolts, and when he hurls them, they will go crashing through everything until they reach their mark. Wherefore; be not for a moment discouraged; but trust you in God, and be glad without a shadow of fear.

If any here have never trusted in God, never made him their Friend, or been reconciled to him by the death of his Son, I pray them to think of their present condition. Opposed to God! You are standing in the way of an express train. You are urged to get out of the way. You will not! You are going to throw that train off the rails, you say. Poor fool, I could put mine arms about your neck, and forcibly drag you from the iron way; for assuredly, if you remain there, nothing can come of it but your everlasting destruction. Wherefore, flee, flee, I pray you, from the wrath to come. The train of divine judgment comes thundering along the iron road even now. It shakes the earth. Awake! Rise! Flee! God help you to do so! Behold, the Saviour stands with open arms to be your shelter. Fly to him, and trust in

him, and live for ever! Amen.

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## Where To Find Fruit

From me is thy fruit found. - Hosea 14:8

The text has a double significance. It may indicate the fruit upon which we feed, or the fruit which we are enabled to produce. If it shall mean the first, there is much of comfort in it. The Lord has compared himself, in his condescending mercy, to a green fir tree in the sentence which precedes the text. The fir tree in the East yields a most goodly shade. Neither the burning heat of the sun, nor the drops of pouring rain can pass through the dense foliage, and therefore it affords a welcome shelter to the traveler. But shade is not enough for a man; he requires food, and the fir tree fails in that respect, for it yields no repast for the hungry. To complete the picture, therefore, when the Lord deigns to compare himself to a green fir tree, he adds, "From me is thy fruit found." Our gracious God is like a fir tree for shade, but like the apple tree among the trees of the wood for fruit. We sit under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto our taste. Living souls must have food to feed upon, or however well housed, they would be comparable to the king of Israel in the besieged city of Samaria. He sat in his palace of ivory, he wore his mantle of purple, and placed the crown of gold upon his head; but what availed his splendor, when neither barn-floor nor winepress could relieve his hunger? In vain all other blessings if the soul received no nourishment from on high; Jesus must not only be our life, but the bread of heaven by which that life is sustained. Glory be to his name! he is all in all to his people: we may gather fruit from him which shall satisfy the cravings of the soul.

According to Master Trapp, some read this passage, "In me is thy fruit

ready." Certain it is that at all times, whenever we approach to God, we shall find in him a ready supply for every lack. The best of trees have fruit on them only at appointed seasons. Who is so unreasonable as to look for fruit upon the peach or the plum at this season of the year? No drooping boughs beckon us to partake of their ripening crops, for Winter's cold still nips the buds. But our God hath fruit at all times: the tree of life yieldeth its fruit every month; nay, every day and every hour, for he is "a very present help in time of trouble."

Another translator reads the passage, "In me thy fruit is enough." Whatever may be the accuracy of the translation, the sentiment itself is most correct. In God there is enough for all his people; and well there may be, since in him there is infinity. "I have enough, my brother," said Esau when he met Jacob: "I have all things," said Jacob in reply. None but the believer can say, "I have all things;" and therefore only he can be sure of having enough. Ishmael had his bottle of water, and went away into the wilderness; but it is written, that Isaac abode by the well: how happy is the soul which hath learned how to live by the well of his faithful God! for the water will be spent in the bottle, but the water will never be spent in the well. Christian, remember the all sufficiency of thy God! Let that ancient name, "El Shaddai"—God all-sufficient, sound like music in thine ear—as some translate it, "The many-breasted God," yielding from himself the sustenance of all his creatures.

As we find the text translated, we have it, "From me is thy fruit found;" but the particle from does not mean apart from, but out of me; and to prevent misunderstanding, I shall not err if I read it in, for this is the force of the word in this place. The text speaks of fruit being found, implying perhaps, that we must look for it—not because there is little, or here and there a cluster, like the grape-gleanings of Abi-ezer; but because the Lord will be enquired of by the house of Israel, and would exercise our faith by making us search for the needed benefit. It is of essential service to us to make us seek, and hence we have the promise of finding to excite our diligence. Christian, look up longingly! Is thy spirit hungering? Look up to thy God now with intense desire; come before him with earnest, vehement pleadings, and thou shalt find in thy God whatsoever thy heart desireth.

Mark that little word "thy." As if the Lord had said, "It is thine already; I have freely given it; it is thy fruit. I bear it, but I bear it for thee; every golden apple, every luscious cluster, I will bestow on thee. Thou canst not ask me for anything which I have not given thee. For behold, I have given thee my Son, and 'in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.'" Believer, hast thou not learned the sweet logic of the beloved disciple, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" In the eternal covenant, God has made over—not only all created things—but himself unto his people. "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." "God, even our God," saith the Psalmist. Is not that a delightful expression, "Even our own God?" And so, as God is your own, his fruit is your own. Every outgoing of power, every outflow of love is yours already. "In him is thy fruit found." Surely this word "thy" is as a little golden cup filled with a rare cordial; he who drinketh of it shall forget his misery, and remember his poverty no more. Let us not fail then, dearly beloved, to receive boldly that which is our own by covenant engagement and faithful promise. What dost thou want this morning? Surely out of the "twelve manner of fruits," there shall be something which will suit thy necessities; stand not back through shame or fear, but come boldly to the throne of the heavenly grace.

Thus much for the first sense of the text; but we do not intend to use the words in that signification this morning. We think that, understanding the text the other way—"From me is that fruit found which grace produces in thee," it will be a very fitting sequel to the sermon of last Sabbath morning. You will recollect we spoke upon the withering of the fig tree which mocked the Savior with its leaves, but yielded him no fruit. There may be some who were alarmed under that sermon, and even believers who were shaken by it; such anxieties will do none of us any hurt, especially if they lead us to pant after fruitfulness. Our text, following upon the other, will direct earnest seekers where to find fruit. There are three sorts of preachers, all useful in their way, the doctrinal, the experimental, and the practical; we will try to blend the three this morning, and so handle the words doctrinally, experimentally, and practically.

I. First. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT. The doctrine of the text is twofold. First, that the believer's fruit is his own—it is called "thy fruit;" secondly, that though it is the believer's own, yet it proceeds entirely from his God.

1. The first doctrine is that true fruit is a believer's own. You will think this a very trite remark, but it is one which needs to be made in these days, for there are certain persons who talk of man as if he were not a thinking, intelligent, free agent. They forget his will, judgment, reason, and affections: they leave out of their consideration everything in fact which constitutes the man, and then speak of the operations of grace as though they were manual works upon wood or stone. For aught I can see, according to their way of talking, the grace of God might just as well have produced holiness in monkeys as in men, for men are generally represented as merely passive existences to be moved by them to gratitude, or repentance, or faith, as horses are groomed in a stable or led out to be exercised. Be it never forgotten that our God deals with men as intelligent beings, having will and reason and all the other powers which make man a responsible creature; he does not ignore our manhood when he converts us by his grace. He uses means fitted for our constitution as men, "I drew them with the cords of love, with the bands of a man."

Good works are a believer's own. It were an ill thing for him if they were not; to what could we compare him but to those dead sticks with fruits tied on them, which women sell to little children? a sorry picture for a branch of Christ's vine. The believer produces fruit from his own inner self when grace has renewed him; and if his holiness were not really the outgrowth of his new heart and his renewed nature, it would be no sign of spiritual life. It is not fruit tied on us, but fruit growing out of us which proveth us to be engrafted into Christ.

True fruit is the believer's own because he wills through divine grace to do good works. If I performed what looked like a good work against my will, I do not see how it could be truly a good work as far as the doer is concerned. If a man could be compelled to virtue while his heart staggered away to sin, would he not be really transgressing? There is a gracious willingness towards the right thing bestowed upon us by the

Holy Spirit. Nay, there is not only a will to holiness, but a desire after it. The true Christian longs after holiness and usefulness; he hungers and thirsts to do the will of his Father who is in heaven. Like his Lord in some measure, it is to him his meat and his drink to do the will of him who sent him. He can say, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." He is constrained, but mark, it is not a physical constraint, for "the love of Christ constraineth us." So you see, beloved, good works are a believer's own because he is willing to do them and desires to perform them.

They are his own, again, because he actually does them. The Holy Ghost does not repent, nor feed the hungry, nor clothe the naked, nor preach the gospel. He gives us grace to do all these, but we ourselves do them. If the poor be fed, it must be by these hands; if souls are edified, it must be by these lips; we do not fold our arms, and shut our mouths, and then bring forth fruit unto God. We do not find ourselves taken up by the hair of our head as the prophet Habakkuk was said to have been, according to the Apocrypha, and so carried away whether we will or no, to perform a deed of charity. All glory be to the Holy Spirit, but he is not glorified by making him appear to be a physical force instead of the great spiritual Worker. We do, my brethren, bring forth fruit which is properly our own when we consider ways of usefulness, meditate methods of working, plan designs of good, act out deeds of mercy, persevere in labor, and continue in service before God.

I will tell you why I am absolutely sure a believer's works are his own, namely, because he grieves over them. The best works he ever performs he feels are his own, because they are imperfect. If there is anything good in them, he ascribes it wholly to the fact that they proceeded from God; but, inasmuch as there is something imperfect in them, he is obliged to say, "Ah! yes, this is my fruit. If it had been God's fruit independent of me, it would have been perfect, but inasmuch as it is imperfect, I am compelled to see that I had a hand in it. The stream was clear enough as it came from the fountain, but flowing through the wooden spout of my nature, it is become in some measure defiled, and so far at least is mine."

Dear friends, the whole analogy of fruitbearing must show to you that the Christian does bring forth fruit unto God, real fruit from his inner self;

and if any of you think that you are going to attain to holiness by simply being passive, you are wonderfully mistaken. If you imagine you will be a pilgrim by sitting down at the wicket-gate, or be carried in a sedan-chair to glory, you will find yourselves left behind. No, we must fight if we would win; we must travel if we would reach the Celestial City; we must wrestle, and fight, and pray. The Word of God does say "It is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure," but it does not stop there, it bids us for this very reason "Work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." The passive first, but then the active. We must lie as dead at Jehovah's feet to be quickened, but being quickened, what then? Why then we walk in holiness and in the fear of God. We are first of all made trees of the Lord's right-hand planting, and we receive grace from him, and then through his grace, we ourselves do really bring forth fruit. The truth is clear enough, prove by your energetic strivings that you understand it.

2. The pith of the doctrine lieth here, that all a believer's fruit proceeds from his God, and that in several senses from the divine purpose. If you are holy, it is because he has called you to holiness. If you have good works they come to you, according to the word of the apostle concerning good works, "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." When you see a costly vase which is the admiration of all eyes, you know that whatever of beauty there is in that vessel was originally in the artist's plan. If you have examined his sketches, you have seen every elegant line, and every graceful figure. Even so, beloved, if you have been sanctified it is according to the eternal design, which was settled in grace and wisdom, before the skies were formed.

All our fruit springs from our God as to calling. You were dead in trespasses and sins. There were no good works in you by nature, and there never would have been, but he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in your heart, to give you the knowledge of God, and then to turn you from dead works to serve the living and true God. You owe everything to your calling. The tree which is loaded with fruit, owes its fruit first of all, to its having been chosen to be in the garden, and next to its having been really planted there; for in our case, had we been left to grow in the wide wilderness, we should have brought

forth no fruit unto God; but he took us up out of the place of barrenness, and put us in the rich soil which Jesus had watered with his own bloody sweat, and therefore we bring forth fruit.

Our fruit is found from God as to union. The fruit of the branch is really traceable to the root. Cut the connection and the branch dies, and no fruit is hereafter produced. By virtue of our union with Christ we bring forth fruit. Every branch of grapes has been first in the root, it has passed through the stem, and flowed through the sap vessels, and fashioned itself externally into fruit, but it was first internal in the stem; so also every good work was first in Christ, and then was brought forth in us. O Christian, prize this precious doctrine of union to Christ; hold it firmly, because it is the source of every atom of fruitfulness which thou canst ever hope to know. If thou wert not joined to Jesus Christ, no fruit could ever be in thee.

Our fruit comes from God, and from God alone, as to providence. When the dew-drops fall from heaven, each one may whisper to the tree and say, "From me is thy fruit found." When the cloud looks down from on high, and is about to distil its liquid treasure, it may thunder to the earth beneath, "From me is thy fruit found." And the bright sun above all others, as he paints the cheek of the apple, or swells the berries of the cluster, may well say to all the trees of the garden, "From me is your fruit found." The fruit owes much to the root—that is essential to fruitfulness—but it owes very much also to external care. Beloved, how much we owe to God's grace-providence! We are greatly debtors to his common providences, in that he maketh all things work together for good. But his grace-providence, in which he provides us constantly with quickening, teaching, correction, consolation, strength, or whatever else we want—to this we owe our all of usefulness or virtue.

Our fruit is found in God as to the matter of husbandry. The knife which the gardener taketh from his pocket, might talk to the tree and say, "Much of thy fruit is found in me. Thou wouldst not yield such an abundance if it were not for my sharp edge. I make thee bleed a little, as I take away thy superfluous shoots, but thou hadst not such goodly clusters if it were not of me." So is it, Christian, with that pruning which the Lord



gives to thee. "My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

Thus the text may be read in very many ways. They will all come to one—that we have nothing, except as we receive it from above. "What hast thou which thou hast not received?" I may say, to conclude this head, that all our fruit is found in God, because he will, having been the author of it, get all the glory of it. Of all our spiritual life he shall have the praise, for it is all due to him, and if he giveth us a crown at the last, we will cast it at his feet.

Brethren, you know this doctrine well enough without my enlarging upon it; you know how constantly Scripture teacheth us that we can do nothing without Christ. We can sin; we can ruin our own souls; we can bring forth the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah, but anything which is lovely, and honest, and of good repute, must come from him who is glorious in working. You have no question or quibble about this. "You hath he quickened;" you trace your life to him. You doth he quicken day by day; you owe the continuance of your life to him. You know as a matter of doctrine that "in him we live and move and have our being," and that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." I need not confirm this doctrine: no argument is required. You have never erred from the truth in this respect; you could not be Christians if you did, for I hold this to be fundamental truth, in all godliness, that salvation from first to last is of the Lord. Salvation is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Let us heartily praise him whose workmanship we are.

II. We come now to THE EXPERIENCE. Experimentally we have proof that all our fruit is in God. Let me remind you of your experience when you were the servants of the flesh. What fruit had ye then in those days? What repentance did your natural mind bring forth? What faith in Christ did your unrenewed soul ever beget or foster? What love to God ever stirred your carnal heart? What affection for the brotherhood possessed your alienated spirit? You must say that at that time you were without God and without hope, and certainly without fruit. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" A painful

remembrance of your former estate compels you to feel the truth of the Lord's Word, "In me is thy fruit found."

Again, when the law began to work in your heart, and you were in a state of bondage, having enough of light to see your darkness, and enough of life to mourn your death—what fruit had ye then when ye were under the law? The law told you what you should do; did it enable you to do anything? The ten commandments set before you a perfect rule: but was it not "weak through the flesh?" You had a very clear perception of the justice and righteousness of God: did the perception reconcile you to justice or to holiness? Let me ask you, did the law of God ever make you love him? Did the awakenings of your conscience, which proceeded from it ever lead you to trust in Jesus Christ? They may have been overruled to this purpose, but the law worketh wrath, and as long as you were under it, it rather produced sin in you than righteousness. Such was Paul's experience, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died," "for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." As a child might never care to run into the street, but being told not to do it, he straightway doth it by reason of the perversity of his nature, just so it is with us by nature; the forbidden thing our flesh lusteth after. All the enmity of carnal nature is provoked to yet greater sin by the law. That which should have been a bit, becomes a spur. Cold water quencheth fire, and yet when poured on lime, produceth a vehement heat. So the law acts contrary to its own nature, by reason of the depravity of the human heart. Thus were you, my brethren, led by a very sorrowful experience, to feel that from Christ must come your fruit; for none could be produced by the efforts of the flesh, backed up by the most earnest resolution and most devout prayer, and driven onward by the whip of the law.

A sweeter experience has proved this to you. When did you begin to bear fruit? It was when you came to Christ and cast yourselves on the great atonement, and rested on the finished righteousness. Ah! what fruit you had then! Do you remember those early days? Did not your faith, and love, and zeal, form a garden of nuts, an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits? Then indeed the vine flourished, the tender grape appeared, the pomegranates budded forth, and the beds of spices gave forth their smell. Have you declined since then? Even if you have, I

charge you to remember that time of love. Jesus remembers it, for he says, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me into the wilderness." He recollects that time of the singing of birds, when the voice of the turtle was heard in your land. Would God this were with you ever! He has not forgotten it, do you not forget it, but seek to enjoy it still. Your fruit began, you know it did, when you came to Jesus Christ.

My brethren, when have you been the most fruitless? This is another part of experience. Has not it been when you have lived farthest from the Lord Jesus Christ, when you have slackened in prayer, when you have departed somewhat from the simplicity of your faith, when your graces engrossed your attention instead of your Lord, when you said, "My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved;" and forgot where your strength lieth—has not it been then that your fruit has ceased? Some of us know that we have nothing out of Christ by terrible soul-emptyings and humblings of heart before the Lord. Brethren, it is no pleasant thing to be clean emptied out; but such times have happened to some of us, when we have felt that if one prayer would save us, if the Holy Spirit did not aid us, we were damned; if one good thought would take us to heaven, we could not reach it; the vileness of our heart has been so clear before our eyes, that had not it been that there was a mighty God to trust to we should have given up in despair.

"How seldom do I rise to God,  
Or taste the joys above!  
Corruption presses down my faith,  
And chills my flaming love.

When smiling mercy courts my soul  
With all its heavenly charms,  
This stubborn, this relentless thing,  
Would thrust it from my arms."

In such seasons we do well to cry, "Quicken thou me, O Lord, according to thy word." Then you feel that to will is present with you, but how to perform that which is good, you find not. It is a very easy thing for me to

exhort you, but sometimes I do not find it very easy to do myself what I exhort you to do. And there are times with us, dear friends, when, though we know our interest in Christ, we are wretched under a deep sense of the creature's fickleness, sinfulness, and death. Our moan is, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" When you have seen the utter emptiness of all creature confidence, then you have been able to say, "From him all my fruit must be found, for no fruit can ever come from me." We shall find from Scripture, I am sure—let our past experience confirm it—that the more we depend upon the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and wait upon the Holy Spirit, pleading that his influences may operate in our hearts, the more we shall bring forth fruit unto God. If I could bear fruit without my God, I would loathe the accursed thing, for it would be the fruit of pride—the fruit of an arrogant setting up of one's self in independence of the Creator No; the Lord deliver us from all faith, all hope, all love which do not spring from himself! May we have none of our own-manufactured graces about us. May we have nothing but that which is minted in heaven, and is therefore made of the pure metal. May we have no grace, pray no prayer, do no works, serve God in nothing except as we depend upon his strength and receive his Spirit. Any experience which comes short of a knowledge that we must get all from God, is a deceiving experience. But if you have been brought to find everything in him, beloved, this is a mark of a child of God. Cultivate a spirit of deep humiliation before the Most High; seek to know more your nothingness, and to prove more the omnipotence of the eternal God. There are two books I have tried to read, but I have not got through the first page yet. The first is the book of my own ignorance, and emptiness, and nothingness—what a great book is that! It will take us all our lives to read it, and I question whether Methuselah ever got to the last page. There is another book I must read, or else the first volume will drive me mad—it is the book of God's all-sufficiency. I have not got through the first word of that, much less the first page, but reading the two together, I would spend all my days. This is heaven's own literature, the wisdom which cometh from above. Less than nothing I can boast, and yet "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Having nothing yet possessing all things." Black as the tents of Kedar, yet fair as the curtains of Solomon: dark as hell's profoundest night, and yet "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

### III. We now arrive at the PRACTICAL POINT.

1. First then, dear friends, let us look to Jesus Christ for fruit in the same way in which we first looked to him for shade. That sounds like something you have heard a great many times before. Very well, but have you really understood it? To give an illustration—you want to overcome an angry temper! You are given to ebullitions of passion—you try to overcome that. How do you go to work? It is very possible there are even believers here who have never tried the right way. How did I get salvation? I came to Jesus just as I was, and I trusted him to save me. Can I kill my angry temper in the same way? It is the only way in which I can ever kill it. I must go to Christ with it, and say to him, "Lord, I trust thee to deliver me from it." This is the only death-blow it will ever receive. Are you covetous? Do you feel the world entangle you? You may struggle against this evil as long as you like, but if it be your besetting sin, you will never be delivered from it in any way but the cross. Take it to Christ. Tell him, "Lord, I have trusted thee, and thy name is Jesus—'Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins'—Lord, this is one of my sins; save me from it!" Do not take Jesus Christ with the blood only, and without the water—that is to have only half-a-Christ. Pray to be forgiven, but ask also to be sanctified. Sing with Toplady -

"Let the water and the blood,  
From thy river side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

I know what some of you do. You go to Christ for forgiveness, and then you go to the law for power to fight your sins. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?" Tell me, did ye receive faith by the law, or by the operation of grace? "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" The only weapon to fight sin with is the spear which pierced Christ's side. Nothing can kill the viprous brood of hell but drops of Jesus' precious blood. Take your sins to Christ's cross, sir, for the old man can only be crucified there: we are crucified with him; we are buried with him. If I be

dead to the world, I must be dead with him, and if I rise again to newness of life, I must rise in him. Ordinances are nothing without Christ as means of mortification. Baptism is nothing, except as we are buried with him in baptism unto death. The Lord's Supper is nothing, except as we eat his flesh and drink his blood, and have communion with him. And your prayers and your repentances, and your tears—the whole of them put together—are not worth a farthing apart from him. Every flower which grows in your garden will wither, and the sooner it is blasted and withered the better for you; only the rose of Sharon will bloom in heaven. "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good;" or helpless saints either. You must overcome by the blood of the Lamb.

2. Another practical observation is this—let us cultivate those graces most which bring us most to Christ, for these will be the most fruitful. Let me look well to my faith; let me see that I keep it purely stayed on him, having no supplementary confidence, but resting wholly and absolutely upon the finished work of my Lord. Let me see to my love. Let my Lord be to me altogether lovely. Lord, help me to sing, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Sometimes graciously enable me to sing, "He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." Faith and love are the great fruitbearers. A gardener says, "There is such and such a twig, I must not cut that off, because it is to the young wood that I am looking for my summer fruits." So he taketh care of it. There is that, believer, a growing faith and growing love to which you must look as the fruitbearing shoots, because they pre-eminently link your soul to Christ, and most evidently have intercourse with him. Cultivate those things which lead you most to him.

3. A third practical piece of advice. Be most in those engagements which you have experimentally proved to draw you nearest to Christ, because it is from him that all your fruits proceed. Any holy exercise which will bring you to him will help you to bear fruit. Do you find prayer the channel of Jesus' manifestations? Do you find yourself profited in the public means of grace? Is it the breaking of bread which we love to celebrate every Sabbath day, which is most precious to you? If so, wherever Jesus Christ layeth bare his heart to you, there be you found;

and if there be any one means of grace which has been more rich to you than another, use it with the greatest perseverance. Use them all, dear friends, do not neglect any, but especially use those most which bring you nearest to your Lord.

4. Lastly, let none of us—whether we be the Lord's people or not—let none of us ever insult Christ by thinking that we are to bring fruit to him as a recommendation to his love. "From me is thy fruit found." Now there may be some saint here who has lost his evidences, and he dare not approach the throne of grace as he used to do, because he says "I have sinned—I must produce fresh fruit before I dare come." My dear friend! My dear friend! Bring fruit to Christ! How can you talk in so legal a fashion? All the fruit you ever will have you must first get from him! Come to him as you are and get your fruit out of him. Never suppose that you must bring Christ a present or else you must not come to him. He does not want your money. If he takes it he will give it back to you in your sack's mouth. He will receive your fruit as an offering, but never as a reconciliation. There are those here this morning who are not converted as yet. They are saying, "I dare not seek the Lord, I dare not trust Christ. I know the gospel is, trust Christ and you are saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but I must not trust him, I am a drunkard, I have been a swearer, I am a Sabbath-breaker, I will wait until I am better and then I will come to Christ." Why how can you talk thus? "From him is thy fruit found." If there be any fruit you must come to Jesus Christ for it. Am I, if I am poor and ragged, am I to buy a new coat before I may beg a garment? What a strange proposal that I should do for myself what Christ came to do. How can that be reasonable? If I saw a man standing outside the baths and wash-houses, and he should say, "Well really, I've just come home from my work and am as black as a sweep, but I dare not go into those baths until I have washed my face first." I should say, "How foolish! it is in the bath that your washing is to be found." There is no fitness wanted for Christ but that which is in Christ: nothing wanted in you, everything is in him. To use the old proverb, "Why carry coals to Newcastle?" Who would think it a profitable business for our London merchants, in the cold winter time, when the price of coals is very high, to charter all the ships they can, and send them laden with coals to Newcastle? If they did so, you would think them mad. And yet there are

many sinners penniless, comfortless, with no good thing of their own, who want to bring good works to Jesus! This is carrying coals to Newcastle with a vengeance. Oh! folly! folly! folly! Go with your ship all black and empty, sail up the harbour, and the pit's mouth will soon yield to you an abundance of precious store. Go to Jesus as you are. Do you want faith to-day—repentance—grace? Go to Christ for it. Go to him, resting on him, dependent on him, believing that he is ready to save you, to begin, to carry on, and finish your salvation. He will be as good as you ever believe him to be, and infinitely better. If thou canst believe him princely enough to put all thy sins away, and to cover thee with his righteousness, he will do it, for never man thought too well of Christ. If thou canst get a big thought of Christ, thou big sinner—if thou canst believe on the eternal Son of the eternal Father, who once poured out his blood in streams on Calvary thou art secure. God help thee. Amen.

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## Where True Prayer Is Found

Therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. - 2 Samuel 7:27

David had first found it in his heart to build a house for God. Sitting in his house of cedar he resolved that the ark of God should no longer abide under curtains, but should be more suitably housed. The Lord, however, did not design that David should build his temple, though he accepted his pious intentions, and declared that it was well that it was in his heart. From which we may learn that our intentions to serve the Lord in a certain manner may be thoroughly good and acceptable, and yet we may not be permitted to carry them out. We may have the will but not the power: the aspiration but not the qualification. We may have to stand aside and see another do the task which we had chosen for ourselves, and yet we may be none the less pleasing to the Lord, who in his great love accepts the will for the deed. It is a holy self-denial which in such cases rejoices to see the Lord glorified by others, and at the Captain's bidding cheerfully stands back in the rear, when zeal had urged it to rush to the front. It is as true service not to do as to do when the Lord's word prescribes it.

The reason why David was not to build the house is not stated here, but you will find it in 1 Chronicles 28:2, 3. "Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: but God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood." David's wars had been necessary and justifiable, and by them the people of the Lord had been delivered; but the Ever Merciful One did not delight in them, and would not use for building his temple an instrument which had been stained with blood. The great Prince of Peace would not have a

warrior's hand to pile the palace of his worship, choosing rather that a man whose mind had exercised itself in quieter pursuits should be the founder of the place of rest for the ark of his covenant of peace. He is not so short of instruments as to use a sword for a trowel, or a spear for a measuring rod, especially when these have been dyed in the blood of his creatures. In your own household affairs you do not use the same implement or utensil for opposite purposes; if David, therefore, is used to smite Philistines he is not to be employed in erecting a temple; Solomon, his son, a man of peace. is called to do that holy work. I have sometimes trembled on behalf of our own nation, and especially just now, lest its warlike propensities should disqualify it for what has hitherto appeared its highest destiny. If it should resolve to pick a quarrel and wantonly plunge itself into a bloody war, it may come to pass that our God may judge it to be unfit for the accomplishment of his purposes of grace. Even if it were granted that the war would be most just and right, yet should it be undertaken with solemn reluctance, lest it should deprive our nation of the capacity to be the preacher of righteousness and the herald of the cross. With what face can we preach the gospel of peace among the heathen if we provoke war ourselves? Little wonder would it be if the Lord should say of the English people, "Ye shall not convert the nations nor build up a church for my name, because ye delight in war and have needlessly shed blood." God grant that all things may be so ordered according to his infinite wisdom that this land may be the true Solomon among the nations, and build a temple for God, which shall enclose the whole earth, wherein every language and every nation shall be heard praising and magnifying the Lord. Labour, I pray you, O ye servants of the loving Savior, to promote peace if haply the temporary rage of the multitude may be appeased without carnage. To return to personal cases: it may happen to any one of you to be called to pass through business or domestic trials, in which you may be altogether blameless, and yet you may at the close of them find yourself disqualified for certain prominent positions of usefulness, at least for a time. Henceforth you may not hope to accomplish certain high and noble purposes which once were laid upon your heart. God may have to say to you ever afterwards, "You use lies elsewhere. I will not employ you for this, but still I accept you, and it was well that it was in your heart;" and if he should so see fit, do not repine, but like David do all you can towards the work that the man who is to

perform it may find materials ready to his hand. David gathered much of the treasure to meet the cost, and did it none the less earnestly because another name would outshine his own in connection with the temple.

Beloved friends, there is a very sweet consolation in my text for those who may be placed in circumstances similar to those of David. If by any means a man of God becomes disqualified for any form of desirable service which was upon his heart, yet nothing can disqualify him from prayer. If he find it in his heart to pray he may boldly draw near to God through the sacrifice of Christ, he may still use the way of access, which the dying body of our Lord has opened, and he may win his suit at the throne of grace. It was well for David that though, when the building of the temple was in his heart it could not be, yet when a prayer was in his heart it might be presented with the certainty of acceptance. If thou, my brother or my sister, art denied the privilege of doing what thy heart is set upon, be not angry with God, but set thy heart towards him in prayer; ask what thou wilt and he will give thee the desire of thine heart.

By my text three thoughts are suggested: the first is it is well to find prayer in our heart,- "therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee;" secondly, it is pleasant to be able to see how the prayer came there,-I shall trace the rise and progress of the prayer of David; and, thirdly, it is most profitable to use a prayer when we find it in our heart; for David solemnly prayed the prayer which he discovered in his soul.

I. First, then, IT IS WELL TO FIND PRAYER IN OUR HEARTS. In no other place can true prayer be found. Prayer with the lip, prayer with bended knee and uplifted hand is nothing worth if the heart be absent. Prayer as a mere matter of form and routine is but the husk, heart-work is the kernel. Words are the oyster shell, the desire of the heart is the pearl. Do not imagine that the Lord looks down with any pleasure upon the tens of thousands of forms of prayer, whether liturgical or extempore, which are presented to him without heart: such forms rather weary him than worship him; they are not adoration, but provocation. The God of truth can never accept an untruthful devotion. Our prayer must flow from our heart, or it will never reach the heart of God. But prayer is not found

in every man's heart. Alas, many of our fellow men never pray; and many who think they pray are yet strangers to that sacred exercise. If an angel were now suddenly to announce that he would mark every man and woman here who has never prayed I fear that many of you would be in a great fright, for fear the mark should be on you. If suddenly the complexion could change, and each prayerless person's face should gather blackness, I wonder how many there would be among us whom we should gaze upon with intense surprise! There shall be no such Cain-like mark set upon any of you, but will you set some sort of seal upon your own conscience if you are compelled to confess, "I am one of those who have never prayed." What an acknowledgment for a rational being to make! Twenty years of life without a prayer to the Creator of its being! Be astonished, O heavens, and amazed O earth! Perhaps you deny that you are thus guilty, for you have always said a prayer, and would not have gone to sleep at night if you had not done so; then, I pray you, remember that you may have repeated holy words from your youth up, and yet may have never prayed a prayer with your heart. To pray as the Holy Ghost teaches is a very different thing from the repetition of the choicest words that the best of writers may have composed, or the utterance of random words without thought. Have we prayed with our hearts or not? Remember, a prayerless soul is a Christless soul, and a Christless soul is a lost soul, and will soon be cast away for ever. The verses were meant for children, but I cannot forbear quoting them here, for they in simple language express my meaning;

"I often say my prayers;  
But do I ever pray?  
And do the wishes of my heart  
Go with the words I say?"

"I may as well kneel down  
And worship gods of stone,  
As offer to the living God  
A prayer of words alone.

"For words without the heart  
The Lord will never hear;

Nor will he to those lips attend  
Whose prayers are not sincere."

Further, let me observe that the spirit of prayer, though it is always present in every regenerated heart, is not always alike active. It is not, perhaps, to-day nor to-morrow that every Christian will be able to say, "I find in my heart to pray this one particular prayer unto God"; it may for the present be beyond our standard of grace, and we may therefore be unable to grasp the blessing. In some respects we are not masters of our supplications. You cannot always pray the prayer of faith in reference to any one thing; that prayer is often the distinct gift of God for an occasion. Others may ask your prayers, and sometimes you may plead very prevalently for them; but at another time that power is absent. You feel no liberty to offer a certain petition, but on the contrary feel held back in the matter. Well, be guided by this inward direction: and follow rather than press forward in such a case. There are times with us when we find it in our heart to pray a prayer, and then we do so with eagerness and assurance; but we cannot command such seasons at pleasure. How freely then does prayer come from us, as freely as the leaping water from the fountain; there is no need to say, "I long to pray," we do pray, we cannot help praying, we have become a mass of prayer. We are walking the streets and cannot pray aloud, but our heart pleads as fast as it beats; we enter our house and attend to family business, and still the heart keeps pleading as constantly as the lungs are heaving; we go to bed, and our last thought is supplication; if we wake in the night still is our soul making intercession before God, and so it continues while the visitation remains. O that it were always so. Now it is a very happy thing when the Christian finds it in his heart to pray with marked and special fervor unto God. Then he puts no pressure upon himself, nor thinks of supplication as a matter of duty; it has become a pleasant necessity, a sacred passion of the inward life, a holy breathing of the soul, not to be restrained. So it should always be, but, alas, most of us have to mourn that in the matter of prayer we are the subjects of many changeful moods. O that we had learned more perfectly how to be praying always in the Holy Ghost.

The presence of living prayer in the heart indicates seven things about that heart upon which we will speak with great brevity.

First, prayer in the heart proves that the heart is renewed. True prayer dwells not in a dead, corrupt, stony heart. If thou findest in thy heart to pray a prayer unto God thou hast assuredly been born again. "Behold he prayeth," is one of the first and one of the surest marks of the new birth. The faintest movement of the pulse proves that life still remains in a drowning man, and though prayer be weak, feeble, fragmentary, yet if it be there at all the soul lives unto God. Though to your apprehension your prayer is so poor and broken and unworthy that it cannot be accepted, yet the desire of the soul towards God is an index of spiritual life most hopeful and instructive. Have hope, brother, as long as you can pray, for none who pray believingly, in the name of Jesus, can ever be cast into hell. He whom faith in Jesus has taught to cry to God shall never hear him say, "Depart, ye cursed," for hath not the Lord said, "Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"? Be glad, therefore, if you find it in your heart to pray, for it proves that the root of the matter is in you.

To find prayer in the heart proves next a reconciled heart. David might have been in a pet with God and have said, "If I cannot build a temple I will do nothing, for I have set my heart upon it, and I have already laid up treasure for it. It is a laudable project, and it has had the sanction of the prophet, and I am hardly used in having my design rejected." There are some professors who would do a great thing if they might, but if they are not permitted to act a shining part they are in the sulks and angry with their God. David when his proposal was set aside found it in his heart not to murmur, but to pray. Job asks concerning the hypocrite, "Will he always call upon Cod?" and thus he meant to say that only true and loyal hearts will continue to pray when things go hard with them. Let this be a test for you and for me. Canst thou pray, brother, now that the delight of thine eyes has been cut off by death? Canst thou pray now that thy substance is diminished and thy bodily health is failing? Then I take it as a sign that thou hast submitted thyself unto God and art at peace with him, being reconciled to him by his grace. To cease from complaining and to give the heart to prayer is the sign of a soul renewed and reconciled.

Prayer is also the index of a spiritual heart. David sat in his house of

cedar: it was costly and carved with great art, but it did not draw his mind away from God. It has too often happened that prospering professors have become proud professors, and have forgotten God. When they were poor they associated with Christian brethren, whom they felt pleasure in recognizing, but now they have gotten a large estate they no longer know the poor people of God, and they spend their Sabbaths where they can meet with a little "society," and move among their "equals" as they call them, they being themselves so very much superior to the holy men and women whom once they had in honor. Such folks become high and mighty like Nebuchadnezzar, and as they walk their grounds or sit in their painted chambers they say, "Behold this great Babylon which I have builded." A "self-made man," risen from the ranks, come to have a name like the name of the great men that are upon the face of the earth: is not this something? Oftentimes hath it happened that these things have turned away the hearts of professors from the God who loaded them with benefits. It was not so with David. In his cedar palace he found it in his heart to pray. The more he had the more he loved his God; the more he received the more he desired to render unto the Lord for his benefits. Plants when they are pot-bound become poor weak things, and so do men's hearts when they are earth-bound, doting upon their riches. As a traveler finds it hard to move when his feet stick in the mud of a miry way, so do some men make small progress heavenward because they are hindered by their own wealth. Happy is that man who has riches but does not suffer riches to have him: who uses wealth and does not abuse it by idolizing it, but seasons all with the word of God and prayer.

Prayer in the heart also proves an enlightened heart. A man who does not pray is in the dark; he knoweth not his own wants, else would he make supplication. If he understood his own danger, the temptations which surround him, and the corruptions which are within him, he would be incessantly in prayer. He who hath left off praying hath surely lost his wits. If the Holy Ghost has taught us anything he has taught us this, that we must pray without ceasing. David prayed, too, as an enlightened man, because he felt that devotion was due to God. Since the Lord had done so much for him he must worship and adore: "Therefore hath thy servant," saith he, "found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." He who is well taught by the Spirit of God knows his position to be that of a humble

dependent, who is bound to reverence his God with all his heart; and hence he daily sings, "Thy vows are upon me, O God, I will render praise unto thee."

The heart in which prayer is found constantly welling up is also a lively heart. We do not all possess lively hearts, nor do we all keep them when we get them, for some men appear to have fatty degeneration of the heart, after a spiritual manner, since their heart acts very feebly in prayer. They are lethargic and lifeless in devotion. Do we not all find ourselves at times in a cold state in reference to prayer? Brothers, I believe that when we cannot pray it is time that we prayed more than ever; and if you answer, "But how can that be?" I would say- pray to pray, pray for prayer, pray for the spirit of supplication. Do not be content to say, "I would pray if I could"; no, but if you cannot pray, pray till you can. He who can row down stream with a flowing tide and a fair wind is but a poor oarsman compared with the man who can pull against wind and tide, and nevertheless make headway. This our soul must endeavor to do. But, beloved, how delicious it is when you can pray, and cannot leave off; when your heart pours forth devotion as the roses shed their odours, or the sun gives his light. I love to feel my soul on the wing like the birds in spring, which are always singing and flitting from bough to bough, full of life and vigor. Oh to have the soul mounting on eagle's wings, and no longer groping in the earth like a mole. To be instant, constant, eager at prayer-this is health, vigor, and delight. To feel the heart in prayer like the chariots of Amminadib, outstripping the wind-this is a joy worth worlds.

Beloved, this finding in the heart to pray proves, in the sixth place, that the heart is in communion with God; for what is prayer but the breath of God in man returning whence it came. Prayer is a telephone by which God speaks in man. His heaven is far away, but his voice sounds in our soul. Prayer is a phonograph: God speaks into our soul, and then our soul speaks out again what the Lord has spoken. Conversation must always be two-sided. God speaketh to us in this book- we must reply to him in prayer and praise. If you do not pray, my brother, why then you have shut the gates of heaven against yourself, and there is neither coming in nor going out between you and your Lord: but prayer keeps up a heavenly



commerce acceptable to God and enriching to your own souls. Do you find yourself mightily moved to pray? Then the Lord is very near to you; the Beloved has come into his is garden to eat his pleasant fruits-take care to feast him with your love. Prayer in the heart is the echo of the footsteps of the Bridegroom of our souls who is seeking communion with us. Open wide the doors of your soul and let him in, and then detain him and constrain him, saying, "Abide with us."

When we find prayer in the heart, we may know that our heart is accepted of God, and the prayer too. Brother, when a desire comes to thee again and again and again, take it as a favorable omen regarding thy supplication. If the Lord should prompt thee to any one desire especially, laying thy child perhaps more than usual upon thy heart, or causing the name of a friend constantly to occur to thee, so that thou findest thyself frequently praying for him-take this as a token from the Lord that he would have thee turn thy thoughts in that direction, and that a blessing is in store for thee. If a certain church which seems to need revival is laid upon thy soul, or a township or a district, mark well the fact. Suppose thou findest thy heart going out towards a special country or city, bearing thy mind thither and working to pray with tears and entreaties, grieving because of its sin, and entreating that God would remember and forgive, be thou sure that this is a prophecy of good to that place, and do thou redouble thy petitions. When the gale blows the navigator spreads his sail to catch the wind, and when the Spirit, who bloweth where he listeth, comes upon thee influencing thee to this or that, be sure to spread all sail. Reckon that the inclination to pray is the foretaste of the coming blessing; as coming events cast their shadows before them, thy desire is the shadow of the mercy which God is sending down to thee. He moves thee to pray for it because he himself is about to give it.

Thus I have shown that it is well when we find it in our hearts to pray a prayer, for it proves the heart to be in many respects in a healthy condition.

II. Now, secondly, IT IS PLEASANT TO BE ABLE TO SEE HOW THE PRAYER CAME INTO THE HEART. "I find it in my heart," says David. Well, David, how did it come there? I answer as he did not, that any true

prayer which is found in the human heart comes there by the Holy Ghost. If there be anything excellent in us, even if it be only a desire to pray acceptably, it is of the Holy Spirit's creation, and unto him be all the praise. But the modus operandi, the way in which the Spirit operates upon us is somewhat in this fashion. First of all he puts the promise into the word of God. David tells us very plainly that it was because God had revealed such and such promises that, therefore saith he, "hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." The Lord gives the promise, and that becomes the parent of our prayer. For first there are some mercies we should never have thought of praying for if he had not promised them. They would never have suggested themselves to us, and we should not have known our need of them unless the supply had taught us, and the promise of God itself incited us to the desire. There are other mercies for which we should not have dared to pray if the promise had not encouraged us. We could not have had the heart to ask such great things if the Lord had not promised them to us. So that the word of God suggests the desire and then encourages us to hope that the desire will certainly be fulfilled. Moreover when promise comes very close home to a man as it did to David when it was spoken personally to him by the prophet, it vivifies the soul, causes the mind to realize the blessing, and both intensifies desire and gives grasp and grip to faith. We should not have felt the boon to be real had it not been placed before us in plain words. Brethren, this is how our prayers come into our heart. The word of God suggests them, encourages us to seek them, and then gives us a realizing power so that we plead with eagerness and believe with force. In saying "therefore" David means not only that the word of God had put the prayer into his mind but that his whole meditation had led him to the finding of this prayer in his heart. Had he not been sitting before the Lord in quiet thought he might never have noticed the work of the Spirit upon his soul, but inward searchings brought the right prayer to light. Will you kindly look through the chapter while I very briefly sum up its contents and show that each item excited David to pray? When the king sat before the Lord and spake out his heart, his first word was about the Lord's past goodness to him and his own insignificance,- "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" Brethren, who are we that God should have been so good to us? But inasmuch as his grace to us has been amazing, do we not find it in our heart to pray a

prayer to him that he would bless us still more? Can you not enquire of the Lord in the words of the hymn which we sang just now-

"After so much mercy past  
Canst thou let me sink at last?"

He hath been mindful of us, he will bless us. Let our memory of his past lovingkindness excite us to prayer for present and future favors.

David then passed on to speak of the greatness of the promise: "This was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come." We also have received exceeding great and precious promises, and since God has promised so much, will we not be much in prayer? Shall he be large in promising and shall we be narrow in asking? Shall he stand before us and say, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive," and will we be content with slender, starved petitions? Beggars seldom need pressing to beg, and when a promise is given them they usually put the widest possible construction upon it, and urge it with great vehemence; will it not be well to take a leaf out of their book? Come, brethren, the argument is strong with those who have spiritual sense- the greatness of the promise encourages us to find many a prayer in our heart.

Then he speaks of the surprising "manner" of God. "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" He saw that God acted far more graciously than the most generous human beings act towards their fellows. He perceived that "as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God's ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts," and therefore he opened his mouth wide in prayer. Was he not right in so doing, and are we right, my brother, if we do not imitate his example? We are advised by the wise man not to go into our brother's house in the day of our calamity, and the like wisdom would move us not to ask too much from friends and neighbors; but no such prudence is needful towards our Friend above; to him we may come at all hours, and to him we may offer the largest requests. Since the Lord dealeth not as men deal, but giveth liberally and upbraideth not, since he openeth the windows of the treasury of heaven, and is pleased to make no stint whatever in the showers of his liberality,

let us wait upon him continually. His unspeakable love should encourage us to abound in prayer.

Then the king goes on to speak of God's free grace, which was another argument to pray. "For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things to make thy servant know them." The Lord had entered into covenant with him, not because David had merited so great an honor, but entirely for his own mercy's sake. David recognizes the freeness and sovereignty of the grace, and seems to say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. If thou hast loved me so, then am I bold to ask great things of thee. If thou waitest not for the merit of man, nor for human deservings, then will I ask thee still further to bless me, unworthy though I am, to the praise of the glory of thy name." Pray mightily, my brethren, since God sits on a throne of grace. When the choicest treasures are to be had for the asking, who can refuse to pray?

Then he proceeded to mention the greatness of God, "Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee." Surely, to a great God we should bring great prayers. We dishonor him by the fewness of our petitions, and the littleness of our desires. My soul, enlarge thy desires; be hungry, be thirsty, be greedy after divine grace, for whatever thou desirest thou shalt have, provided it be indeed for thy good. Thy desire to obtain shall be the test of thy capacity to receive. Brethren, we have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name," said the Lord Jesus to his disciples, and he might say the same to us now; for all we have ever asked comes to next to nothing compared with what he is prepared to give, compared with what he will give when once he has tutored us into something like largeness of heart in prayer, like that of Solomon, of whom we read, "God gave him largeness of heart even as the sand which is on the sea shore." We need to be delivered from narrow conceptions of God, and limited desires in prayer, that we may ask of infinity with suitable capacity of soul, and so may receive grace upon grace, and be filled with all the fullness of God.

David closed his meditation by speaking of God's love to his people,

saying, "And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, Lord, art become their God." Well, since the Lord loves his people so intensely, we may well be encouraged to ask great things for ourselves, and especially to seek great things for the church. We are no strangers to God now, his chosen are neither aliens nor foreigners, they are his children, dear to his heart; and if we, being evil, know now to give good gifts unto our children, how much more sure is it that our heavenly Father will give good gifts to them that ask him? When you pray for Zion plead for great prosperity, and speak with boldness, for you are asking blessings upon those whom God delights to bless, asking prosperity for that church which is as the apple of his eye.

I will sum up this point as to the pleasure of seeing how prayer comes to be in our heart, by briefly tracing the line of beauty along which it runs. First of all the thought and purpose of blessing arises in the heart of God: David perceived that to be the case, for in the twenty-first verse he says, "For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things." Prayer owes its origin to the heart of God. The next stage is reached when it is revealed by inspiration; the Lord sent Nathan to tell David of his gracious intent towards him. The thought has passed, you see, from God's secret purpose into God's revealed word, and now it filters into the heart of David, and David sends it back to God in prayer. Prayer, like our Lord, comes forth from God and returns to God. That is the pedigree and history of all true supplication. It is like the mist which you see in the early morning, rising from the plains towards heaven in the form of clouds, like incense from an altar. How came it there? First of all, the moisture was in the heavens, in the secret treasuries of God. Then came a day when it fell in drops of rain, and did not return void, but watered the earth. Afterwards, when the blessed sun shone forth, it steamed up again, to return to the place from whence it came. The clouds are like the divine decree-who shall enter into the secret place where Jehovah hideth his purposes? The rain is like the word, with its sparkling

drops of precious promises, the outcome of the mysterious purposes of God. These revealed blessings we see standing in pools in the Scriptures. Turn to the Book or listen to the Lord's servants whom he helps to speak, and you shall hear a sound of abundance of rain. This rain watereth the soul of man, and when the warm love of God comes shining on the saturated heart it uprises in earnest petitions. Prayer is never lost, for though the mist which rises in yonder valley may never fall again into the same place, it drops somewhere; and so true prayer, though it come not back into the offerer's own bosom, is fruitful in good in some way or other. The result of honest hearty prayer may not be distinctly this or that according to your mind or mine, but it is always good; supplication is never wasted, it is preserved in the divine reservoir, and in the time its influence visits the earth and waters it with "the river of God, which is full of water." When you find a rare flower by the roadside, and wonder how it came there, for it is no indigenous weed but a fair stranger from another clime, it is pleasant to trace out its way to the place it beautifies; and even so when you find a prayer in your heart, it is gladsome to see how it conies forth from the heart of God, by the word of God, to blossom in the garden of your soul.

III. In the third place IT IS VERY PROFITABLE TO USE A PRAYER WHEN WE FIND IT IN OUR HEART. Notice the phraseology of my text. He says, "Thy servant hath found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." Not to say this prayer, but to pray this prayer. There is great force in the expression. Some prayers are never prayed, but are like arrows which are never shot from the bow. Scarcely may I call them prayers, for they are such as to form, and matter, and verbiage, but they are said, not prayed. The praying of prayer is the main matter, Sometimes, beloved, we may have a prayer in our hearts and may neglect the voice of the Lord within our soul, and if so we are great losers.

What does praying a prayer mean? It means, first, that you present it to God with fervency. Pray as if you meant it, throw your whole soul into the petition. Entreat the Lord with tears and cries. If you do not prevail at first, yet come to him importunately again and again with the resolve that since he has written the prayer in your heart you will take no denial. Heat your prayers red hot. In naval warfare, in the old time, our men of war

fired red hot shot; try that system, for nothing is so powerful in prayer as fervency and importunity.

Pray also spiritually, for the text saith, "I have found it in my heart to pray this prayer unto thee." It is of no use pray to yourself or to the four walls of your room. Some persons even pray to those who are around them, like the preacher of whose prayer the remark was made that "it was one of the finest prayers that ever was presented to a Boston audience." I am afraid many prayers are presented to audiences rather than to God. This should not be. Moreover, when you find a prayer in your heart do not talk it over nor say to another, "I feel such and such a desire"-but go and pour it out before God; speak it into the divine ear, realize that God is there as distinctly as if you could see him, for that is the way to make a proper use of the prayer which is in your heart.

Pray with specialty. The text indicates that- "I have found it in my heart to pray this prayer." Know what you pray. Prayer is not putting your hand into a bag and pulling out what comes first. Oh, no; there must be definite desires and specific requests. Think carefully about it and ask for what you want and for nothing else but what you need. Pray this prayer. David had a promise about his house and his prayer was about his house that God would bless and establish it. Much of what we think to be prayer is really playing at praying. The archers in the English armies of old with their arrows a cloth-yard long, when they met the foe took steady aim, and sorely they galled the foe. Give your little boy his bow and arrow, and what does he do? He shoots at random and sends his arrows away, for he plays at archery. A good deal of praying is of that sort, there is no steadily taking aim at the white and drawing the bow with strength, and watching the arrow with anxiety. Lord, teach us to pray.

We ought to pray, too, dear friends, when we find prayer in our hearts, with much boldness. He says, "I found in my heart to pray," that is, he had the heart to pray, the courage to pray: the promise influenced him to make bold with God. Some men fail in reverence for God, but far more fail in holy boldness towards God. Men who are mighty for God are generally famous for courage with him. Look at Luther; they say it was wonderful to hear him preach, but a hundred times more so to hear him

pray. There was an awful reverence about that heroic man, but there was also such a childlike simplicity of daring that he seemed as though he did really lay hold of God. That is the way: try it in your chamber this afternoon. Be bold with God, find it in your heart to pray this prayer unto him.

And do so promptly. Let promptitude mark your prayer as it did that of David. He did not wait a week or two after he had obtained the promise; he went straight away and sat down before the Lord, began to plead the divine word, and said, "Do as thou hast said." He found the petition in his heart, and before it could lose its way again he brought it before God. He was studying his soul, and as he observed its movements he saw a prayer lift up its head. "Ah," said he, "I will seize it," and he held it fast and presented it before God, and so obtained a blessing.

I suggest, dear friends, to those whose hearts feel touched in the matter, that we should to-day make special supplication to God as to the peace of nations, now so miserably endangered. You will meet as teachers in the school, you will meet in the classes, and others of you will be at home in meditation this afternoon; but you can all in various ways help in the common intercession. At this moment it is upon my heart very heavily to pray this prayer to God, and I wish you would all make a point of joining in it: "Send us peace in our days, good Lord." Not as politicians, but as followers of Christ, we are bound to entreat our Lord to prevent the cruel war which is now threatened. A curse will surely fall upon all who are causing the strife, but blessed are the peacemakers. I believe that if all Christians would join in pleading with God they would do much more than all the public meetings and all the petitions to the Houses of Parliament or to the Queen will ever accomplish. O Lord' prevent war, we pray thee.

Another thing: during this week the various societies are holding their public meetings, and I suggest, if you find it in your hearts, that you spend a little extra time in praying to God to bless his church and its mission work. There will, also, be meetings held of great importance this week, in connection with certain religious bodies. There are denominations which are sadly diseased with scepticism, but a healthy



love for the truth remains with many, and therefore there will come a struggle between the evangelical and the philosophical parties: this week will witness such a struggle. Pray God to send the conquest to the right, to strengthen hesitating brethren, and to give decision to those who have long been too timorous in their action. Pray that power and guidance from on high may be given to those who hold the orthodox faith. I find it in my heart so to pray, and shall be glad to know that others are agreeing with me.

Find it in your hearts, too, at this time to pray for the work of this our own church, and I call special attention to the work of our colporteurs. We have now nearly ninety brethren going from village to village, from house to house, selling the word of God, and preaching it to those who in the hamlets might otherwise be left without the gospel. Find it in your hearts to invoke a blessing upon them; and, in fine, if there be anything that is more upon your heart than another, be wise enough to hedge in a quarter of an hour in order to pray the prayer unto the Lord. Shut yourself up and say, "I have business to do with the Master. I feel a call within my ear to speak with the King." Beloved brethren, when such a season comes you, I would most humbly but most affectionately ask those of you who are benefited by my ministry to whisper my name into the King's ear, for I have much need of his grace and help. May the Lord accept your petitions, for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

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## **Whither Goest Thou?**

But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. - Job 23:10

On several Sabbath mornings of late I have earnestly handled spiritual subjects which I trust may have been for the edification of the people of God; but it will not do to continue in that line. I am a fisher of men as well as a shepherd of the flock. I must attend to both offices. Here are souls perishing, sinners that need to be saved by Christ, and therefore I must leave the flock, and go after the wanderers. I must lay down the crook and take up the net. By a simple sermon, full of earnest expostulation, I would reason with the careless. At this moment I have not so much to expound doctrine as to arouse hearts. Oh, for the power of the Holy Ghost, without which I must utterly fail in my design! We have this morning been praying for the conversion of many: we expect our prayers to be heard. The question is not, Will there be any converted under this sermon? but, Who will it be? I trust many who have come here with no higher motive than to see the great congregation and to hear the preacher, may, nevertheless, be met with in God's infinite mercy, and placed in the way of eternal life. May this be the spiritual birthday of many—a day to be remembered by them throughout eternity!

Job could not understand the way of God with him; he was greatly perplexed. He could not find the Lord, with whom aforetime he constantly abode. He cries, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." But if Job knew not the way of the Lord, the Lord knew Job's way. It is a great comfort that when we cannot see the Lord, He sees us, and perceives the way that we take. It is not so important that we should understand what the Lord is doing as that the Lord should understand what we are doing, and that we should be impressed by the great fact that He does understand it. Our case may be quite beyond our own comprehension, but it is all plain to Him who seeth the end from the beginning, and understands the secrets of all hearts.

Because God knew his way, Job turned from the unjust judgments of his unfeeling friends and appealed to the Lord God Himself. He pleaded in the supreme court, where his case was known, and he refused the verdicts of erring men. He that doeth right seeketh the light; and as Job saw that the light was with God, he hastened to that light, that his deeds might be

made manifest. Like a bird of the day, which begins to signal the return of the morning, he could sing when he stood in the light of God. He was glad that the Lord knew his way, his motive, and his desires; for from that truth he inferred that he would be helped in his trials, and brought safely through them: "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

These words afford rich consolation to the saints; and if I were to use them for that purpose, I should expect the Lord's people greatly to rejoice in the Lord, whose observant eye and gracious thoughts are always upon them. Our whole condition lies open to Him with whom we have to do. Though never understood by men, we are understood by our God.

"'Tis no surprising thing  
That we should be unknown:  
The Jewish world knew not their King,  
God's everlasting Son."

As the Son of God was known to the Father, though unknown to all the world, so are we hidden from the knowledge of men, but well known of the Most High. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." "Thou hast known my soul in adversities."

I quit the design of comforting the people of God for the more presently pressing work of arousing the unconverted. Their way is evil, and the end thereof is destruction. Oh, that I could arouse them to a sense of their condition! To that end I shall ask four questions of every man within reach of my voice. God knoweth the way that you take. I will ask you first: Do you know your own way? Secondly: Is it a comfort to you that God knows your way? Thirdly: Are you tried in the way? and, if so, fourthly: Have you confidence in God as to the result of that trial? Can you say with Job, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold"?

I. My hearer, I ask you, first: Do You have a way. There is a way which you have taken, chosen, selected for yourself: there is a way which you follow in desire, word, and act. So far as your life is left to your own management, there is a way which you voluntarily take, and willingly follow. Do you know what that way is? It is not everyone who does know

as much as that. It is a very simple question to put to you; but yet it is a very needful one to a great many; for many walk on as in a dream.

Do you know where you are going? "Of course," says one, "everybody knows where he is going." Do you know where you are going, and do you carefully consider your end? You are steaming across the deep sea of time into the main ocean of eternity: to what port are you steering? Whither goest thou, O man? The birds in the heaven know their time and place when they fly away in due season; but do you know whither you are speeding? Do you keep watch, looking ahead for the shore? What shore are you expecting to see? For what purpose are you living? What is the end and drift of your daily action? I fear that many in this vast congregation are not prepared to give a deliberate answer which will be pleasant to utter and to think upon. Is not this suspicious? If I were to go out tomorrow by sea, I should not walk on board a steamboat and then enquire, "Where are you going?" The captain would think me a crazy fellow if I embarked before I knew where the vessel was going. I first make up my mind where I will go, and then select a vessel which is likely to carry me there in comfort. You must know where you are going. The main thing with the captain of a Cunarder will be the getting his vessel safely into the port for which it is bound. This design overrules everything else. To get into port is the thought of every watch, every glance at the chart, every observation of the stars. The captain's heart is set upon the other side. His hope is safely to arrive at the desired haven, and he knows which is the haven of his choice. He would not expect to get there if he did not set his mind on it. How is it with you, dear friend? You are speeding towards heaven or hell: which of these is your port? I know of no ultimate abode of souls except the brightness of the Father's glory, or the darkness of Jehovah's wrath: which of these will be your end? Which way are you intentionally going? What is it you are aiming at? Are you living for God? or are you so living that the result must be eternal banishment from His presence?

Surely, to press this inquiry upon you needs no eloquence of speech. The question is vital to your happiness, and self-interest should induce you to weigh it. I shall not use a single metaphor or illustration; for I am not here to please, but to arouse. I charge every man and woman in this

house now to consider this question: Whither are you going? What will be the end of the life you are now leading? Do not cast away the inquiry. It is not impertinent; it is not unnecessary. In the name of the Lord, I beseech you answer me.

If you answer that question, allow me to put another: Do you know how you are going? In what strength are you pursuing your journey? If you feel able to say, "I am seeking that which is right and good", I then press the inquiry, In what strength are you pursuing it? Are you depending upon your own power, or have you received strength from on high? Do you rely on your own resolves and determinations, or have you received help from the Spirit of God? Remember, there are days in every life-voyage in which the storm-fiend puts all human power to a nonplus. Even in the fairest weather we are all too apt to run on rocks or quicksands; but the voyage of life is seldom altogether a pleasant one, and we must be prepared for tempests. Our own unaided strength will not endure the waves and the winds of the ocean of life; and if you are trusting to yourself disaster will befall you. The Lord brings men to the desired haven; but left to themselves, they are no match for the thousand dangers of their mysterious voyage. Is God with you? Has the Lord Jesus become your strength and your song? Do you sail beneath the blood-red flag of the Cross? If you are trusting in the Lord alone, disappointment, failure, and shipwreck are impossible; but if you are hastening on with out God for your Guide and Protector, then will your weakness and folly be made clear before long to your inevitable ruin. You may put on all steam and forge ahead in the teeth of the wind; but all in vain: you will never reach the Fair Havens.

Are there any here who decline to answer my question? Will you not tell us whither you are going? When a great vessel is crossing the sea and another comes within sight, they propose the question, "Where are you bound?" If the other vessel took no notice, gave no answer whatever, it would look suspicious. A craft that will not say where it is going! We don't like the look of it. If one of Her Majesty's vessels were about, and it challenged a sail, and received no reply to the question, "To what port are you bound?" I think they would fire a shot across her bows and make her heave to, till she did answer. Might not the silent craft prove to be a

pirate? When a man confesses that he does not know where he is going, or what his business may be, the policeman concludes that he is probably going where he ought not to go, and has business on hand which is not what it should be. If you are afraid to consider your future, your fear is a bad omen. The tradesman who is afraid to look into his accounts will before long have them looked into for him by an officer from the Bankruptcy Court. He that dares not see his own face in the glass must be an ugly fellow; and you that dare not behold your own characters, have bad characters. Not know where you are going! Ah me! do you wish to find yourselves in hell on a sudden? Would you, like the rich man, lift up your eyes in hopeless misery? I am suspicious of you who cannot tell where you are going; and I wish you would be suspicious of yourselves. You who do not like self-examination are the persons who need it most. You who shun awkward questions are the very people who need to face them. I usually speak out—pretty plainly, and those of you who are used to me are not displeased; but sometimes strange hearers are offended, and say that they will not come to be spoken to in such a fashion. Ah, my friend! your ill humour shows that you are in an ill condition and do not care to be corrected. If you were honestly desirous to be set right, you would like straight talks and honest rebukes. Do you prefer to go to a doctor who is known to say, "There is not much the matter: a little change, and a dose of physic, will soon put you all right"? Do you pay your guineas to be flattered? No; the man who is wise wants to know the truth, however alarming that truth may be. The man who is honest and hopeful desires a thorough examination, and invites the preacher to deal truthfully with him, even if the result should cause distress of mind. If you decline to see whither you are going, it is because you are going down into the pit. If you decline to answer the question, What is your way? I fear your way is one that you cannot defend, whose end will cause you endless lament.

Is anyone here compelled to say, "I have chosen the evil road"? Remember, the Lord knows the way that you take. I am anxious that you should yourself know the truth about your condition and prospects. I dread much your going on in ignorance. I wish every man here who is serving Satan to be aware that he is doing it. "If Jehovah be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him": be hearty one way or the other. If you

have chosen the service of sin, own it like a man, to yourself, at least. Choose your way of life in broad daylight. If you propose to die without hope in Christ, say as much. If you resolve to let the future happen as it may, and to run all risks, then put down in black and white your daring resolution. If you believe that you shall die like a dog and see no hereafter, do not at all conceal from yourself your doggish degradation, but be true to your own choice. If you choose the way of evil pleasures, do it deliberately and after weighing all that can be said on the other side.

But there is this comfort to me, if it does not comfort you—that if you have chosen the wrong way, that choice need not stand. The grace of God can come in, and lead you at once to reverse your course. Oh, that you may now say, "I had not thought of it, but I certainly am going in the wrong direction, and, God helping me, I will not go an inch further!" Through our Lord Jesus Christ the past can be forgiven; and by the power of the Holy Spirit the present and the future can be changed. The grace of God can lead you to turn away from that which you have eagerly followed, and cause you to seek after that which you have disregarded. Oh, that today your cry might be, "Ho for holiness and heaven!" You have not been hitherto on the Lord's side, but now enlist in the army of the Lord Jesus. I would fain stay your vessel in her evil voyage. I am firing a shot across your bows. I solemnly warn you to consider your ways. Bethink you, what will the end of these things be? Break off your sins by righteousness; for it is time to seek the Lord. "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel?" This is the voice of God's own Word to you: hear it, and be admonished, and, God helping you, turn at once.

But, my friend, are you drifting? Do you say, "I am not distinctly sailing for heaven, neither am I resolutely steering in the other direction. I do not quite know what to say of myself"? Are you drifting, then? Are you like a vessel which is left to the mercy of the winds and the waves? Ignoble condition! Perilous case! What! Are you no more than a log on the water? I should not like to be a passenger in a vessel which had no course marked out on the chart, no pilot at the wheel, no man at watch. Surely, you must be derelict, if not water-logged; and you will come to a total wreck before long. Yours is a dark prospect. Some time ago, I read in a paper of a gentleman being brought up before the magistrate. What was

the charge against him? "Nothing very serious," you will say. He was found wandering in the fields. He was asked where he was going, and he said he was not going anywhere. He was asked where he came from, and he said he did not know. They asked him where his home was, and he said he had none. They brought him up for wandering as—what?—a dangerous lunatic. The man who has no aim or object in life, but just wanders about anywhere or nowhere, acts like a dangerous lunatic, and assuredly he is not morally sane. What! Am I aiming at nothing? Have I all this machinery of life, making up a vessel more wonderful than the finest steam-boat, and am I going nowhere? My heart-throbs are the pulsing of a divinely-arranged machinery: do they beat for nothing? Do I get up every morning, and go about this world, and work hard, and all for nothing which will last? As a being created of God for noblest purposes, am I spending my existence in a purposeless manner? How foolish! Why, surely, I have need, like the prodigal, to come to myself; and if I do come to myself, I shall ask myself, Can it be right that I should thus be wasting the precious gifts of time, and life, and power? If I were nothing, it were congruous that I should aim at nothing; but, being a man, I ought to have a high purpose, and to pursue it heartily. Do not say that you are drifting; it is a terrible answer, implying grievous danger, and casting a suspicion upon your sanity. If you have reason, use it in a reasonable way, and do not play the fool.

But can you say, "Yes, I am bound for the right port"? It may be that your accents are trembling with a holy fear; but none the less I am glad to hear you say as much. I rejoice if you say, "Christ commands me; I am trusting to his guidance; he is my way, my life, my end." Dear friend, I congratulate you. We will sail together, as God shall help us, under the convoy of our Lord Jesus, who is the Lord High Admiral of the sea of life. We will keep with His squadron till we cast anchor in the glassy sea. But now that you know your way and are assured that you are on the right tack, put on all steam. Exert your strength in the work to which your life is consecrated. Waste not a single moment; let no energy lie dormant; arouse every faculty. If you are serving the Lord, serve Him with all your might. Is it not written, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength"? Those words sound to me like great strokes of the soul's



paddle wheels! They urge us to press forward in the holy voyage. Brothers, we must run, for our life is to be a race. It must be hard running, too. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." If we really are on the right way, let us press forward with all our powers; and may God help us that we may win the prize! Answer this first question, and know of a surety whose you are, and where you are, and whither you are going.

II. Secondly, IS IT A COMFORT TO YOU THAT GOD KNOWS YOUR WAY? Solemnly, I believe that one of the best tests of human character is our relation to the great truth of God's omniscience. If it startles you that God sees you, then you ought to be startled. If it delights you that God sees you, you may reasonably conclude that there is within your heart that which is right and true, which God will approve of. You are among those who do the truth, for you come to the light, and cry, "Search me, O God." Allow me to apply the test to you now, by asking what you think of the truth that the Lord knows you altogether. Remember, if your heart condemn you, God is greater than your heart and knoweth all things; but if your heart condemn you not, then have you confidence towards God.

Dear friend, it is quite certain that God does know the way that you take. The Hebrew may be read, "He knoweth the way that is in me"; from which I gather that the Lord not only knows our outward actions, but our inward feelings. He knows our likes and dislikes, our desires and our designs, our imaginations and tendencies. He knows not only what we do, but what we would do if we could. He knows which way we should go if the restraints of society and the fear of consequences were removed; and that, perhaps, is a more important proof of character than the actions of which we are guilty. God knows what you think of, what you wish for, what you are pleased with: he knows, not only the surface-tint of your character, but the secret heart and core of it. The Lord knows you altogether. Think of that. Does it give you any joy, this morning, to think that the Lord thus reads all the secrets of your bosom? Whether you rejoice therein or not, so it is and ever will be.

The Lord knows you approvingly if you follow that which is right. He

knoweth them that put their trust in Him; that is to say, He approves of them. If there be in you even a faint desire towards God, He knows it and looks with pleasure upon it. If you practise private prayer, if you do good by stealth, if you conquer evil passions, if you honour Him by patience, if you present gifts to Him which nobody ever hears of, He knows it all, and He smiles upon it. Does this give you pleasure, greater pleasure than if men praised you for it? Then it is well with you; but if you put the praise of men before the approval of God, you are in an evil case. If you can say this morning, "I am glad that He knows what I do, for his approval is heaven to me," then conclude that there is a work of grace in your heart, and that you are a follower of Jesus.

God knows your way, however falsely you may be represented by others. Those three men who had looked so askance upon Job, accused him of hypocrisy, and of having practised some secret evil; but Job could answer, "The Lord knoweth the way that I take." Are you the victim of slander? The Lord knows the truth. Though you have been sadly misunderstood, if not wilfully misrepresented by ungenerous persons, yet God knows all about you; and His knowledge is of more importance than the opinions of dying men. If you are not afraid to put your character and profession before the eye of the Lord, you have small reason for disquietude, though all men should cast out your name as evil.

The Lord knows the way that you take, though you could not yourself describe that way. Some gracious people are slow of speech and they have great difficulty in saying anything about their soul affairs. Coming to see the elders of the church is quite an ordeal. I am half afraid that they even feel it a trial to see me, poor creature that I am. They are timid in speech, though they would be bold in act. They could die for Jesus, but they find it hard to speak for him. Their heart is all right; but when they begin to talk, their tongue fails them. They are unable to describe their conversion, though they feel it. They love repentance, but can barely describe their own repenting. They have believed in the Lord Jesus, but it would puzzle them to tell what faith is. Trembling one, fall back on this—"He knoweth the way that I take." If I cannot express my faith, yet He accepts it: if I cannot describe His work in my soul, yet He discerns the work of His own hands.

Another great mercy is, that God knows the way we take when we hardly know it ourselves. There are times with the true children of God when they cannot see their way, nor even take their bearings. It is not every saint that knows his longitude and latitude; nay, it is not every saint that is sure that he is a saint. We have to ask, "Is my repentance real? Is my faith true? Have I really passed from death to life? Am I the Lord's own?" I do not wish you to be in such a state: it is a pity that such a question should be possible; but I know full well that many sincere saints are often put to the question, and not altogether without reason. Herein is comfort: the Lord knows His children, and He knows the truth of their graces, the preciousness of their faith, the heavenliness of their life; for He is the former, the author of them all. He knows His own work, and cannot be deceived. Wherefore, dear friends, let us feel confident in God's knowledge of us, since He is greater than our hearts, and His verdict is more sure than that of conscience itself.

Once more, remember that at this very moment God knows your way. He knows not only the way you have taken and the way you will take, but the way you are now choosing for yourself. He knows how you are acting towards the sermon you are hearing. It may be, you conclude that the preacher is very tiresome. Be it so: but still the subject is one which ought to be pressed upon your consideration; therefore, bear with me. But if you reply, "No, it is not that; but I do not want to be probed and pressed in this way." Well, the Lord knows that you are taking the way of resisting His Spirit, and hardening your neck against rebuke. Do you like that fact? I think I hear one say, "I really wish to be right, and I am afraid I am not right. Oh, that I could be made so! "God knows that feeling; breathe it into His ear in prayer. If you can say, "I am willing to be tested; I know to what port I am going; I am no pirate; I am bound for the New Jerusalem," then I rejoice. Well, well, the Lord knows. He dearly sees your present thought, your present wish, your present resolve. He knows your heart. Is that a comfort to you? If it is, well. But if it saddens you that God should know your present condition, then be afraid, for there is something about you to be afraid of. He that sews fig leaves together, as Adam did, that he may hide himself from God, must know that he is naked. If he were clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, he

would seek no concealment, but would be willing both to examine himself, and to be examined of the Lord.

Thus have I handled these two questions: Do you know your way? Is it a comfort to you that God knows your way?

III. Thirdly, DO YOU MEET WITH TRIALS IN THE WAY? I anticipate your answer. Out of the many here present, not one has been quite free from sorrow. I think I hear one saying, "Sir, I have had more trouble since I have been a Christian than I ever had before." I met with such a case the other day: a man said to me, "I never went to a place of worship for many years, and I always seemed to prosper. At last I began to think of divine things, and I attended the house of God; but since then I have had nothing but trouble." He did not murmur against God, but he did think it very strange. Friend, listen to me. These troubles are no token that you are in the wrong way. Job was in the right way, and the Lord knew it; and yet he suffered Job to be very fiercely tried.

Consider that there are trials in all ways. Even the road to destruction, broad as it is, has not a path in it which avoids trial. Some sinners go over hedge and ditch to hell. If a man resolves to be a worldling, he will not find that the paths of sin are paths of peace. The wicked may well be ill at ease; for God walks contrary to them because they walk contrary to him. No man, be he on the throne, or on the wool-sack, or up in a mill, or down in a coal-pit can live without affliction. In a cottage near a wood there are troubles as well as in the palace by the sea. We are born to trouble: if you look for a world without thorns and thistles, you will not find it here.

Then, remember, the very brightest of the saints have been afflicted. We have in the Bible, records of the lives of believers. Can you remember the life of a single believer who lived and died without sorrow? I cannot. Begin with father Abraham: the Lord did try Abraham. Go on to Moses, a king in Israel. Were not his trials many and heavy? Remember David and all his afflictions. Come down to New Testament times. The apostles were so tried that one of them said, "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable." Through much tribulation they reached their

rest. If the saints of God confessed that theirs was a troublous way, you need not suppose that you are out of the road because your way is full of difficulty. Is there any ocean upon which a ship can sail in which it shall be quite sure that no storms will arise? Where there is sea there may be storms, so where there is life there will be changes, temptations, difficulties and sorrows.

Trials are no evidence of being without God, since trials come from God. Job says, "When he hath tried me." He sees God in his afflictions. The devil actually wrought the trouble; but the Lord not only permitted it, but he had a design in it. Without the divine concurrence, none of his afflictions could have happened. It was God that tried Job, and it is God that tries us. No trouble comes to us without divine permission. All the dogs of affliction are muzzled until God sets them free. Nay, against none of the seed of Israel can a dog move its tongue unless God permits. Troubles do not spring out of the ground like weeds that grow anyhow, but they grow as plants set in the garden. God appoints the weight and number of all our adversities. If He declares the number ten they cannot be eleven. If He wills that we bear a certain weight, no one can add half an ounce more. Since every trial comes from God, afflictions are no evidence that you are out of God's way.

Besides, according to the text, these trials are tests: "When he hath tried me." The trials that came to Job were made to be proofs that the patriarch was real and sincere. Did not the enemy say: "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." The devil will have it that as dogs follow men for bones, so do we follow God for what we can get out of him. The Lord lets the devil see that our love is not bought by temporal goods; that we are not mercenary followers, but loving children of the Lord, so that under dire suffering we exclaim, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." By the endurance of grief our sincerity is made manifest, and it is proven that we are not mere pretenders, but true heirs of God.

Once more upon this point: if you have met with troubles, remember they will come to an end. The holy man in our text says, "When he hath tried me." As much as to say, He will not always be doing it; there will come a time when He will have done trying me. Beloved, put a stout heart to a steep hill and you will climb it before long. Put the ship in good trim for a storm; and though the winds may howl for a while, they will at length sob themselves asleep. There is a sea of glass for us after the sea of storms. Only have patience and the end will come. Many a man of God has lived through a hundred troubles when he thought one would kill him; and so will it be with you. You young beginners, you that are bound for the kingdom, but have only lately started for it, be not amazed if you meet with conflicts. If you very soon meet with difficulties, be not surprised. Let your trials be evidence to you rather that you are in the right, than that you are in the wrong way; "for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" He that will go to hell will find many to help him thither; but he that will go to heaven may have to cut his way through a host of adversaries. Pluck up courage. The rod is one of the tokens of the child of God. If thou wert not God's child thou mightest be left unchastened; but inasmuch as thou art dear to Him, He will whip thee when thou dost disobey. If thou wert only a bit of common clay God would not put thee into the furnace; but as thou art gold and He knows it, thou must be refined; and to be refined it is needful that the fire should exercise its power upon thee. Because thou art bound for heaven thou wilt meet with storms on thy voyage to glory.

IV. Fourthly, HAVE YOU CONFIDENCE IN GOD AS TO THESE STORMS? Can you say, in the language of the text, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold"? If you are really trusting in Jesus, if he is everything to you, you may say this confidently; for you will find it true to the letter. If you have really given yourself up to be saved by grace, do not hesitate to believe that you will be found safe at the last. I do not like people to come and trust Christ with a temporary faith as though he could keep them for a day or two, but could not preserve them all their lives. Trust Christ for everlasting salvation: mark the word "everlasting." I thank God, that when I believed in His Son Jesus Christ, I laid hold upon final perseverance: I believed that where He had begun a good work He would carry it on and perfect it in the day of Christ. I believed in the Lord

Jesus, not for a year or two, but for all the days of my life, and to eternity. I want your faith to have a hand of that kind, so that you grasp the Lord as your Saviour to the uttermost. I cannot tell what troubles may come, nor what temptations may arise; but I know in whose hands I am, and I am persuaded that He is able to preserve me, so that when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. I go into the fire, but I shall not be burned up in it; "I shall come forth." Like the three holy children, though the furnace be heated seven times hotter, yet the Son of man will be with me in the furnace, and "I shall come forth" with not even the smell of fire upon me. Yes, "I shall come forth," and none can hinder me. It is good to begin with this holy confidence, and to let that confidence increase as you get nearer to the recompense of the reward. Hath He not promised that we shall never perish? shall we not, therefore, come forth as gold?

This confidence is grounded on the Lord's knowledge of us. "He knoweth the way that I take": therefore, "when he hath tried me, shall come forth as gold." If something happened to us which the Lord had not foreseen and provided for, we might be in great peril; But He knows our way even to the end, and is prepared for its rough places. If some amazing calamity could come upon us which the Lord had not reckoned upon, we might well be afraid of being wrecked; but our Lord's foreseeing eye hath swept the horizon and prepared us for all weathers. He knows where storms do lurk and cyclones hide away; and He is at home in managing tempests and tornadoes. If His far-seeing eye has spied out for us a long sickness and a gradual and painful death, then He has prepared the means to bear us through. If He has looked into the mysterious unknown of the apocalyptic revelation, and seen unimaginable horrors and heartmelting terrors, yet He has forestalled the necessity which He knows is coming on. It is enough for us that our Father knows what things we have need of and "when he hath tried us, we shall come forth as gold."

This confidence must be sustained by sincerity. If a man is not sure that he is sincere, he cannot have confidence in God. If you are a bit of gold and know it, the fire and you are friends. You will come forth out of it; for no fire will burn up gold. But if you suspect that you are some imitation metal, some mixture which glitters but is not gold, you will then hate fire, and have no good word for it. You will proudly murmur at the divine

dispensations. Why should you be put into the fire? Why should you be tried? You will kick against God's providence if you are a hypocrite; but if you are really sincere, you will submit to the divine hand, and will not lie down in despair. The motto of pure gold is, "I shall come forth." Make it your hopeful confidence in the day of trouble. I want you to have this sense of sincerity which makes you know that you are what you profess to be, that you may also have the conviction that you will come forth out of every possible trial. I shall be tempted, but "I shall come forth"; I shall be denounced by slander, but "I shall come forth." Be of good cheer: O gold, if thou goest into the fire gold, thou wilt come forth gold!

Once more, he says, "I shall come forth as gold." But how does that come forth? It comes forth proved. It has been assayed, and is now warranted pure. So shall you be. After the trial you will be able to say, "Now I know that I fear God; now I know that God is with me, sustaining me; now I see that He has helped me, and I am sure that I am his." How does gold come forth? It comes forth purified. A lump of ore may not be so big as when it went into the fire, but it is quite as precious. There is quite as much gold in it now as there was at first. What has gone? Nothing but that which is best gone. The dross has gone; but all the gold is there. O child of God, you may decrease in bulk, but not in bullion! You may lose importance, but not innocence. You may not talk so big; but there shall be really more to talk of. And what a gain it is to lose dross! What gain to lose pride! What gain to lose self-sufficiency! What gain to lose all those propensities to boastings that are so abundantly there! You may thank God for your trials, for you will come forth as gold purified.

Once more, how does gold come forth from the furnace? It comes forth ready for use. Now the goldsmith may take it and make what he pleases of it. It has been through the fire and the dross has been got away from it, and it is fit for his use. So, beloved, if you are on the way to heaven and you meet with difficulties, they will bring you preparation for higher service; you will be a better and more useful man; you will be a woman whom God can more fully use to comfort others of a sorrowful spirit. Spiritual afflictions are heavenly promotions. You are going a rank higher: God is putting another stripe upon your arm. You were only a corporal, but now He is making a sergeant of you. Be not discouraged.



You that have set out for heaven this morning, do not go back because you get a rainy day when you start. Do not be like Pliable. When he got to the Slough of Despond, and tumbled in, all he did was to struggle to get out on the side nearest home. He said, "If I may only once get out of this bog, you may have that grand city for yourself for me." Come, be like Christian, who, though he did sink, always kept his face in the right way and always turned his back to the City of Destruction. "No," he said, "if I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, I will go down with my eyes towards the hills whence cometh my help." "I am bound for Canaan, and if all the Canaanites stand in the way in one block, I will die with my face towards Jerusalem: I still will hold on, God helping me, even unto the end." May the Lord so bless you, for He knows the way you take; and when He hath tried you, He will bring you forth as gold. Amen.

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## **Who Can Tell?**

Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? - Jonah 3:9

This was the forlorn hope of the Ninevites: "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" The book of Jonah should be exceedingly comfortable to those who are despairing because of the wickedness of their times. Nineveh was a city as great in its wickedness as in its power. If any of us with little faith had been bidden to go round about her, and "tell the towers thereof, and mark well her bulwarks;" if we had been commanded to go through her streets and behold her both in the blaze of the sun and in the light of the moon as her inhabitants indulged in vice, we should have said. "Alas! Alas! the city is wholly given into idolatry, and it is girt about with a wall of sin, as

stupendous as its wall of stone." Suppose that the problem had been given to us to solve - how shall this city be moved to repentance? How shall its vice be forsaken and the God of Israel worshipped by all its inhabitants from the highest to the lowest? If we had not been paralyzed with despair, which is the most probable, we should, nevertheless, have sat down carefully to consider our plans. We should have parcelled it out into missionary districts; we should have needed at least several hundreds, it not thousands, of able ministers; at once, expenses would have to be incurred, and we should have considered ourselves bound to contemplate the erection of innumerable structures in which the Word of God might be preached. Our machinery would necessarily become cumbrous; we should find that we, unless we had the full resources of an empire, could not even begin the work. But what saith the Lord concerning this? Putting aside the judgments of reason, and all the plans and schemes which flesh and blood so naturally do follow, he raises up one man. By a singular providence he qualifies that one man for his mission. He sends him down into the very depths of the sea, where the weeds are wrapped about him, he comes up from the great deep, and the awful descent has steeled his soul and completely covered him with the armor of courageous faith. Who need tremble at anything on shore who has passed the bowels of a fish and yet survived? He comes into the city, his eyes almost starting from their sockets with the recollection of the great judgment which had passed over his head, and in stern inflexible manner, with shrill monotonous voice, he begins to cry, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" Is this, O God! is this thy way? Is this the means with which thou wilt accomplish the great event? Wilt thou make Nineveh repent at the bidding of one man? Shall yon sallow man fresh from the sea - shall his voice be sufficient to stir this great city? O God! if thou hadst come forth in thy fiery chariot, if thou hadst spoken with thy thunder, if thou hadst shaken the earth with thine earthquakes then might Nineveh feel, but surely this one man is not sufficient for the deed. But as high as the heaven is above the earth, so high are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. So skillful is he that with the weakest instrument he can produce the mightiest workmanship. That one man begins his journey. Already the inhabitants flock to listen to him. He proceeds - the crowd multiplies. As he stands at the corner of the alleys, and the lanes, every window is thrown up to

listen, and the streets are thronged as he walks along. Still on he goes till the whole city has begun to shake with his terrible voice. And now the King himself bide him come into his presence, and the fearless still propounds the threatening of God. Then comes the effect. All Nineveh is wrapped in sackcloth; the cry of man and beast go up in one terrible wailing to God. Jehovah is honored and Nineveh repents. Ah! My brethren, we see in this rich grounds for hope. What cannot God do? Think not that he needs to wait for us. He can accomplish the greatest deeds by the meanest instrumentality. One man, if he willed it, would be sufficient to stir this giant city. One man, if God decreed it, might be the means of the conversion of a nation, nay, a continent should shake beneath the tramping of one man. There is no palace so high that this one man's voice should not reach it, and there is no den of infamy so deep that his cry should not be heard therein. All we need is that God should "make bare his arm," and who can withstand his might. What though he grasp but the jaw-bone of an ass yet is his arm mightier than Samson's, and not only would it be heaps upon heaps, but city upon city, continent upon continent. With the meanest instrument would God slay his thousands and overcome his myriads. Oh church of God, never fear; remember the men that God has given thee in the days of yore. Look back to Paul; remember Augustine; think ye well of Luther, and of Calvin; talk ye of Whitfield, and of Wesley, and remember these were but separate individual men, and yet through them God did a work, the remembrance whereof still rolleth on and shall never cease while this earth endures.

With this by way of preface, I shall now somewhat turn aside from the narrative, to address myself to those who are trembling on account of sin and who are in the same position as the men of Nineveh, and like them anxiously desiring mercy.

I shall notice briefly this morning three things. First, the miserable plight in which the men of Nineveh found themselves; secondly, the scanty reasons which they had for hope; and then, thirdly, I shall observe that we have stronger reasons to compel us to pray, and more comfortable arguments to urge us to trust.

I. First then, I shall consider the men of Nineveh, as representing many

here present, as to THE DOLEFUL PLIGHT IN VICE THEY FOUND THEMSELVES. The men of Nineveh were like those in the days of Noah. They were married and given in marriage: they ate and they drank: they builded and they planted. The whole world was their granary, and the kingdoms of the earth their hunting ground. They were rich and mighty above all people, for God had greatly increased their prosperity; and they had become the greatest nation upon the face of the earth. Locked in security they fell into great and abominable sins. Their vices probably rivalled those of Sodom. If they were not worse even than the Eastern cities of the present day, they were abominable beyond description. How suddenly were they however startled from their security and convinced of their sin? The preaching of that one strange man had brought them from the height of their splendor to the depths of sorrow. Now was their boasting cut off; the sound of their mirth had ceased; and they began to weep and lament. What was their miserable plight? I take it, it consisted in three discoveries; they now discovered their great sin; then again, the shortness of their time, and in the next place, the terrible character of their destruction. Would that ye would discover the like ye careless sinners, ye that slumber in Zion, ye that fear not God, neither turn from your evil ways. Would I say that in the first place, some prophet-voice would stir you to remember your sins, for are they not many and exceeding great? Let each man among us look to his life, and who is there here that need not blush? Some of us have been moral. We have by the training of our youth and by the restraints of grace been kept from the immoralities of others, but even we are compelled to lay our mouths in the dust. While looking into our heart, we discover it to be a nest of unclean birds, full of all manner of evil and loathsome things. We have been as visions in our hearts as the worst of men have been in their acts. But there are too many who cannot even plead that they have been moral, though this would be but a poor excuse for the want of love to God. Look, men and brethren, look to your lives; who among us hath been free from murmuring against God? Who is he that hath loved his neighbor as himself? Who is it that has never been angry without a cause? Who has never cursed God in his heart, even if he hath not done so with his lips? Who among us have always scrupulously kept our eye from lust and our heart from covetousness? Have we not all sinned? If our iniquities could now be revealed; if on every man's brow were written his sin, which of

you would not put his hand upon his forehead to hide his iniquity from his fellows? It will be of essential service to many of you if you will read over your lives. Turn, I beseech you, to the pages of your memory, and let the black, blotted, misspelled pages now be read again. Think not that the preacher understands how to flatter his congregation. It has become fashionable in these times to look upon our hearers as all being good and excellent - would not this be a lie and a falsehood before Almighty God? Are there not here those that can indulge secretly in vices which we must not mention? Are there not those who do that to their fellows in trade which they would despise in others? What! are none of you covetous? Do none of you over-reach or defraud your neighbors? Do none of ye practice the common frauds and tricks in trade? Are none of ye liars, and none deceivers, none slanderers who bear false witness against your neighbors? Am I so happy as to have a spotless congregation here? I cannot flatter myself that such can be the truth. No, our iniquities are great and our sins are hideous. Oh, that we were all ready to confess, each man for himself, the iniquities which we have done! Surely, if the Spirit of God shall but shine into our hearts and show us the evil of our ways, we shall find ourselves in a sorrowful condition indeed, and shall be ready to cry out before God, oven as Nineveh did of old.

Added to this however the Ninevites had information as to the shortness of their days. "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." How fixed and definite the date! Six weeks shall scarcely run their round," says the Prophet, "ere ye must die, and perish miserably." To an hour was the time described, "yet forty days." How would the Ninevites count the days with terror, and watch each rising and setting sun as if these were the black milestones upon their dreary road to death! "Ah," saith one, "but ye will not tell us that our days are only forty." Nay, men and brethren I am no prophet. I cannot tell how many your days may be, but this one thing I can say, it is possible that there are some here who have not forty days to live! There may be some among you who have not so long a respite as even Nineveh itself. Suppose now I should be able to take you to that great city. If I could have shown you its massive ramparts and its stupendous fortresses; if like Jonah I could point to them and say, "In forty days this city will be an overthrown," which would require the greatest stretch of credulity to believe this prophecy or that which follows,

"In forty days your body shall crumble back to dust?" Which I say would require the greatest stretch of faith? whether is the easier of these twain, to send you to death, or to uproot a city? What art thou, man, but a heap of animated dust? A worm may destroy thee, a grain of sand may be sufficient to take away thy life. Feeble is the thread of life, a spider's web is a cable compared therewith. It is but a dream, a child's whisper may break it, and we may awake in another world. "Forty days!" surely that was a long and distant period compared with what may be the date of your death. I have been long enough preaching in this place to look back now on many who have gone from this spot to the place appointed to all firing. Many, many are the faces which this day I miss as I look along your ranks and cast my eye around this gallery. There are not a few who I remember to have passed from the land of the living and to have gone to another world - and some how suddenly, how rapidly! I have been startled at it often myself. I have seen some here on the Sabbath, and by the Tuesday or by the Thursday the message has come, "On what day can you bury such-and-such a one?" "Bury her!" "Yes sir, bury her, she is gone;" and I have said, "How strange it seems that she should be dead who so lately was living in our midst!"

Forty days I add is a long lease compared with that which you have any reason to conclude that God has bestowed on you. But what if it were forty years, how short a time even then. If ye will but look with the eye of wisdom, how rapidly our years revolve. Are you not startled even now to see the sear leaf in your path? It was but yesterday that the fresh green buds were seen. It seemeth but a month ago since first we saw the wheat starting up from the ground, and lo the harvest is over and gone and many of the birds have disappeared and the tints of autumn are succeeding the verdure of summer. Years seem but months now and months but days, and days pass so rapidly that they 'flit like shadows before us. O! men and women, if we could but measure life it is but a span, and in a time how short, how brief every one of us must appear before his God. The shortness of time should help to arouse us, and then, let me add the third thing which startled the Ninevites was this, the terrible character of the judgment. Doubtless one part of the effect of Jonah's preaching may be traced to the singular vagueness of his prophecy. He says, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." By

whom, he does not tell us. How he does not deign to reveal. It is to be overthrown, that is all. Whether some mighty nation should invade it, or whether an earthquake should swallow it up quick, or whether by plague or pestilence the whole city should be emptied, or whether an intestine quarrel should cut off the population, he says not. The very vagueness and indistinctness of a prophecy adds to its terror, just as men can never bring their minds to think of spectres in the plain daylight, but always conjure up such things in hours of shade and gloom. The gloominess of the message made men tremble. And oh! ye that are not reconciled to God, men without religion, without hope and without God in the world, how terrible is the judgment that shall come upon you! It is not for me to attempt to describe it. Scripture only speaks of the life to come in indistinct terms. Terrible are they in their vagueness. Jesus saith, "These shall go away into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth," and anon he speaks of torment as a place "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." and then he describes it as "a bottomless pit," and as "a fire" that "never shall be quenched." Ah! my brethren, we know but little of the wrath of God which shall certainly come upon the wicked, but we know enough to let us understand that it is too terrible for human ear to hear. If hell had been fully described to us in this time-state, this life itself would have been but the vestibule of eternal torment. I question whether any eyes could bear to read such a description as God might have given. Both our ears would have tingled, and our hearts would melt like water, at the sound thereof. Oh! sinner, it is enough for me to say to you this day, "Except ye repent, ye must perish with a terrible overthrow. God, even God himself, shall draw his sword and bathe it in your blood. He shall drive you from his presence amidst the thunders of his wrath and the lightnings of his vengeance. He shall smite you with his omnipotence, and shall spend himself in punishing you, and your torment shall be without end, and the smoke thereof shall go up for ever and ever. I speak not this day to you that are unbelievers in the word: with you I will have nothing to do this morning; but to you who are believers in the revelation of the Bible - who profess to be nominal Christians, with you I have to deal. Oh sirs, if ye believe this book, if ye are impenitent, how tremendous is the doom which awaits you; how fatal shall death be to you, and how terrible the last dread day of judgment! And all this is coming on apace. The chariot wheels of God's justice have

axles which are hot with speed, the black coursers are covered with foam as on they drive. Perhaps, as here I stand and speak alas, too coldly on things which should make any man boil over with enthusiasm - perhaps death may even now be fitting his arrow to the string, and you may be his victim, and this sermon may be closed, as Paul's sermon was, with some one's falling dead like Eutychus, in the window in his sleep. God grant it may not be so, but nevertheless there is cause enough for each one of us to tremble and to bow before the God of Israel. Thus have I spoken on the first point: O Holy Spirit, bless the word!

These Ninevites however took heart and hope. They said, "Let us proclaim a fast, let man and beast cry mightily unto God, for who can tell but he may turn from his fierce anger that we perish not."

II. Now the second point was, THE SLENDER GROUND WHICH THE NINEVITES HAD FOR HOPE. And now regard attentively, for I long this morning for you all in the bowels of Christ, that ye also with a far better hope may be enabled to imitate the example of the men of Nineveh. You will notice that in Jonah's message, there was no proclamation of mercy made. It was one short sentence of doom. 'Twas like the great bell of St. Sepulchre's Church tolling out the hour of the execution of a criminal. There was not so much as a note of mercy. 'Twas the trumpet of the Judge, but not the silver trump of Jubilee. No mercy glanced from Jonah's eye, no pity was in his heart. He was sent with a thundering commission and he dealt it out in a thundering fashion. "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be Overthrown." I think I see the king of Nineveh sitting down with his nobles at a council of state, and one of them would say, "We have little hope of mercy, for if you will observe Jonah never offered us any. How terribly he spoke. There was not so much as a tear in his eye. I am persuaded that Jonah's God is very just and severe. He will by no means spare us; we shall be cut off." But the king's answer to his councillor was, "Who can tell? you only think so, but you cannot say it, let us yet hope, for "Who can tell." My dear hearers, 'tis no Jonah that addresses you. My language to-day shall be rather that of Isaiah, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Oh cannot you say with Nineveh's king, "Who can



tell?" Will not you go home to your chamber and pray, for "Who can tell?" Will you not go to the Bible and search for a promise, for "Who can tell?" Will you not go to the cross and trust in the flowing blood, for "Who can tell?" You may be forgiven yet, accepted yet, and one day yet sing God's praises before the throne above. Another thing which would cut off the hope of the Ninevites very much was this, that they knew nothing of God except, it may be, some dreadful legends they had heard of his terrible acts. One of the councillors of the king deeply learned would say, "O king, live for ever! The God of Jonah is a terrible God. Hast thou not heard what he did in Egypt; how he destroyed Pharaoh and his chariots of old in the Red Sea? And hast thou not heard what he did to Sennacherib when he cut him off and his hosts? Hast thou never heard the thunder of his power, and the might of his terrible acts? Surely he will have no mercy on us." But the king answered - "Who can tell?" Thou dost not know. It is but a surmise. "Who can tell?" But oh, my hearers, we are on a vantage ground here, for you know that God is merciful. Many and many a time have we assured you from the lips of God himself, through this written word, that he delighteth in mercy. You have his promise for it, nay, you have his oath for it. Jehovah lifts his hand to heaven, and swears by himself. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." Come, then sinner, for "who can tell;" he is a merciful God. Do what Benhadad did of old, when he and his army had been routed, and he alone was left with a few of his nobles. He said: "Let us put ropes on our necks, and go unto the king of Israel, for we have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful kings." Do you the like with Jesus. You have heard that he is merciful and full of compassion. Come to him now; trust in his blood, and "who can tell;" this day your sins may be blotted out? "Who can tell?" This day you may be washed in the blood of Christ, and made white as Adam in Paradise. "Who can tell?" This day the Lord may make your heart leap with joy, while he whispers - "Thou art mine, and I am thine." "Who can tell?" Drowning men catch at straws - this is no straw - this is a solid rock: lay hold on it and be saved. "Who can tell?"

But once again, the people of Nineveh lacked another encouragement which you and I have. They had never heard of the cross. Jonah's preaching was very powerful, but there was no Christ in it. There was

nothing about the Messiah that was to come - no talking of the sprinkled blood - no mention of a great sin-atonement sacrifice - and therefore the men who were in the council of the king, might have said - "Surely we have never heard that any satisfaction has been offered to the injured justice of God. How therefore can he be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly? "Ah," said the king, "who can tell?" and on that slender "who can tell?" they ventured to cry for mercy; but oh, sinner thou art answered this day, that "God hath spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world that he sent forth his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but might be saved. For there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Come sinner, come to the cross, for God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. I say, this should make thee ask - "Who can tell?" He may wash me clean, he may accept me, and I may yet be able to sing with the loudest of all the voices of his children -

"I the chief of sinners am,  
But Jesus died for me."

And now shall I tell you what I think was the hope which the poor king of Nineveh really had? I have set before you his discouragements, and now I will set before you his encouragements. They were very slender, but still they seemed to have been sufficient. Perhaps the king said in his heart, or he might have said to his councillors - "Sirs, there is one thing which ye cannot deny, we are come to the worst, and if we repent and cry for mercy, at least that cry will not be to our disadvantage. We shall be none the worse off even if we are not heard."

Now sometimes I have known a trembling sinner take comfort even from that. The words of our hymn suggest the full idea.

"I can but perish if I go,  
I am resolved to try;  
For if I stay away I know,  
I must for ever die."

If you seek not Christ; if you repent not of sin; if you put not your trust in him, perish you must. That is certain. If you go, and are rejected, at least you are none the worse off. Try it, and you shall find out that you are much the better, for you shall not be rejected. Remember the cage of the three lepers at the gate of Samaria. They were sitting there without food to eat, and at last the pangs of hunger were strong upon them. One of them said to his fellows, "Let us go now to the host of the Syrians. If they kill us we shall but die; if they save us alive, we shall live, but if we stay here, perish we must. So, as there was nothing to lose, and there might be something to gain, they risked it. Oh, sinner, would to God the Lord would teach thee as much wisdom as this. Go to him just as thou art, and say, "Lord, sink or swim, I take thy cross to be my only trust. If thou wilt not save me, if I perish in the stream, yet will I perish clinging to the rock of my salvation, for no other trust and no other hope have I." Oh that you may be led to do even this, and ye shall not be disappointed.

Besides, the king would add, "It is true that Jonah did not say that God would have mercy, but then he did not say he would not." There was a cry from Jonah's lip, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown" but he did not say, "God will not have any mercy at all." So the king said, "Who can tell, then?" if any could have told him, Jonah would. Was he not a fierce looking man; if there had been any thunders in store, would he not have dealt them out in his terrible fury of prophecy? "Surely," said the king, if he stopped there, and did not add, "I will have no mercy, this is a happy token. Who can tell? If Jonah did not tell, we cannot."

And now, sinner, I would thou wouldst catch hold on this. But thou hast something stronger and firmer still, for there is mercy proclaimed to thee this day. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. These are his own words and he himself expressly invites you to come to him. He says "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely;" and he gives you his word for it - "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out." Salvation is free as the air we breathe to every convinced sinner. If thou knowest this day thy need of Christ, take him, he is thine. He is a fountain open for the thirsty. All the preparation thou needest is simply a burning thirst. Then come and drink, and none can say thee nay.

"From the Mount of Calvary,  
Where the Saviour deigned to die,  
What transporting sounds I hear,  
Bursting on my ravished ear! -

Love's redeeming work is done,

Come and welcome, sinner, come!"

Well, then, if thou art invited, "Who can tell?" Come, come and try, for  
"Who can tell?"

Yet, I think, the greatest confidence which the king of Nineveh would have would be derived from the following suggestion. "Oh," said he, "if God had meant to destroy us without giving us an opportunity of pardon, he would not have sent Jonah forty days beforehand. He would have given us no time at all. He would simply have given a blow and a word, but the blow would have been first. He would have overthrown the city in his wrath without a single message. What did he do to Sodom? He sent no messenger there. The sun rose and the fire descended from God's terrible right hand. Not so Nineveh; it had its warning. And now, sinner, turn thou this to good account. Thou hast had many a warning. Thou art this day warned, nay, more thou art affectionately invited to come to Christ. The voice from the cross is speaking, and each trickling drop of blood crieth, "Amen."

"Come and welcome, sinner, come!"

Now, if the Lord were unwilling to forgive, would he have sent his servants to warn and to invite? If there were not bowels of mercy with him, would he not have said, "Let them alone, they are joined unto idols, let them perish?" It is no small prophecy of God's good intentions to a man when God sends to him a faithful minister. Oh, my hearers, I cannot speak to you with eloquence. I cannot address you with the fervid words of such an one as Whitfield, but this I can say, and God is my witness, I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, whether man

would hear, or whether he will forbear. If ye perish, it is not because I have kept back any part of that which I have received of God, who hath sent me. I have broken through the trammels of creed and system that I might free my head of the blood of all men. I have not been content to run in the track of an old and narrow creed, if I felt that it kept me from earnestly pleading with you, and warning you to flee from the wrath to come. I have endangered many a friendship, and brought upon my self no little shame, because I must and will, in this matter, deal earnestly with your souls. 'Tis no child's play to preach. It shall be no child's play to give an account of preaching at the last great tremendous day. You are warned; in God's name I conjure you, ere the gates of mercy are shut upon you - ere life shall end: now, now bethink yourselves. Now may the Spirit of God bring you to your knees, now drive you to prayer, now lead you to faith in the sprinkled blood of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. Sinner, remember! if thou perish thou destroyest thyself. Behold, God willeth not thy death, but he bids thee come now. Nay! he doth, as it were, pray thee to return. He says, "Return, ye backsliding children of men." "Oh Israel, return unto me." He says again, "Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be white as snow." Would that I could draw you! Oh that I had chains on my lips that should bind you in golden fetters to the cross of Christ. Come, sinner, for "who can tell?" Nay, I change the sentence. "I can tell" - if ye turn, he will turn unto you. Come ye to him, and he will accept you, for he is a God ready to forgive, and now, this day, he is ready to cast your sins into the depths of the sea, and remember them no more for ever.

III. And now, this shall bring me to the third point, namely, THE URGING OF DIVERS REASONS WHY WE SHOULD IMITATE THE NINEVITES IN REPENTANCE.

It was an old and a horrible custom of past governments, when a man was executed for murder, to allow him to be hung in chains, so that as often as any one passed by the gibbet they might learn, as was thought, the severity of justice. I fear, however, that they more frequently learned the brutality and barbarism of the age. Now, as these were hung in chains as warnings, I would translate this horrible figure into one that shall

glitter with joy and delight. God, in order that you may know his mercy, has been pleased to preserve instances thereof, that so often as you look upon them you may be led to say, if such and such an one was saved, why may not I? It is needless for me to refer you to Old Testament and New Testament scriptures. You will remember well the pardon given to David! Surely you have not forgotten the mercy which God had on that chief of sinners, Manasseh! As for the New Testament pardoned sinners, from the thief on the cross to Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners, it sufficeth but to hint at them. And now this day behold before your eyes in this place, sinners once like yourselves, who have obtained mercy and are now forgiven. Amongst the thousands in this hall there are not a few who (say some two years ago or less) entered this place out of idle curiosity. I could describe some to you who had never entered a place of worship for twenty or even thirty years. Some of them had been habitual drunkards, their lives had been the abodes of misery; some of them had been harlots, and led others into sin, beside destroying their own bodies and their souls. Into this place they crept, they came merely to listen to the preacher, of whom many a strange thing had been said. Their attention was rivetted. An arrow from the bow of God shot into their hearts and here they are this day. Without boasting I say it, they are my joy and my crown of rejoicing, and shall be such in the day of the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If you, who have been like them, but are now repenting of your sins, could hear their testimony as I have done, you would never doubt of the mercy of God. If you could read the account that I have preserved of some of them - sailors, who in every part of the world have sinned - who have never touched upon land except to commit fornication and wickedness - if I could tell you on the other hand the dreadful iniquities into which some here have plunged in the days of their flesh, you would say, "Surely he is a pardoning God, and methinks that might entice you to come. Oh if there be any such here, and there are many such here, I know, if you are sitting in this hall to-day side by side with some trembling sinner, and you observe the tear dropping from his eye, be not slow to tell him, "I am one of the men that Mr. Spurgeon mentions." The Lord has saved thee, and be not slow to take the hand of the penitent, and bid him come where you went, and bid him look for mercy where you sought it and found it. And I may say again, if I may speak for myself here to-day, if you knew my own character as it was

before conversion, you need none of you despair of mercy. When I went to God confessing my sins to him, I felt myself to be the vilest sinner out of hell. Others might have praised me, but I had not a word to say on my own account. If the hottest flames of the pit had been mine eternal portion it was not one whit more than I deserved. But

"Tell it unto sinners tell,  
I am, I am out of hell,"

And forgiven and accepted in Christ. Who then need despair? Who can tell? Come sinner, come, and say this in thine heart, and go and cry unto God in prayer, and lay hold on Christ by faith, saying, "Who can tell?" The innumerable instances of past mercies should stir us up to say, "Who can tell?"

And then again let me remind you - Oh, ye that are now conscious of your guilt, that your only hope for deliverance lies in the mercy of God. When a man knows that he has only one hope left how tenaciously will he cling to it. Some sick man has tried every system of medicine - he has spent nearly all his wealth, and now he has come to the last stage. He is trying the last system of medicine. If this remedy fail, die he must. Do you not readily imagine that he would use this with the greatest diligence, and be as obedient as possible to every command of the physician? And now sinner, it is Christ or hell with thee this day. If Christ save thee not, thou art a lost man. If the cross be not thy salvation, the jaws of hell must soon close upon thee. 'Tis Christ or nothing. Nay it is Christ or perdition! Lay hold on him then; clutch him; he is thy last, thy only hope. Oh, fly to him: he his thine only refuge. If thou wert pursued by some fierce beast of prey: if there were but one tree on some vast plain, albeit, there were but a scanty hope of escape by climbing it, with what speed would thy feet carry thee to it. I see thee running and I come before thee and say, "Stop, why in such haste?" You rush past me crying - "Sir, 'tis my only chance, 'tis my only hope; I am devoured, I am rent in pieces if I find not shelter there." It is your case today. Behold the roaring lion of the pit, athirst for your blood, is after you. Away to the cross; cling to it; there is hope; there is sure refuge. But apart from that thou art worse than rent in pieces; thou art destroyed for ever and ever.

But for thy encouragement, let me tell thee one other thing, and then I shall have done. Sinner, remember that while it will be a happy thing for thee to be saved, it will be a glorious thing for God to save thee. Men object not to do a thing which is expensive to them, if it bring them in some honor. They will not stoop to do a thing which involves shame and scorn; but if honor goeth with a thing then are they ready enough to do it. Now soul, remember, if God shall save thee it will honor him. Why, wilt thou not honor him if he will but blot out thy sin? I thought when I was seeking mercy, if God would but save me there was nothing I would not do for him. I would be cut in pieces rather than deny him. I would serve him all my life, and he might do what he would with me in heaven. And do you not sometimes feel that if God would but save you, you would sing loudest of them all in heaven? Would you not love him; creep to the foot of his throne, and cast your crown before his feet, saying: "Lord, not unto me, not unto me, but unto thy name be all the glory." God delighteth to save sinners, because this puts jewels in his crown. He is glorified in his justice, but not as he is in his mercy. He appears in silken robes with a golden crown upon his head when he saves sinners. He wears an iron crown when he crushes them. Judgment is his strange work; he does that with his left hand, but his right-handed acts are those of mercy and of love. Hence he puts the righteous always on the right hand that he may be ready to pardon and ready to deliver. Oh, come then soul to Christ. Thou art not about to ask a thing which God is unwilling to give, or that which will slur his escutcheon, or blot his banner. Thou art asking for that which is as glorious to God as it is beneficial to thyself. Come humble soul and cry to Christ, and he will have mercy upon thee.

My only fear in conclusion is, that if any of you have received the slightest impression this morning you will go home and forget it. May I ask you now as a favor that if you have but got so much as a scar under the preaching of the Word, go home alone if you can. Say but little if you are obliged to walk with others, and go straight away to your chamber, fall there on your knees, make a confession of your sin, cry to God for mercy through the blood of Christ, and "Who can tell?" Who can tell - this very day there shall be high holiday in heaven over hundreds of sinners who in this Music Hall have first learned to pray - who in this place have first



been led to consider their ways and turn to God. I hope our friends will all remain and no one move, while I pray that that may be the case, and all of you that wish it may be so, will solemnly say Amen after the few sentences of prayer I shall utter: -

"Lord, save us this morning. We confess our sin; we ask for mercy humbly through the blood of Christ. We pray thee do not deny us, but let us all appear at thy right hand at last. Here reveal with power, and let many be saved this morning for Jesus' sake." And the people said AMEN.

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## **The Whole Machinery Of Salvation**

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! - Romans 10:14-15

Please notice, dear friends, that in the thirteenth verse we have the way of salvation set before us in the plainest terms: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." I remember well when I lived on that verse for many months. I longed for salvation; I could not see that there was any way of hope for me; I thought that I must be left out, that I was too sinful, or too hard, or too something or other, so that others might be saved, but I should not be. But when I read this verse, I did what I ask you to do, I caught at it; it seemed like a life-line thrown to a sinking man. I clung to it, and it became a life-buoy to me: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Ah!" thought I, "I do call on that blessed name, I will call on that glorious name; if I perish, I will never cease to invoke that sacred name." An invocation of the name of God, a trusting in God, and a consequent calling upon God and acknowledgment of God, this it is that saves the soul.

But I must get you to notice these words a little more in detail. There is here, first, a wide word, a very wide word: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Whosoever." I have heard that, when a person is making his will, if he wishes to leave all he has to one person, say to his wife, if he just says so, that is the best thing he can do; but he had better not go into details, and begin making a list of what he is leaving, because he will probably leave something or other out. Now, in order to make this will of God very distinct, he does not go into any detail, but he just says, "Whosoever." That means the black man, and the red

man, and the yellow man, and the white man. It means the rich man, and the poor man:, and the man who is not a man. It means everybody of every sort, and those who are of no sort at all, or of all sorts put together. "Whosoever." That includes me, I am sure; but I am equally certain that; it includes you, you in the aisles who were never here before, you who are quite unknown in London, you who are a stranger and a foreigner, whoever you may be. It is much better to have it put so, without going into detail, because otherwise somebody might be left out. I have often thought that, if I had read in Scripture that "If Charles Haddon Spurgeon shall call upon the name of the Lord, he shall be saved," I should not have felt half as sure of salvation as I do now, because I should have concluded that there might have been somebody else of that name, and very likely there is, and I should have said, "Surely it did not mean me;" but when the Lord says "Whosoever," I cannot get out of that circle. It is a big net that seems to entangle all men in its meshes. "Whosoever." If I call upon the name of the Lord, if you call upon the name of the Lord, if the man who lies upstairs a-dying calls upon the name of the Lord, we shall be saved. What a wide word that "whosoever" is!

And then, next, what an easy word we have here! "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord." Anybody can call upon the name of the Lord. Everybody understands what it is to call "Hi, there!" Have you not often used such a call as that? And if you have been in distress or danger, have you never called, "Help, help, help?" Very well, he who can thus call, let him call upon God, invoke his help, clamor for his mercy, crave his pity. If he does that; in a believing way, as we shall have to show you, trusting that God will hear him, he shall be saved. So there is no difficulty here that wants a doctor of divinity to explain; the truth is put mainly in monosyllabic words: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." It is as plain as a pikestaff. Oh, that you might see it, and begin to call upon the name of the Lord by earnest prayer!

But here is another word, a sure word: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." There is no "if" here; no "maybe" here; but a glorious "shall." Our shalls and wills are poor, puny things; but God's "shall" is firm as the eternal mountains. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," as surely as there is a God. The Lord

has made no mistake; he will not revoke his declaration by changing his mind. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Oh, that many would call upon his name, tonight, and find immediate salvation, which will last them throughout life, and throughout eternity, for "shall be saved" reaches a very long way, even throughout the eternal ages that are yet to come.

Now here, you see, friends, we have a wonderful remedy for the disease of sin, very simple and very abundant; but the difficulty is to get it to the people who need it. I am going to talk about that matter in very plain language, because I want to be very practical, and I pray that God's Spirit may make my whole discourse to be so.

In our text there are four necessities upon which Paul insists. Praying to God, calling upon his name, will save a man; but first, there is no praying aright without believing: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" But, secondly, there is no believing without hearing: "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" Thirdly, there is no hearing without a preacher: "How shall they hear without a preacher?" And fourthly, and lastly, there is no effective preaching without being sent: "How shall they preach except they be sent?"

I. First, then, THERE IS NO PRAYING ARIGHT WITHOUT BELIEVING, from which I gather this moral, then let us believe. Since we must pray, and only by prayer can find salvation, and there is no praying without believing, may the Lord help us to believe, for how shall we pray aright unless we do believe?

I think that I have persons here tonight who have commenced to pray, who have begun pleading with God. I hope, dear friends, nay, I feel sure of it, that, if that prayer is sincere, there is a measure of faith in it, for would you ask God to save you if you did not believe that you needed to be saved? There is a measure of faith in that. Would you ask God to save you if you did not think that there is a way of salvation by which he can save you? There is a measure of faith in believing that. I think that you believe that there is a Savior. There is a measure of faith in that; and, I hope, a measure of saving faith, too, in your believing that,

notwithstanding all your sins and sinfulness, there is a Savior provided, who is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. You may not have much faith; but you must have some faith if you are really praying to God from your heart, and entreating him to save you.

I think, too, that you must have a little faith that the Savior will save you. You have been praying to him to do it. Would you have expressed that desire, and have come to him in prayer about it, unless there was some kind of sediment of faith in your heart? I want to put it very gently to you, yet very plainly. Remember, faith is not measured by the quantity, but by the quality. A man of strong faith is happier, but he is not more truly saved, than a man of weak faith, so long as he has any faith at all. If yours is only feeble faith, the Lord will say to you, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." The faith that comes behind Christ, and touches the hem of his garment, is a saving faith; and I think that is what you are doing when you say, "Lord Jesus, save me." If this is a real prayer, and not a sham one, if it comes from your heart, there is, at any rate, a tint, a shade, if not an actual color of faith, upon your soul already, How could you call on him in whom you have not believed? Would we call for help from a person who we did not think would help us or could help us? No; the mere fact of calling upon anyone for help proves that we have some measure of confidence in that person, that he can and will help us. Well, if thou believest as much as that concerning Christ, and if thou wilt cast thyself upon the believing that thou shalt be saved, I would that thou hadst more faith, but even that little faith will bear thee into heaven.

You believe also that Christ can and does hear you. Ah, you would not have been alone upstairs this afternoon, crying for mercy, if yea had thought that there was nobody to hear you! Rational beings do not go and ask of nobody. You believe that Christ is able to hear you, and you have some faith that he does hear you, for which I am very thankful indeed.

I think that I may add that you are measurably trusting to Christ. Certainly, you are not trusting to anybody else. The fact that you often pray to him for mercy, for the pardon of sin, for the renewal of your nature, proves that you have some degree, at least, some faint measure of faith in him. Now, let me exhort you, while you keep on praying, to mix

more faith with your praying. "With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt," and with all thy prayings thou shalt offer faith. When thou askest anything of God, believe, and thou shalt receive. When thou dost appeal to his mercy, believe in the mercy. When thou art pleading for his help, believe in the help, for there is much power in faith. "According to your faith, be it unto you."

You all know, surely, what believing is. You say, "I shall go home to pray." No, no, no; believe, and pray as much as ever you like, and a believing prayer will save you. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;" but "how then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Faith comes first. Believe, then, before you do anything else. May God, of his great mercy, enable, some poor sinner to have done with doings and with feelings, and to trust, just to trust Jesus! There you are, hanging up there in a tree; you are afraid of failing down, so you cling with all your might. Suppose that a strong man comes underneath, and says, "Here, drop into my arms; I will catch you, I am able to bear your weight." If you trust, him, you will drop into his arms. That is what you have to do with Christ tonight; trust him, and let go every other confidence; just drop into his arms, and you shall be saved. Remember, then, this first lesson, that there is no praying aright without believing.

II. Now we go another step, and come to the second necessity. **THERE IS NO BELIEVING WITHOUT HEARING:** "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"

The word "heard" is to be understood in a wide sense. Reading is a kind of hearing. It is not merely listening with the ear; but you must, by some means or other, come to a knowledge of the truth, and you cannot know what you do not hear, or read, or learn. The truth must come under your notice, so that you are aware of it, or else there can be no faith in you concerning it. I hope that none of you ever believe with the faith of the man who, when he was asked what he believed, said that he believed what the church believed. "Well," said one, "what does the church believe?" "Oh!" he replied, "the church believes what I believe." "Well, then, please tell me, what do you and the church believe?" "We both believe the same thing," answered he; and he could be got no farther.

Now, there is no faith in that at all; it is simple ignorance, and nothing more. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" Why, to believe a thing is to know the ins and outs of it! To get at it by reading it or hearing it, are only different forms of the same thing. Well, now, if any man here desires faith, what should he do to obtain it? Sit still, and say, "I will try to believe?" Certainly not. Suppose that I were to announce to you tonight that the Czar of all the Russias is dead, and you said that you wished to believe it. You could not believe it by an effort of your mind; you would inquire for evidence of the truth of my statement, or you would wait till you saw the telegrams tomorrow, and so you would learn whether it was true or not. It is not a distinct act of the will alone that brings faith: "Faith cometh by hearing."

Listen, then. The offener you hear the gospel, the better. I mean you who have not yet believed it. As you are hearing it, you may come to believe it. It may insensibly, as it were, steal over you. Having heard it, and heard it, and heard it, again and again, you may at last find yourself believing that Jesus suffered on the cross for you. I recommend all seekers after Christ to hear the Word often.

Take another piece of advice. Hear better; hear with both your ears at once; hearken as you would listen if the preacher were telling you how you could make a fortune in ten minutes. How everybody would listen, how everyone would want to have a front seat, so as to make no mistake! How the pencils would go to work to take down the instructions! Hear that way, for there is more at stake than a fortune, even your immortal soul. Heaven and hell hang upon the hearing or not hearing of the Word. Hear often, and hear well.

But so hear as to try to understand it, and if you cannot meet with the preacher who seems to proclaim an all-round gospel, do what is better, go to the Bible itself. Read this blessed Book through studiously, with such helps as good men can give you. Yes, try and understand the truth, and prove it by experience. Come to this Book, and come to the house of prayer with this thought on your mind, "There is a something that I have to believe, and I am going to know what it is; I am going to know the top of it and the bottom of it, the head and the front and the heart of it; and,

at any rate, I will, if I can, know what it is, and what are the grounds and reasons for it." Hearing thus, you will believe it.

There let me leave that point, then. Hear the gospel; only mind that what you hear is the gospel. You can hear some very smart sermons, and very clever sermons; and, as a rule, I may say that the cleverer they are, the worse they are; where you see so much of the man, you will see very little of his Master; when everything seems yielded up to the turning of the phrases, putting the thing very grandly, and carrying you away with wonderful eloquence, the gospel itself gets put out of sight. Let the eloquent men have a shop for themselves on a Monday; but let us have the Sabbath-day given up to plain dealing with the souls of men. We want none of this word-daubing; men are going to heaven or to hell, and it is time that we came to close grips with them about this all-important matter. God help us so to do! Hear that which really is aimed at your heart and conscience; hear that which tells of Christ, and heaven, and the way thither; hearing that, you are on the way to believing it.

III. Thirdly, THERE IS NO HEARING WITHOUT A PREACHER: "and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Therefore, let us preach.

Someone must make the truth known to men. They will not find out about the Savior unless they are told of him. The gospel will not be revealed to men by any supernatural agency; we must go with it. They cannot learn it without being taught it. No man will know the gospel unless somebody shall tell it to him, by word of mouth, or by the gift of a book or a tract, or by a letter, or by the open preaching of the Word. Somebody must make it known to the man, for how can he believe in him of whom he has not heard, and how can he hear without a preacher?

Who ought to preach, then? Everyone who can preach, should do so. The gift of preaching is the responsibility for preaching. I often wonder at some Christian men who can fire away so grandly on the hustings, or the platform, but who never speak for Christ; they will have to account for those prostituted tongues. If a man can speak upon the temperance question, he can speak upon the salvation question; let him take care that he does so. I do not wish him to be silent on the one, but I do earnestly



entreat him not to be silent on the other. There are a great many persons who ought to preach the gospel, but who do not. Every man who knows the gospel ought to make it known. "Let him that heareth say, Come." When you hear the gospel, tell it to somebody else; you Christian people are all bound, in proportion to your gifts and your opportunity, to make the gospel known. "Why!" says one, "I thought that work was for priests." Just so, it is only for priests; but then all believers are priests. By his mighty grace, our Lord Jesus Christ hath made us kings and priests unto God; and it is our duty, as well as our privilege, to exercise this blessed priestly function of telling to the sons of men the way whereby they may be saved. Each man, then, in this place, who knows Christ, and each woman and each young person, too, are bound to tell of Christ in some way or other to all who are round about them.

For this work, a high degree of gifts is not required. It does not say, "How shalt they hear without a doctor of divinity?" It does not say, "How shall they hear without a popular preacher?" Oh, dear! some of us would have been lost if we could not have been saved without hearing a man of great abilities. I thank God that I owe my conversion to Christ to an unknown person, who certainly was no minister in the ordinary acceptance of the term; but who could say this much, "Look unto Christ, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth." I learned my theology, from which I have never swerved, from an old woman who was cook in the house where I was an usher. She could talk about the deep things of God; and as I sat and heard what she had to say, as an aged Christian, of what the Lord had done for her, I learned more from her instruction than from anybody I have ever met with since. It does not require a college training to enable you to tell about Christ; some of the best workers in this church have little enough of education, but they bring many to Christ. Go on, my dear brothers and sisters, telling of Christ's love to you, even if you have very few gifts.

Remember that, when you have told out the story of the cross to men, you are rid of one responsibility. At any rate, if they perish, it will not be because they did not know; and if they perish through ignorance, it will not be that their ignorance was through your neglect in teaching them. Now, tonight, I wish that I could stir up everyone here to become a preacher, women and all; not that I care much for women preaching, but

I want them to preach in the sense in which I have laid the matter down; that is, to make known to somebody the wondrous story of the cross. Speak to an individual, if you can. If you cannot do that, write. If you cannot write, send a sermon, or give a tract. Only do keep on making Christ known. I suppose that there are two or three thousand believers here tonight out of these six thousand people. If every one of you Christians would every day make Christ known to somebody, what a missionary organization we should be! How can they hear without a preacher? Now, let every one of you become, in the sense in which the text means it, a preacher, by telling out in some form or other, and making known in some way or other, the wondrous doctrine of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

It is pitiable that anybody should live and die without knowing the gospel. You can have no idea, unless you go into the houses in many of our streets, what absolute ignorance there is in this city of London about the simple elements of the gospel of Christ. City missionaries have often told me stories that have amazed and appalled me. You think, because so many come to some of our houses of prayer, that the people of London go into the house of God. There is at least a million of people, and perhaps two millions, who never attend any place of worship at all. There would be three millions, I suppose, out of our five millions, who only occasionally go to any place of worship at all. Why speak of "heathendom?" We have it at our doors. The more earnest a man is to win souls, the more he is shocked, amazed, and appalled by the necessity there is to keep on making known the gospel of Christ. And now they are starting new the-elegies, inventing falsehoods. Up with you, men and Christians publish Christ again. The only way to put this false fire out is with the old fire of the gospel; men fear that fire. Put down the new heresy with the old orthodoxy. Bring out Christ crucified. Cry again, with Luther's earnestness, "Believe and live!" Cry again, with Calvinistic determination, "Salvation is all of grace, of grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ." I would to God that we might all preach thus. If we had but all our church-members resolved to testify the gospel of the grace of God, then should we see men hearing; then should we find men believing; and men believing are men saved.

IV. So I come to the fourth necessity, with which I shall close. THERE IS NO EFFECTIVE PREACHING WITHOUT BEING SENT: "and how shall they preach, except they be sent?"

"Ah!" says one, "now we have you in a corner. We must not all go and preach, if we are not sent." If you are not sent, do not go.

But what does it mean, "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" A man who goes to tell others about Christ must feel that he is sent to do it, or he will never do it properly and effectively.

The man who is sent, first of all, has a message given to him. You do not say to your servant, "You go north, south, east, west, and that is all." No, if you send him, you give him a message: "Go and say to Mr. So-and-so, this and that;" or you write it down, and you say, "Deliver that letter to such a person." You do not leave him to go and say whatever he likes: "John, I want you to call on Mr. So-and-so to-morrow morning, and to say whatever first comes into your head." You do not act like that, do you? Yet that is the notion some people have, nowadays, of what a preacher is; he is a man who makes his message up as he goes along; he is a "thinker;" he excogitates the gospel out of his own brains. I have heard of a German who is said to have constructed a camel out of his own consciousness. Very likely; but I am sure that nobody will construct the gospel that way he must receive it by the Rev. of God. The other plan is not Paul's notion, for he asks, "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" First, then, get your message, be determined to know nothing among men but what the Lord himself has revealed to you in his Word, by the teaching of his Spirit. Get it well into you; say to yourself, "What I am going to speak is nothing of my own; else it would fall flat and powerless; but I am going with, 'Thus saith the Lord.' This is God's message." Then, if you are sent, you will preach, and you will so preach that men will hear; and they will so hear that they will believe; and they will so believe that they will be saved. But you must go as a God-sent man, having received your message from the mouth of your Master.

Next, I think that, even if we get a message from God, we want something more than that, there must be an impulse felt within, that shall compel us

to speak of Christ. If you merely go and flippantly talk about Jesus Christ to people, you may as well talk about anything else; but if you pity them, if you love them, if you feel that they must not be lost, that you cannot bear the thought of it, if it is in your mind, so that ye cannot sleep while you are thinking of such an one because he is going down to perdition, if it gets such a burden that it oppresses you, and weighs you down, so that you must speak to somebody about his soul, ah, then you will speak, for you will feel that you are sent! Now, my impression is that, if we are in a right state of heart, we shall always feel like that. If a Christian man were in a right condition of heart, whether he found himself in the train, or along a country road, or at the railway-station, or in the police-court, or waiting in the lobby of a house, or anywhere, he would begin at once to deal with the person with whom he came into contact about his soul. I wish that it were your habit to be always looking out for souls. Up then, ye Christian men, and seek as God shall help you, by every means in your power, to make known Christ to the dying all around you! But you will not do it unless you are sent, driven, impelled, forced; you will not win souls for Christ till the gospel is like a fire in your bones, and you feel that woe is unto you if you do not preach it.

Well now, before you go to try to do that, there is one thing more. You cannot do it effectively unless you are sent; and to be sent means to have power given you with which to do the work. Can that power be had? If you feel impelled to cry to God to give you the power to preach, the spiritual power, the power of the Holy Ghost, if you are propelled to teach in the Sunday-school,—and it is not worth doing unless you feel that you are impelled to it, and sent to it,—then pray for the power to win the souls of those dear children for Christ. If you feel called upon to write a letter to a friend tomorrow about his soul or her soul, do it because you feel called upon to do it; but pray to God to show you how to do it. Pray to him to put the power into the words that you utter, that you may say the right words, and put even the right tone into those words. There is a good deal even in the tone of the preacher. "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" They must be clothed with divine power; but the Lord can clothe even a child with that power; he has often done it. He can clothe a humble Christian woman, who never spoke in public, with the power to win souls; he has often done it. And you, brother, who have been quite satisfied to

be a church-member and to do nothing for Christ,—a most unsatisfactory state of things indeed,—should begin to be doing something for him who has; done so much for you. First tarry at Jerusalem till you are endued with power from on high; and then go forth as Christ's witnesses; for how shall you preach, except you be sent? But the power being obtained, you must go forth, and tell out the message that your Lord has given you.

But you have not done it all till you have given a report to your Master. If you have been sent, you will go back to your Lord after you have delivered his message, and you will tell him what they have to say about it. Every man who is sent on an errand gives an answer by-and-by as to the reply of the person to whom he was sent. I am afraid that some teachers and preachers forget this. We ought to go, like Isaiah, back to the Master, and say, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" You have tried hard with Mary to bring her to Christ; did you ever tell the Master about Mary? Mother, you have tried hard with your boy to bring him to the Savior; have you ever told Jesus about your boy? Last Tuesday night, there were a mother and father who had a son about whom they had once been very hopeful; but he had left home, and gone away, for weeks, though he promised to return. He had gone off, and they had not heard a word about him. They came to a company of Christian people, last Tuesday night, broken-hearted. They had done their best to find their son, but they could not find him. It was to Haddon Hall that they came, and the people of God there prayed for his father and mother. The father himself prayed, and broke down with emotion about his lost son. He went home, and there was a letter from his son to say that the Savior had found him. He had given up the drink, and he hoped to be a comfort to his father and mother all the rest of their days. He was many miles away, and knew nothing of his father's prayer. Often, when you do not get on with people, go and tell the Lord Jesus Christ about it; say, "Lord, I have preached to them, I have prayed for them, I have talked to them, I have wept over them, I bear them on my heart as a burden. Their very name seems to burn itself with letters of fire into my soul. Lord, save them! Lord, save them, and they will be saved!" That is the way to win souls. If God works, he first of all makes us travail in birth for the souls of others, and then are they born into the kingdom.

The rest of the text is a kind of vision. The prophet sees persons coming down the mountain side; he looks at them, and perceives that they are not men of war; else the greaves upon their legs would be terrible to the peaceful inhabitants of the plain. Yet here they come, a great company from the mountain tops, descending into the valleys. Who are they? As he looks, he says, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" They are coming bearing the white flag, servants of the great King with whom you have been at war. They bear the banner that speaks of peace with God.

We, to whom the text alludes, who are the preachers of this gospel of peace, say to you tonight: Sinner, throw down your weapons of rebellion. Guilty one, fight no longer against God; come, and be at peace with him. His peace is proclaimed to you through Jesus Christ. He will freely forgive you every transgression and iniquity; he is ready to forget and blot it all out. God invites you to be reconciled to him, to have done with warring against him. We preach peace to you; and, if you hear us, we then tell you glad tidings of good things, full pardon for all the past, a change of heart to be given to you, to make you a new creature in Christ Jesus,—yes, to be given you tonight, before you leave the Tabernacle,—help for the future to strive against sin; strength to conquer and tread the dragon beneath your feet, power to become a child of God, to become an heir of heaven, to be taken under the guardian wing of providence, to be directed by the infinite wisdom of the Holy Spirit. These glad tidings of good things are published to all of you, even you that are farthest off from Christ, and hope, and peace. Believe in Jesus; trust him; trust God in human flesh, trust him who bled to death upon the cross, and paid down the ransom for your soul, and trust him now. He will do all for you that you need to have done for you, and he will save you, and bring you to his right hand in glory.

Now I have talked all in vain unless the Lord shall apply the truth to you, and you believe it; do not wait for somebody to believe for you; trust Christ for yourself; believe in Jesus even now. Amen.

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## Why Are Men Saved?

Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake. - Psalm 106:8

In looking upon the works of God in creation, there are two questions which at once occur to the thoughtful mind, and which must be answered before we can procure a clue to the philosophy and science of creation itself. The first one is the question of authorship: Who made all these things? And the next question is that of design: For what purpose were all these things created? The first question, "Who made all these things?" is one which is easily answered by a man who has a honest conscience and a sane mind, for when he lifts eyes up yonder to read the stars, he will see those stars spell out in golden letters this word—*God*; and when he looks below upon the waves, if his ears are honestly opened, he will hear each wave proclaiming, *God*. If he looks to the summits of the mountains, they will not speak, but with a dignified answer of silence they seem to say,

"The hand that made us is Divine."

If we listen to the rippling of the freshet at the mountain side, to the tumbling of the avalanche, to the lowing of the cattle, to the singing of the birds, to every voice and sound of nature, we shall hear this answer to the question, "God is our maker; he hath made us, and not we ourselves."

The next question, as to design—Why were these things made?—is not so easy to answer, apart from Scripture; but when we look at Scripture we discover this fact—that as the answer to the first question is God, so the answer to the second question is the same. Why were these things made? The answer is, for God's glory, for his honor, and for his pleasure. No other answer can be consistent with reason. Whatever other replies men

may propound, no other can be really sound. If they will for one moment consider that there was a time when God had no creatures—when he dwelt alone, the mighty maker of ages, glorious in an uncreated solitude, divine in his eternal loneliness—"I am and there is none beside me"—can any one answer this question—Why did God make creatures to exist?—in any other way than by answering it thus: "He made them for his own pleasure and for his own glory." You may say he made them for his creatures; but we answer, there were then no creatures to make them for. We admit that the answer may be a sound one *now*. God makes the harvest for his creatures; he hangs the sun in the firmament to bless his creatures with light and sunshine; he bids the moon walk I her course by night, to cheer the darkness of his creatures upon earth. But the first answer, going back to the origin of all things, can be nothing else than this: "For his pleasure they are and were created." "He made all things for himself and by himself."

Now, this which holds good in the works of creation, holds equally good in the works of salvation. Lift up your eyes on high; higher than those stars which glimmer on the floor of heaven; look up, where spirits in white, clearer than light, shine like stars in their magnificence; look there, where the redeemed with their choral symphonies "circle the throne of God rejoicing," and put this question: "Who saved those glorified beings, and for what purpose were they saved." We tell you that the same answer must be given as we have previously given to the former question—"He saved them—he saved them for his name's sake." The text is an answer to the two great questions concerning salvation: Who saved men, and why are they saved? "He saved them for his name's sake."

Into this subject I shall endeavour to look this morning. May God make it profitable to each of us, and may we be found among the number who shall be saved "for his name's sake." Treating the text verbally—and that is the way most will understand—here are four things. First, *a glorious Saviour*—"He saved them;" secondly, *a favored people*—"He saved them;" thirdly *a divine reason why he saved them*—"for his names sake;" and fourthly, *an obstruction conquered*, in the word "nevertheless," implying that there was some difficulty that was removed. "Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake." A Saviour; the saved; the reason; the



obstruction removed.

I. First, then, here is A GLORIOUS SAVIOUR—"He saved them." Who is to be understood by that pronoun "he?" Possibly man of my hearers may answer, "Why, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour of men." Right, my friends; but not all the truth. Jesus Christ is the Saviour; but not more so than God the Father, or God the Holy Ghost. Some persons who are ignorant of the system of divine truth think of God the Father as being a great Being full of wrath, and anger, and justice, but having no love, they think of God the Spirit perhaps as a mere influence proceeding from the Father and the Son. Now, nothing can be more incorrect than such opinions. It is true the Son redeems me, but then the Father gave the Son to die for me, and the Father chose me in the everlasting election of his grace. The Father blots out my sin; the Father accepts me and adopts me into his family through Christ. The Son could not save without the Father any more than the Father without the Son; and as for the Holy Spirit, if the Son redeems, know ye not that the Holy Ghost regenerates? It is he that makes us new creatures in Christ, who begets us again unto a lively hope, who purifies our soul, who sanctifies our spirit, and who, at last, presents us spotless and faultless before the throne of the Most High, accepted in the beloved. When thou sayest, "Saviour," remember there is a Trinity in that word—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, this Saviour being three persons under one name. Thou canst not be saved by the Son without the Father, nor by the Father without the Son, nor by Father and Son without the Spirit. But as they are one in creation, so are they one in salvation, working together in one God for our salvation, and unto that God be glory everlasting, world without end, Amen.

But, note here, how this Divine being claims salvation wholly to himself. "Nevertheless HE saved them." But, Moses, where art thou? Didst not thou save them, Moses? Thou didst stretch the rod over the sea, and it clave in halves; thou didst lift up thy prayer to heaven, and the frogs came, and the flies swarmed, and the water was turned into blood, and the hail smote the land of Egypt. Was not thou their Saviour, Moses? And thou Aaron, thou didst offer the bullocks which God accepted; thou didst lead them, with Moses, through the wilderness. Wast not thou their Saviour? They answer, "Nay, we were the instruments, but *he* saved them.

God made use of us, but unto his name be all the glory, and none unto ourselves." But, Israel, thou wast a strong and mighty people; didst not thou save thyself? Perhaps it was by thine own holiness that the Red Sea was dried up; perhaps the parted floods were frightened at the piety of the saints that stood upon their margin; perhaps it was Israel that delivered itself. Nay, nay, saith God's Word; *he* saved them; they did not save themselves, nor did their fellow-men redeem them. And yet, mark you, there are some who dispute this point, who think that men save themselves, or, at least, that priests and preachers can help to do it. We say that the preacher, under God, may be the instrument of arresting man's attention, of warning him and arousing him; but the preacher is nothing; God is everything. The most mighty eloquence that ever distilled from the lips of seraphic preacher is nothing apart from God's Holy Spirit. Neither Paul, nor Apollos, nor Cephas, are anything: God gave the increase and God must have all the glory. There are some we meet with here and there who say, "I am Mr. So-and-so's convert; I am a convert of the Rev. Dr. this or that." Well, if you are, sir, I cannot give you much hope of heaven. Only God's converts go there; not proselytes of man, but the redeemed of the Lord. Oh, it is very little to convert a man to our own opinions; it is something to be the means of converting him to the Lord our God. I had a letter some time ago from a good Baptist minister in Ireland, who very much wanted me to cover over to Ireland, as he said, to represent the Baptist interest, because it was low there, and perhaps it might lead the people to think a little more of Baptists. I told him I would not go across the street merely to do that, much less would I cross the Irish Channel. I should not think of going to Ireland for that; but if I might go there to make Christians, under God, and be the means of bringing men to Christ, I would leave it to them what they should be afterwards, and trust to God's Holy Spirit to direct and guide them as to what denomination they should consider nearest akin to God's truth. Brethren, I might make all of you Baptists, perhaps, and yet you would be none the better for it; I might convert you all in that way, but such a conversion would be that you would be washed to greater stains, converted into hypocrites, and not into saints. I have seen something of wholesale conversion. Great revivalists have rise up; they have preached thundering sermons that have made men's knees knock together. "What a wonderful man!" people have said. "He has converted so many under one

sermon." But look for his converts in a month, and where will they be? You will see some of them in the alehouse, you will hear others of them swear, you will find many of them rogues, and cheats, because they were not God's converts, but only man's. Brethren, if the work be done at all, it must be done of God, for if God do not convert there is nothing done that shall last, and nothing that shall be of any avail for eternity.

But some reply, "Well, sir, but men convert themselves." Yes, they do, and a fine conversion it is. Very frequently they convert themselves. But then that which man did, man undoes. He who converts himself one day, unconverts himself the next; he tieth a knot which his own fingers can loosen. Remember this—you may convert yourselves a dozen times over, but "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and "cannot see the kingdom of God." It is only "that which is born of the Spirit" that "is Spirit," and is therefore able to be gathered at last into the spirit-realm, where only spiritual things can be found before the throne of the Most High. We must reserve this prerogative wholly to God. If any man state that God is not Creator, we call him infidel; if any man entrench upon this doctrine, that God is the absolute Maker of all things, we hiss him down in a moment; but he is an infidel of the worst kind, because more specious, who puts God out of the mercy throne, instead of putting him out of the creation throne, and who tells men that they may convert themselves, whereas God doth it all. "*He*" only, the great Jehovah—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—"he saved them for his name's sake.

Thus have I endeavoured to set out clearly the first truth of the divine and glorious Saviour.

II. Now, secondly, THE FAVORED PEOPLE—"He saved *them*." Who are they? You will reply, "They were the most respectable people that could be found in the world; they were a very prayerful, loving, holy, and deserving people; and, therefore, because they were good he saved them." Very well, that is your opinion, I will tell you what Moses says,—"*Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitudes of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Nevertheless he saved them.*" Look at the 7th verse, and you will have their character. In the first place, they were a stupid people—"Our

fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt." In the next place, they were an ungrateful people—"they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies." In the third place, they were a provoking people—"they provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea." Ah, these are the people whom free grace saves, these are the men and these the woman whom the God of all grace condescends to take to his bosom and to make anew.

Note, first, *that they were a stupid people*. God sends his gospel not always to the wise and prudent, but unto fools;

"He takes the fool and makes him know  
The wonders of his dying love."

Do not suppose, my hearer, because you are very unlettered and can scarcely read—do not imagine, because you have always been brought up in extreme ignorance, and have scarcely learnt to spell your name, that therefore you cannot be saved. God's grace can save you, and then enlighten you. A brother minister once told me a story of a man who was known in a certain village as a simpleton, and was always considered to be soft in the head; no one thought he could ever understand anything. But one day he came to hear the gospel preached. He had been a drunken fellow, having wit enough to be wicked, which is a very common kind of wit. The Lord was pleased to bless the word to his soul, so that he became a changed character; and what was the marvel of all was, his religion gave him a something which began to develop his latent faculties. He found he had a something to live for, and he began to try what he could do. In the first place he wanted to read his Bible, that he might read his Saviour's name; and after much hammering and spelling away, at last he was able to read a chapter. Then he was asked to pray at a prayer-meeting; here was an exercise of his vocal powers. Five or six words made up his prayer, and down he sat abashed. But by continually praying in his own family at home, he came to pray like the rest of the brethren, and he went on till he became a preacher, and, singularly enough, he had a fluency—a depth of understanding and a power of thought, such as are seldom found among ministers who only occasionally occupy pulpits. Strange it was, that grace should even tend to develop his natural powers, giving him an object, setting him devoutly and firmly upon it, and so bringing out all his

resources that they were fully shown. AH, ignorant ones, ye need not despair. He saved them; not for *their* sakes—there was nothing in them why they should be saved. He saved them, not for their wisdom's sake; but, ignorant though they were, understanding not the meaning of his miracles, "he saved them for his name's sake."

Note, again, *they were a very ungrateful people*, and yet he saved them. He delivered them times without number, and worked for them mighty miracles; but they still rebelled. Ah, that is like you, my hearer. You have had many deliverances from the borders of the grave; God has given you house and food day after day, and provided for you, and kept you to this hour; but how ungrateful you have been! As Isaiah said, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but my people doth not know, Israel doth not consider." How many there are of this character, who have favors from God, the history of which they could not give in a year; but yet what have they ever done for him? They would not keep a horse that did not work for them, nor as much as a dog that would not notice them. But here is God; he has kept them day by day, and they have done a great deal against him, but they have done nothing for him. He has put the bread into their very mouths, nurtured them, and sustained their strength, and they have spent their strength in defying him, in cursing his name and breaking his Sabbath. "Nevertheless he saved them." Some of this sort have been saved. I hope I have some here now who will be saved by conquering grace, made new men by the mighty power of God's Spirit. "Nevertheless he saved them." When there was nothing to recommend them, but every reason why they should be cast away for their ingratitude, "Nevertheless he saved them."

And note, once more, *they were a provoking people*—"They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea." Ah! how many people there are in this world that are a provoking people to God! If God were like man, who among us would be here to-day? If we are provoked once or twice, up goes the hand. With some men their passion stirs at the very first offence; others, who are somewhat more placid will bear offence after offence, till at last they say, "there is an end to everything, and I can bear that no longer; you must stay it, or else I must stay you!" Ah! if God had that temper, where should we be? Well might he say, "My thoughts are not as

your thoughts; I am God, I change not, or else ye sons of Jacob had been consumed." They were a provoking people, "nevertheless he saved them." Have you provoked him? Take heart, if you repent, God has promised to save you; and what is more, he may this morning give you repentance, and even give you remission of sins, for he saves provoking people for his name's sake. I hear one of my hearers say,— "Well, sir, that is encouraging sin with a vengeance!" Is it, indeed, sir! Why? "Because you are talking to the very worst of men, and you are saying that they may yet be saved." Pray, sirs, when I spoke to the worst of men, did I speak to *you* or not? You say, "No; I am one of the most respectable and best of men." Well then, sir, I have no need to preach to you, for you think you do not need mercy. "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." But these poor people, whom you say I am encouraging in sin, need to be spoken to. I will leave you. Good morning to you! You keep to your own gospel, and I wonder whether you will find your way to heaven by it. Nay, I do not wonder, I know you will not, unless you are brought as a poor sinner to take Christ at his word, and be saved for his name's sake. But I say farewell to you, and I will keep on in my course. But why did you say I encourage men in sin? I encourage them to turn from it. I did not say he saved the provoking people, and then let them still provoke him as they had done before; I did not say he saved the wicked people, and then let them sin as they did before. But you know the meaning of the word "saved;" I explained it the other morning. The word "saved" does not mean merely taking men to heaven; it means more—it means saving them from their sin; it means giving them a new heart, new spirits, new lives; it means making them into new men. Is there anything licentious in saying that Christ takes the worst of men to make them into saints? If there be, I cannot see it. I only wish he would take the worst of this congregation and make them into the saints of the living God, and then there would be far less licentiousness. Sinner, I comfort thee; not in thy sin, but in thy repentance. Sinner, the saints of heaven were once as bad as thou hast been. Art thou a drunkard, a swearer, an unclean person? "Such were some of them; but they have been washed—but they have been sanctified." Is thy robe black? Ask them whether their robes were ever black, they would not have wanted washing, "We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Then sinner, if they were black, and were saved, why not thyself?

"Are not his mercies rich and free?  
Then say, my soul, why not for thee?  
Our Jesus died upon the tree,  
Then why, my soul, why not for thee?"

Take heart, penitents, God will have mercy on you. "Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake."

III. Now we come to the third point—THE REASON OF SALVATION: "He saved them for his name's sake." There is no other reason why God should save a man, but for his name's sake; there is nothing in a sinner which can entitle him to salvation, or recommend him to mercy; it must be God's own heart which must dictate the motive why men are to be saved. One person says, "God will save me, because I am so upright." Sir, he will do no such thing. Says another, "God will save me because I am so talented." Sir, he will not. *Your talent!* Why thou drivelling, self-conceited idiot, thy talent is nothing compared with that of the angel that once stood before the throne, and sinned, and who now is cast into the bottomless pit for ever! If he would save men for their talent, he would have saved Satan; for he had talents enough. As for thy morality and goodness, it is but filthy rags, and he will never save thee for aught thou doest. None of us would ever be saved, if God expected anything of us: we must be saved purely and solely for reasons connected with himself, and lying in his own bosom. Blessed be his name, he saves us for "his name's sake." What does that mean? I think it means this: the name of God is his person, his attributes, and his nature. For his nature's sake, for his very attribute's sake, he saved men; and, perhaps, we may include this also, "My name is in him"—that is, in Christ; he saves us for the sake of Christ, who is the name of God. And what does that mean? I think it means this:

He saved them, first, that he might manifest his nature. God was all love, and he wanted to manifest it; he did show it when he made the sun, the moon, and the stars, and scattered flowers o'er the green and laughing earth. He did show his love when he made the air balmy to the body, and the sunshine cheering to the eye. He gives us warmth even in winter, by the clothing and by the fuel which he has stored in the bowels of the

earth; but he wanted to reveal himself still more. "How can I show them that I love them with all my infinite heart? I will give my Son to die to save the very worst of them, and so I will manifest my nature." And God has done it, he has manifested his power, his justice, his love, his faithfulness, and his truth; he has manifested his whole self on the great platform of salvation. It was, so to speak, the balcony on which God stepped to show himself to man—the balcony of salvation—here it is he manifests himself, by saving men's souls.

He did it, again, to vindicate his name. Some say God is cruel; they wickedly call him tyrant. "Ah!" says God, "but I will save the worst of sinners, and vindicate my name; I will blot out the stigma; I will remove the slur: they shall not be able to say that, unless they be filthy liars, for I will be abundantly merciful. I will take away this stain, and they shall see that my great name is a name of love." And said he, again, "I will do this for my name's sake; that is, to make these people love my name; but if I take the worst of men, oh, how they will love me! If I go and take some of the offscouring of the earth, and make them my children, oh, how they will love me! Then they will cleave to my name; they will think it more sweet than music; it will be more precious to them than the spikenard of the Eastern merchants; they will value it as gold, yea, as much fine gold. The man who loves me best, is the man who has most sins forgiven: he owes much, therefore he will love much." This is the reason why God often selects the worst of men to make them his. Saith an old writer, "All the carvings of heaven were made out of knots; the temple of God, the king of heaven, is a cedar one, but the cedars were all knotty trees before he cut them down." He chose the worst, that he might display his workmanship and his skill, to make unto himself a name; as it is written, "It shall be unto me for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Now, dear hearers, of whatever class you are, here is something I have to offer well worthy of your consideration, namely—that if saved, we are saved for the sake of God, for his name's sake, and not for our own.

Now this puts all men on a level with regard to salvation. Suppose that in coming into this garden, the rule had been that every one should have made mention of my name as the key of admittance; the law is, that no man is to be admitted for his rank or title, but only by the use of a certain



name. Up comes a lord; he makes use of the name and comes in; up comes a beggar, all in patches; he makes use of the name—the law says it is only the use of the name that will admit you—he makes use of it and he enters, for there is no distinction. So, my lady, if you come, with all your morality, you must make use of His name: if you come, poor filthy inhabitant of a cellar or a garret, and make use of His name, the doors will fly wide open, for there is salvation for every one who makes mention of the name of Christ, and for none other. This pulls down the pride of the moralist, abases the self exaltation of the self righteous, and puts us all, as guilty sinners, on an equal footing before God, to receive mercy at his hands, "For his name's sake," and for that reason alone.

IV. I have detained you too long; let me close by noticing the OBSTACLES REMOVED in the word "nevertheless." I shall do that in somewhat of an interesting form, by way of parable.

Once on a time, Mercy sat upon her snow-white throne, surrounded by the troops of love. A sinner was brought before her, whom Mercy designed to save. The herald blew the trumpet, and after three blasts thereof, with a loud voice, he said—"O heaven and earth, and hell, I summon you this day to come before the throne of Mercy, to tell why this sinner should not be saved." There stood the sinner, trembling with fear; he knew that there were multitudes of opponents, who would press into the hall of Mercy, and with eyes full of wrath would say, "He must not, and he shall not escape, he must be lost!" The trumpet was blown, and Mercy sat placidly on her throne, until there stepped in one with a fiery countenance; his head was covered with light; he spoke with a voice like thunder, and out of his eyes flashed lightning! "Who art thou?" said Mercy. He replied, "I am Law; the law of God." "And what hast thou to say?" "I have this to say," and he lifted up a stony tablet, written on both sides; "these ten commands this wretch has broken. My demand is blood; for it is written, 'The soul that sinneth it shall die.' Die he, or justice must." The wretch trembles, his knees knock together, the marrow of his bones melts within him, as if they were ice dissolved by fire, and he shakes with very fright. Already he thought he saw the thunderbolt launched at him, he saw the lightning penetrate into his soul, hell yawned before him in imagination, and he thought himself cast away for ever. But

Mercy smiled, and said, "Law, I will answer thee. This wretch deserves to die; justice demands that he should perish—I award thee thy claim." And oh! how the sinner trembles. "But there is one yonder who has come with me to-day, my king, my Lord; his name is Jesus; he will tell you how the debt can be paid, and the sinner can go free." Then Jesus spake, and said, "O Mercy, I will do thy bidding. Take me Law; put me in a garden; make me sweat drops of blood; then nail me to a tree; scourge my back before you put me to death; hang me on the cross; let blood run from my hands and feet; let me descend into the grave; let me pay all the sinner oweth; I will die in his stead." And the Law went out and scourged the Saviour, nailed him to the cross, and coming back with his face all bright with satisfaction, stood again at the throne of Mercy, and Mercy said, "Law, what hast thou now to say?" "Nothing," said he, "fair angel, nothing." "What! not one of these commands against him?" "No, not one. Jesus, his substitute, has kept them all—has paid the penalty for his disobedience; and now, instead of his condemnation, I demand as a debt of justice that he be acquitted." "Stand thou here," said Mercy, "sit on my throne; I and thou together will now send forth another summons." The trumpet rang again. "Come hither, all ye who have aught to say against this sinner, why he should not be acquitted;" and up comes another—one who often troubled the sinner, one who had a voice not so loud as that of the Law, but still piercing and thrilling—a voice whose whispers were like the cuttings of a dagger. "Who art thou?" says Mercy. "I am Conscience; this sinner must be punished; he has done so much against the law of God that he must be punished; I demand it; and I will give him no rest till he is punished, nor even then, for I will follow him even to the grave, and persecute him after death with pangs unutterable." "Nay," said Mercy, "hear me," and while he paused for a moment, she took a bunch of hyssop and sprinkled Conscience with the blood, saying, "Hear me, Conscience, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin;' Now hast thou ought to say,?" "No," said Conscience, "nothing."

'Covered is his unrighteousness;  
From condemnation he is free.'

Henceforth I will not grieve him; I will be a good conscience unto him, through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." The trumpet rang a third

time, and growling from the innermost vaults, up there came a grim black fiend, with hate in his eyes, and hellish majesty on his brows. He is asked, "Hast thou anything against that sinner?" "Yes," said he, "I have; he has made a league with hell, and a covenant with the grave, and here it is signed with his own hand. He asked God to destroy his soul in a drunken fit, and vowed he would never turn to God; see, here is his covenant with hell!" "Let us look at it," said Mercy; and it was handed up, whilst the grim fiend looked at the sinner, and pierced him through with his black looks. "Ah! but," said Mercy, "this man had no right to sign the deed; a man must not sign away another's property. This man was bought and paid for long beforehand; he is not his own; the covenant with death is disannulled, and the league with hell is rent in pieces. Go thy way Satan," "Nay," said he, howling again, "I have something else to say: that man was always my friend; he listened ever to my insinuations; he scoffed at the gospel; he scorned the majesty of heaven; is he to be pardoned, whilst I repair to my hellish den, for ever to bear the penalty of guilt?" Said Mercy, "Avaunt, thou fiend; these things he did in the days of his unregeneracy; but this word 'nevertheless' blots them out. Go thou to thy hell; take this for another lash upon thyself—the sinner shall be pardoned, but thou—never, treacherous fiend!" And then Mercy, smilingly turning to the sinner, said, "Sinner, the trumpet must be blown for the last time!" Again it was blown, and no one answered. Then stood the sinner up, and Mercy said, "Sinner ask thyself the question—ask thou of heaven, of earth, of hell—whether any can condemn thee?" And the sinner stood up, and with a bold loud voice said, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" And he looked into hell, and Satan lay there, biting his iron bonds; and he looked on earth, and earth was silent; and in the majesty of faith the sinner did even climb to heaven itself, and he said, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? God?" And the answer came, "No; he justifieth." "Christ?" Sweetly it was whispered, "No; he died." Then turning round, the sinner joyfully exclaimed, "Who shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And the once condemned sinner came back to Mercy; prostrate at her feet he lay, and vowed henceforth to be hers for ever, if she would keep him to the end, and make him what she would desire him to be. Then no longer did the trumpet ring, but angels rejoiced, and heaven was glad, for the sinner was saved.

Thus, you see, I have what is called, dramatized the thing; but I don't care what it is called; it is a way of arresting the ear, when nothing else will. "Nevertheless;" there is the obstruction taken away! Sinner, whatever be the "nevertheless," it shall never the less abate the Saviour's love; not the less shall it ever make it, but it shall remain the same.

"Come, guilty soul, and flee away  
To Christ and heal thy wounds;  
This is the glorious gospel-day,  
Wherein free grace abounds.  
Come to Jesus, sinner, come."

On thy knee weep out a sorrowful confession; look to his cross, and see the substitute; believe, and live. Ye almost demons, ye that have gone farthest in sin, now, Jesus says, "If you know your need of me, turn unto me, and I will have mercy upon you: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

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## **Why They Leave Us**

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. - John 17:24

The prayer of the Savior rises as it proceeds. He asked for his people that they might be preserved from the world, then that they might be sanctified, and then that they might be made manifestly one; and now he reaches his crowning point—that they may be with him where he is, and behold his glory. It is well when in prayer the spirit takes to itself wings. The prayer that swings to and fro like a door upon its hinges may admit to fellowship; but that prayer is more after the divine pattern which, like a

ladder, rises round by round, until it loses itself in heaven.

This last step of our Lord's prayer is not only above all the rest, but it is a longer step than any of the others. He here ascends, not from one blessing which may be enjoyed on earth, to another of higher degree; but he mounts right away from all that is of this present state into that which is reserved for the eternal future. He quits the highest peaks of grace, and at a single stride his prayer sets its foot in glory: "that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

There is this to be noticed also concerning this divine prayer, that not only does it rise as to its subject, but it even ascends as to the place which the Intercessor appears to occupy. Has it not been so with yourselves in prayer at times, that you have hardly known where you were? You might have cried with Paul, "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell." Do not these words of our Lord Jesus remind you of this? Was he not carried away by the fervor of his devotion? Where was he when he uttered the words of our text? If I follow the language I might conclude that our Lord was already in heaven. He says, "rather, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." Does he not mean that they should be in heaven with him? Of course he does; yet he was not in heaven; he was still in the midst of his apostles, in the body upon earth; and he had yet Gethsemane and Golgotha before him ere he could enter his glory. He had prayed himself into such an exaltation of feeling that his prayer was in heaven, and he himself was there in spirit. What a hint this gives to us! How readily may we quit the field of battle and the place of agony, and rise into such fellowship with God, that we may think and speak, and act, as if we were already in possession of our eternal joy! By the ardor of prayer and the confidence of faith we may be caught up into Paradise, and there utter words which are beyond the latitude of earth, and are dated "from the Delectable Mountains."

Nor is this all; for still the prayer rises, not only as to its matter and place, but in a very singular way it also takes to itself a higher style. Before, our Lord had asked and pleaded; but now he uses a firmer word: he says, "Father, I will." I would not force that word so as to make it bear an

imperious or commanding meaning, for the Savior speaketh not so to the Father: but still it has a more elevated tone about it than asking. Our Lord here useth the royal manner rather than the tone of his humiliation. He speaketh like unto the Son of God; he addresses the great Father as one who counteth it not robbery to be equal with him, but exercises the prerogative of his Eternal Sonship. He saith, "I will." This is a tone which belongs not to us except in a very modified degree, but it teaches us a lesson. It is well in prayer, when the Holy Spirit helpeth us, not only to groan out of the dust as suppliant sinners, but to seek unto our Father in the spirit of adoption with the confidence of children, and then with the promise of God in our hand we may with consecrated bravery lay hold upon the covenant angel, and cry, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Importunity is a humble approach to this divine "I will." The will consecrated, educated, and sanctified, may and must reveal itself in our more spiritual petitions, just as, with equal correctness, it hides away when the pleading is for temporal things, and whispers, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." The Lord pours upon his pleading servants at times a kind of inspiration by which they rise into power in prayer, and have their will of the Lord. Is it not written, "Delight thyself in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart?" We come at last to feel that the desires of our heart are inspired of his Spirit, and then that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.

There ought to be much for our edification in a text like this, which in subject, place, and style rises to such an elevation. It is the apex of this wonderful pyramid of prayer; the last round of the ladder of light. O Spirit of the Lord, instruct us while we behold it!

I have taken this text because it has taken hold on me. Our beloved brother, Charles Stanford, has just been taken from us. I seem to be standing as one of a company of disciples, and my brethren are melting away. My brethren, my comrades, my delights, are leaving me for the better land. We have enjoyed holy and happy fellowship in days of peace, and we have stood shoulder to shoulder in the battle of the Lord; but we are melting away. One has gone; another has gone; before we look round another will have departed. We see them for a moment, and they vanish from our gaze. It is true they do not rise into the air like the Divine

Master from Olivet; yet do they rise, I am persuaded of that: only the poor body descends, and that descent is for a very little while. They rise, to be for ever with the Lord. The grief is to us who are left behind. What a gap is left where stood Hugh Stowell Brown! Who is to fill it? What a gap is left where stood Charles Stanford! Who is to fill it? Who among us will go next? We stand like men amazed. Some of us stood next in the rank with those who have been taken. Why this constant thinning of our ranks while the warfare is so stern? Why this removal of the very best when we so much need the noblest examples? I am bowed down, and could best express myself in a flood of tears as I survey the line of graves so newly digged; but I restrain myself from so carnal a mode of regarding the matter, and look upon it in a clearer light. The Master is gathering the ripest of his fruit, and well doth he deserve them. His own dear hand is putting his apples of gold into his baskets of silver; and as we see that it is the Lord, we are bewildered no longer. His word, as it comes before us in the text, calms and quiets our spirits. It dries our tears, and calls us to rejoicing as we hear our heavenly Bridegroom praying, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." We understand why the dearest and best are going. We see in whose hand is held the magnet which attracts them to the skies. One by one they must depart from this lowland country, to dwell above, in the palace of the King, for Jesus is drawing them to himself. Our dear babes go home because "he gathereth the lambs with his arm and carrieth them in his bosom;" and our ripe saints go home because the Beloved is come into his garden to gather lilies. These words of our Lord Jesus explain the continual home-going; they are the answer to the riddle which we call death. I am going to talk of how our honored brethren are not, because God taketh them; and I shall be happy if my words shall prepare us to exercise a holy readiness to see the grand request of our Redeemer fulfilled, even though it cost us many a sorrowful parting.

I. Let us begin as our text begins, and thus the first thought about the continual gathering to the house above will be THE HOME-WORD—the rallying word: "Father." Observe, our Lord had said, "Holy Father," and toward the close of the prayer he said, "O righteous Father;" but in commencing this particular petition he uses the word "Father" by itself alone: this relationship is in itself so dear that it agrees best with the

loftiest petition. I like to think of that name "Father," as used in this connection. Is it not the center of living unity? If there is to be a family gathering and reunion, where should it be but in the father's house? Who is at the head of the table but the father? All the interests of the children unite in the parent, and he feels for them all.

From the great Father the Lord Jesus himself came forth. We do not understand the doctrine of the eternal filiation—we adore the mystery into which we may not pry. But we know that as our Lord Jesus is God-and-man Mediator, he came forth from the Father; and unto the Father's will he submitted himself in so doing. As for us, we come distinctly of that Father, it is he that made us, and not we ourselves; and, better and brighter fact still, of his own will begat he us by the word of truth. We were born a second time from heaven, and from our Heavenly Father our spiritual life is derived.

The whole of this sermon through, I want to show you that it is right that we should part with our brethren and joyfully permit of their going home; and surely I may at once ask you—What can be more right than that children should go home to their father? From him they came, to him they owe their life; should they not always tend towards him, and should not this be the goal of their being, that they should at last dwell in his presence? To go away from the Father and to live apart from him is the sorrow of our fallen nature as it plays the prodigal; but the coming back to the Father is restoration to life, to peace, to happiness. Yes, all our hopeful steps are towards the Father. We are saved when by believing in the name of Jesus we receive power to become the sons of God. Our sanctification lies in the bosom of our adoption. Because Jesus comes from the Father and leads us back to the Father, therefore is there a heaven for us. Wherefore, whenever we think of heaven let us chiefly think of the Father; for it is in our Father's house that there are many mansions, and it is to the Father that our Lord has gone, that he may prepare a place for us.

"FATHER!" why, it is a bell that rings us home. He who hath the spirit of adoption feels that the Father draws him home, and he would fain run after him. How intensely did Jesus turn to the Father! He cannot speak of



the glory wherein he is to be without coupling his Father with it. Brethren, it is in the Father that we live and move and have our being. Is there any spiritual life in the world which does not continually proceed from the life of the great Father? Is it not by the continual outcoming of the Holy Ghost from the Father that we remain spiritual men? And as from him we live, so for him we live, if we live aright. We wish so to act as to glorify God in everything. Even our salvation should not be an ultimate end with any one of us; we should desire to glorify God by our salvation. We look upon the doctrines that we preach, and the precepts which we obey, as means to the glory of God, even the Father.

This is the consummation which the First-born looks for, and to which all of us who are like him are aspiring also, namely, that God may be all in all: that the great Father may be had in honor, and may be worshipped in every place. Since, then, we are from him, and of him, and to him, and for him, this word "Father" calls us to gather at his feet. Shall any one of us lament the process? No; we dare not complain that our choicest brethren are taken up to gladden the great Father's house. Our brother is gone; but we ask, "Where is he gone?" and when the answer comes, "He is gone to the Father," all notion of complaint is over. To whom else should he go? When the great First-born went away from us, he told his sorrowing followers that he was going to their Father and his Father; and that answer was enough. So, when our friend, or our child, or our wife, or our brother is gone, it is enough that he is with the Father. To call them back does not occur to us; but rather we each one desire to follow after them.

"Father, I long, I faint to see  
The place of thine abode;  
I'd leave thine earthly courts and flee  
Up to thy seat, my God."

A child may be happy at school, but he longs for the holidays. Is it merely to escape his lessons? Ah, no! Ask him, and he will tell you, "I want to go home to see my father." The same is equally true, and possibly more so, if we include the feminine form of parentage. What a home-cry is that of "mother!" The sight of that dear face has been longed and hungered for by many a child when far away. Mother or father, which you will; they are

blended in the great Fatherhood of God. Let it but be said that any one has gone to his father, and no further question is asked as to the right of his going thither. To the father belongs the first possession of the child; should he not have his own child at home? The Savior wipes our tears away with a handkerchief which is marked in the corner with this word—"Father."

II. Secondly, I want your thoughts upon THE HOME IMPETUS. The force which draws us home lies in the word, "I will." Jesus Christ, our most true God, veiled in human form, bows his knee and prays, and throws his divine energy into the prayer for the bringing home of his redeemed. This one irresistible, everlastingly almighty prayer carries everything before it. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am," is the centripetal energy which is drawing all the family of God towards its one home.

How shall the chosen get home to the Father? Chariots are provided. Here are the chariots of fire and horses of fire in this prayer. "I will," saith Jesus, "that they be with me;" and with him they must be. There are difficulties in the way—long nights and darkness lie between, and hills of guilt, and forests of trouble, and bands of fierce temptations; yet the pilgrims shall surely reach their journey's end, for the Lord's "I will" shall be a wall of fire round about them. In this petition I see both sword and shield for the church militant. Here I see the eagles' wings on which they shall be upborne till they enter within the golden gates. Jesus saith, "I will;" and who is he that shall hinder the home-coming of the chosen? As well hope to arrest the marches of the stars of heaven.

Examine the energy of this "I will" for a moment, and you will see, first, that it hath the force of *an intercessory prayer*. It is a gem from that wonderful breastplate of jewels which our great High-priest wore upon his breast when he offered his fullest intercession. I cannot imagine our Lord's interceding in vain. If he asks that we may be with him where he is, he must assuredly have his request. It is written, that "he was heard in that he feared." When with strong crying and tears he poured out his soul unto death, his Father granted the requests of his heart. I do not wonder it should be so; how could the best Beloved fail of that which he sought in

intercession from his Father God! Mark, then, that the force of irresistible intercession is drawing every blood-bought soul into the place where Jesus is. You cannot hold your dying babe; for Jesus asks for it to be with him. Will you come into competition with your Lord? Surely you will not. You cannot hold your aged father, nor detain your beloved mother, beyond the time appointed; for the intercession of Christ has such a force about it that they must ascend even as sparks must seek the sun.

More than intercession is found in the expression "I will." It suggests the idea of a *testamentary bequest* and appointment. The Lord Jesus is making his last will and testament, and he writes, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me." No man who makes his will likes to have it frustrated. Our Savior's testament will assuredly be carried out in every jot and tittle; and, if for no other reason, yet certainly for this cause, that though he died, and thus made his will valid, yet he lives again to be his own executor, and to carry out his will. When I read in our Lord's testament the words, "Father, I will that they be with me," I ask, "Who is to hold them back?" They must in due time be with him, for the will of the ever blessed Savior must be carried out: there can be no standing against a force of that kind.

Nor is this all: the words read to me, not only like intercession and testamentary decree, but there is a strong expression of *desire, resolve, and purpose*. Jesus desires it, and saith, "I will." It is a deliberate desire—a forcible, distinct, resolute, determined purpose. The will of God is supreme law. It needeth not that he should speak; he doth but will or purpose, and the thing is done. Now read my text: "I will that they be with me;" the Son of God wills it. How are the saints to be hindered from what the Lord wills? They must rise from their beds of dust and silent clay;—they must rise to be with Jesus where he is, for Jesus wills it. By your anxious care you may seek to detain them; you may sit about their bed and nurse them both night and day, but they must quit these dark abodes when Jesus gives the signal. You may clutch them with affectionate eagerness, and even cry in despair, "They shall not go, we cannot bear to part with them;" but go they must when Jesus calls. Take back your naughty hands, which would detain them, for naughty they are if you would rob your Savior. Would you cross *his* will? Would you set at naught

his testament? You could not if you would; you would not if you could. Rather be inclined to go with them than think to resist the heavenly attraction which upraises them. If Jesus saith, "I will," then it is yours to say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt. They were never so much mine as they are thine. I never had so much right to them as thou hast who hast bought them. They never so truly could be at home with me as they will be at home with thee in thine own bosom; so my will dissolves itself into thy will, and I say with steadfast resignation, 'Let them go.'"

Brothers and sisters, you perceive the forces which are bearing away our beloved ones. I see tender hands reaching after us this morning; they are invisible to sense, but palpable to faith. Cords of love are being cast about the chosen, and they are being drawn out secretly from their fellows. Would you break those bands asunder, and cast those cords from us? I beseech you, think not so; but let that pierced hand which bought the beloved ones seek out its own purchase and bring them home. Should not Jesus have his own? Do we not bow our knee and pray for Jesus, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven?"

III. But now I want to conduct you farther into the text. We have had the home-word and the home-bringing impetus, and now let us carefully note THE HOME CHARACTER. "Father, I will that *they also, whom thou hast given me*, be with me where I am." The description is—"They also, whom thou hast given me." The Greek is somewhat difficult to translate. The translators of the Revised Version were, no doubt, excellent Greek scholars, and if they had known a little more English, they might have come a little nearer to a perfect translation, but they do not always appear to think the common English reader to be worthy of their consideration. This is their translation in the present instance:—"Father, that which thou hast given me, I will that, where I am they also may be with me." This, to speak plainly, sounds very like nonsense. It is the translation which a boy would present to his tutor at school, but it is of small use to the general reader. It is literal, no doubt; but literalisms are often another proof that the letter killeth. Translators into the English tongue might have contrived to have given us words with a meaning in them. I merely quote the version to show you that there is here a something in the singular as well as persons in the plural. "Father, I will concerning *that*

which thou hast given me, that *they* may be with me where I am." Our Lord looked upon those whom the Father gave him as one—one body, one church, one bride: he willed that as a whole the church should be with him where he is. Then he looked again and saw each of the many individuals of whom the one church is composed, and he prayed that each, that all of these, might be with him and behold his glory. Jesus never so prays for the whole church as to forget a single member; neither does he so pray for the members individually as to overlook the corporate capacity of the whole. Sweet thought! Jesus wills to have the whole of what he bought with his precious blood with him in heaven; he will not lose any part. He did not die for a part of a church, nor will he be satisfied unless the entire flock which he has purchased shall be gathered around him.

But while the Lord looks at those whom his Father gave him as one body, he looks upon you and me, and each believer here, as a part of that great unity, and his prayer is that all of us may be with him. I believe that he prays as much for the least as for the greatest, as much for Benjamin as for Judah, as much for the despondent as for those who are fully assured. The prayer is one of great breadth and comprehensiveness, but yet it is not the prayer which those who believe in Universalism would put into his mouth. He does not pray that those who die unbelievers may be with him where he is, neither does he will that souls in hell should one day come out of it and be with him in glory. There is no trace of that doctrine in holy writ: those who teach such fables draw their inspiration from some other source. The new purgatory, in which so many have come to believe, is unknown to Holy Scripture. No, our Lord's prayer is distinctly for those whom the Father gave him—for every one of these, but for no others. His "I will" concerns them only.

I feel right glad that there is no sort of personal character mentioned here, but only—"Those whom thou hast given me." It seems as if the Lord in his last moments was not so much looking at the fruit of grace as at grace itself; he did not so much note either the perfections or the imperfections of his people, but only the fact that they were his by the eternal gift of the Father. They belonged to the Father—"thine they were." The Father gave them to Jesus—"thou gavest them me." The Father gave

them as a love token and a means of his Son's glorification—"Thine they were and thou gavest them me;" and now our Lord pleads that because they were the Father's gift to him he should have them with him. Does anybody raise a cavil as to Christ's right to have those with him who were his Father's, whom his Father gave him, and whom he himself actually took into his own possession? No, they ought to be with him, since they are his in so divine a manner. If I possess a love-token that some dear one has given me I may rightly desire to have it with me. Nobody can have such a right to your wedding-ring, good sister, as you have yourself, and are not Christ's saints, as it were, a signet upon his finger, a token which his Father gave him of his good pleasure in him? Should they not be with Jesus where he is, since they are his crown jewels and his glory? We in our creature love lift up our hands, and cry, "My Lord, my Master, let me have this dear one with me a little longer. I need the companionship of one so sweet, or life will be misery to me." But if Jesus looks us in the face, and says, "Is thy right better than mine?" we draw back at once. He has a greater part in his saints than we can have. O Jesus, thy Father gave them to thee of old; they are his reward for the travail of thy soul; and far be it from us to deny thee. Though blinded by our tears, we can yet see the rights of Jesus, and we loyally admit them. We cry concerning our best beloved, "The Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." Does not the text sweetly comfort us in the talking away of one and another, since it shows how they belong to Christ?

IV. And now, advancing another step, Christ reveals to us something concerning THE HOME COMPANIONSHIP in the glory land. Those who are taken away, where are they gone? The text saith, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."

By this language we are impressed with *the nearness of the saints to Christ in glory*—"that they may be with me." Think for a moment: when our Lord used these words, and John took them down, the disciples were with him. They had left the supper-table where they had feasted together. The Master had said, "Arise, let us go hence;" and it was in the very midst of them that the Lord Jesus offered this choice prayer. Learn, then, that in heaven the saints will be nearer to Christ than the apostles were when

they sat at the table with him, or heard him pray. That was a nearness which might consist only in place, and their minds might still be, as they often were, far away from him: but up in heaven we shall be one with him in sympathy, in spirit, in conscious fellowship. We shall be with Jesus in the closest, clearest, and most complete sense. No fellowship on earth can reach to the plenitude of the communion which we shall enjoy above. "With him"—"for ever with the Lord"—this is heaven. Who would wish to detain from such companionship those whom we love?

Yet do not drop the thought of place, lest you refine away the essence of the prayer. Let us see the spiritual clearly, but let us not, on that account, make the sense less real, less matter of fact. To the prayer that his saints may be with him our Lord added the words, "May be with me where I am." Our bodies will rise from the dust, and they *must occupy a place*: that place will be where Jesus is. Even spirits must be somewhere, and that somewhere with us is to be where Jesus is. We are to be, not metaphorically and fancifully, but really, truly, literally with Jesus. We shall enjoy an intense nearness to him in that blessed place which the Father has prepared for him, and which he is preparing for us. There is a place where Jesus is revealed in all the splendor of his majesty, amid angels and glorified spirits; and those whom our Lord's will has taken away from us have not gone into banishment in a mysterious land, neither are they shut up in a house of detention till there is a general jail delivery, but they are with Christ in Paradise. They serve him, and they see his face. Who would be so cruel as to keep a saint from such a fair country? I would desire all good for my children, my relatives, my friends; and what good is better than to be where Jesus is? Are you not glad to hear of the promotion of those you love? Will you quarrel with God because some of your dearest ones are promoted to the skies? The thought of their amazing bliss greatly moderates our natural grief. We weep for ourselves, but as we remember their companionship with the Altogether Lovely One a smile blends with our tears.

Notice the *occupation* of those who are with Jesus: "That they may behold my glory." I do not wonder that Jesus wants his dear ones to be with him for this purpose, since love always pines for a partner in its joys. When I have been abroad, and have been specially charmed with glorious

scenery, I have a hundred times felt myself saying, almost involuntarily, "How I wish that my dear wife could be here! I should enjoy this a hundred times as much if she could but see it!" It is an instinct of affection to seek fellowship in joy. The Lord Jesus is truly human, and he feels this unselfish desire of every loving human heart, and therefore says, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Our Lord graciously permits his disciples to have fellowship with him in his sufferings, and hence he is all the more desirous that they should participate in his glory. He knows that nothing will be a greater joy to them than to see him exalted; therefore he would give them this highest form of delight. Was not Joseph delighted when he said to his brethren, "Ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt;" and still more so when he could actually show his father how great was his power, how exalted was his rank. It is joy to Jesus to let us behold his joy, and it will be glory to us to behold his glory. Should not the redeemed ascend to such blessed delights? Would you hinder them?

How unselfish it is on our Lord's part to think himself not fully glorified till we behold his glory! How unselfish he will make us also, since it will be our glory to see his glory! He does not say that he is going to take us home, that *we* may be in glory, but that we may behold *his* glory. His glory is better to us than any personal glory: all things are more ours by being his. Glory apart from him were no glory. Beloved, even as our Lord seems to lose himself in his people, his people hide themselves away in him. It is his glory to glorify them; it is their glory to glorify him; and it will be the glory of glories for them to be glorified together. Who would not go to this heaven? Who would keep a brother out of it an hour?

Observe the fellowship which exists in the glory land. Read the verse: "That *they* may behold *my* glory, which *thou* hast given *me*." What a blending of persons! Where did our Lord's glory come from? "Thou gavest it me," says Jesus. Hence it is the Father's glory passed over to the Son. Yet Jesus calls it "*my* glory," for it is truly his own. The saints are to behold this, and it will be their glory to see it. Here we have the Father, and the Elder Brother, and the many brethren, and a wonderful communism of interests and possessions. It is ever so in a loving family.



There we draw no hard and fast lines of *meum* and *tuum*. "All thine are mine, and mine are thine." We ask not whose is this? or whose is that? when we are at home. If you were to go into a stranger's house, you would not think of taking this or that; but as your father's own son you make yourself at home, and no one enquires, "What doest thou?" Bridegroom and bride do not quarrel about property whether it be his or hers. Laws have been made lately to settle different estates for those who are one: this is well enough when love is gone, but true conjugal love laughs at all that can make separate that which God hath joined together. The wife says, "That is mine." "No" saith the caviller, "it is your husband's." Her answer is, "and therefore it is mine." In that blessed union into which divine love has admitted us Christ is ours, and we are Christ's; his Father is our Father, we are one with him, he is one with the Father: and hence all things are ours, and the Father himself loveth us. All this will not only be true in heaven, but it will there be realized and acted on. So when the Lord brings his people home, we shall be one with him, and he one with the Father, and we also in him one with the Father, so that we shall then find boundless glory in beholding the glory of our Lord and God. My text has baffled me. I am beaten back by its blaze of light. Forgive me. I had a thought, but I cannot express it. The fire of my text burns with such fervent heat that it threatens to consume me if I draw nearer to it. Easily could I step into heaven—so I feel at this moment.

V. I must end by speaking of THE HOME ATMOSPHERE. None of us can wish our departed friends back from their thrones. Since they have gone to be where Jesus is, and to enter so fully into the most blissful fellowship with him and the Father, we would not have them return even for an instant to this poor country. We only wish that our turn for migration may come soon. We would not be too long divided from our fellows. If some of the birds have gone to the sunny land, let us plume our wings to follow them. There will be only a little interval between our parting and our everlasting meeting. Look at the many who died before we came into the world. Some of them have been in heaven together now for thousands of years. To them it must seem that they were only divided by a moment's interval; their continents of fellowship have made the channel of death seem but a streak of sea. Soon we shall take the same view of things.

Breathe the home atmosphere. Jesus tells us that the atmosphere of his home is *love*: "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Brethren, can you follow me in a great flight? Can you stretch broader wings than the condor ever knew, and fly back into the unbeginning eternity? There was a day before all days, when there was no day but the Ancient of Days. There was a time before all time, when God only was: the uncreated, the only-existent One. The Divine Three, Father, Son, and Spirit, lived in blessed consort with each other, delighting in each other. Oh the intensity of the divine love of the Father to the Son! There was no world, no sun, no moon, no stars, no universe, but God alone; and the whole of God's omnipotence flowed forth in a stream of love to the Son, while the Son's whole being remained eternally one with the Father by a mysterious essential union. How came all this which we now see and hear? Why this creation? this fall of Adam? this redemption? this church? this heaven? How came it all about? It needed not to have been, but the Father's love made him resolve to show forth the glory of his Son. The mysterious volume which has been gradually unfolded before us has only this one design—the Father would make known his love to the Son, and make the Son's glories to appear before the eyes of those whom the Father gave him. This Fall and this Redemption, and the story as a whole, so far as the divine purpose is concerned, are the fruit of the Father's love to the Son, and his delight in glorifying the Son. Those myriads, those white-robed myriads, harping to music infinitely deep, what mean they all? They are the Father's delight in the Son. That he might be glorified for ever, he permitted that he should bear a human body, and should suffer, bleed, and die, so that there might come out of him, as a harvest cometh from a dying and buried corn of wheat, all the countless hosts of elect souls, ordained for ever to a felicity exceeding bounds. These are the bride of the Lamb, the body of Christ, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. Their destiny is so high that no language can fully describe it. God only knows the love of God, and all that it has prepared for those who are the objects of it.

Love wraps up the whole in its cloth of gold. Love is both the source and the channel, and the end of the divine acting. Because the Father loved the Son he gave us to him, and ordained that we should be with him. His love to us is love to the Son. "Not for your sakes do I this, O House of

Israel; be ashamed and be confounded." Because of the boundless, ineffable, infinite love of the great Father toward his Son, therefore hath he ordained this whole system of salvation and redemption, that Jesus in the church of his redeemed might everlastingly be glorified. Let our saintly ones go home, beloved, if that is the design of their going. Since all comes of divine love, and all sets forth divine love, let them go to him who loves them—let divine love fulfill its purpose of bringing many sons unto glory. Since the Father once made our Lord perfect by his sufferings, let him now be made perfectly glorious by the coming up of his redeemed from the purifying bath of his atonement I see them rise like sheep from the washing, all of them gathering with delight at the feet of that great Shepherd of the sheep.

Beloved, I am lost in the subject now. I breathe that heavenly air. Love surrounds all, and conquers grief. I will not cause the temperature to fall by uttering any other words but this—Hold your friends lovingly, but be ready to yield them to Jesus. Detain them not from him to whom they belong. When they are sick, fast and pray; but when they are departed, do much as David did, who washed his face, and ate, and drank. You cannot bring them back again; you will go to them, they cannot return to you. Comfort yourselves with the double thought of their joy in Christ and Christ's joy in them; add the triple thought of the Father's joy in Christ and in them. Let us watch the Master's call. Let us not dread the question—*who next, and who next?* Let none of us start back as though we hoped to linger longer than others. Let us even desire to see our names in the celestial conscription. Let us be willing to be dealt with just as our Lord pleases. Let no doubt intervene; let no gloom encompass us. Dying is but going home; indeed, there is no dying for the saints. Charles Stanford is gone! Thus was his death told to me—"He drew up his feet and smiled." Thus will you and I depart. He had borne his testimony in the light, even when blind. He had cheered us all, though he was the greatest sufferer of us all; and now the film has gone from the eyes, and the *anguish* is gone from the heart, and he is with Jesus. He smiled. What a sight was that which caused that smile! I have seen many faces of dear departed ones lit up with splendor. Of many I could feel sure that they had seen a vision of angels. Traces of a reflected glory hung about their countenances. O brethren, we shall soon know more of heaven than all the divines can tell

us. Let us go home now to our own dwellings; but let us pledge ourselves that we will meet again. But where shall we appoint the trysting place? It would be idle to appoint any spot of earth, for this assembly will never come together again in this world. We will meet with Jesus, where he is, where we shall behold his glory. Some of you cannot do this. Turn from your evil ways. Turn to the right, where stands that cross, and keep straight on, and you will come to Jesus in glory. Blessed be the name of the Lord! Amen.

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## **The Wicked Man's Life, Funeral, And Epitaph**

And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity. - Ecclesiastes 8:10

It is quite certain that there are immense benefits attending our present mode of burial in extra mural cemeteries. It was high time that the dead should be removed from the midst of the living—that we should not worship in the midst of corpses, and sit in the Lord's house on the Sabbath, breathing the noxious effluvia of decaying bodies. But when we have said this, we must remember that there are some advantages which we have lost by the removal of the dead, and more especially by the wholesale mode of burial which now seems very likely to become general. We are not so often met by the array of dead. In the midst of our crowded cities we sometimes see the sable hearse bearing the relics of men to their last homes, but the funeral ceremonies are now mostly confined to those sweet sleeping places beyond our walks, where rest the bodies of those who are very dear to us. Now, I believe the sight of a funeral is a very healthful thing for the soul. Whatever harm may come to the body by

walking through the vault and the catacomb, the soul can there find much food for contemplation, and much excitement for thought. In the great villages, where some of us were wont to dwell, we remember how when the funeral came now and then, the tolling of the bell preached to all the villagers a better sermon than they had heard in the church for many a day, and we recollect, how as children, we used to cluster around the grave, and look at that which was not so frequent an occurrence in the midst of a rare and spare population; and we remember the solemn thoughts which used to arise even in our young hearts when we heard the words uttered, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." The solemn falling of the few grains of ashes upon the coffin-lid was the sowing of good seed in our hearts. And afterwards, when we have in our childish play climbed over those nettle-bound graves, and seated ourselves upon those mossgrown tombstones, we have had many a lesson preached to us by the dull cold tongue of death, more eloquent than aught we have heard from the lip of living man and more likely to abide with us in after years, but now we see little of death. We have fulfilled Abraham's wish beyond what he desired—we "bury the dead out of our sight;" it is rarely that we see them, and a stranger passing through our streets might say, "Do these live always? for I see no funerals amongst the millions of this city, I see no signs of death."

We shall this morning want you, first of all, to *walk with a living man*; it is said of him that he did "come and go from the place of the holy:" next, I shall want you to *attend his funeral*, and then, in conclusion I shall ask you to *assist in writing his epitaph*—"and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this also is vanity."

I. In the first place, HERE IS SOME GOOD COMPANY FOR YOU; some with whom you may walk to the house of God, for it is said of them, that they did come and go from the place of the holy. By this, I think we may understand the place where the righteous meet to worship God. God's house may be called "the place of the holy." Still, if we confine ourselves strictly to the Hebrew, and to the connection, it appears that by the "place of the holy" is intended the judgment-seat the place where the magistrate dispenses justice; and alas! there be some wicked who and go even to the place of judgment, to judge their fellow sinners. And we may with equal

propriety consider it in a third sense to represent the pulpit which should be "the place of the holy but we have seen the wicked come and go even from the pulpit, though God had never commanded them to declare his, statutes.

In the first place we will take this as representing *the house of God*. What a sight it is to see the great crowds coming up to the sanctuary of the Lord. I am sure, as we saw the multitudes coming up to the house of God, there must have been a peculiar thrill of joy pass through our hearts. It reminds us of the ancient gathering in Zion's temple when thither the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, to worship at the sanctuary of God. Oh! it is a noble sight when with joy and gladness we see the young and the old, the gray-headed and the children, all of them pressing forward in one eager throng to worship the Lord of Hosts, and listen to the voice of his sacred oracle. But your pleasure must have a great deal of alloy if you stop for a moment and dissect the congregation. Pull the goodly mass in sunder: in a heap it sparkles like gold; pull aside the threads, and alas! you will see that there are some not made of the precious metal, for "we have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy." Gathered in this throng this morning we have here men who almost profane the spot in which they are found. Last night's revel has left its impress upon their countenances. We have others who will, ere this day is closed, be cursing God in the house of Satan. There be many to be found here who have during this week been spending their time in lying, cheating, and swindling in the midst of their business. I doubt not there are some here who have taken every advantage that was possible of their fellow men, and if they have not come within the clutches of the law it certainly has not been their fault. We have too, I doubt not, in such a multitude—yea, I may speak with confidence—we have men here who have, during the past week, and at other times defiled themselves with sins that we will not mention, for it were a shame for us to speak of the things which are done of them in secret. Little do we know when we look here from this pulpit—it looks like one great field of flowers, fair to look upon—how many a root of deadly henbane and noxious nightshade groweth here, and though you all look fair and goodly, yet "I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy."

Shall we just take the wicked man's arm and walk with him to the house of God? When he begins to go, if he be one who has neglected going in his childhood, which perhaps is not extremely likely, when he begins to go even in his childhood, or whenever you choose to mention, you will notice that he is not often affected by the sound of the ministry. He goes up to the chapel with flippancy and mirth. He goeth to it as he would to a theater or any other place of amusement, as a means of passing away his Sabbath and killing time. Merrily he trippeth in there, but I have seen the wicked man when he went away look far differently from what he did when he entered. His plumes had been trailed in the dust. As he walks home there is no more flippancy and lightness, for he says, "Surely the Lord God has been in that place and I have been compelled to tremble. I went to scoff but I am obliged, in coming away, to confess that there is a power in religion, and the services of God's house are not all dulness after all." Perhaps you have hoped good of this man. But, alas! he forgot it all, and cast away all his impressions. And he came again the next Sunday, and that time he felt again. Again the arrow of the Lord seemed to stick fast in his heart. But, alas! it was like the rushing of water. There was a mark for a moment, but his heart was soon healed, he felt not the blow; and as for persuading him to salvation, he we, like the deaf adder, "charm we never so wisely," he would not regard us so as to turn from his ways. And I have seen him come and go till years have rolled over his head, and he has still filled his seat, and the minister is still preaching, but in his case preaching in vain. Still are the tears of mercy flowing for him; still are the thunders of justice launched against him; but he abideth just as he was. In him there is no change except this, that now he groweth hard and callous. You do not now hear him say that he trembles under the Word—not he. He is like a horse that hath been in the battle, he feareth not the noise of the drum nor the rolling of the smoke, and careth not for the din of the cannon. He cometh up, he heareth a faithful warning, and he saith, "What of it? this is for the wicked." He heareth an affectionate invitation, and he saith, "Go thy way, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." And so he comes and goes up to the house of God and back again. Like the door upon its hinges he turns into the sanctuary to-day, and out of it to-morrow. "He comes and goes from the place of the holy." It may be, however, he goes even further. Almost persuaded to be a Christian by some sermon from a Paul, he trembles at his feet. He thinks

he really repents; he unites himself with the Christian church: he makes a profession of religion; but, alas! his heart has never been changed. The sow is washed, but it is the sow still. The dog has been driven from its vomit, but its doggish nature is there the same. The Ethiopian is clothed in a white garment, but he hath not changed his skin. The leopard hath been covered all over, but he hath not washed his spots away. He is the same as ever he was. He goes to the baptismal pool a black sinner, and he comes out of it the same. He goes to the table of the Lord a deceiver; he eats the bread and drinks the wine, and he returns the same. Sacrament after Sacrament passes away. The Holy Eucharist is broken in his presence, he receives it, but he comes and he goes, for he receives it not in the love of it. He is a stranger to vital godliness, and as a wicked man "he comes and he goes from the place of the holy."

But is it not a marvellous thing that men should be able to do this? I have sometimes heard a preacher so earnestly put the matter of salvation before men, that I have said, "Surely they must see this." I have heard him plead as though he pleaded for his own life, and I have said, "Surely they must feel this." And I have turned round, and I have seen the handkerchief used to brush away the tear, and I have said, "Good must follow this." You have brought your own friends under the sound of the Word, and you have prayed the whole sermon through that the arrow may reach the white and penetrate the center of the mark, and you said to yourself, "What an appropriate discourse." Still you kept on praying, and you were pleased to see that there was some emotion. You said "Oh, it will touch his heart at last." But is it not strange that, though wooed by love divine, man will not melt; though thundered at by Sinai's own terrific thunderbolts they will not tremble; yea, though Christ himself incarnate in the flesh should preach again, yet would they not regard him, and mayhap would treat him to-day as their parent did but yesterday, when they dragged him out of the city and would have cast him headlong from the summit of the mount on which the city was builded. I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy till his conscience was seared, as with a hot iron. I have seen him come and go from the place of the holy till he had become harder than the nether millstone, till he was past feeling, given up "to work all manner of uncleanness with greediness."



But now we are going to change our journey. Instead of going to the house of God we will go another way. I have seen the wicked go to the place of the holy, that is to the *judgment bench*. We have had glaring instances even in the criminal calendar of men who have been seen sitting on a judgment bench one day, and in a short time they have been standing at the dock themselves. I have wondered what must be the peculiar feelings of a man who officiates as a judge, knowing that he who judges has been a law-breaker himself. A wicked man, a greedy, lustful, drunken man—you know such are to be discovered among petty magistrates. We have known these sit and condemn the drunkard, when, had the world known how they went to bed the night before, they would have said of them, "thou that judgest another doest the same things thyself." There have been instances known of men who have condemned a poor wretch for shooting a rabbit or stealing a few pheasants' eggs, or some enormous crime like that, and they themselves have been robbing the coffers of the bank, embezzling funds to an immense extent, and cheating everybody. How singular they must feel. One would think it must be a very strange emotion that passes over a man when he executes the law upon one which he knows ought to be executed upon himself. And yet, I have seen the wicked come and go from the holy place, until he came to think that his sins were no sins, that the poor must be severely upbraided for their iniquities, that what he called the lower classes must be kept in check, not thinking that there are none so low as those who condemn others whilst they do the same things themselves speaking about checks and barriers, when neither check nor barrier were of any use to himself, talking of curbing others and of judging righteous judgment, when had righteous judgment been carried out to the letter, he would himself have been the prisoner, and not have been honored with a commission from government. Ah! is it not a sight that we may well look at, when we see justice perverted and the law turned upside down by men who "come and go from the place of the holy."

But the third case is worse still. "I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy"—that is, the *pulpit*. If there be a place under high heaven more holy than another, it is the pulpit whence the gospel is preached. This is the Thermophylae of Christendom; here must the great

battle be fought between Christ's church and the invading hosts of a wicked world. This is the last vestige of anything sacred that is left to us. We have no altars now; Christ is our altar: but we have a pulpit still left, a place which, when a man entereth, he might well put off his shoes from his feet, for the place whereon he standeth is holy. Consecrated by a Saviour's presence, established by the clearness and the force of an apostle's eloquence, maintained and upheld by the faithfulness and fervor of a succession of Evangelists who, like stars, have marked the era in which they lived, and stamped it with their names, the pulpit is handed down to those of us who occupy it now with a prestige of everything that is great and holy. Yet I have seen the wicked come and go from it. Alas! if there be a sinner that is hardened, it is the man that sins and occupies his pulpit. We have heard of such a man living in the commission of the foulest sins, and at length has been discovered; and yet such is the filthiness of mankind, that when he began to preach to the people again, they clustered round the beast for the mere sake of hearing what he would say to them. We have known cases, too, where men, when convicted to their own forehead, have unblushingly persevered in proclaiming a gospel which their lives denied. And perhaps these are the hardest of all sinners to deal with!. But if the garment be once defiled, away with all thoughts of the pulpit then. He must be clean who ministers at the altar. Every saint must be holy, but he, holiest of all, who seeks to serve his God. Yet, we must mourn to say it, the church of God every now and then has had a sun that was black instead of white, and a moon that was as a clot of blood, instead of being full of fairness and beauty. Happy the church when God gives her holy ministers; but unhappy the church where wicked men preside. I know ministers to this day, however, who know more about fishing rods than they do about chapters in the Bible; more about fox-hounds than about hunting after men's souls; who understand a great deal more of the spring and the net than they do of the net for catching souls, or earnest exhortations for men to flee from the wrath to come. We know such even now: still uproarious at a farmer's dinner, still the very loudest to give the toast and clash the glass, still mightiest among the mighty found, of the gay, the wild, and the dissolute. Pity on the church that still allows it! Happy the day when all such persons shall be purged from the pulpit; then shall it stand forth "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners." "I have

seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy."

II. And now WE ARE GOING TO HIS FUNERAL. I shall want you to attend it. You need not be particular about having on a hat band, or being arrayed in garments of mourning. It does not signify for the wretch we are going to bury. There is no need for any very great outward signs of mourning, for he will be forgotten even in the city where he hath done this: therefore we need not particularly mourn for him. Let us first go to the funeral and look at the outward ceremonial. We will suppose one or two cases.

There is a man who has come and gone from the place of the holy. He has made a very blazing profession. He has been a county magistrate. Now, do you see what a stir is made about his poor bones? There is the hearse covered with plumes, and there follows a long string of carriages. The country people stare to see such a long train of carriages coming to follow one poor worm to its resting-place. What pomp! what grandeur! See how the place of worship is hung with black. There seems to be intense mourning made over this man. Will you just think of it for a minute, and who are they mourning for? A hypocrite! Whom is all this pomp for? For one who was a wicked man, a man who made a pretension of religion, a man who judged others, and who ought to have been condemned himself. All this pomp for putrid clay; and what is it more or better than that? When such a man dies, ought he not to be buried with the burial of an ass? Let him be drawn and dragged from the gates of the city. What has he to do with pomp? At the head of the mournful cavalcade is Beelzebub, leading the procession, and, looking back with twinkling eye, and leer of malicious joy, says, "Here is fine pomp to conduct a soul to hell with!" Ah! plumes and hearse for the man who is being conducted to his last abode in Tophet! A string of carriages to do honor to the man whom God hath cursed in life and cursed in death, for the hope of the hypocrite is evermore an accursed one. And a bell is ringing, and the clergyman is reading the funeral service, and is burying the man "in sure and certain hope." Oh! what a laugh rings up from somewhere a little lower down than the grave! "In sure and certain hope," says Satan, "ha! ha! your sure and certain hope is folly indeed. Trust to a bubble, and hope to fly to the stars; trust to the wild winds, that they shall conduct you safely to heaven,

but trust to such a hope as that, and thou art a madman indeed." Oh! if we judged rightly, when a hypocrite died, we should do him no honor. If men could but see a little deeper than the skin, and read the thoughts of the heart, they would not patronize this great, black lie, and lead a long string of carriages through the streets; they would say, "No, the man was good for nothing, he was the outward skin without the life, he professed to be what he was not, he lived the scornful life of a deceiver; let him have the burial of Jeconiah; let him not have a funeral at all; let him be cast away as loathsome carrion, for that is all he is." Ah! when a godly man dies, ye may make lamentation over him, ye may well carry him with solemn pomp unto his grave, for there is an odour in his bones, there is a sweet savor about him that even God delighteth in, for "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." But the gilded hypocrite, the varnished deceiver, the well accoutred wolf in sheeps' clothing—away with pomp for him! Why should men bewail him? They do not do it, why should they pretend to do so, then, and give the outward semblance of a grief, where they feel none?

But possibly I may have seen the wicked man buried in a more quiet way. He is taken quietly to his tomb with as little pomp as possible, and he is with all decency and solemnity interred in the grave. And now listen to the minister. If he is a man of God, when he buries such a man as he ought to be buried, you do not hear a solitary word about the character of the deceased; you hear nothing at all about any hopes of everlasting life. He is put into his grave. The minister well remembers how he did "come and go from the place of the holy," he recollects full well how he used to sit in the gallery and listen to his discourse. And there is one who weeps; and the minister stands there and weeps too, to think how all his labor has been lost, and one of his hearers has been destroyed, and that without hope. But note how cautiously he speaks, even to the wife. He would give her all the hope he could, poor widow as she is, and he speaks very gentle. She says, "I hope my husband is in heaven." He holds his tongue; he is very silent; if he is of a sympathetic nature he will be quiet. And when he speaks about the deceased in his next Sunday's sermon, if he mentions him at all he refers to him as a doubtful case, he uses him rather as a beacon than as an example, and bids other men beware how they presume to waste their opportunities, and let the golden hours of their

Sabbath-day roll by disregarded. "I have seen the wicked buried who have come and gone from the place of the holy." As for the pompous funeral, that was ludicrous. A man might almost laugh to see the folly of honoring the man who deserved to be dishonored, but as for the still and silent and truthful funeral, how sad it is! But brethren, after all, we ought to judge ourselves very much in the light of our funerals. That is the way we judge other things. Look at your fields to-morrow. There is the flaunting poppy, and there by the hedge-rows are many flowers that lift their heads to the sun. Judging them by their leaf you might prefer them to the sober coloured wheat. But wait until the funeral. Then the poppy shall be gathered and the weeds shall be bound up in a bundle to be burned—gathered into a heap in the field to be consumed, to be made into manure for the soil. But see the funeral of the wheat. What a magnificent funeral has the wheat-sheaf "Harvest home" is shouted as it is carried to the garner, for it is a precious thing. Even so let each of us so live, as considering that we must die. Oh! I would desire to live that when I leave this mortal state, men may say, "There is one gone who sought to make the world better. However rough his efforts might have been, he was an honest man; he sought to serve God, and there lies he that feared not the face of man." I would have every Christian seek to win such a funeral as this—a funeral like Stephen's: "And devout men carried him to his sepulcher, and made great lamentation over him." I remember the funeral of one pastor—I attended it. Many ministers of the gospel walked behind the coffin to attend their brother, and pay honor to him. And then came a ton of the church, every one of whom wept as if they had lost a father. And I remember the solemn sermon that was preached in the chapel all hung with black, when all of us wept because a great man had fallen that day in Israel. We felt that a prince had been taken from us and we all said, like Elijah's servant, "My father, my father, the horses of Israel and the chariots thereof." But I have seen the wicked buried that have come and gone from the place of the holy, and I saw nothing of this sort. I saw a flickering kind of sorrow, like the dying of a wick that is almost consumed. I saw that those who paid a decent respect to the corpse did it for the widow's sake, and for the sake of them that were left behind; but if they could have dealt with the corpse as their nature seemed to dictate, they ought to have dealt with the man when living, they would have said, "Let him be buried at the dead of night; let him

have some unhallowed corner in the churchyard where the nettle long has grown; let the frog croak o'er his tomb; let the owl make her resting-place o'er his sepulcher, and let her hoot all night long, for hooted he well deserves to be; let no laurel and no cypress grow upon his grave, and let no rose twine itself as a sweet bower around the place where he sleeps; let no cowslip and no lily of the valley deck the grass that covereth him; there let him lie; let not the green sward grow, but let the place be accursed where sleeps the hypocrite, for he deserves it, and even so let it be." "I have seen the wicked buried who have come and gone from the place of the holy."

But there is a sad thing yet to come. We must look a little deeper than the mere ceremonial of the burial and we shall see that there is a great deal more in some people's coffins besides their corpses. When old Robert Flockart was buried a few weeks ago in Edinburgh, he was buried as I think a Christian minister should be, for his old Bible and hymn book were placed upon the top of the coffin. Had he been a soldier, I suppose he would have had his sword put there; but he had been a Christian soldier, and so they buried with him his Bible and hymn book as his trophies. It was well that such a trophy should be *on* that coffin; but there is a great deal, as I have said, *inside* some people's coffins. If we had eyes to see invisible things, and we could break the lid of the hypocrite's coffin, we should see a great deal there. There lie all his hopes. The wicked man may come and go from the place of the holy, but he has no hope of being saved. He thought, because he had attended the place of the holy regularly, therefore he was safe for another world. There lie his hopes, and they are to be buried with him. Of all the frightful things that a man can look upon, the face of a dead hope is the most horrible. A dead child is a pang indeed to a mother's heart; a dead wife or a dead husband, to the heart of the bereaved must be sorrowful indeed; but a coffin full of dead hopes—did you ever see such a load of misery carried to the grave as that? Wrapt in the same shroud, there lie all his dead pretensions. When he was here he made a pretension of being respectable; there lies his respect, he shall be a hissing and a reproach for ever. He made a pretension of being sanctified, but the mask is off now, and he stands in all his native blackness. He made pretensions about being God's elect, but his election is discovered now to be a rejection. He thought himself to be

clothed in the Saviour's righteousness, but he finds that he justified himself: Christ had never given him his imputed righteousness. And so he sleeps. The tongue that prattled once so pleasantly concerning godliness is now silent. That hypocritical eye that once flashed with the pretended fire of joy—it is all now dark, dark. That brain that thought of inventions to deceive—the worm shall feed on it. And that heart of his that once throbbed beneath ribs that were scarcely thick enough to hide the transparency of his hypocrisy shall now be devoured by demons. There are dead pretensions inside that rotting skeleton, and dead hopes too. But there is one thing that sleeps with him in his coffin that he had set his heart upon. He had set his heart upon being known after he was gone. He thought surely after he had departed this life, he would be handed down to posterity and be remembered. Now read the text—"And they were forgotten in the city where they had so done." There is his hope of fame. Every man likes to live a little longer than his life—Englishmen especially—for there is scarcely to be found a rock in all England up which even a goat might scarcely climb where there may not be discovered the initials of the names of men, who never had any other mode of attaining to fame, and therefore thought they would inscribe their names there. Go where you will, you find men attempting to be known; and this is the reason why many people write in newspapers, else they never would be known. A hundred little inventions we all of us have for keeping our names going after we are dead. But with the wicked man it is all in vain; he shall be forgotten. He has done nothing to make anybody remember him. Ask the poor; "Do you remember So-and-so?" "Hard master, sir, very. He always cut us down to the last sixpence; and we do not wish to recollect him." Their children won't hear his name; they will forget him entirely. Ask the church, "Do you remember So-and-so? he was a member." "Well," says one, "I remember him certainly, his name was on the books, but we never had his heart. He used to come and go, but I never could talk with him. There was nothing spiritual in him. There was a great deal of sounding bell-metal and brass, but no gold. I never could discover that he had the "root of the matter in him." No one thinks of him, and he will soon be forgotten. The chapel grows old, there comes up another congregation, and somehow or other they talk about the odd deacons that used to be there, who were good and holy men and about the old lady, that used to be so eminently useful in visiting the sick, about the young man who rose

out of that church, who was so useful in the cause of God; but you never hear mention made of his name; he is quite forgotten. When he died his name was struck out of the books, he was reported as being dead, and all remembrance of him died with him. I have often noticed how soon wicked things die when the man dies who originated them. Look at Voltaire's philosophy; with all the noise it made in his time—where is it now? There is just a little of it lingering, but it seems to have gone. And there was Tom Paine, who did his best to write his name in letters of damnation, and one would think he might have been remembered. But who cares for him now? Except amongst a few, here and there, his name has passed away. And all the names of error, and heresy, and schism, where do they go? You hear about St. Austin to this day, but you never hear about the heretics he attacked. Everybody knows about Athanasius, and how he stood up for the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ; but we have almost forgotten the life of Arius, and scarcely ever think of those men who aided and abetted him in his folly. Bad men die out quickly, for the world feels it is a good thing to be rid of them; they are not worth remembering. But the death of a good man, the man who was sincerely a Christian—how different is that! And when you see the body of a saint, if he has served God with all his might, how sweet it is to look upon him—ah, and to look upon his coffin too, or upon his tomb in after years! Go into Bunhill-fields, and stand by the memorial of John Bunyan, and you will say, "Ah! there lies the head that contained the brain which thought out that wondrous dream of the Pilgrim's Progress from the City of Destruction to the Better land. There lies the finger that wrote those wondrous lines which depict the story of him who came at last to the land Beulah, and waded through the flood, and entered into the celestial city. And there are the eyelids which he once spoke of, when he said, "If I lie in prison until the moss grows on my eyelids, I will never make a promise to withhold from preaching." And there is that bold eye that penetrated the judge, when he said, "If you will let me out of prison to-day, I will preach again to-morrow, by the help of God." And there lies that loving hand that was ever ready to receive into communion all them that loved the Lord Jesus Christ: I love the hand that wrote the book, "Water Baptism no Bar to Christian Communion." I love him for that sake alone, and if he had written nothing else but that, I would say, "John Bunyan, be honored for ever." And there lies the foot that carried him up Snow Hill to go and



make peace between a father and a son, in that cold day, which cost him his life. Peace to his ashes Wait, O John Bunyan, till thy Master sends his angel to blow the trumpet and methinks, when the archangel sounds it, he will almost think of thee, and this shall be a part of his joy, that honest John Bunyan, the greatest of all Englishmen, shall rise from his tomb at the blowing of that great trump. You cannot say so of the wicked. What is a wicked man's body but a rotten piece of noisomeness? Put it away, and thank God there are worms to eat such a thing up, and thank him still more, that there is a worm called Time, to eat up the evil influence and the accursed memory, which such a man leaves behind him. All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done."

III. We are to WRITE HIS EPITAPH, and his epitaph is contained in these short words: "this also is vanity" And now in a few words I will endeavor to show that it is vanity for a man to come and go from the house of God, and yet have no true religion. If I made up my mind to hate God, to sin against him, and to be lost at last, I would do it thoroughly, out and out. If I had determined to be damned, and had calculated the chances, and made up my mind that it would be better to be cast away for ever, I know there is one thing I would not do, I would not go to the house of God. Why, if I made up my mind to be lost, what is the good of going there to be teared about it? Because, if the man is faithful, he will prick my conscience and wake me up. If I am determined and have made up my mind to be lost, let me go to hell as easily as I can, what need is there that my conscience should be pricked, and this great stone laid in my way to keep me from going there? Besides, I hold that, for a man who has no love for the house of God, regularly to attend because he thinks it is respectable, is just one of the most pitiful kinds of drudgery that can be met with. If I did not love the house of God, I would not go there. If it were not a delight to me to be found in the sanctuary of God, singing of his praise, and hearing of his word, I would stop away. To be seen going to chapel twice on the Sabbath, sitting as God's people sit, rising when they rise, and singing about what you do not feel; hearing that which pricks your conscience, and listening to the reading of promises that do not belong to you; hearing about heaven, that is not yours, being frightened with hell, which is to be yours for ever—why, the man is just a born fool that goes to the house of God, except he has got an interest in it.

We may commend him for going; it is a respectable thing, perhaps, and right that it should be so but I submit it is an intolerable drudgery to go always to the house of God, if you have made up your mind to be lost. Now, on this man's tomb must be written at last—"there was a man who would not serve God, but who had not courage enough to stand out against God. There is a man so silly that he pretended to be religious, and so wicked that he was a hypocrite to his pretensions." Why, although you must deplore a wicked man's wickedness as a fearful crime, yet there is some kind of respect to be paid to the man who is downright honest in it; but not an atom of respect to the man who wants to be a cant and a hypocrite. He wishes, if he can, just to save his neck at last; just as he thinks, to do enough to let him get off free when he comes to lay a-dying; enough to keep his conscience quiet, enough to look respectable; enough as he thinks, when he dies to give him a little chance of entering heaven, though it be, as it were, neck or nothing. Ah, poor thing! Well may we write over him, "This also is vanity!" But, sir, you will be more laughed at for your pretensions than if you had made none. Having professed to be religious, and having pretended to carry it out, you shall have more scorn than if you had came out in your right colors, and have said, "Who is the Lord, that I should fear him? Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice?" And now, are there any here who are so wicked as to choose eternal wrath? Have I any here so besotted as to choose destruction? Yes, yes, many; for if to-day, my hearer, thou art choosing sin; if thou art choosing self-righteousness, if thou art choosing pride, or lust, or the pleasures of this world, remember, thou art choosing damnation, for the two things cannot but go together. Sin is the guilt, and hell is the bread beneath it. If you choose sin, you have virtually chosen perdition. Think of this, I beseech you.

"O Lord! do thou the sinner turn!  
Now rouse him from his senseless state;  
O let him not thy counsel spurn,  
Nor rue his fatal choice too late."

May the Lord lead you to Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life! And when ye are buried, may ye be buried with the righteous, and may your last end be like his!

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## **A Willing People And An Immutable Leader**

Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. - Psalm 110:3

Never verse in the Scripture has puzzled me more than this to find out its meaning and its connection. In reading it over hastily, at first sight, it may appear very easy; but if you search into it very carefully you will find you can with difficulty string the words together, or give them any intelligible meaning. I have taken down all the commentators I have in my possession; I find they all give a meaning to the words, but not a soul of them—not even Dr. Gill—gives a connected meaning to the whole sentence. After looking at the old translations, and employing every means in my power to discover the meaning, I found myself as far off as when I began. Matthew Henry, one of the wisest commentators, certainly the best for family reading, makes the passage read as if it were like this: "Thy people shall come willingly in the day of thy power in the beauties of holiness. In the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth." That is how he explains it, though he does not say that is the proper translation. He explains the last sentence, "Thou hast the dew of thy youth," as meaning that in early life, from the womb of the morning, young people would give themselves to Jesus Christ. But it is no such thing. There is a colon at the word "morning," dividing the sentence. Besides, it does not say, the "people shall be willing; thou hast the dew of their youth," as it would read if it were as the expositors understand it; but it says to Christ, "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." It was not until we had thoroughly looked at the connection of the verse, and tried to catch the scope of the Psalm, that we thought we had hit upon its meaning; and

even now we shall leave it with your judgment to decide whether or not we have gained the mind of the Spirit, as we hope we have.

The Psalm is a kind of coronation Psalm. Christ is bidden to take his throne: "Sit thou at my right hand." The sceptre is put into his hand. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion." And then the question is asked, "Where are his people?" For a king would be no king without subjects. The highest title of kingship is but an empty one that hath no subjects to make up its fulness. Where, then, shall Christ find that which shall be the fulness of him that filleth all in all? The great anxiety we have is not whether Christ is king or not:—we know he is; he is the Lord of creation and of providence; our anxiety is about his subjects. Ofttimes do we ask, "O Lord, where shall we find thy subjects?" When we have preached to hard hearts, and prophesied to dry bones, our unbelief at times says, "Where shall we find children for Christ? Where shall we find people who will constitute the subjects of his empire?" Our fears are all put to rest by this passage: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning;" and by the second promise, "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." These thoughts are placed here to allay the anxieties of God's believing people, and to let them see how Christ shall indeed be king, and never lack a multitude of subjects.

First, here is a promise concerning his people; and secondly, here is a promise concerning Christ himself, that he shall always be as strong, as fresh, as new, and as mighty a Christ as ever.

I. First, we shall look at THE PROMISE MADE TO CHRIST'S PEOPLE. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning." Here is a promise of time; "in the day of thy power." Here is a promise of people: "thy people." Here is a promise of disposition: "thy people shall be willing." Here is a promise of character: "thy people shall be willing in the beauties of holiness." And here is a majestic figure to show the manner in which they shall be brought forth. By a very bold metaphor, they are said to come out as mysteriously as the dew drops from the womb of the morning. We know not how, but they are produced by God. "Thy people shall be willing in

the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness." In the womb of the morning they shall come.

1. First, here is a promise concerning time. Christ is not to gather in his people every day, but on one special day, the day of his power. It is not the day when man feels himself to be the most mighty, that souls are gathered; for alas! God's servants sometimes preach until their self-complacency tells them they have been exceedingly eloquent and mighty, and that, therefore, men must be saved: but there is no promise that in the day of our power we shall ever see men gathered to Christ. There are times too when the people seem to have a great power of seeking after God, and when they have the power of hearing, but there is no promise that just when an excitement reigns, and when there appears to be power in the creature, that such a day shall be the day of God's ingathering. It is "the day of thy power"—not of the minister's power, nor of the hearers'.

The day of God's power—when is it? We take it, it is the day when God pours out his own power upon the minister, so that God's children are gathered in by his preaching.

There are times, beloved, when the ordained servant of the living God will have nothing to do in preaching, but just to open his mouth and allow the words to flow. He will scarcely need stay to think, but the thoughts will be injected into his mind, and while he preaches he will feel there is a power accompanying his word. His hearers too will discern it. Some of them will feel as if they were sitting under a sledge hammer, beating on their hearts. Others will feel as if truth were stealing into their hearts and slaying all their unbelief, in such a way that they could not resist the blessed power. It will often happen that God's children will find an influence and a might irresistible going with the word. They have heard that minister before, they were delighted with him, they trusted that they had been edified on good soil, every blow hit the mark, there was no arrow shot which did not go into the centre of the soul—there was not a syllable uttered which was not like the word of Jehovah himself, speaking either from Sinai, or Calvary. Have you never known such times? Have you not felt them when you have been standing or sitting in the house of God? Ah! those are times when God, by the manifestation of himself, is

pleased to enlighten his children, to gather in his people, and to make poor sinners willing. There is also a day of power in every sinner's heart; for, alas! the general day of power which occurs to our congregation omits many—many over whom we have to weep—while hundreds shed tears of penitence, other hundreds sit stolid and unmoved. While some hearts leap for very joy, others are bound in the fetters of ignorance, and are sleeping the sleep of death. While God is pouring out his Spirit till some hearts are full to the very brim, ready to burst, there are some dry, without a drop of the heavenly moisture. But the day of God's power is a day of personal power in our souls, like that day of Zaccheus when the Lord said, "Make haste, and come down." It is a day not of argument of man, but a day of omnipotent power—God working in the heart. It is not a day of intellectual enlightenment, a day of instruction merely, but a day when God shall enter into the heart, and with a mighty hand shall wrench the will and turn it as he would—shall make the judgment judge righteously, the imagination think as it ought, and shall guide the whole soul to himself. Did you never think what power that was which God exerts in every individual heart? There is no power like it. Should a man command the mighty waterfalls to congeal and stand, in heaps? If they should obey him, he would not have worked a miracle half so mighty as that which God works in the heart when he bids the floods of sin to cease flowing. Could I command Etna with its flames and smoke to cease its ebullitions, and should it at once be still, I had not worked a deed so mighty as when God speaks to a boiling spirit sending forth fire and smoke, and bids it stay. The everlasting God exhibits more power in turning a sinner from the error of his ways, than in the creation of a world or the sustentation of an universe. In the day of God's power, God's people shall be willing. Beloved, we also look for a day of power in the coming period of the reign of Jesus Christ. I take it there is a time coming when the feeblest among us shall be as David, and when David shall be as the angel of the Lord. The time is approaching when every poor ignorant minister shall preach with power, and when every child of God shall be filled with the knowledge of God. We hope for a happy day when Christ shall come and shall cause the knowledge of the Lord to be spread so rapidly that it shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. We often cheer ourselves with this subject—well, if we do labour in vain and spend our strength for nought now, it will not be so always; the day will come

when the fresh wind of the Spirit will fill the sails of the church, and she shall go swiftly along; when the feeble hand of the minister shall be as mighty as the hand of the boldest Christian warrior who ever wielded the sword of the Spirit; when every word of Christ shall be as ointment poured forth, spreading perfume over a sinful world; when we shall never preach a sermon without effect; when, as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, it not only shall not return void, but shall water the earth, so that having already brought forth and budded, it shall bring forth fruit to the glory of God—that fruit, the destruction of idols, and the casting down of all false religions. Happy day, that day of power! Christians! why do you not pray for it? Why do ye not ask that God would give his people might, and that Christ may speedily come and find his people willing?

There is, however, another translation to these words. Calvin translates them, "at the time of the assembling of their army," "au jour des montres" "in the day of the review." You sometimes say, "Oh! if a great struggle were to occur, where would be found the men to fight for Christ?" We have heard timid believers say, "Oh, I am afraid if persecution should set in, we should find very few valiant for truth—few ministers would come forward boldly to uphold the gospel of Christ." No such thing, believer! Christ's people will be willing in the day of God's armies. God never had a battle to fight yet when he could say, "I have no soldiers in reserve." God never had an arduous campaign in which his armies were insufficient. Once the prophet said, Zechariah I. 18-21, "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And the Lord showed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spoke, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it." God had enough men to cut off the horns, and to build his house, there were four; and he had the right sort of men ready to do his work; for "carpenters" were ready. Whenever a struggle is approaching God will find his men. Whenever a battle is to commence, God will find the men valiant for truth. Never be afraid that God will not take care of

his church. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of God's battle." Are you undertaking some noble enterprise? Are you saying, "Here is a grand endeavour to evangelize the world; where shall we find people? The answer is, "God's people shall be willing in the day of his armies." Some Sunday-school teachers are complaining, that in their church they cannot find enough to canvass the district. Why not? Because they have not enough of God's people, for God's people are willing in the day of his armies. We have complained that we cannot get ministers to evangelize. Why not? Because they are not thoroughly imbued with the Master's Spirit, for his people would be willing in the day of God's armies when they are wanted. They always have willing hearts to be ready for the battle. They do not say, "I must consult flesh and blood." No, there is the standard; up go God's soldiers! There is the battle; out go their swords! They are ready for the fight at once. They are always ready in the day of God's armies. Beloved, fear no struggle; dread no enterprise; neither think that the silver and the gold will be withholden from us—"The silver and the gold are mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills." Think not, however grand your ideas, that you shall fail therein. God's people will come forward willingly when he requires their aid. We believe that truth firmly; but we must wait for God's day; we must pray for God's day; we must hope for it; we must labour for it, and when it comes, God shall find his people willing, as they ought to be.

2. Next, we have here the promise of a people, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power"—nobody else. Here is a promise that Christ shall always have a people. In the darkest ages Christ has always had a church; and if darker times shall come, he will have his church still. Oh! Elijah, thy unbelief is foolish. Thou sayest, "I, only I, am left alone, and they seek my life." Nay, Elijah, in those caves of the earth God has his prophets, hidden by seventies. Thou, too, poor unbelieving Christian, at times thou sayest, "I, even I, am left." Oh! if thou hadst eyes to see, if thou couldst travel a little, thy heart would be glad to find that God does not lack a people. It cheers my heart to find that God has a family everywhere. We do not go anywhere but we find really earnest hearts—men full of prayer. I bless God that I can say, concerning the church wherever I have been, though they are not many, there are a few, who sigh and groan over the sorrows of Israel. There are chosen bands in



every church, thoroughly earnest men who are looking out for, and are ready to receive their Master, who cry to God that he would send them times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Do not be too sad; God has a people, and they are willing now; and when the day of God's power shall come, there is no fear about the people. Religion may be at a low ebb, but it never was at such a low ebb that God's ship was stranded. It may be ever so low, but the devil shall never be able to cross the river of Christ's church dry shod. He shall always find abundance of water running in the channel thereof. God grant us grace to look out for his people, believing that there are some everywhere, for the promise is, "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

3. We next come to disposition. God's people are a willing people. Adam Clarke says,—"This verse has been woefully perverted. It has been supposed to point out that irresistible operation of the grace of God on the souls of the elect, thereby making them willing to receive Christ as their Saviour." A doctrine which he utterly discards. Well, my dear Adam Clarke, we are extremely obliged to you for your remark, but at the same time we think that the text has not been "woefully perverted." We believe that the text has been very properly used to show that God makes men willing. For if we read our Bibles rightly, we understand that men, by nature, are not willing; for there is a text you are extremely fond of which we do not think belongs to you, and which says, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." "No man can come unto me, except the Father which has sent me, draw him." If you would remember that, we think, even though the text does not teach it, you might at least have some respect for the doctrine; but it says, God's people shall be willing in the day of God's power; and if we read it as plain English people, we look from this text that there must be a work of his grace making men willing in the day of God's power. We do not know whether you think that fair logic. We think it is. We have been accused of having no logic, and we are not particularly sorry about that, for we would rather have what men call dogmatism than logic. It is Christ's to prove; it is ours to preach. We leave argument to Christ; for us, we have only to affirm what we see in God's Word. God's people are to be a willing people. We can tell who are the children by the fact that they are willing. I preach to many of you times without number. I tell you of hell; I bid you flee from it; I tell you of

Christ; I bid you look to him, but you are unwilling to do so. What do I conclude from that? Either that the day of God's power has not yet come, or that you are not God's people. When I preach with power, and the word is dispensed with unction, if I see you unmoved and unsettled, unwilling to cast yourselves on Jesus Christ, what say I? Why, I fear those are not God's people, for God's people are willing in the day of his power, willing to submit to sovereign grace, to give themselves up into the hands of the Mediator, to hang simply on his cross for salvation. I ask again what has made them willing? Must it not have been something in grace which has turned their will? If the will of man be purely free to do right or wrong, I conjure you, my friends, to answer this: if it be so, why do you not turn to God this very moment without divine assistance? It is because you are not willing, and it needed a promise that God's people should be willing in the day of his power.

I think this word applies not only to their being willing to be saved, but willing to work after they are saved. Did you ever know a minister who preached on the Sunday, but who at the prayer-meeting on the Monday night seemed as if he would much rather be at home? And if there was a lecture on Thursday, did not he, poor man, come up as if he were about to perform some enormously hard duty? What do you think of him? Why, you think he is not one of the people of God, else he would be willing. Some persons come to the house of God, but they come just as the negro would to his whipping place, they do not like it, and they are glad to get away again. But what do we say of God's people, -

"Up to her courts with joys unknown,  
The sacred tribes repair."

They are a willing people. There is a collection. The Church of God requires some assistance. One man doles out as small a trifle as ever he can to keep up his respectability. You do not think he exhibits the spirit of a Christian because he is not willing; but Christ's people are willing; all that they do, they do willingly, for they are constrained by no compulsion, but by grace alone. I am sure we all can do a thing far better when we are willing than when we are forced. God loves his people's services, because they do them voluntarily. Voluntaryism is the essence of the gospel.

Willing people are those whom God delights to have as his servants. He would not have slaves to grace his throne, but free men, who, with gladness and joy, should be willing in the day of his power.

4. We shall scarcely have time for a discussion of the whole text, but we must briefly notice the character of these people as well as their dispositions. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." "They shall be willing in the beauties of holiness." This is how they shall be clothed—not merely in holiness, but in the beauties of holiness, for holiness hath its beauties, its gems, its pearls; and what are these? They shall be clothed in the beauties of holiness of imputed righteousness and of imparted grace. God's people are, in themselves a deformed people, hence their comeliness must be given them. The standard of beauty is saintship. If an angel should descend from heaven, and carry up to God the most beautiful creature he could find, he would not cull earth's roses, he would not gather her lilies, but he would take up to heaven the fair character of a child of God. Where he found a self-denying hero, where he discovered a disinterested Christian—an ardent disciple, the angel would take him up, exclaiming, "Great God, here is beauty; take it, this is thy beauty." We walk along and admire statues and such-like things, and we say, "Here is beauty," but the Christian has on him the true beauty—the beauties of holiness. Oh! ye young, ye gay, ye proud, ye ask for beauty, but do you know that all the beauties of this earth can do you no good, for you must die and wear a shroud?

"Time will rob you of your bloom,  
Death will drag you to the tomb."

But if you have the beauties of holiness, they shall increase and become fairer and fairer, and amongst the fair angels, you, as fair as they, shall stand decked in your Saviour's righteousness. "Thy people shall be willing" to come forward, and they shall be the right sort of people; they will be a holy people, arrayed in all "the beauties of holiness."

5. Now there is a bold metaphor here which we must explain in the last place. The text says, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power in the beauties of holiness." Now you understand that, but what do the

next words mean, "From the womb of the morning?" "Why, from the earliest periods of their lives," say the commentators, "God's people shall be willing." No, it does not mean that; there is a bold and brilliant figure here. It is asked, where are they to come from? how are God's people to be brought? what means are to be employed? how is it to be done? The simple answer is this. Did you never see the dew-drops glistening on the earth? and did you never ask, "Whence came these? how came they here so infinite in number, so lavishly scattered everywhere, so pure and brilliant." Nature whispered the answer, "They came from the womb of the morning." So God's people will come forth as noiselessly, as mysteriously, as divinely, as if they came "from the womb of the morning," like the dew drops. Philosophy has laboured to discover the origin of dew, and perhaps has guessed it; but to the Eastern, one of the greatest riddles was, out of whose womb came the dew? Who is the mother of those pearly drops? Now, so will God's people come mysteriously. It will be said by the bystander, "There was nothing in that man's preaching; I thought I should hear an orator; this man has been made the means of salvation to thousands, and I thought I should hear an eloquent man, but I have heard a great many preachers far more intelligent and intellectual than he; how were these souls converted? "Why, they have come from the womb of the morning," mysteriously. Again, the dew drops—who made them? Do kings and princes rise up and hold their sceptres, and bid the clouds shed tears, or affright them to weeping by the beating of the drum? Do armies march to the battle to force the sky to give up its treasure, and scatter its diamonds lavishly? No; God speaks; he whispers in the ears of nature, and it weeps for joy at the glad news that the morning is come. God does it; there is no apparent agency employed, no thunder, no lightning; God has done it. That is how God's people shall be saved; they come forth from the "womb of the morning" divinely called, divinely brought, divinely blessed, divinely numbered, divinely scattered over the entire surface of the globe, divinely refreshing to the world, they proceed from the "womb of the morning." You may have noticed in the morning what a multitude of dew drops there are, and you may have inquired, "Whence comes so great a multitude?" We answer, the womb of nature is capable of ten thousand births at once. So, "from the womb of the morning" God's children shall come. No struggle, no pang, no shriek, no agony is heard, all is secret; but

they shall come fresh "from the womb of the morning." The figure is so beautiful that words cannot explain it. You have only to stand early one morning when the sun is beginning to shoot his rays of light up to the sky, and look at the fields all glistening with dew, and say, "Whence came all these?" The answer is, they came "From the womb of the morning." So when you find that multitudes are saved, and you see them coming so mysteriously, so gently, so divinely, and yet so numerous, you can only compare them to the dew of the morning. You say, "Whence came these?" And the answer is, they have come "from the womb of the morning."

II. Now the second part of the text is the sweetest, and we must have a little time upon that. There was a promise made to Christ concerning his people, and that sets our fears at rest concerning the Church. Now here is ANOTHER PROMISE MADE TO CHRIST: "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." Ah! believer, this is the great source of gospel success, that Christ has the dew of his youth. Jesus Christ, personally, has the dew of his youth. Certain leaders in their young days have led their troops to battle, and by the loudness of their voice, and the strength of their bodies, they have inspired their men with courage; but the old warrior hath his hair sown with grey; he begins to be decrepid, and no longer can lead men to battle. It is not so with Jesus Christ. He has still the dew of his youth. The same Christ who led his troops to battle in his early youth leads them now. The arm which smote the sinner with his word smites now; it is as unpalsied as it was before. The eye which looked upon his friends with gladness, and upon his foemen with a glance most stern and high—that same eye is regarding us now, undimmed, like that of Moses. He has the dew of his youth. Oh! it does delight us to think that Christ was "God over all, blessed for ever," in his youth, filled with Almighty power, and he is just the same now. He is not an old Christ—a worn out Christ, but our leader still. He is as young as ever. The same dew, the same freshness, is about him. You hear it said of a minister, "In his younger days there was a deal of freshness about him, but he is getting old and begins to repeat himself." It is never so with Christ; he always has the dew of his youth. He who "spake as never man spake," once, when he shall come to speak again, will speak just as he did before. He has the dew of his youth personally.

So also doctrinally. Christ hath the dew of his youth. Usually, when a religion starts it is very rampant, but it afterwards decays. Look at the religion of Mahommed. For one hundred years or more it threatened to subvert kingdoms, and overturn the whole world, but where are the blades that flashed then? Where are now the willing hands that smote down the foes of Mahommed? Why, his religion has become an old worn-out thing; no one cares about it; and the Turk, sitting on his divan, with his legs crossed, smoking his pipe, is the best image of the Mahomedan religion—old, infirm, effete. But the Christian religion,—ah! it is as fresh as when it started from its cradle at Jerusalem; it is as hale, and hearty, and mighty, as when Paul preached it at Athens, or Peter at Jerusalem. It is not an old religion. Not one particle of it hath waxed old, though hundreds of years have passed away. How many religions have died since Christ's began! How many have risen up, like mushrooms in a night! But is not Christ's as new as it ever was? I ask you, ye old grey heads, you have known your Master in your youth, and you thought his religion sweet and precious; do you find it useless now? Do you find now that Christ has not the dew of youth upon him? No; you can say, "Sweet Jesus, the day I first touched thine hand, the day of mine espousals, I thought thee altogether lovely; and thou art not like an earthly friend: thou hast not waxed old; thou art as young as ever. Thy brow hath no furrows on it; thine eyes are not dime. Thine hair is still black as the raven, not white with age; thou art still unmoved, unaltered, notwithstanding all the years that I have known thee. Well, beloved, do you see what encouragement this is to us in the propagation of our Master's kingdom, that we are not preaching an old thing that is out of date, but a religion which has the dew of its youth upon it. The same religion which could save three thousand at Pentecost, can save three thousand now. I preach old doctrine, but it is as new as when it first came from heaven's mint. The image and the superscription is as clear, and the metal is as bright and undimmed as ever. I have an old sword, but it is not a rusty one; though it hath hacked and cut many a Rahab, yet it has not a single mark of weakness upon itself—it is as new as when it was first forged upon the anvil of wisdom. The gospel has the same spirit attending it now, that it had when it was a young gospel. As Peter stood up to preach then so may Peters now, and God shall give them the same unction. As Paul preached then, so shall Pauls now. As Timothy upheld the Lord's word, so may Timothys now, and the same

Holy Spirit shall attend it. I am afraid Christ's people do not believe this sentence—that Christ has the dew of his youth. They have a notion that the times of great revivals are gone by. And the fathers, they ask, where are they? We are apt to cry, "The horses of Israel, and the chariots thereof." No one will ever wear Elijah's mantle again; we shall never see great and wondrous deeds again. O foolish unbelief! Christ has still the dew of his youth. He has as much of the Holy Spirit now as he had at first, for he has it without measure. And though he has dispensed it unto thousands, he will dispense it still. But the question is asked, "How is it that people in these times begin to get tired of the gospel, if it has the dew of its youth?" Why, beloved, it is because the gospel does not come to them in the form of dew at all. Do we not frequently hear a gospel all dry and marrowless, like a lot of bones out of which the marrow has been boiled? Very nice these bones are for your philosophical divines, who like to study antiquities, and discover to what unclean animal this or that bone belongs, but of no service at all to God's children, for there is no food on the bones. We want a gospel covered with unction, full of savour; and when God's people have that, they are never tired of it, they find a dew and a freshness about it which are lasting.

Now, if Christ has the dew of his youth about him, how earnestly ought those of us who are his ministers to proclaim his word. There is nothing like strong faith to make a man preach mightily. If I think I preach a tottering old gospel, I cannot proclaim it with zeal; but if I think I am preaching a strong stalwart gospel, whose frame has not been shaken, and whose might is just as great as ever, how strongly ought I to preach it? Ah! blessed be God, there are a few hearts as hot as ever, a few souls as firm in their Master's cause as ever were the hearts of the Apostles. They are yet a few good men and true, who rally round the cross. Like David's men in the cave Adullam, there are some mighties who rally round the standard. He is not left without his witnesses, he has the dew of his youth yet, and the day may come when those now hidden in darkness, shall, as dew before the sunshine, come out, glistening on every bush, adorning every tree, enlightening every village, cheering every pasture, making the little hills sing for joy. Go, Christian, and put this into the form of prayer. Pray to Christ that his people may be willing in the day of his power, and that he would always retain the dew of his youth.

"Ride forth, sweet Prince, triumphantly,  
And bid the world obey."

Go on, and prove thyself to be the same as ever, the blessed God, "God over all, blessed for evermore." Up, Christian, up! fight for your young Monarch! Up with ye, warriors! Let your swords flash from their scabbards! Fight for your King! Up! up! for the old banner is a new banner too. Christ is still fresh and still young. Let the enthusiasm of your youth gird you! Once again, start up, ye aged Christians, and let your young days come again, for if Christ has the dew of his youth about him, it behooves you to serve him with youthful vigour. Up! starting now from your sleep, give to him a new youth, and strive to be as earnest and as zealous for his cause as if it were the first day you ever knew him. Oh! may God make many sinners willing! May he bring many to his feet, for he has promised that they shall be willing in the day of his power.

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## **A Wise Desire**

He shall choose our inheritance for us. - Psalm 47:4

The Christian is always pleased and delighted when he can see Christ in the Scriptures. If he can but detect the footstep of his lord, and discover that the sacred writers are making some reference to him, however indistinct or dark he will rejoice there at: for all the Scriptures are nothing except as we find Christ in them. St. Austin says, "The Scriptures are the swaddling bands of the man-child - Christ Jesus, and were all intended to be hallowed garments in which to wrap him "So they are; and it is our pleasant duty to lift the veil, or remove the garment of Jesus and so behold him in his person, in his nature, or his offices. Now, this text is concerning Jesus Christ - he it is who is to "choose our inheritance for us," he in whom dwelleth all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge is



the great Being who is selected as the head of predestination - to choose our lot and our portion, and fix our destiny. Verily, beloved brethren, you and I can rejoice in this great fact, that our Saviour chooses for us. For were we all to be assembled together in some great plain, as Israel was of old, to elect for ourselves a king, we should not propose a second candidate. There would be one who stands like Saul, the son of Kish, head and shoulders taller than all the rest, whom we should at once select to be our king and ruler of Providence for us. We would not ask for some prudent sage or deeply taught philosopher; we would not choose the most experienced senior; but, without a single moment's hesitation, directly we saw Jesus Christ, in the majesty of his person, we should say, in the words of the Psalmist, He who redeemed us, he who ransomed us, he who loved us - "*He shall choose our inheritance for us.*"

I remember once going to a chapel where this happened to be the text, and the good man who occupied the pulpit was more than a little of an Arminian. Therefore, when he commenced, he said, "This passage refers entirely to our temporal inheritance. It has nothing whatever to do with our everlasting destiny: for," said he, "We do not want Christ to choose for us in the matter of heaven or hell. It is so plain and easy that every man who has a grain of common sense will choose heaven; and any person would know better than to choose hell. We have no need of any superior intelligence, or any greater being, to choose heaven or hell for us. It is left to our own free will, and we have enough wisdom given us, sufficiently correct means to judge for ourselves, and therefore, as he very logically inferred, there was no necessity for Jesus Christ, or any one, to make a choice for us. We could choose the inheritance for ourselves without any assistance." Ah! but my good brother, it may be very true that we *could*, but I think we should want something more than common sense before we *should* choose aright. For you must recollect that it is not simply the choosing of heaven or hell; it is the choosing of pleasure on earth, or of pain of honor or of persecution; and very often the man is bewildered. If it were just simply hell that a man had to choose, none would prefer it; but since it is the sin which engenders hell, and the lust which brings him on to punishment, there comes the difficulty. For by nature we are all inclined to follow the way which leads downwards, we are naturally willing to walk the road which leads to the pit - we do not

seek the pit itself, but the road that leads to it - and were it not for sovereign grace, none of us would ever have followed the path to heaven. I am daily more and more convinced that the difference between one man and another is, not the difference between his use of his will, but the difference of grace that has been bestowed upon him. So that if one man has his "inheritance in heaven," it will be because Christ chose his inheritance for him; and if another man has his place in hell, it will be because he chose his inheritance himself. We *do* need some one to choose for us in that matter; we want our Father to fix our eternal destiny, and write our names in the book of life, otherwise, if left to ourselves, the road to hell would be as naturally our choice as for a piece of inanimate matter to roll downwards, instead of assisting itself upwards.

However, to come at once to our text, and leave every other person's observations alone, "He shall choose our inheritance for us." First, I shall speak of the text as being a *glorious fact* - "He *shall* choose our inheritance for us." And, secondly, I will speak of it as being a *very just and wise prayer* - "He shall choose our inheritance for us."

I. First, then, I shall speak of this as being A GLORIOUS FACT. It is a great truth that God does choose the inheritance for his people. It is a very high honor conferred upon God's servants, that it is said of them, "He shall choose their inheritance." As for the worldling, God gives him anything, but for the Christian, God selects the best portion, and chooses his inheritance for him. Says a good divine, "It is one of the greatest glories of the Church of Christ, that our mighty Maker, and our Friend, always chooses our inheritance for us." He gives the worldling husks; but he stops to find out the sweet fruits for his people. He gathers out the fruits from among the leaves, that his people might have the best food, and enjoy the richest pleasures. Oh! it is the satisfaction of God's people to believe in this exalting truth that he chooses their inheritance for them. But, since there are many who dispute it, allow me just to stir up your minds by way of remembrance, by mentioning certain facts which will lead you to see clearly that verily God does choose our lot, and apportion for us our inheritance.

And, first, let me ask, must we not all of us admit an over-ruling

providence, and the appointment of Jehovah's hands, as to the means whereby we came into this world? These men who think that afterwards we are left to our own free will by choosing this or the other to direct our steps, must admit that our entrance into the world was not of our own will, but that God there had his hand upon us. What circumstances were those in our power which led us to elect a certain person to be our parent? Had we anything to do with it? Did not God of himself appoint our parents, native place, and friends? Could he not have caused me to be born with the skin of the Hottentot, brought forth by a filthy mother who should nurse me in her "kraal," and teach me to bow down to Pagan gods, quite as easily as to have given me a pious mother, who should each morning and night bend her knee in prayer on my behalf? Or, might he not, if he had pleased, have given me some profligate to have been my parent, from whose lips I might have early heard fearful, filthy, and obscene language? Might he not have placed me where I should have had a drunken father, who should have immured me in a very dungeon of ignorance, and brought me up in the chains of crime? Was it not God's providence that I had so happy a lot, that both my parents were his children, and endeavored to train me up in the fear of the Lord? To whom do any of you owe your parentage - be it good, or be it bad? Is it not to be traced to the decree of God? Did not his predestination put you where you were? Was it not the Lord who appointed the place of your birth, and the hour thereof? Look again at your bodies, do you not see the doings of God there? How many children are born into the world deformed? How many come into it deficient in some one or other of their faculties? But look at ourself. You are perhaps comely in person, or if not, you have all your limbs; your bones are well set, and you are strong - must you not trace this up to God? Do you not see that he arranged the commencement of your life for you? You might have opened your career there, or there, or there; but he placed you there in that particular spot, without asking your leave. Did he turn to you and say, O clay! in what shape shall I fashion you? Or, did he who begat you ask you what you would be? No: he made you what he pleased, and if you have now the possession of your faculties and limbs, you must acknowledge and confess that there was the decree of God in it. And, still further, how much of the finger of God must we discern in our temper and constitution? I suppose no one will be foolish enough to say that we are all born with the same natural temperament

and constitution. I am sure there are some persons who differ a great deal from others, at least I should like to differ a little from them - some of those with whom you could not sit a single moment without feeling that you would rather stand in a shower of rain, and get dripping wet than sit on a sofa by their side; some persons are so exceedingly warm in their tempers that they actually burn a hole in their manners and conversation - they cannot speak without being cross, and testy and angry. Now, although such persons often indulge their temper, yet we must allow that, in some measure, they are excusable, because they can trace it to the nature which their mother gave them, (as the worldly poet would say) or rather, that temperament with which they were bore. As if there should be others here who are naturally amiable - who have a kind loving spirit - who are not so easily moved to wrath and passion; in whom there is not so much of that absurd pride which makes man exalt himself above his fellows: who has formed them aright or fashioned them so well? Has not God done it and proved himself a Sovereign? And must we not see in this that God in some way or other has fixed our destiny, from the very fact that the opening bud of life is entirely in his hands? It does seem rational that since God appointed the commencement of our existence, there should be some evidence of his control in the future parts of it.

But now a second observation. I will ask any sensible man, above all, any serious Christian here, whether there have not been certain times in his life when he could most distinctly see that indeed God did "choose his inheritance for him?" You are a young man - you are asked what will be your pursuit: you choose such-and-such a thing. You are about to be apprenticed to that peculiar trade - a misfortune happens - it cannot be done. Without your consent, or will, you are placed in another position. Your will was scarcely consulted; your parents exercised some authority, while the hand of providence seemed to say to you, "it must be so" - and you could not help yourself. Take another case: you had established a house of business - suddenly there came a crushing misfortune which you no more could avoid than an ant could stop an avalanche. You were driven from your business, and now you occupy your present position because there was nothing else to which you could betake yourself. Was not that the hand of God? You cannot trace it to yourself; you were positively compelled to change your plan; you were driven to it. Perhaps

you once had friends on whom you depended; you had no thought of launching out into the world and being independent of the assistance of others. Suddenly, by a stroke of providence, one friend dies; then another; then another; and, without your own volition, you were placed in such circumstances that like a leaf in the whirlpool, you were whirled round and round, and the employment you now follow, or the engagement that now occupies you, is not of your own choosing, but is that of God? I do not know whether all of you can go with me here, but I think you must in some instance or other be forced to see that God has indeed ordained your inheritance for you. If you cannot, I can I can see a thousand chances, as men would call them, all working together like wheels in a great piece of machinery, to fix me just where I am, and I can look back to a hundred places where, if one of those little wheels had run awry - if one of those little atoms in the great whirlpool of my existence had started aside - I might have been anywhere but here, occupying a very different position. If you cannot say this, I know I can with emphasis, and can trace God's hand back to the period of my birth through every step I have taken; I can feel that indeed God has allotted my inheritance for me. If any of you are so wilfully beclouded that you will not see the hand of God in your being, and will insist that all has been done by your will without providence: that you have been left to steer your own course across the ocean of existence; and that you are where you are because your own hand guided the tiller, and your own arm directed the rudder, all I can say is, my own experience belies the fact, and the experience of many now in this place would rise in testimony against you, and say, "Verily, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." - "Man proposes, but God disposes," and the God of heaven is not unoccupied, but is engaged in over-ruling, ordering, altering, working all things according to the good pleasure of his will.

A third fact let me mention. If you turn to the pages of inspiration, and read the lives of some of the most eminent saints, I think you will be obliged to see the marks of God's providence in their histories too plainly to be mistaken. Take, for instance, the life of *Joseph*. There is a young man who from early life serves God. Read that life till its latest period when he gave commandment concerning his bones, and you cannot help marvelling at the wondrous dealings of providence. Did Joseph choose to

be hated of his brethren? But, yet, was not their envy a material circumstance in his destiny? Did he choose to be put into the pit? But was not the putting into the pit as necessary to his being made a king in Egypt as Pharaoh's dream! Did Joseph desire to be tempted of his mistress? He chose to reject the temptation, but did he choose the trial? Nay, God sent it. Did he choose to be put into the dungeon? No. And had he aught to do with the baker's dream, or with Pharaoh's either? Can you not see, all the way through, from first to last, even in the forgetfulness of the butler, who forget to speak of Joseph till the appointed time came, when Pharaoh should want an interpreter, that there was verily the hand of God? Joseph's brethren did just as they liked when they put him into the pit. Potiphar's wife followed the dictates of her own abandoned lust in tempting him. And yet, notwithstanding all the freedom of their will, it was ordained of God, and worked according together for one great end, to place Joseph on the throne; for as he said himself, "Ye meant it for evil, but God intended it for good, that he might save your souls alive!" There was the ordinance of God's Providence in it as clearly as there is light in the sun. Or take again the life of such a man as *Moses*. I suppose no one will deny that there was a Providence in his being placed in the ark, just in the particular spot where Pharaoh's daughter came to wash. And who will deny that it was a providence that she should say, "Go and fetch me a woman to nurse this child," and his mother, Jochebed, should come to nurse him? I imagine that no one would consider that there was an absence of Providence in the fact that the child was comely, and that he grew in all the wisdom of Egypt, and that he had a mind capacious enough to receive knowledge. Nor will you deny the providence that led him to the side of Horeb's mountain, or to Jethro's daughter, nor can you for an instant deny that there was a providence which afterwards brought him before King Pharaoh, and helped him all his way through. The man was a God's-man. God seems to be stamped upon his brow in all his acts; in all the three forties of his life, whether the forty spent in the palace, the forty in the wilderness, or the forty that he was king in Jeshurun. In all this there seems to be so manifestly God overruling the man's acts, that you cannot help saying, "Here is the Almighty! here is the hand of God in everything the man does!" and ye turn from the history of Moses, and say, "Truly God was in this place though I knew it not." I might refer you to the life of *Daniel*, fraught with interest as it was, and in that book you

would see how his steps were first of all sadly guided to Babylon, by being carried captive; and yet that from the degradation of his banishment there arises the grandeur of Daniel's visions, and Daniel's character is displayed in all its clearness, so that you must see that a wise hand was dealing with him, and developing his virtues and his excellencies. More I shall not say here, because I like you to refer to the Scripture yourselves. Scripture is the best book of providence we have ever read. If any one should ask me for a book of anecdotes illustrative of providence, I should refer him to the Bible. There he might find the marvellous story of the woman who went out into a distant country, and during her absence lost her inheritance. On a certain day she went to the king to ask him for it, and just as she came there Gehazi was telling the king concerning a woman whose son Elijah had raised to life - and he said, "O, my Lord! this is the woman, and this is the son!" There were Gehazi and the king talking on the subject, and the woman came in just at the moment. And yet there are some fools who call that a "chance." Why, sirs, it is an appointment as clearly as anything could be. And that is just one out of myriads of instances you could find in Scripture, where you can see God present in the affairs of man.

But as the Bible, after all, is the best proof of any doctrine we can advance, I beg to refer you to one or two texts therein: and first, let me ask you to direct your attention to a passage in the Isaiah, 6,7, "I am the Lord and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things." Now here is a most direct assertion of the power of God in everything: that he maketh peace, and that he maketh evil - that he createth light and that he createth darkness. We may ask as the prophet did of old, "Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?" Even providential evil is to be ascribed to God; and in some marvellous sense which we understand not and cannot comprehend, the ordinance of God has even reference to the sins of men "He has made even the wicked for the day of his wrath." "The vessels of wrath fitted to destruction even these shall show forth his praise. Good and evil in your condition you must ever regard as the work of God. Whatever your circumstances are this morning - are you sick, are you in poverty or are you much troubled, the evil as well as the good is the work of God; and shall a man receive good at the hands of the Lord, and shall

he not in equal patience receive evil? Will you not take everything from God which he is pleased to give, seeing that he himself asserts "I create light I create darkness; I make good and I make evil." Turn now to a passage in Job 14:5. - "His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." What a solemn thought! God has "appointed our bounds." One of the prophets says, "Thou hast hedged up my way with thorns and made a wall so that I cannot find my paths." And that is first the truth in regard to man's life. The "bounds" of it are "appointed!" man only walks within these "bounds;" out of these limits he cannot get. If this does not imply the hand of God in everything I do not know what does. Turn now to a proverb from the wise man - Proverbs 16:33. - "The lot is cast into the lap but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." And if the disposal of the lot is the Lord's whose is the arrangement of our whole life? You know when Achan had committed a great sin the tribes were assembled and the lot fell upon Achan. When Jonah was in the ship they cast lots and the lot fell upon Jonah. And when Jonathan had tasted the honey they cast lots and Jonathan was taken. When they cast lots for an apostle who should succeed the fallen Judas, the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was separated to the work. The lot is directed of God. And if the simple casting of a lot is guided by him how much more the events of our entire life - especially when we are told by our blessed Saviour: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered: not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father." If it be so; if these hairs are counted; if an inventory is written of each one of them; and if the existence of each of these hairs is marked and mapped, how much more precious in the sight of the Lord shall our lives be. Take one more passage in Jeremiah 21:25: "O Lord I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Jeremiah said, "I know" and he was an inspired man, and that satisfies us. "I know." I have sometimes when quoting a passage out of the apostle Paul been met by somebody replying that; really they did not think Paul so great an authority as other Scripture writers." I was astonished at hearing of the following dialogue between two young persons. One remarked "Mr. Spurgeon is too high in doctrine." Said her friend: "He is not higher than St. Paul." "No" said she "But St. Paul was not quite right according to my opinion." I was very glad to sink in the same boat as Paul for if Paul was not right in the view of poor pitiful creatures, verily



Spurgeon should not care. I would rather be wrong with Paul than right with anybody else because Paul was inspired. But will they cut out some of the Old Testament too? Will they dare to accuse Jeremiah of mistake? Jeremiah says, "I know that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

I may not have proved my point to any person who is an antagonist to this doctrine: but to you who believe I do not doubt that I have somewhat confirmed it. Let me say one word. Perhaps some who hear me will say, "Then, sir in the case of Christians you make God the author of sin if you believe that their lives were ordained of him!" *I never said so!* Prove that I said it and then I will come before your bar and try to excuse myself. But until you hear these lips say, that God is the author of sin go your way and prove first of all what it means to speak the truth. I have not asserted any such vile doctrine; but I will tell you who does say that God is the author of sin - and that is the man who does not believe in natural depravity - that man makes God the author of sin. I remember the case of a minister who most fearfully split on this rock. When a child had been doing something that was far from right a friend said, "See there brother, there is original sin in the child; for at its early age see how it sins." "No" said he, "it is only certain powers God has placed in the child developing themselves; it is the nature which God has given it originally it is one of God's perfect creatures." These gentlemen make God the author of sin, because they throw the nature upon God, whereas had we not fallen, every one of us would have been born with a perfect nature; but since we have fallen, anything good in us is the gift of God, and that which is evil springs naturally from our parents, by carnal descent from Adam. I never said God was the author of sin. I thank you, sir, take the accusation yourself.

II. And now having thus spoken upon the doctrine, we shall have a few minutes concerning this as A PRAYER. "He shall choose our inheritance for us." Dry doctrine my friends is of little use. It is not the doctrine which helps us it is our assent to the doctrine. And now I have been preaching this morning concerning God's ordaining our lives. Some do not like it, to them the truth will be of no service. But there are some of you, who if it were not the truth, would say you wish to have it so, for you would say, in

your prayer "Thou shalt choose my inheritance for me."

First, "thou shalt choose my *mercies* for me." You and I beloved often get choosing our own mercies. God in his wisdom may have made one man rich. "Ah!" says he, at night, "would God I had not all this wealth to tease my mind and worry me. I believe any peasant who toils for me has far more rest than I have." Another who is a poor man wipes the hot sweat from his brow, and says, "O my Father, I have asked thee to give me neither poverty nor riches; but here am I so poor that I am obliged to toil incessantly for my bread, would God I could have my mercies there among the rich." One has been born with abilities. He has improved them by education, and this improvement of his natural powers has entailed upon him fearful responsibilities, so that he has to exercise his thoughts and his brain from morning till night. Sometimes he sits down and says, "Now if I am not the most hard worked of all mortals. Those who keep a shop can shut it up; but I am open it all times, and I am always under this responsibility. What shall I do and how shall I rest myself?" Another who has to toil with his hands is thinking, "Oh! if I could lead such a gentlemanly life as that minister. He never has to work hard. He only has to think and read, of course that is not hard work. He has perhaps to sit up till twelve o'clock at night to prepare his sermon, that is not work of course. I wish I had his situation." So we all cry out about our mercies, and want to choose our allotments. "Oh!" says one, "I have health, but I think I could do without that if I had wealth." Another says, "I have wealth, but I could give all my gold to have good constitution." One says, "Here am I stowed away in this dirty London; I would give anything if I could go and live in the country." Another, who resides in the country, says, "There is no convenience here, you have to go so many miles for the doctor, and one thing and the other, I wish I dwelt in London." So that we are none of us satisfied with our mercies. But the true Christian says, or ought to say, "Thou shalt choose my inheritance for me;" high or low, rich or poor, town or country, wealth or poverty, ability or ignorance, "Thou shalt choose my inheritance for me."

Again, we must leave to God the choice of our *employment*. "Oh!" says the preacher - and I have been wicked enough to say so myself - "how would I like to have all my employment in the week that I might sit in the

pew on the Sabbath and hear a sermon, and be refreshed?" I am sure I should be glad to hear a sermon; it is a long time since I heard one. But when I do attend one, it always tires me - I want to be improving on it. How would I like to sit down and have a little of the feast in God's house myself, instead of always being the serving man in God's household. Thank God! I can steal a crumb for myself sometimes. But then we fancy, O that I were not in that employment! O that like Jonah we might flee to Tarshish, to avoid going to that great Nineveh. Another is a Sabbath-school teacher. He says, "I would rather visit the sick than sit with those troublesome boys and girls. And then the teachers do not seem to be so friendly with me as they should be." The Sunday-school teacher thinks he can do anything better than teach; but there is his friend who visits the sick coming down the stairs, and he says, "I could teach little children, or preach a little; but really I cannot visit the sick. There is nothing so hard, and that requires so much self-denial." Another says, "I am a tract distributor. It is not easy work to have your tracts refused at this door, and then at another; and persons looking at you as if you came to rob them; could stand up before the congregation and speak, but I cannot do this." And so we get selecting our employments. Ah! but we ought to say, "Thou shalt choose my inheritance for me;" and leave our employment to God. "If there were two angels in heaven," said a good man, "supposing there were two works to be done, and one work was to rule a city, and the other to sweep a street crossing - the angels would not stop a moment to say which they would do. They would do which ever God told them to do. Gabriel would shoulder his broom and sweep the crossing cheerfully, and Michael would not be a bit prouder in taking the scepter to govern the city." So with a Christian.

But there is nothing that we oftener want to choose than our *crosses*. None of us like crosses at all; but all of us think everybody else's trials lighter than our own. Crosses we must have; but we often want to be choosing them. "Oh!" says one, "my trouble is in my family. It is the worst cross in the world - my business is successful; but if I might have a cross in my business, and get rid of this cross in my family, I should not mind." Then, my beloved hearers, in reference to your mercies, your employments, and your afflictions, say - "Lord, thou shalt choose my inheritance for me! I have been a silly child; I have often tried to meddle

with my lot. Now I leave it. I cast myself on the stream of Providence, hoping to float along. I give myself up to the influence of thy will." He that kicks and struggles in the water, they say, will be sure to sink; but he who lies still will float - so with Providence. He that struggles against it goes down; but he who resigns everything to it, will float along quietly calmly, and happily.

Having thus spoken upon the extent of the surrender very briefly, I might hint at *the wisdom of it*, and show you it is not only good for you to offer this prayer, but it is better for you, than to control yourself. I might tell you that it is good for you to give yourself up to God's hands, because he understands your wants, he knows your case and he will so pity your necessities that he will give you the best supplies. It is better for you then if you trusted in yourself, for if you had the choosing of your troubles, or your employments, you would always have this bitter thought, "Now, I chose it myself, and therefore I must blame my own folly."

But now another thought. *What was the cause of the Psalmist saying this?* How came he to be able to feel it? for there are few Christians who can really affirm it and stand to it: "Thou shalt choose my inheritance for me." I think the cause is to be found in this, that he had a true experience of God's wisdom. Poor David could indeed thank God for having chosen his inheritance for him, for he had given him a very goodly one. He had put him in a king's mansion; he had made him conqueror over Goliath, and had raised him to be ruler over a great people. David, by a practical experience, could say, "Thou shalt choose my inheritance for me." Some of you cannot say it, can you? What is the reason? because you have never witnessed Divine guidance, you have never looked to see the hand that supplies your mercies. Some of us who have seen that hand in a few instances are obliged to say from the very force of circumstances,

"Here I raise my Ebenezer."

Then, again -

"Hither by thy help I've come."

I hope and trust in that same good pleasure which has guided me hitherto, that it will bring me safely home.

Again, it was a *true faith* that made the Psalmist say he relied upon God. He knew him to be worthy of his trust, so he said, "Thou shalt choose my inheritance for me." And, again, it was *true love*, for love can trust - affection can put confidence in the one it loves; and since David loved his God, he took the unwritten roll of his life, and he said, "Write what thou wilt, my Lord." "Thou shalt choose my inheritance for me."

I might finish, if I had time, by telling you the good effects that this produced upon the Psalmist's mind, and what it would produce upon yours; how it would bring a holy calm continually if you were always to pray this prayer; and how it would so relieve your mind from anxiety, that you would be better able to walk as a Christian should. For when a man is anxious he cannot pray; when he is troubled about the world he cannot serve his Master, he is serving himself. If you could "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," beloved, "all things would then be added to you." What a noble Christian you would be; how much more honorable you would be to Christ's religion; and how much better you could serve him.

And now you who have been meddling with Christ's business, I have been preaching this to you. You know you sometimes sing -

"Tis mine to obey, 'tis his to provide,"

but then you have been meddling with Christ's business, you have been leaving your own; you have been trying the "providing" part and leaving the "obeying?" to somebody else. Now, you take the obeying part, and let Christ manage the providing. Come then, brethren, doubting and fearful ones, come and see your father's storehouse, and ask whether he will let you starve while he has stored away such plenty in his garner! Come and look at his heart of mercy, see if that will ever fail! Come and look at his inscrutable wisdom and see if that will ever go amiss: Above all, look up there to Jesus Christ your intercessor, and ask yourself, "while he pleads, can my Father forget me?" And if he remembers even sparrows, will he

forget one of the least of his poor children? "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he will sustain thee," "He will never suffer the righteous to be moved."

This I have preached to God's children: and now one word to the other portion of this crowded assembly. The other day there was a very singular scene in the House of Commons. There is a certain enclosure there set apart for the members; into this place a gentleman ignorantly strayed. By-and- bye some one raised the cry "A stranger in the house!" The sergeant of the House went up to him, took him by the shoulder and reminded him that he had no business there - not being a member - not one of the elect - not having been elected by the country. The man of course looked very foolish. But, as he had made a mistake, he was let go. Had he wilfully strayed within the enclosure, and taken a seat he might not have got off so easily. When I saw that, I thought, "A stranger in the House!" This morning is there not a stranger in the house? There are some here who are strangers to the subject we have been discussing - strangers to God - strangers to true religion. "There's a stranger in the house." It led me to think of that great "assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven;" and I thought of the people who, last Sabbath night, sat down to the Lord's table to partake of the Sacrament; and the idea struck me, "There's a stranger in the house." Now, in the House of Commons, a stranger cannot sit five minutes without being detected, for all eyes are so soon fixed upon him; but in Christ's Church - in this church - a stranger can sit in the house without being found out. Ah! there are strangers sitting here, looking as religious as other people: some that are not children, some that are not chosen some that are not heirs of God. They are "strangers in the house." Shall I tell you what will happen by-and-bye? Though I cannot detect you under the cloak of you profession; though God's people may not find you out, the grim "sergeant of the house "is coming - Death is coming - and he will discover you! What will be the penalty of your intrusion, as a professor, into Christ's Church? What will be your lot if you have been a stranger in his house below, when you find that, though you may have sat for a little while in this House of Commons below, you cannot sit in the House of Lords above? What will be your lot when it shall be said, "Depart ye accused?" And you may exclaim "Lord! Lord! have we not eaten and

drunk in thy presence, and taught in thy streets?" And yet he will say, "Verily, I never knew you!" "You are a stranger in the house!" - " Depart, accursed one!" How can I tell who is a stranger in these pews, and who are strangers upstairs? Some of us are not strangers! "We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." To such of you as *are* strangers, I pray you think of it, and go to Christ's throne, and beg of him that yet you may be his children, and numbered with his people. Then, after that, I will talk with you about my text, but not now. Then I will bid you pray to God, "Thou shalt choose my inheritance for me."

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## **With The King For His Work!**

These were the potters, and those that dwelt among plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work. - 1 Chronicles 4:23

All labor is honorable. No man ever needs to be ashamed of an honest calling. Whether a potter or a gardener, or whatever else his occupation may be, the workman need never blush at the craft or toil by which he earns his honest wage. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," belongs to us all. The sluggard may well be ashamed of his sloth, not the diligent man of his industry. It is quite certain that the word of God does not disparage the humblest calling. I suppose that there is scarcely a trade or occupation which is not mentioned in sacred Scripture. The rough hand and the rugged face of the peasant are to be preferred before the dainty finger and the sleek form of the Pharisee. And the election of grace has comprised men of all sorts-herdsman and fisherman, brickmaker and tent maker; those who ploughed the soil, and those who ploughed the sea.

From all ranks and classes and conditions of men God has been pleased to call forth his own; and he has loved them none the less because they have had to soil their hands with the potter's clay, or bend their backs to till the field. Wretched is the clown who sits in the shade while his comrades work in the sun.

There is an honor then, and a dignity, too, in humble honest toil. The Bible itself does not disdain to record the humble craftsman's name. To serve a king always was and still is deemed a thing to be desired. Those who do such duties claim some deference from their fellows. Work done well, however common, is accounted worthy of its wage, but work done for royalty generally has some special attraction to commend it. Such a man is privileged by appointment to be purveyor of this or that to her Majesty the Queen; and he takes good care to let us know it. It is published in his shop window. It is painted over his door. It is printed on his cards. It is pointed out on his bill-heads. He is "By appointment to the Queen." Royalty seems to dignify him. But, beloved, there is a King whom it is real honor to serve- an honor which angels appreciate-which archangels delight in. That King is the King of kings, and of him we shall have to speak to-night, and of his service.

Earthly kings have many servants, and so has the King Eternal. I trust that many of us count it to be the very joy of our life that we call Jesus Christ our Lord and Master, and that to us it is the highest pleasure to serve him- to render to him all that our strength can possibly yield because we feel that we are debtors to him, and are bound, henceforth, in bonds of love to his divine service for ever and for evermore.

Looking at my text, I see three or four observations springing from it.

I. The first is this. Since we have mention here of potters and those that dwelt among the plants and hedges with the king for his work, we infer that **OUR KING HAS MANY KINDS OF SERVANTS**. Other kings have servants of different sorts, and it would be the extreme of folly if one royal servant should say to another, "You are a nobody. You are of no use, because you cannot perform the offices which I am called to discharge."



No brother must exult over his neighbor. He that is appointed to one office must fill it, and he ought to sympathise with the friend who fulfils any other office, but he should never exalt himself above him. The king has many kinds of servants.

Look at any one of our kings, and you find that they have soldiers. Until the halcyon days of peace shall arrive-may God speedily send them-I suppose there will always be standing armies and regiments of soldiers. Certainly, our great King, the King of kings, has many soldiers. It is their duty to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. They have to put on the panoply of God, and to contend, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places. Full often they have to draw the sharp sword of controversy against doctrinal errors, which might come in to destroy the city of our God. Do not find fault with the Christian because he has soldierly qualities. There hath been no time since Christ went to heaven in which soldiers of Christ were not required. Until the last enemy shall have laid down his weapons, and infidelity and superstition shall be chased out of the world, we shall want these fighting men, who, with sword and shield, go forth to the conflict. They are your Master's servants. Pray for them.

But the king has his watchmen, too, who go not forth to fight, but stay at home and move about the city, especially by night. And do you know, I think the Lord's watchmen are mostly found amongst the sick. During the day, I suppose, there is little fear lest the incense of prayer should cease to rise up to the throne of heaven. But were we all in good health we might be all asleep, and no prayer might be ascending. From this island at a certain hour of the night, if all were locked in slumber, there would be no petitions going up; but it seems to me to be a part of heavenly ordinance that every hour shall be sanctified by prayer, as well the dead of night as the blaze of noon; and so he keeps some of his watchmen awake. They must pray. Their pains, their sleeplessness keep them devout. They lift up their hearts to the Most High. And so with a blessed cordon of prayer the night watches are surrounded, and the Lord does keep his flock safe from the wolf. I like to think of those who cannot come out to the assembly, and cannot take part in any of the active exercises of evangelization, who,

nevertheless, can on their beds keep watch for the Lord. "Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give him no rest until he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." These are his remembrancers - these consumptives, these sick folk, who in the gloomy hours of night keep awake and pour out their heart like water before the Lord. Now, let not the soldier despise her that tarries at home, for she divideth the spoil. Let not Barak exult over feeble Jael who keepeth the tent, for it may be that her prayer shall drive the nail through the adversary's brow; and it shall not fall to Barak to be honored, but unto the humble stay-at-home. Oh, watch, ye watchers. Plead much, ye intercessors.

Ye are the Lord's servants. Active and passive duties are alike valuable, and God accepts them; let not one, therefore, exalt himself against the other. There are some of my Master's servants that are his heralds. You know that great kings have their trumpeters to go and proclaim for them. This is an honorable office, and one to which I trust many a young man here will aspire-to be a herald of the cross to publish salvation. Get ye up to the high mountains and lift up your voice. Lift it up. Lift it up with strength. Say unto the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" But in every court there are scribes as well as heralds, the king's registrars that have to keep the chronicles and the records. So our great King has his scribes-the men of Isachar that can handle the pen, they whose hearts indite the good matter, for they speak of the things which they have made touching the king as the pen moves across the page. Well, whether it be by the spoken utterance of the tongue, or by the silent but vigorous expression of facts, thoughts, and feelings, we must be equally grateful for every opportunity to do anything for Jesus. And instead of beginning to question, "Which is the more valuable?" let each one seek to make his own department of the Master's service as complete and efficient as he can.

Our King, too, has his musicians, as other monarchs have, who play before them to make a goodly sound upon an instrument. And I do delight in those of my Master's servants who can dedicate musical talents to him, and give us, first of all, the sweet poetry with which we adore him in psalm and song; and after that the sweet tunes which help us with united voice to magnify the Lord. Then there are sweet voices which help

us of gruffer note in some way to keep harmony, and so together to praise God. God be thanked for the brother who has the voice of melody. Let him consecrate it to his Lord, and train it, and use it always with discretion, not perhaps too loudly, and yet sometimes not too softly either.

Still in a king's house they do not all sing. They cannot. There are some that make no melody. Servants are there in the royal palace that make no music except it be with the brush and the broom; or whose music consists of the motion of their willing feet as they wait at the table, or as they go from chamber to chamber upon the royal errand. Now, let not those who can sing his praises exalt themselves above those who can perform the lowliest service for the Lord. And let not those who are performing the real service of life think that there is something about their labor that is more acceptable than the singing of Jehovah's praise, for it is not so. Each one in his own order, all acting with the right motive, all helping to take their part in the right spirit, and all shall be equally acceptable with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here is a great variety of servants. I cannot stop to go through them all, but you see the text mentions some of them called potters. I do not know but they may supply a very good emblem of Sunday - school teachers. Let them not be ashamed of the metaphor, for I cheerfully put myself with them, as I hope the minister may have some claim to be classed among the King's potters. What do the potters do but take the clay while it is yet plastic and soft to put it on the wheel and make the wheel revolve, and then with thumb and finger fashion the clay as it revolves before them, to make a vessel fit for the royal use? Well, dear Sunday-school teachers, if ever at any time the human mind is plastic it is while a child is young. We should any of us find it hard to learn who never had studious habits till we reached the age of thirty years or upward. Many a man is willing enough to be a student, but he has not the faculty for it. His skull-case has become set and hard and tight, and he cannot make his brain work as he could have done if he had begun earlier; but with the younger folk-oh what an opportunity there is to do a world with them! We cannot fashion them unless the hand of the Lord be with our hand-unless God makes their hearts soft-unless he puts them on the wheel for us, but if he does

that, oh how a mother's hand can mould her boy! How a teacher's heart can mould the boy or girl committed to him or her, and how throughout life the men and women of the future will bear about them the marks of the teachers of to-day. You are the King's potters. May he help you to do the work aright.

And then there is another class of workers mentioned, and those, I think, are like Sunday-school teachers too-those that dwell among plants and hedges. These were the king's gardeners. They dwelt in sheltered places-in enclosures that were protected by hedges to keep off the wind and so retain the heat. They lived in pleasant retreats where rare plants could grow. Now this is just what the Sunday-school teacher should be. He tries to get the plants out from the wild waste and bring them into the

"Garden walled around,  
Chosen and made peculiar ground;  
The little spot enclosed by grace,  
Out of the world's wide wilderness."

He knows the church is the garden of the Lord and he longs to plant many little slips in it. And I bless God that there are some teachers that my eye rests upon who have planted many little slips that have been growing well.

I thanked God when I saw them first take root: I blest the Lord when it was my business to water them as it is mine now, and that of their teachers still; and I hope it will be the business of the teacher, and the pastor too, to gather much fruit from these little plants that we dwell among, that we plant, and that we water, and that we tend. Dear friends, if you are engaged in this service, it is a right honorable one. The first man was a gardener, and the second man-the Lord from heaven-was supposed to be a gardener, and the supposition was not untrue, for never was there such a garden as he planted. It is he who makes the wilderness to rejoice and blossom as the rose. Because of his own excellency, and because of the plants that he has nurtured, the church is a garden of unparalleled renown.

Thus there are many servants of our great Master; and I will only say this much more concerning them: how blessed it is to be included in the number. Oh, one does not mind what department he takes so long as he may but serve Christ. I have often prayed by myself a prayer like this: "Lord make me the door-mat of the church. Let everybody wipe his boots upon me. Let me bear the mud and the mire so long as my Master's temple may be kept clean by me." And I think any Christian man will wish to take the lowest and most menial place so that he may be accounted of by our Lord as among "his servants who serve him." The scullions in Christ's kitchen are more honorable than the counsellors of an imperial court. They that have to do the worst and blackest work, if such there be to be done for the great Master, have a higher esteem in the judgment of perfect spirits than those that rule empires, conduct armies, but know not the fear of God.

II. I proceed to our second observation: ALL WHO LIVE WITH OUR KING MUST WORK. Read the text. "There were the potters and those that dwelt among plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work." They did not live on the king's bounty and dwell on the king's country estates to do nothing, but they dwelt there for his work. I do not know whether all that call my Master "Lord" have caught this idea. I have thought that some of our church members imagine that the cause of Christ was a coach, and that they were to ride on it, and that they would prefer the box seat, or else a very comfortable seat in the middle of the coach.

Nor do they wish to be incommoded by too many fellow travelers: they do not like to be pressed for room even in the pews: they would rather sit at ease, solace themselves with their own dignity, and ride to heaven in a quiet, respectable, comfortable sort of way. In fact, it would appear to me as if some of our friends imagined that when a man becomes a believer he may repose on a silken couch and be carried to glory in a palanquin, never needing to do anything afterwards, but simply to dream himself into everlasting felicity. They get a nice creed that drugs their conscience; they settle down in some snug corner where they defy anybody to disturb their security; they select a sound minister who runs on one line that he never leaves; they listen sometimes, not often too earnestly, to the plan

and promises of the gospel; and when they have listened they say they are fed.

And if they ask about a minister, the question is, "Are you fed?" When it has got as far as the feeding their interest is exhausted. With the work of faith and the labor of love they never meddle. But let me assure you as a matter of fact that they that live with our King must work. They do not work that they may live with him, but they work because they live with him. Because his grace has admitted them into his courts, therefore from that time they begin to work with all diligence. And why is this? What motive prompts them?

Well, first, because he works. Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The most wonderful worker in the universe is God himself; and his dear Son, when he was here, never had an idle hour. "He went about doing good." He began life as a carpenter, and, I do not doubt, worked hard at it. Then as a Savior he surveyed on the outset his great charge "to fulfill all righteousness." With untiring zeal he pursued his arduous mission to the end, and he finished his work. Until he said, "It is finished," he did not relax his ardor or lay down his toil. Brethren, we cannot dwell with the great working God and yet be sluggards. He will not put up with it. He will not have communion with us unless we are agreed with him. "How can two walk together unless they be agreed?" Are you an active-minded person, and have you had a servant that you could not stir or hasten or make her move with agility? Or have you had a workman who took one step to-day and another to-morrow? Why, it gives you the fidgets. It makes your flesh creep. You do not know what to do. You cannot bear it. You take hold of the broom, or whatever else he is pretending to handle, and turn to; for you would sooner do the work yourself. Your patience is exhausted. Now, a glorious and active-minded God will not walk with sluggards. He cannot endure them. If you are to dwell with God you must be his servant, you must have something to do in his name; in whatever occupation it may be, to lay yourself out for his glory is essential and imperative.

The next reason why those that dwell with him must work, is that his company always inspires us with the desire to do something for him. You

never spent a happy hour alone in private prayer holding privileged communion with God when you did not feel constrained to say, "Lord, show me what thou wouldest have me to do." You never enjoyed full assurance of faith without the question coming to you, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?" You cannot look at him on the cross bleeding, pouring out his soul unto death for us, without feeling that the couch of inglorious ease would ill befit a faithful disciple's favored fellowship with him. You crave that your hand should find something to do, and that your tongue should have something to say. You yearn for some opportunity of sounding forth his dear praises. You may go where you will if you want to be idle, but you cannot go to the cross and come away a sluggard. The nails of it do prick us into sacred industry. They are the spurs of Christian duty. The agonies of our self-sacrificing Lord inspire us with such ardor, that we feel we must serve him, and take it as a favor, not as a tax. It is a delight rather than a duty to lay ourselves out for him.

When you get into Christ's courts, there is so much to do that you cannot help doing something. If you are a member of an active church you find yourself called upon this way and that way to spend and to be spent for Christ. In such a hive drones are despicable. If you live where there are young converts, where there are tried believers, where there are backsliders, where there are hopeful penitents;-as these come under your notice you perceive that your Master's house is full of service, and you cannot refrain from taking some share in it, and taking it eagerly, anxiously, and cheerfully.

Nay, a true Christian cannot stroll outside his Master's house without feeling calls to service. Can you walk these streets and have your ears assailed, as I grieve to say you must, with the filthiest language from working men,-who seem, to my mind, to have become more coarse in their talk the last ten years than they used to be,-can you go down a street and have your blood curdle at the frequent oath without feeling that you must be up and doing? Can you see these streets swarming with children and not come forward to help the Sunday-school? Can you watch the multitudes of boys and girls streaming out of the Board School and not say to yourself.

"What is done with these on the Lord's day? Others must be hard at work with them, why am I not doing something?" Everywhere, on all hands, work is suggested, and especially by the activity of our adversaries. See how they compass sea and land to make one proselyte! See how the devil incessantly goes about seeking whom he may devour! He appears to have lost his eyelids. He never sleeps. He is intent continually upon devouring the souls of men; and all the incidents and accidents we meet with say to us, "Are you Christians? Then bestir yourselves. Are you the King's servants? Then be up and doing, for there are ten thousand things that must be done at once, if done at all, without waiting to discuss the best way of doing them."

At any rate, of this thing you may be quite certain. The professor of true religion who is negligent in his Lord's service must and will lose the comforts of his Lord's presence. I speak not, of course, of those who are sick, infirm, or helpless, for as I have already explained, by their patience and resignation and intercession they are exercising a very important part of the work of the Lord's house, but I speak of those of you who might be actively engaged, and I regard it as a rule without exception that sluggish Christians become uncomfortable. When you meet with a brother or sister in Christ who is always grievous, complaining of doubts and fears, sighing and groaning, crying and moaning over an experience that puzzles rather than profits, you need not ask many questions, for you may safely interpret all the symptoms. That person does not teach in the Sunday-school. That person does not go out preaching in the villages. That person is very likely doing nothing. An earnest worker may be occasionally beset with temptations, but he will not be perpetually bewildered with these throes of anxiety. If that be the regular, habitual condition of the man, it looks as if he had a want of occupation. There be many flies and moths and spiders and cobwebs in the chambers of the indolent. Surely they would be brushed away if there were more activity for Christ. I think any minister will tell you it is the people who do nothing themselves in a church that find fault with those who do the work. With great discernment they can always discover flaws in the policy and practice of the earnest brethren who take the pains and do the drudge of office. Bless their hearts, why do they not do it better



themselves? No, not they. They seem to think that their department in the sacred household is to find fault with their Master's servants. Now I have looked all over his house, for I have been for years in it, occupying an official position; I have pried over my Master's books, and I have been into his record office, but do you know I have not found anywhere that he has ever issued appointments to any ladies or gentlemen to be the supervisors and censurers of his servants. I believe they act without commission and that they will probably go without any wages. Or if all service rendered meets with an equitable retribution, and the wages of sin is death, their carpings will bring them no comfort, and their revilings will be requited with bitter remorse. O brothers and sisters, there is no colourable excuse for your culpable inactivity. Christ walks at a quick pace. If you want to walk with him you must not loiter. He is no friend to the sluggard. I cannot always tell you where fellowship with him may be found, but I can tell you where it can never be enjoyed. He is not where idlers lounge and congregate to gossip with gibe and jeer, with slur and sneer, railing at the very men whose conduct proves their conscience so pure that they would blight their own interests to bless the Lord's cause.

But he is with his people who are diligently devoted to his service and seek to him for strength to do that service well. Those that live with our King must work.

III. Now, thirdly, **THOSE THAT WORK FOR OUR KING OUGHT TO LIVE WITH HIM.** That is the other side of it, for these potters and these gardeners dwelt with the king for his work. I offer to the Sunday-school teachers of the south side of London a motto which may last them for life: "With the King for his work." Put that up now over your mantelpieces. "With the King for his work." Work by all means, because you are with the King; but get with the King by all means, because you want to do his work. Oh, how important it is that every good servant of our heavenly Master should be with him. Why? Do you ask me; why? Because you cannot know his will if you do not live with him. He that lives with Christ gets his orders every day; and oftentimes from moment to moment he gets guidance from his great Lord's eye. He says, "Thou shalt guide me with thine eye." You know how a servant in the house watches her mistress. The mistress does not need always to speak. Perhaps it is at a

dinner. There is a number of guests. She does not keep calling, "Mary," and instructing her in measured sentences to attend to the various requirements, but by a simple movement of her head, or a quiet glance of her eye, Mary can understand all her mistress means.

Now, those that live with Jesus Christ have a sort of secret alphabet between themselves and him. Oftentimes when a Christian man does the right thing, you read as a story, or as an anecdote that enlivens a book, how strangely wise he was, how he dropped the fit word at the fitting moment, how he had a knack of giving the right answer to one who wrongly assailed him. Do you know why he had that knack? He lived with his Master, so he knew what you knew not. He knew the meaning of his Master's eye, and it guided him. Oh, I believe if Sunday-school teachers and ministers live with their Lord they will be made wise to win souls.

Oftentimes things they never thought of saying they will say exactly at the right time to the right persons, and so surprising will it be to the persons addressed that they will almost think that you must have been told about them. Keep close to your Master, and then you will know your Master's will. Why should workers live with the Lord, but that they may gather strength?

Every hour of communion with Christ. is an hour of increased vigor. In the old fable when Hercules fought with the giant he could not kill him. He flung him down with all his might, and Hercules could fling a fellow about. He thought he had dashed him to pieces, but every time he got up stronger than before, so down he flung him again. "Surely," he thought, "if I have destroyed the hydra and the lion I can kill this man-this giant." But up the giant sprang again, because the old fable said that the earth was his mother, and every time that he fell he touched his mother and got new life from her.

So every time a Christian falls on his knees, draws near to his God, he gets a touch of his great Father, and he gets new strength. When the devil throws a Christian to his knees-throws him down with such force, too, that he thinks, "I will crush him," he gets up and is stronger than the devil again. Over he goes again. He trips him up, flings him down, but every

time he falls to praying he rises from before the mercy-seat like a giant against the foe. Oh, then, dwell near the Lord, for that is the source of your strength as well as your knowledge.

Why should workers dwell with the King? Surely it is thereby to keep up their enthusiasm. Humanly speaking, the very soul of Christianity is enthusiasm. Cold religion-well, there are some cold things that give one a chill to think of. Cold religion! It is the most ghastly spectacle on which a pure and fervent heart can look. Cold religion! Ugh! It is nauseous. There is only one thing worse, and that is a cool, listless profession; for Jesus Christ tells us that the lukewarm made him sick outright. To the Laodicean, said the faithful and true witness, "I would thou wert cold or hot," "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Let your faith be at furnace heat. Religion cannot long be lukewarm; it will either die out or it will kindle and set you all on fire. If it consume a man, then it only reaches the heat at which Jesus Christ lived. Somebody has very properly said, "Bloodheat is the healthy heat for a Christian's soul." So it is. But what is the blood-heat? The heat of our great atoning sacrifice-the blood-heat of our blessed Redeemer when he sweat great drops of blood, and gave himself for us. Would God we were filled with such flaming zeal. But ah! you never can attain unto it except you live with him. The world is cold and icebound, and the church is chill and pierced with the east wind. Would you get into the tropics where fruits luxuriant grow? Live near to Christ, then you will become enthusiastic, and pursue your work with a fervor all divine.

We must live with our King too, that we may be inspired with courage. I suppose some teachers are timid. I know some preachers are haunted with strange fears. The way to quicken courage is to look the King in the face. When you see how patiently he endured reproach, and how resolutely he proceeded with his ministry of love, even to die for us, you will not be afraid of the faces of men, nor will you shrink from duty because nervous friends warn you of danger.

And you had need live with the King if you would cultivate the soft grace of patience. Sunday-school work is very trying. It often vexes the soul, and you get weary. But when you go and look at him and see how he

failed not, neither was discouraged, but went through with the work which he undertook till he could say, "It is finished," you will chide your soul for all its futile excitement and feverish unrest. By your patience and perseverance you will approve yourselves as children of God and followers of Christ.

In fine, dear friend, I do not know that a person can do anything for our Lord Jesus Christ aright without living in communion with him. I am persuaded that Martha got into trouble about that dinner of hers, because she did not mix with her serving the sitting at the Savior's feet with Mary. I am sure that we can attempt too much and accomplish too little; for we can do apparently a great deal, but because we have not had power with God, very little may come of it. Steeped seed is the best for Sunday - school teachers. It is always well to take care that the good seed you bring to the little plots-your children's little minds-has been laid in soak the night before in earnest prayer. It is wonderful how quickly it sprouts and what a deal of vitality it manifests if you put it asoak. The dry seed-dry teaching without any praying- without any communion with God-may be productive, but it is a long time in coming up and yielding a reward for your labor.

Believe me, my dear brothers and sisters, that to abide near to Jesus is the very life of Christian service. I would have you feel and speak on this wise, " I am engaged in the service of the King. Fifty little children I have under my charge-all infants-and I am trying to teach them something, but they are all full of fun, and I cannot get anything into their little heads, but it would never do to think of giving it up, because I am doing it for Jesus. I would not do it for anybody else." Or, "I have got half-a-dozen unruly boys in the ragged school. I would not undertake the work of this school for the biggest salary that could be offered me, but I can do it for Jesus Christ, and I will do it for the love and gratitude I feel to him; in fact, I am happy in doing it because I know that he is looking on-that he sees all that I do-for if nobody else appreciates my service he does, and he will accept me, and he will help me, and some blessed result will come of it, so I will tax all my energies to the task as the workman wakes up when there is a king watching. With what care and diligence he will exercise his highest skill! So let thy task be performed with all thy might, for if done

for him it ought to be done well. Nothing should be slurred over in a slovenly fashion that is done for Jesus. This thought, that I am with the King is animating and helpful to me, I can assure you beyond any description of its influence that I can convey to you.

IV. Now to our last point, upon which only a few words. That which should reconcile us to live in any place is that we may work for the King in it; and that which should reconcile us to any work is that WE ARE WORKING FOR THE KING. "These were the potters that dwelt among plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work." In any place where you dwell you can dwell with the King. These pottery men and gardeners were on the king's estate. You need not live next door a church; you need not live with a pious family to have God with you. Oh, bless the Lord, I have met with my Lord and Master by the bedsides of the sick in Kent-street, many a time. My friend Mr. McCree has met the Lord many a time in a cellar in St. Giles's; and he is often to be found in Bethnalgreen and Shoreditch-in the very worst habitations that ever human beings dwelt in. Dwell wherever you may-on the land or on the sea, in the hospital or in the workhouse,-you may still dwell there with the King. He does not want any carpets. He does not care about rich furniture. In fact, he does not often come where the floors are covered with Turkey carpets. I think the scarcest place for Christ is with the rich; they seldom have much to say about him. I speak not of them all, but of very many. If for my part I want half an hour's real talk about Jesus Christ I must visit the poor man. I do not know how others find it. It is so; it is sadly so, in my experience. Well, wherever you dwell and whatever your rank, you may have the Lord dwelling with you; and this ought to reconcile you to dwell anywhere, if you can serve the Lord. I always find that when men are converted if they live in a very bad neighborhood, they try and get out of it. That is right enough. I think if I were living in some neighbourhoods the sooner I could change my residence the better pleased I should be. At the same time, in an ill locality a good man is a great boon. Where is a bright lamp more wanted than down in a dark alley? Where is the pure light most wanted? Is not it amongst the depraved and profligate? Sometimes I almost fear that the repugnance with which Christian people fly away from a bad district is a misfortune for the population, especially for the young who are left behind.

Of the sympathy that might be felt, and the good that might be done by their being there, the inhabitants are henceforth bereft. My dear brother, if you are placed in the very midst of ribald wickedness, an opportunity to serve the Lord where Satan's seat is might induce you to stop there awhile with the self-denial of a missionary among the heathen. It may be that it is cowardly and craven to run away. Rather should it become you to say, "I am put into this fort in the midst of the enemy, and I mean to keep it; my fixed purpose is to hoist the flag of Christ on the top of it, and instead of deserting the post to strive incessantly to win souls for him." At any rate, if you are compelled to live in neighbourhoods that you do not like, it ought to be some comfort to you that the King will live there with you, and that perhaps he has placed you there to try your faith, to honor his name, and to bless the outcasts. Go, beloved, wherever you reside and realize that your abode is a station you are appointed to occupy for his work. Let the nurse-girl in the family, with the little ones about her, live for Christ and lose no opportunity of letting her light shine. Let the artizan, thrown into the large workshop, where there are none like himself, account that he is put there for the King's work. The tradesman, dealing with many who like to have a word across the counter, should order his conversation for the glory of Christ. The merchant, who will be sure to make many friends in business, should not forget his Lord, but bear a faithful testimony as often as he can.

The employer of many hands should take care that he seeks the welfare of their souls, and consider by what manifold agencies he can promote the King's work. You that have leisure, dear friends, should feel that your spare time is a sacred trust, to be squandered never, but to be consecrated ever to the King's work. You that have talents should feel the like imperative obligation-yea, and especially you that have only one talent! It was the man of one talent that buried it. So it commonly is. You have not much talent you think-nothing brilliant. Then the temptation is to go and bury your bit of bronze because you cannot display any glittering gold.

Your conscious weakness produces a wicked conceit. Do not withhold your mite from the treasury because you have not a million to

contribute. Live still with the King for his work.

Doubtless I have been addressing some who have never served the King, who do not know him, who do not love him. I am not going to ask you to work for him. No, no. My Lord wants none to work for him who do not believe in him. "Come and trust him." Our soldier friends over there, a sprinkling of whom I am pleased to see, and proud to salute, know how to enlist in the service. How does a man first become a soldier? Well, he receives a shilling. He receives, and then he is a soldier. He that will receive Christ is made a soldier of Christ. it is receiving you have got to begin with. And after you have received Christ then you shall go forth and serve him. Put out an empty hand and receive Christ into it by a little faith, and then go and serve him, and the Lord bless you henceforth and for ever.

Amen.

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## The Withered Fig Tree

And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there. Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! - Matthew 21:17-20

This is a miracle and a parable. We have books upon the miracles, we have an equal number of volumes upon the parables: into which of these volumes shall we place this story? I would answer, put it in both. It is a singular miracle, and it is a striking parable. It is an acted parable, in which our Lord gives us an object-lesson. He gets truth before men's eyes, in this instance, that the lesson may make a deeper impression upon the mind and heart. I would lay great stress upon the remark that this is a parable; for, if you do not look upon it in that light, you may misunderstand it. We are not of those who come to the Word of God with the cool impertinence of the critic, thinking ourselves wiser than the Book, and therefore able to judge it. We believe that the Holy Spirit is greater than man's spirit, and that our Lord and Master was a better judge of what is right and good than any of us can be. Our place is at his feet: we are not cavillers, but followers. Whatever Jesus does and says, we regard with deepest reverence; our chief desire is to learn as much as we can from it. We see great mysteries in his simplest actions, and profound teaching about his plainest words. When he speaks or acts, we are like Moses at the bush, and feel that we stand on holy ground.

Flippant persons have spoken of the story before us in a very foolish manner. They have represented it as though our Lord, being hungered, thought only of his necessity, and, expecting to be refreshed by a few green figs went up to the tree in error. Finding no fruit upon the tree, it



being a season when he had no right to expect that there would be any, he was vexed, and uttered a malediction against a tree, as though it had been a responsible agent. This view of the case results from the folly of the observer: it is not the truth. Our Lord desired to teach his disciples concerning the doom of Jerusalem. The reception given him in Jerusalem was full of promise, but it would come to nothing. Their loud hosannas would change to, "Crucify Him!"

When Jerusalem was to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar a former time, the prophets had not only spoken, but they had used instructive signs. If you turn to the Book of Ezekiel, you will there see the record of many signs and symbols which set forth the coming woe. These tokens excited curiosity, secured consideration, and brought home the prophetic warnings to the homes and hearts of the common people. Again, the judgments of God were at the gates of the guilty city. Words—the words of Jesus—had been wasted; and even tears—tears of the Saviour—had been spilt in vain; it was time that the sign should be given—the sign of condemnation. Ezekiel had said, "All the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, and have dried up the green tree"; and herein was suggested the very image which was employed by our Lord. He saw a fig tree, by a freak of nature, covered with leaves at a time when, in the ordinary course of things, it should not have been so. Our Lord saw that this was a fine object lesson for him, and therefore he took his disciples to see if there were figs as well as leaves. When he found none, he bade the fig tree remain for ever fruitless, and immediately it began to wither. Our Lord would have used the fig tree to excellent purpose had he ordered it to be used a fuel to warm cold hands, but he did better when he used it to warm cold hearts. No wrong was done to any man; it was a tree on the waste, and utterly worthless. No pain was inflicted; no anger was felt. In the object-lesson, the Lord simply said to the fig tree, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever"; and it withered away. In this our Lord taught a great lesson to all ages at a small expense. The withering of a tree has been the quickening of many a soul; and if it had not been so, it was no loss to any that a tree should wither when it had proved itself barren. A great teacher may do far more than destroy a tree, if he can thereby give demonstrations of truth, and scatter seeds of virtue. It is the veriest idleness of criticism to find fault with our

Lord Jesus for a piece of fine poetic instruction, for which, had it been spoken by any other teacher, the most lavish praise would have been awarded by these very critics.

The blighted fig tree was a singularly apt simile of the Jewish state. The nation had promised great things to God. When all the other nations were like trees without leaves, making no profession of allegiance to the true God, the Jewish nation was covered with the leafage of abundant religious profession. Scribes, pharisees, priests and elders of the people were all sticklers for the letter of the law, and boaster of being worshippers of the one God, and strict observers of all his laws. Their constant cry was, "The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these." "We have Abraham to our Father" was frequently on their lips. They were a fig tree in full leaf. But there was no fruit upon them; for the people were neither holy, nor just, nor true, nor faithful towards God, nor loving to their neighbor. The Jewish church was a mass of glittering profession, unsupported by spiritual life. Our Lord had looked into the temple, and had found the house of prayer to be a den of thieves. He condemned the Jewish church to remain a lifeless, fruitless thing; and it was so. The synagogue remained open; but its teaching became a dead form. Israel had no influence upon the age. The Jewish race became, for centuries, a withered tree: it had nothing but profession when Christ came, and that profession proved powerless to save even the holy city. Christ did not destroy the religious organization of the Jews: he left them as they were; but they withered away from the root, till the Roman came, and with the axes of his legions cleared away the fruitless trunk.

What a lesson is this to nations! Nations may make a profession, a loud profession, of religion, and yet may fail to exhibit that righteousness which exalteth a nation. Nations may be adorned with all the leafage of civilization, and art, and progress, and religion; but if there be no inner life of godliness, and no fruit unto righteousness, they will stand for a while, and then wither away.

What a lesson this is to churches! There have been churches which have stood prominent in numbers and in influence; but faith, and love, and

holiness have not been maintained, and the Holy Ghost has left them to the vain show of a fruitless profession; and there stand those churches, with the trunk of organization, and widely-extended branches, but they are dead, and every year they become more and more decayed. Brethren, such churches we have even among Nonconformists at this hour. May it never be so with this church! We may have numbers of people coming to hear the Word, and a considerable body of men and women professing to be converted; but unless vital godliness is in their midst, what are congregations and churches? We might have a valued ministry, but what would this be without the Spirit of God? We might have large subscriptions, and many outward efforts; but what of these without the spirit of prayer, the spirit of faith, the spirit of grace and consecration? I dread lest we should ever come to be like a tree, precocious with a superlative profession, but yet worthless in the sight of the Lord, because the secret life of piety, and vital union to Christ, are gone. Better that the axe clear away every vestige of the tree than that it stand out against the sky an open lie, a mockery, a delusion.

This is the lesson of the text; but I do not want you to consider it only in the gross, in its relation to nations and churches; but my heart's desire is that we may learn the lesson in detail, and take it home each one to his own heart. May the Lord himself speak to each one of us this morning personally! In preparing the sermon, I have had great searchings of heart, and I pray that the hearing of it may produce the same results. May we tremble, lest, having a profession of godliness, we should wear it conspicuously, and yet should lack the fruitbearing which alone can warrant such a profession. The name of saintship, if it be not justified by sanctity, is an offence to honest men, and much more to a holy God. A pronounced and forward avowal of Christianity without a Christian life at the back of it is a lie, abhorrent to God and man, an offence against truth, a dishonour to religion, and the forerunner of a withering curse.

May the Holy Spirit help me to preach very solemnly and powerfully at this time!

Our first observation is this—There are in the world cases of forward, but fruitless, profession; our second observation will be this—These will be

inspected by King Jesus; and our third remark will be—The result of that inspection will be very terrible. Help us, O Holy Spirit!

I. First, then, THERE ARE IN THE WORLD CASES OF FORWARD, BUT FRUITLESS, PROFESSION.

The cases to which we refer are not so very rare. They far excel their fellow-men. Their promise is very loud, and their exterior very impressive. They look like fruitful trees; you expect many baskets of the best figs from them. They impress us by their talk, they overpower us by their manners. We envy them, and lash ourselves. This last might not harm us; but to envy hypocrites can never be otherwise than injurious in the long run; for, when their hypocrisy is discovered, we are apt to despise religion as well as the pretenders to it. Do you not know persons who are in appearance everything and in reality nothing? O dark thought! may we not ourselves be such persons? See the man, he is strong in faith, even to presumption; he is joyous in hope, even to levity; he is loving in spirit, even to utter indifference about truth! How very glib he is in talk! How deep he is in theological speculation! Yet he has never entered the kingdom by the new birth. He has never been taught of God. The gospel has come to him in word only. He is a stranger to the work of the Holy Ghost. Are there not such persons? Are there not persons who are defenders of orthodoxy and yet are heterodox in their own conduct? Do we not know men and women whose lives deny what their lips profess? We are sure it is so. All vineyards have had in them fig trees covered with leaves, which have been conspicuous from the foliage of their profession, and yet have brought forth no fruit unto the Lord.

Such persons seem to defy the seasons. It was not the time of figs, yet was this fig tree covered with those leaves which usually betokened ripe figs. I suppose you all know what I have often seen for myself—the fig tree puts forth its fruit before its leaves. Early in the year you see green knobs put forth at the end and points of the branches, and these, as they swell, turn out to be green figs. The leaves come forward afterwards, and by the time the tree is fully covered with leaves, the figs are ready for eating. When a fig tree is in full leaf, you expect to find figs upon it; and if you do not, it will bear no figs for that season. This tree put forth leaves abundantly

before its season, and therein excelled all other fig trees. Yes, but it was a freak of nature, and not a healthy result of true growth. Such freaks of nature occur in forests and in vineyards; and their like may be met with in the moral and spiritual world. Certain men and women seem far in advance of those round about them, and astonish us by their special virtues. They are better than the best; more excellent than the most excellent—at least in appearance. They are so zealous that they are not chilled by the surrounding world: their great souls create a summer for themselves. The backwardness of saints, and the wickedness of sinners, do not hinder them; they are too vigorous to be affected by their surroundings. They are very superior persons, covered with virtues, as this fig tree with leaves.

Observe, that they overleap the ordinary rule of growth. As I have told you, the rule is, first the fig, and afterwards the fig leaves; but we have seen persons who make a profession before they have produced the slightest fruit to justify it. I like to see our young friends, when they believe in Christ, proving their faith by holiness at home, by godliness abroad, and then coming forward and confessing their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That looks to be the sober and normal way of proceeding, for a man first to be, and then to profess to be; first to be lighted, and then to shine; first to repent and believe, and then to confess his repentance and his faith in the Scriptural way, by baptism into Christ. But these people think it unnecessary to attend to the trifle of heart-work—they dare to omit the most vital part of the matter. They attend a revival meeting, and they declare themselves saved, though they have not been renewed in heart, and possess neither repentance nor faith. They come forward to avow a mere emotion. They have nothing better than a resolve; but they flourish it as if it were the deed itself. Quick as thought, the convert sets up to be a teacher. Without test or trial of his brand-new virtues, he holds himself forth as an example to others. Now, I do not object to the rapidity of the conversion; on the contrary, I admire it, if it be true; but I cannot judge till I see the fruit and evidence in the life. If the change of conduct is distinct and true, I care not how quickly the work is done; but we must see the change. There is a heat which leads to fermentation, and a fermentation which breeds sourness and corruption. O dear friends, never think you may skip the fruit and come at once to the

leaf. Be not like a builder who should say, "It is all nonsense to spend labor and material on works underground. Foundations are never seen; I can run up a house in no time; four walls and a roof will not take long." Yes; but how long will such a house last? Is it worthwhile building a house without foundations? If you omit the foundation, why not omit the house altogether? Is there not a tendency, especially in these days, when men are either skeptical or fanatical, to cultivate a mushroom godliness, which comes up in a night and perishes in a night? Will it not be ruinous if conviction of sin is slighted, repentance slurred, faith imitated, the new birth counterfeited, and godliness feigned? Beloved, this will never do. We must have figs before leaves, acts before declarations, faith before baptism, union to Christ before union with the church. You cannot leap over the processes of nature, neither may you omit the processes of grace, lest haply your foliage without fruit become a curse without cure.

These people usually catch the eye of others. According to Mark, our Lord saw this tree "afar off." The other trees were not in leaf, and consequently, when he began to go up the hill toward Jerusalem, he saw this one tree quite a long way before he reached it. A fig tree dressed in its vesture of lovely green would be a striking object, and would be observable at a distance. It stood, also, near the track from Bethany to the city gate. It stood where every wayfarer would observe it, and probably speak with wonder of its singular leafage for the season. Persons whose religion is false are frequently prominent, because they have not grace enough to be modest and retiring. They seek the highest room, aspire to office, and push themselves into leadership. They do not walk in secret with God, they have little concern about private godliness, and so they are all the more eager to be seen of men. This is both their weakness and their peril. Though least of all able to bear the wear and tear of publicity, they are covetous for it, and are, therefore, all the more watched. This is the evil of the whole matter; for it makes their spiritual failure to be known by so many, and their sin brings all the greater dishonor upon the name of the Lord, whom they profess to serve. Better far to be fruitless in a corner of a wood than on the public way which leads to the temple.

Such people not only catch the eye, but they often attract the company of good men. Who blames us for drawing near to a tree which is in leaf long

before its fellows? Is it not right to cultivate the acquaintance of the eminently good? Our Saviour and his disciples went up to the leafy fig tree: not merely did it win their eye, but it drew them to itself. Have we not been fascinated by the charming conduct of one who seemed to be a brother in the Lord, more devout than usual, fearing God above many? Like Jehu, he has said, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord;" and we have been glad enough to ride in the chariot with him: he seemed so godly, so generous, so humble, so useful, that we looked up to him, and wished that we were more worthy to be associated with him. Young converts and seekers are naturally apt to do this; and hence it is a sad calamity when their confidence turns out to have been misplaced.

Whenever we see any standing out prominently, and making a bold profession, what should be our thoughts about them? I answer, do not judge them; do not fall into habitual mistrust. Your Lord did not stand at a distance and say, "That tree is worthless." No, he went up to it, with his disciples, and carefully inspected it. These prominent persons may be wonders of divine grace: let us hope and pray that they may be. Let the Lord and his love be magnified in them! God has his fig trees that bear figs in winter; God has his saints who are filled with good works when the love of others has waxed cold. The Lord raises some up to be as standards for the truth, rallying points in the battle. The Lord can make young men mature, and new converts useful. It has been said, by way of proverbial expression, that "some men are born with beards." The Lord can give great grace, so as to make spiritual growth rapid and yet solid. He does this so often that we have no right to doubt but what the prominent brother before us is one of these growths of grace. Unless we are forced to see with bitter regret that there are no marks of grace, no evidences of faith, let us hope for the best, and be glad at the sight of God's grace. If we are inclined to be suspicious, let us turn the point of that sword towards our own bosoms. Self-suspicion will be healthy; suspicion of others may be cruel. We are not judges; and even if we are, we had better keep to our own court, and sit on our own judgment-seat, dispensing the law within the little kingdom of our own selves.

Where those who are prominent turn out to be all they profess to be, they are a great blessing. It would have been well if that morning there had

been figs upon that fig tree. It would have been a great refreshment to the Saviour if he had been fed by the green fruit. When the Lord makes the first in position to be first in holiness, it is a blessing to the church, to the family, and to the neighborhood; indeed, it may prove to be a blessing to the whole world. We ought, therefore, to pray the Lord to water with his own hand those trees which he has planted; or, in other words, to uphold by his grace those men of his right hand whom he has made strong for himself.

But when we take the text and lay it home to our own hearts, we need not be so gentle with it as in the cases of others. We have, many of us, for long years been like this fig-tree, as to prominence and profession. And in this matter, so far, there is nothing of which to be ashamed. Yet it is evidently to ourselves that the parable speaks; for we have stood in open avowal and distinct service by the wayside, and we have been seen "afar off." Certain of us have made a very bold profession, and we are not ashamed to repeat that profession before men and angels. Hence the enquiry: Are we truthful in it? What if we should turn out to be contending for a faith in which we have no share? What if in us there should be none of the life of love, and consequently our profession should be "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal"? What if there should be talk, and no work; doctrine, and no practice? What if we are without holiness? Then we shall never see the Lord. Whatever terrible aspect this parable-miracle may have, it bears upon many of us. I, the preacher, feel how much it bears upon me. In that spirit have I thought it over, anxiously trusting that every deacon and every elder of this church, and every member and every worker among you, may have great searchings of heart. May every minister of Christ who may have dropped in here this morning, say to himself, "Yes, I have been like that fig tree in prominence and in profession; God grant that I be not like it in being devoid of fruit!"

II. It is time that we remembered the solemn truth of our second head:  
**THESE WILL BE INSPECTED BY KING JESUS.**

He will draw nigh to them, and when he comes up to them he will look for fruit. The first Adam came to the fig tree for leaves, but the Second Adam looks for figs. He searches our character through and through, to see



whether there is any real faith, any true love, any living hope, any joy which is the fruit of the Spirit, any patience, any self-denial, any fervour in prayer, any walking with God, any indwelling of the Holy Spirit; and if he does not see these things, he is not satisfied with chapel-going, church-going, prayer meetings, communions, sermons, Bible readings; for all these may be no more than leafage. If our Lord does not see the fruit of the Spirit upon us, he is not satisfied with us, and his inspection will lead to severe measures. Notice that what Jesus looks for is not your words, not your resolves, not your avowals, but your sincerity, your inward faith, your being indeed wrought upon by the Spirit of God to bring forth fruits meet for his kingdom.

Our Lord has a right to expect fruit when he looks for it. When he went up to that fig tree he had a right to expect fruit; because the fruit, according to nature, comes before the leaf. If, then, the leaf has come, there should be fruit. True, it was not the time of figs; but then, if it was not the time of figs, it certainly was not the season for leaves, for the figs are first. This tree, by putting forth leaves, which are the signs and tokens of ripe figs, virtually advertised itself as bearing fruit. So, however bad the times may be, some of us profess that we will not follow the times, but will follow the one immutable truth. As Christians, we confess that we are redeemed from among men, and have been delivered from this perverse generation. Christ may not expect fruit of men who acknowledge the world and its changing ages as their supreme guide; but he may well look for it from the believer in his own Word. He looks for fruit from the preacher, from the Sunday-school teacher, from the church-officer, from the sister who conducts a Bible class, from that brother who has a band of young men around him, to whom he is a guide in the gospel. He does expect it of all who submit to his gospel rule. As Christ had a right to expect fruit of a leaf-bearing fig tree, so he has a right to expect great things from those who avow themselves his trustful followers. Ah me! how this fact should move the preacher with trembling! Should it not affect full many of you in the same manner?

Fruit is what the Lord earnestly desires. The Saviour, when he came under the fig tree, did not desire leaves; for we read that he hungered, and human hunger cannot be removed by leaves of a fig tree. He desired

to eat a fig or two; and he longs to have fruit from us also. He hungers for our holiness: he longs that his joy may be in us, that our joy may be full. He comes up to each of you who are members of his church, and especially to each of you who are leaders of his people, and he looks to see in you the things in which his soul is well pleased. He would see in us love to himself, love to our fellow-men, strong faith in revelation, earnest contention for the once delivered faith, importunate pleading in prayer, and careful living in every part of our course. He expects from us actions such as are according to the law of God and the mind of the Spirit of God; and if he does not see these, he does not receive his due. What did he die for but to make his people holy? What did he give himself for but that he might sanctify unto himself a people zealous of good works? What is the reward of the bloody sweat and the five wounds and the death agony, but that by all these we should be bought with a price? We rob him of his reward if we do not glorify him, and therefore the Spirit of God is grieved at our conduct if we do not show forth his praises by our godly and zealous lives.

And mark here, that when Christ comes to a soul he surveys it with keen discernment. He is not mocked. It is not possible to deceive him. I have thought that to be a fig which turned out to be only a leaf was a mistake; but our Lord makes no such mistake. Neither will he overlook the little figs, just breaking forth. He knows the fruit of the Spirit in whatever stage it may be. He never mistakes fluent expression for hearty possession, nor real grace for mere emotion. Beloved, you are in good hands as to the trial of your condition when the Lord Jesus comes to deal with you. Your fellow-men are quick in their judgments, and they may be either censorious, or partial; but the King gives forth a righteous sentence. He knows just where we are, and what we are; and he judges not after the appearance, but according to truth. Oh, that our prayer might this morning rise to heaven: "Jesus, Master, come and cast thy searching eyes upon me, and judge whether I am living unto thee or not! Give me to see myself as thou seest me, that I may have my errors corrected, and my graces nourished. Lord, make me to be indeed what I profess to be; and if I am not so already, convince me of my false state, and begin a true work in my soul. If I am thine, and am right in thy sight, grant me a kind, assuring word to sink my fears again, and I will gladly rejoice in thee as

the God of my salvation."

III. I come, thirdly, by the help of the Spirit of God, to consider the truth, that **THE RESULT OF THE COMING OF CHRIST TO THE FORWARD, BUT FRUITLESS, PROFESSOR WILL BE VERY TERRIBLE.**

The searcher finds nothing but leaves where fruit might have been expected. Nothing but leaves means nothing but lies. Is that a harsh expression? If I profess faith, and have no faith, is not that a lie? If I profess repentance, and have not repented, is not that a lie? If I unite with the people of the living God, and yet have no fear of God in my heart, is not that a lie? If I come to the communion-table, and partake of the bread and wine, and yet never discern the Lord's body, is not that a lie? If I profess to defend the doctrines of grace, and yet am not assured of the truth of them, is not that a lie? If I have never felt my depravity; if I have never been effectually called, never known my election of God, never rested in the redeeming blood, and have never been renewed by the Spirit, is not my defense of the doctrines of grace a lie? If there is nothing but leaves, there is nothing but lies, and the Saviour sees that it is so. All the verdure of green leaf to him without fruit is but so much deceit. Profession without grace is the funeral pageantry of a dead soul. Religion without holiness is the light which comes from rotten wood—the phosphorescence of decay: I speak dread words, but how can I speak less dreadfully than I do? If you and I have but a name to live, and are dead, what a state we are in! Ours is something worse than corruption: it is the corruption of corruption. To profess religion and live in sin, is to sprinkle rose-water upon a dunghill, and leave it a dunghill still. To give a spirit an angel's name when it bears the devil's character, is almost to sin against the Holy Ghost. If we remain unconverted, of what use can it be to have our name written among the godly?

Our Lord discovered that there was no fruit, and that was a dreadful thing; but, next, he condemned the tree. Was it not right that he should condemn it? Did he curse it? It was already a curse. It was calculated to tantalize the hungry, and take them out of their way to deceive them. God will not have the poor and needy made a jest of. An empty profession is a practical curse; and should it not receive the censure of the Lord of truth?

The tree was of no use where it was: it ministered to no man's refreshment. So, the barren professor occupies a position in which he ought to be a blessing, but, in truth, an evil influence streams forth from him. If he has not the grace of God in him, he is utterly useless, and in all probability he is a curse: he is an Achan in the camp, grieving the Lord, and causing him to refuse success to his people.

Our Lord did, however, use the fig tree for a good purpose when he caused it to wither away; for it became, henceforth, a beacon and a warning to all others who put forth vain pretenses. So, when the ungodly man, who has exhibited a flourishing profession, is allowed to fade away in his ways, some moral effect is produced upon others: they are compelled to see the peril of an unsound profession; and if they are wise, they will no longer be guilty of it. Would God it might be so in every case whenever a notable religionist withers away!

After that, when the Saviour had condemned it, he pronounced sentence upon it; and what was the sentence? It was simply, "As you were." It was nothing more than a confirmation of its state. This tree has borne no fruit, it shall never bear fruit. If a man chooses to be without the grace of God, and yet to make a profession of having it, it is only just that the great Judge should say, "Continue without grace." When the great Judge at last shall speak to those who depart from God, he will simply say to them, "Depart!" Throughout life they always were departing, and after death their character is stamped with perpetuity. If you choose to be graceless, to be graceless shall be your doom. "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." May the Lord Jesus never have to sentence any of you in this way; but may he turn us, that we may be turned, and work in us eternal life to his praise and glory!

Then there came a change over the tree. It began at once to wither. I do not know whether the disciples saw a quiver run through it at once; but on the next morning when they passed that way, according to Mark, it had dried up from the roots. Not only did the leaves hang down, like streamers when there is no wind; not only did the bark seem to have lost every token of vitality; but the whole fabric was blighted fatally. Have you ever seen a fig tree with its strange, weird branches? It is a very

extraordinary sight when bare of leaves. In this case I see its skeleton arms! It is twice dead, dead from the very roots. Thus have I seen the fair professor undergo a blight. He has looked like a thing that has felt the breath of a furnace, and has had its moisture dried up. The man is no longer himself: his glory and his beauty are hopelessly gone. No axe was lifted; no fire was kindled; a word did it, and the tree withered from the root. So, without thunderbolt or pestilence, the once brave professor is stricken as with the judgment of Cain. It is an awful fate. Better far to have the vine-dresser come to you with the axe in his hand, and strike you with the head of it, and say to you, "Tree, thou must bear fruit, or be hewn down." Such a warning would be terrible, but it would be infinitely better than to be left in one's place untouched, quietly to wither to destruction.

Now I have delivered my heavy burden, laying it far more upon myself than upon any one of you; for I stand more prominent than you; I have made a louder profession than most of you; and if I have not his grace in me, then I shall stand before the multitude that have seen me in my greenness, and shall wither away to the very roots, a terrible example of what God doth with those who bear no fruit to his glory.

But now I desire to conclude with tenderer words. Let no man say, "This is very hard." Brother, it is not hard, is it, that if we profess a thing we should be expected to be true to it? Besides, I pray you not to think that anything my Lord can do is hard. He is all gentleness and tenderness. The only thing he ever did destroy was this fig tree. He destroyed no men, as Elias did when he brought fire from heaven upon them; nor as Elisha did when the bears came out of the wood. It is only a barren tree that he causes to wither away. He is all love and tenderness: he does not want to wither you, nor will he, if you be but true. The very least he may expect is that you be true to what you profess. Are you rebellious because he asks you not to play the hypocrite? If you begin to kick against his admonition, it will look as if you were yourself untrue at heart. Instead of that, come and bow humbly at his feet, and say, "Lord, if anything in this solemn truth bears upon me, I beseech thee so to apply it to my conscience that I may feel its power, and flee to thee for salvation." Many men are converted in this way—these hard but honest things drive them from false refuges, and bring them to be true to Christ and to their own souls.

"But," saith one, "I know what I will do; I will never make any profession; I will bear no leaves." My friend, that also is a sullen, rebellious spirit. Instead of talking so, you should say, Lord, I do not ask thee to take away my leaves, but let me have fruit. The fruit is not likely to ripen well without leaves; leaves are essential to the health of the tree, and the health of the tree is essential to the ripening of the fruit. Open confession of faith is good, and must not be refused. Lord, I would not drop a leaf.

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,  
Or to defend his cause;  
Maintain the honour of his word,  
The glory of his cross."

Lord, I do not want to be set away in a corner; I am satisfied to stand where men may see my good works, and glorify my Father who is in heaven. I do not ask to be observed; but I am not ashamed to be observed; only, Lord, make me fit for observation. If a commander said to a soldier, "Stand firm, but mind you have your cartridges ready, so that you may not lift an empty gun;" suppose that soldier answered, "I cannot be so particular. I would rather run to the rear." Would that be a fit reply? Coward! because your captain warns you that you must not be a sham, you would therefore, run off altogether! Surely, you are of an evil sort. You are not truly one of the Lord's, if you cannot bear his rebuke. Let not these solemn truths drive us away, but let them draw us on to say, "Lord, I pray thee, help me to make my calling and election sure. I beseech thee, help me to bring forth the expected fruit. Thy grace can do it."

I would suggest to everyone here to cry to the Lord to make us conscious of our natural barrenness. Gracious ones, may the Lord make us mourn our comparative barrenness, even if we do bear some fruit. To feel quite satisfied with yourself is perilous: to feel that you are holy, and indeed that you are perfect, is to be on the brink of the pit of pride. If you hold your head so high, I am afraid you will strike it against the top of the doorway. If you walk on stilts, I fear you will fall. It is a safer thing to feel, "Lord, I do serve thee, and I am no deceiver. I do love thee; thou hast wrought the works of the Spirit in me. But alas! I am not what I want to

be, I am not what I ought to be. I aspire to holiness: help me to attain it. Lord, I would lie in the very dust before thee to think that after being digged about and dinged, as I have been, I should bear such little fruit. I feel myself less than nothing. My cry is, 'God be merciful to me.' If I had done all, I should still have been an unprofitable servant; but having done so little, Lord, where shall I hide my guilty head?"

Lastly, when you have made this confession, and the good Lord has heard you, there is one emblem in Scripture I should like you to copy. Suppose this morning you feel so dry and dead and barren, that you cannot serve God as you would, nor even pray for more grace, as you wish to do. Then you are something like these twelve rods. They are very dead and dry, for they have been held in the hands of twelve chiefs, who have used them as their official staves. These twelve rods are to be laid before the Lord. This one is Aaron's rod; but it is quite as dead and dry as any of the rest. The whole twelve are laid in the place where the Lord dwelleth. We see them next morning. Eleven are dry rods still; but see this rod of Aaron! What has happened? It was dry as death. See, it has budded! This is wonderful! But look, it has blossomed! There are almond flowers upon it. You know they are rosy pink and white. This is marvelous! But look again, it has brought forth almonds! Here, you have them! See these green fruits, which look like peaches. Take off the flesh, and here is an almond whose shell you may break and find the kernel. The heavenly power has come upon the dry stick, and it has budded and blossomed, and even brought forth almonds. Fruit-bearing is the proof of life and favour. Lord, take these poor sticks this morning, and make them bud. Lord, here we are, in a bundle, perform that ancient miracle in a thousand of us. Make us bud and blossom, and bear fruit! Come with divine power, and turn this congregation from a fagot into a grove. Oh, that our blessed Lord may get a fig from some dry stick this morning! at least, such a fig as this, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" there is sweetness in that fig as this, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief." Here is another, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"—that is a whole basketful of the first ripe figs, and the Lord rejoices in their sweetness. Come Holy Spirit, produce fruit in us this day, through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen, and Amen.

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## **The Withering Work Of The Spirit**

The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. - Isaiah 40:6-8

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. - 1 Peter 1:23-25

The passage in Isaiah which I have just read in your hearing may be used as a very eloquent description of our mortality, and if a sermon should be preached from it upon the frailty of human nature, the brevity of life, and the certainty of death, no one could dispute the appropriateness of the text. Yet I venture to question whether such a discourse would strike the central teaching of the prophet. Something more than the decay of our material flesh is intended here; the carnal mind, the flesh in another sense, was intended by the Holy Ghost when he bade his messenger proclaim those words. It does not seem to me that a mere expression of the mortality of our race was needed in this place by the context; it would hardly keep pace with the sublime revelations which surround it, and would in some measure be a digression from the subject in hand. The notion that we are here simply and alone reminded of our mortality does not square with the New Testament exposition of it in Peter, which I have also placed before you as a text. There is another and more spiritual



meaning here beside and beyond that which would be contained in the great and very obvious truth that all of us must die.

Look at the chapter in Isaiah with care. What is the subject of it? It is the divine consolation of Zion. Zion had been tossed to and fro with conflicts; she had been smarting under the result of sin. The Lord, to remove her sorrow, bids his prophets announce the coming of the long-expected Deliverer, the end and accomplishment of all her warfare and the pardon of all her iniquity. There is no doubt that this is the theme of the prophecy; and further, there is no sort of question about the next point, that the prophet goes on to foretell the coming of John the Baptist as the harbinger of the Messiah. We have no difficulty in the explanation of the passage, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God;" for the New Testament again and again refers this to the Baptist and his ministry. The object of the coming of the Baptist and the mission of the Messiah, whom he heralded, was the manifestation of divine glory. Observe the fifth verse: "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Well, what next? Was it needful to mention man's mortality in this connection? We think not. But there is much more appropriateness in the succeeding verses, if we see their deeper meaning. Do they not mean this? In order to make room for the display of the divine glory in Christ Jesus and his salvation, there would come a withering of all the glory wherein man boasts himself: the flesh should be seen in its true nature as corrupt and dying, and the grace of God alone should be exalted. This would be seen under the ministry of John the Baptist first, and should be the preparatory work of the Holy Ghost in men's hearts, in all time, in order that the glory of the Lord should be revealed and human pride be for ever confounded.

The Spirit blows upon the flesh, and that which seemed vigorous becomes weak, that which was fair to look upon is smitten with decay; the true nature of the flesh is thus discovered, its deceit is laid bare, its power is destroyed, and there is space for the dispensation of the ever-abiding word, and for the rule of the Great Shepherd, whose words are spirit and life. There is a withering wrought by the Spirit which is the preparation for the sowing and implanting by which salvation is wrought.

The withering before the sowing was very marvellously fulfilled in the preaching of John the Baptist. Most appropriately he carried on his ministry in the desert, for a spiritual desert was all around him; he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. It was not his work to plant, but to hew down. The fleshly religion of the Jews was then in its prime. Phariseeism stalked through the streets in all its pomp; men complacently rested in outward ceremonies only, and spiritual religion was at the lowest conceivable ebb. Here and there might be found a Simeon and an Anna, but for the most part men knew nothing of spiritual religion, but said in their hearts: "We have Abraham to our father," and this is enough. What a stir he made when he called the lordly Pharisees a generation of vipers! How he shook the nation with the declaration, "Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees"! Stern as Elias, his work was to level the mountains, and lay low every lofty imagination. That word, "Repent," was as a scorching wind to the verdure of self-righteousness, a killing blast for the confidence of ceremonialism. His food and his dress called for fasting and mourning. The outward token of his ministry declared the death amid which he preached, as he buried in the waters of Jordan those who came to him. "Ye must die and be buried, even as he who is to come will save by death and burial." This was the meaning of the emblem which he set before the crowd. His typical act was as thorough in its teaching as were his words; and as if that were not enough, he warned them of a yet more searching and trying baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and of the coming of one whose fan was in his hand, thoroughly to purge his floor. The Spirit in John blew as the rough north wind, searching and withering, and made him to be a destroyer of the vain gloryings of a fleshly religion, that the spiritual faith might be established.

When our Lord himself actually appeared, he came into a withered land, whose glories had all departed. Old Jesse's stem was bare, and our Lord was the branch which grew out of his root. The scepter had departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet, when Shiloh came. An alien sat on David's throne, and the Roman called the covenant-land his own. The lamp of prophecy burned but dimly, even if it had not utterly gone out. No Isaiah had arisen of late to console them, nor even a

Jeremiah to lament their apostacy. The whole economy of Judaism was as a worn-out vesture; it had waxed old, and was ready to vanish away. The priesthood was disarranged. Luke tells us that Annas and Caiaphas were high priests that year—two in a year or at once, a strange setting aside of the laws of Moses. All the dispensation which gathered around the visible, or as Paul calls it, the "worldly" sanctuary, was coming to a close; and when our Lord had finished his work, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, the sacrifices were abolished, the priesthood of Aaron was set aside, and carnal ordinances were abrogated, for the Spirit revealed spiritual things. When he came who was made a priest, "not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life," there was "a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof."

Such are the facts of history; but I am not about to dilate upon them: I am coming to your own personal histories—to the experience of every child of God. In every one of us it must be fulfilled that all that is of the flesh in us, seeing it is but as grass, must be withered, and the comeliness thereof must be destroyed. The Spirit of God, like the wind, must pass over the field of our souls, and cause our beauty to be as a fading flower. He must so convince us of sin, and so reveal ourselves to ourselves, that we shall see that the flesh profiteth nothing; that our fallen nature is corruption itself, and that "they who are in the flesh cannot please God." There must be brought home to us the sentence of death upon our former legal and carnal life, that the incorruptible seed of the word of God, implanted by the Holy Ghost, may be in us, and abide in us for ever.

The subject of this morning is the withering work of the Spirit upon the souls of men, and when we have spoken upon it, we shall conclude with a few words upon the implanting work, which always follows where this withering work has been performed.

I. Turning then to THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN CAUSING THE GOODLINESS OF THE FLESH TO FADE, let us, first, observe that the work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of man in withering up that which is of the flesh, is very unexpected. You will observe in our text, that even the speaker himself, though doubtless one taught of God, when he was

bidden to cry, said, "What shall I cry?" Even he did not know that in order to the comforting of God's people, there must first be experienced a preliminary visitation. Many preachers of God's gospel have forgotten that the law is the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. They have sown on the unbroken fallow ground and forgotten that the plough must break the clods. We have seen too much of trying to sew without the sharp needle of the Spirit's convincing power. Preachers have labored to make Christ precious to those who think themselves rich and increased in goods: and it has been labor in vain. It is our duty to preach Jesus Christ even to self-righteous sinners, but it is certain that Jesus Christ will never be accepted by them while they hold themselves in high esteem. Only the sick will welcome the physician. It is the work of the Spirit of God to convince men of sin, and until they are convinced of sin, they will never be led to seek the righteousness which is of God by Jesus Christ. I am persuaded, that wherever there is a real work of grace in any soul, it begins with a pulling down: the Holy Ghost does not build on the old foundation. Wood, hay, and stubble will not do for him to build upon. He will come as the fire, and cause a conflagration of all proud nature's Babels. He will break our bow and cut our spear in sunder, and burn our chariot in the fire. When every sandy foundation is gone, then, but not till then, behold he will lay in our souls the great foundation stone, chosen of God, and precious. The awakened sinner, when he asks that God would have mercy upon him, is much astonished to find that, instead of enjoying a speedy peace, his soul is bowed down within him under a sense of divine wrath. Naturally enough he enquires: "Is this the answer to my prayer? I prayed the Lord to deliver me from sin and self, and is this the way in which he deals with me? I said, 'Hear me,' and behold he wounds me with the wounds of a cruel one. I said, 'Clothe me,' and lo! He has torn off from me the few rags which covered me before, and my nakedness stares me in the face. I said, 'Wash me,' and behold he has plunged me in the ditch till mine own clothes do abhor me. Is this the way of grace?" Sinner, be not surprised: it is even so. Perceivest thou not the cause of it? How canst thou be healed while the proud flesh is in thy wound? It must come out. It is the only way to heal thee permanently: it would be folly to film over thy sore, or heal thy flesh, and leave the leprosy within thy bones. The great physician will cut with his sharp knife till the corrupt flesh be removed, for only thus can a sure healing work be

wrought in thee. Dost thou not see that it is divinely wise that before thou art clothed thou shouldst be stripped! What, wouldst thou have Christ's lustrous righteousness outside whiter than any fuller can make it, and thine own filthy rags concealed within? Nay, man; they must be put away; not a single thread of thine own must be left upon thee. It cannot be that God should cleanse thee until he has made thee see somewhat of thy defilement; for thou wouldst never value the precious blood which cleanses us from all sin if thou hadst not first of all been made to mourn that thou art altogether an unclean thing.

The convincing work of the Spirit, wherever it comes, is unexpected, and even to the child of God in whom this process has still to go on, it is often startling. We begin again to build that which the Spirit of God had destroyed. Having begun in the spirit, we act as if we would be made perfect in the flesh; and then when our mistaken upbuilding has to be levelled with the earth, we are almost as astonished as we were when first the scales fell from our eyes. In some such condition as this was Newton when he wrote: -

"I asked the Lord that I might grow  
In faith and love and every grace,  
Might more of his salvation know,  
And seek more earnestly his face.

Tw'as he who taught me thus to pray,  
And he, I trust, has answered prayer;  
But it has been in such a way  
As almost drove me to despair.

I hop'd that in some favour'd hour,  
At once he'd answer my request,  
And by his love's constraining power  
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

Instead of this, he made me feel  
The hidden evils of my heart.  
And let the angry powers of hell

Assault my soul in ev'ry part."

Ah, marvel not, for thus the Lord is wont to answer his people. The voice which saith, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," achieves its purpose by first making them hear the cry, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field."

2. Furthermore, this withering is after the usual order of the divine operation. If we consider well the way of God, we shall not be atonished that he beginneth with his people by terrible things in righteousness. Observe the method of creation. I will not venture upon any dogmatic theory of geology, but there seems to be every probability that this world has been fitted up and destroyed, refitted and then destroyed again, many times before the last arranging of it for the habitation of men. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" then came a long interval, and at length, at the appointed time, during seven days, the Lord prepared the earth for the human race. Consider then the state of matters when the great architect began his work. What was there in the beginning? Originally, nothing. When he commanded the ordering of the earth how was it? "The earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." There was no trace of another's plan to interfere with the great architect. "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding." He received no contribution of column or pillar towards the temple which he intended to build. The earth was, as the Hebrew puts it, Tohu and Bohu, disorder and confusion—in a word, chaos. So it is in the new creation. When the Lord new creates us, he borrows nothing from the old man, but makes all things new. He does not repair and add a new wing to the old house of our depraved nature, but he builds a new temple for his own praise. We are spiritually without form and empty, and darkness is upon the face of our heart, and his word comes to us, saying, "Light be," and there is light, and ere long life and every precious thing.

To take another instance from the ways of God. When man has fallen, when did the Lord bring him the gospel? The first whisper of the gospel, as you know, was, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman,

between thy seed and her seed. He shall bruise thy head." That whisper came to man shivering in the presence of his Maker, having nothing more to say by way of excuse; but standing guilty before the Lord. When did the Lord God clothe our parents? Not until first of all he had put the question, "Who told thee that thou wast naked?" Not until the fig-leaves had utterly failed did the Lord bring in the covering skin of the sacrifice, and wrap them in it. If you will pursue the meditation upon the acts of God with men, you will constantly see the same thing. God has given us a wonderful type of salvation in Noah's ark; but Noah was saved in that ark in connection with death; he himself, as it were, immured alive in a tomb, and all the world besides left to destruction. All other hope for Noah was gone, and thee the ark rose upon the waters. Remember the redemption of the children of Israel out of Egypt: it occurred when they were in the saddest plight, and their cry went up to heaven by reason of their bondage. When no arm brought salvation, then with a high hand and an outstretched arm the Lord brought forth his people. Everywhere before the salvation there comes the humbling of the creature, the overthrow of human hope. As in the back woods of America before there can be tillage, the planting of cities, the arts of civilization, and the transactions of commerce, the woodman's axe must hack and hew: the stately trees of centuries must fall: the roots must be burned, the odd reign of nature disturbed. The old must go before the new can come. Even thus the Lord takes away the first, that he may establish the second. The first heaven and the first earth must pass away, or there cannot be a new heaven and a new earth. Now, as it has been outwardly, we ought to expect that it would be the same within us and when these witherings and facings occur in our souls, we should only say "It is the Lord, let him do as seemeth him good."

3. I would have you notice, thirdly, that we are taught in our text how universal this process is in its range over the hearts of all those upon whom the Spirit works. The withering is a withering of what? Of part of the flesh and some portion of its tendencies? Nay, observe, "All flesh is grass; and all the goodness thereof"—the very choice and pick of it—"is as the flower of the field," and what happens to the grass? Does any of it live? "The grass withereth," all of it. The flower, will not that abide? So fair a thing, has not that an immortality? No, it fades: it utterly falls away.

So wherever the Spirit of God breathes on the soul of man, there is a withering of everything that is of the flesh, and it is seen that to be carnally minded is death. Of course, we all know and confess that where there is a work of grace, there must be a destruction of our delight in the pleasures of the flesh. When the Spirit of God breathes on us, that which was sweet becomes bitter; that which was bright becomes dim. A man cannot love sin and yet possess the life of God. If he takes pleasure in fleshly joys wherein he once delighted, he is still what he was: he mince the things of the flesh, and therefore he is after the flesh, and he shall die. The world and the lusts thereof are to the unregenerate as beautiful as the meadows in spring, when they are bedecked with flowers, but to the regenerate soul they are a wilderness, a salt land, and not inhabited. Of those very things wherein we once took delight we say, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." We cry to be delivered from the poisonous joys of earth, we loathe them, and wonder that we could once riot in them. Beloved hearers, do you know what this kind of withering means? Have you seen the lusts of the flesh, and the pomps and the pleasures thereof all fade away before your eyes? It must be so, or the Spirit of God has not visited your soul.

But mark, wherever the Spirit of God comes, he destroys the goodliness and flower of the flesh; that is to say, our righteousness withers as our sinfulness. Before the Spirit comes we think ourselves as good as the best. We say, "All these commandments have I kept from my youth up," and we superciliously ask, "What lack I yet?" Have we not been moral? Nay, have we not even been religious? We confess that we may have committed faults, but we think them very venial, and we venture, in our wicked pride, to imagine that, after all, we are not so vile as the word of God would lead us to think. Ah, my dear hearer, when the Spirit of God blows on the comeliness of thy flesh, its beauty will fade as a leaf, and thou wilt have quite another idea of thyself thou wilt then find no language too severe in which to describe thy past character. Searching deep into thy motives, and investigating that which moved thee to thine actions, thou wilt see so much of evil, that thou wilt cry with the publican, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Where the Holy Ghost has withered up in us our self-righteousness, he



has not half completed his work; there is much more to be destroyed yet, and among the rest, away must go our boasted power of resolution. Most people conceive that they can turn to God whenever they resolve to do so. "I am a man of such strength of mind," says one, "that if I made up my mind to be religious, I should be without difficulty." "Ah," saith another volatile spirit, "I believe that one of these days I can correct the errors of the past, and commence a new life." Ah, dear hearers, the resolutions of the flesh are goodly flowers, but they must all fade. When visited by the Spirit of God, we find that even when the will is present with us, how to perform that which we would we find not; yea, and we discover that our will is averse to all that is good, and that naturally we will not come unto Christ that we may have life. What poor frail things resolutions are when seen in the light of God's Spirit!

Still the man will say, "I believe I have, after all, within myself an enlightened conscience and an intelligence that will guide me aright. The light of nature I will use, and I do not doubt that if I wander somewhat I shall find my way back again." Ah, man! thy wisdom, which is the very flower of thy nature, what is it but folly, though thou knowest it not? Unconverted and unrenewed, thou art in God's sight no wiser than the wild ass's colt. I wish thou wert in thine own esteem humbled as a little child at Jesus' feet, and made to cry, "Teach thou me."

When the withering wind of the Spirit moves over the carnal mind, it reveals the death of the flesh in all respects, especially in the matter of power towards that which is good. We then learn that word of our Lord: "Without me ye can do nothing." When I was seeking the Lord, I not only believed that I could not pray without divine help, but I felt in my very soul that I could not. Then I could not even feel aright, or mourn as I would, or groan as I would. I longed to long more after Christ; but, alas! I could not even feel that I needed him as I ought to feel it. This heart was then as hard as adamant, as dead as those that rot in their graves. Oh, what would I at times have given for a tear! I wanted to repent, but could not; longed to believe, but could not; I felt bound, hampered, and paralysed. This is a humbling revelation of God's Holy Spirit, but a needful one; for the faith of the flesh is not the faith of God's elect. The faith which justifies the soul is the gift of God and not of ourselves. That

repentance which is the work of the flesh will need to be repented of. The flower of the flesh must wither; only the seed of the Spirit will produce fruit unto perfection. The heirs of heaven are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of God. If the work in us be not the Spirit's working, but our own, it will droop and die when most we require its protection; and its end will be as the grass which to-day is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven.

4. You see, then, the universality of this withering work within us, but I beg you also to notice the completeness of it. The grass, what does it do? Droop? nay, wither. The dower of the field: what of that? Does it hang its head a little? No, according to Isaiah it fades; and according to Peter it falleth away. There is no reviving it with showers, it has come to its end. Even thus are the awakened led to see that in their flesh there dwelleth no good thing. What dying and withering work some of God's servants have had in their souls! Look at John Bunyan, as he describes himself in his "Grace Abounding!" For how many months and even years was the Spirit engaged in writing death upon all that was the old Bunyan, in order that he might become by grace a new man fitted to track the pilgrims along their heavenly way. We have not all endured the ordeal so long, but in every child of God there must be a death to sin, to the law, and to self, which must be fully accomplished ere he is perfected in Christ and taken to heaven. Corruption cannot inherit incorruption; it is through the Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the body, and therefore live. But cannot the fleshly mind be improved? By no means; for "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Cannot you improve the old nature? No; "ye must be born again." Can it not be taught heavenly things? No. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." There is nothing to be done with the old nature but to let it be laid in the grave; it must be dead, and buried, and when it is so, then the incorruptible seed that liveth and abideth for ever will develop gloriously, the fruit of the new birth will come to maturity, and grace shall be exalted in glory. The old nature never does improve, it is as earthly, and sensual, and devilish in the saint of eighty years of age as it was when first he came to Christ; it is unimproved and unimprovable; towards God it is enmity itself: every

imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil, and that continually. The old nature called "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other," neither can there be peace between them.

5. Let us further notice that all this withering work in the soul is very painful. As you read these verses do they not strike you as having a very funereal tone? "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth." This is mournful work, but it must be done. I think those who experience much of it when they first come to Christ have great reason to be thankful. Their course in life will, in all probability, be much brighter and happier, for I have noticed that persons who are converted very easily, and come to Christ with but comparatively little knowledge of their own depravity, have to learn it afterwards, and they remain for a long time babes in Christ, and are perplexed with masters that would not have troubled them if they had experienced a deeper work at first. No, sir; if grace has begun to build in your soul and left any of the old walls of self-trust standing, they will have to come down sooner or later. You may congratulate yourself upon their remaining, but it is a false congratulation, your glorying is not good. I am sure of this, that Christ will never put a new piece upon an old garment, or new wine in old bottles: he knows the rent would be worse in the long run, and the bottles would burst. All that is of nature's spinning must be unravelled. The natural building must come down, lath and plaster, roof and foundation, and we must have a house not made with hands. It was a great mercy for our city of London that the great fire cleared away all the old buildings which were the lair of the plague, a far healthier city was then built; and it is a great mercy for a man when God sweeps right away all his own righteousness and strength, when he makes him feel that he is nothing and can be nothing, and drives him to confess that Christ must be all in all, and that his only strength lies in the eternal might of the ever-blessed Spirit. Sometimes in a house of business an old system has been going on for years, and it has caused much confusion, and allowed much dishonesty. You come in as a new manager, and you adopt an entirely new plan. Now, try if you can, and graft your method on to the old system. How it will worry you! Year after year you say to yourself, "I

cannot work it: if I had swept the whole away and started afresh, clear from the beginning, it would not have given me one-tenth of the trouble." God does not intend to graft the system of grace upon corrupt nature, nor to make the new Adam grow out of the old Adam, but he intends to teach us this: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Salvation is not of the flesh but of the Lord alone; that which is born of the flesh is only flesh at the best; and only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. It must be the Spirit's work altogether, or it is not what God will accept.

Observe, brethren, that although this is painful it is inevitable. I have already entrenched upon this, and shown you how necessary it is that all of the old should be taken away; but let me further remark that it is inevitable that the old should go, because it is in itself corruptible. Why does the grass wither? Because it is a withering thing. "Its root is ever in its we, and it must die." How could it spring out of the earth, and be immortal? It is no amaranth: it blooms not in Paradise: it grows in a soil on which the curse has fallen. Every supposed good thing that grows out of your own self, is like yourself, mortal, and it must die. The seeds of corruption are in all the fruits of manhood's tree; let them be as fair to look upon as Eden's clusters, they must decay.

Moreover, it would never do, my brother, that there should be something of the flesh in our salvation and something of the Spirit; for if it were so there would be a division of the honor. Hitherto the praises of God; beyond this my own praises. If I were to win heaven partly through what I had done, and partly through what Christ had done, and if the energy which sanctified me was in a measure my own, and in a measure divine, they that divide the work shall divide the reward, and the songs of heaven while they would be partly to Jehovah must also be partly to the creature. But it shall not be. Down, proud flesh! Down! I say. Though thou cleanse and purge thyself as thou mayst, thou art to the core corrupt though thou labor unto weariness, thou buildest wood that will be burned, and stubble that will be turned to ashes. Give up thine own self-confidence, and let the work be, and the merit be where the honor shall be, namely, with God alone. It is inevitable, then, that there should be all this withering.

7. This last word by way of comfort to any that are passing through the

process we are describing, and I hope some of you are. It gives me great joy when I hear that you unconverted ones are very miserable, for the miseries which the Holy Spirit works are always the prelude to happiness. It is the Spirit's work to wither. I rejoice in our translation, "Because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." It is true the passage may be translated, "The wind of the Lord bloweth upon it." One word, as you know, is used in the Hebrew both for "wind" and "Spirit," and the same is true of the Greek; but let us retain the old translation here, for I conceive it to be the real meaning of the text. The Spirit of God it is that withers the flesh. It is not the devil that killed my self-righteousness. I might be afraid if it were: nor was it myself that humbled myself by a voluntary and needless self-degradation, but it was the Spirit of God. Better to be broken in pieces by the Spirit of God, than to be made whole by the flesh! What doth the Lord say? "I kill." But what next? "I make alive." He never makes any alive but those he kills. Blessed be the Holy Ghost when he kills me, when he drives the sword through the very bowels of my own merits and myself-confidence, for then he will make me alive. "I wound, and I heal." He never heals those whom he has not wounded. Then blessed be the hand that wounds; let it go on wounding; let it cut and tear; let it lay bare to me myself at my very worst, that I may be driven to self-despair, and may fall back upon the free mercy of God, and receive it as a poor, guilty, lost, helpless, undone sinner, who casts himself into the arms of sovereign grace, knowing that God must give all, and Christ must be all, and the Spirit must work all, and man must be as clay in the potter's hands, that the Lord may do with him as seemeth trim good. Rejoice, dear brother, how ever low you are brought, for if the Spirit humbles you he means no evil, but he intends infinite good to your soul.

II. Now, let us close with a few sentences concerning THE IMPLANTATION.

According to Peter, although the flesh withers, and the flower thereof falls away, yet in the children of God there is an unwithering something of another kind. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." "The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." Now, the gospel is of use to us because

it is not of human origin. If it were of the flesh, all it could do for us would not land us beyond the flesh; but the gospel of Jesus Christ is super-human, divine, and spiritual. In its conception it was of God; its great gift, even the Savior, is a divine gift; and all its teachings are full of deity. If you, my hearer, believe a gospel which you have thought out for yourself, or a philosophical gospel which comes from the brain of man, it is of the flesh, and will wither, and you will die, and be lost through trusting in it. The only word that can bless you and be a seed in your soul must be the living and incorruptible word of the eternal Spirit. Now this is the incorruptible word, that "God was made flesh and dwelt among us;" that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This is the incorruptible word, that "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Now, brethren, this is the seed; but before it can grow in your soul, it must be planted there by the Spirit. Do you receive it this morning? Then the Holy Spirit implants it in your soul. Do you leap up to it, and say, "I believe it! I grasp it! On the incarnate God I fix my hope; the substitutionary sacrifice, the complete atonement of Christ is all my confidence; I am reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus." Then you possess the living seed within your soul.

And what is the result of it? Why, then there comes, according to the text, a new life into us, as the result of the indwelling of the living word, and our being born again by it. A new life it is; it is not the old nature putting out its better parts; not the old Adam refining and purifying itself, and rising to something better. No; have we not said aforetime that the flesh withers and the flower thereof fades? It is an entirely new life. Ye are as much new creatures at your regeneration, as if you had never existed, and had been for the first time created. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The child of God is beyond and above other men. Other men do not possess the life which he has received. They are but duplex—body and soul have they. He is of triple nature—he is spirit, soul, and body. A fresh principle, a spark of the divine life has dropped into his soul; he is no longer a natural or carnal man, but he has become a

spiritual man, understanding spiritual things and possessing a life far superior to anything that belongs to the rest of mankind. O that God, who has withered in the souls of any of you that which is of the flesh, may speedily grant you the new birth through the Word.

Now observe, to close, wherever this new life comes through the word, it is incorruptible, it lives and abides for ever. To get the good seed out of a true believer's heart and to destroy the new nature in him, is a thing attempted by earth and hell, but never yet achieved. Pluck the sun out of the firmament, and you shall not even then be able to pluck grace out of a regenerate heart. It "liveth and abideth for ever," saith the text; it neither can corrupt of itself nor be corrupted. "It sinneth not, because it is born of God." "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." You have a natural life—that will die, it is of the flesh. You have a spiritual life—of that it is written: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." You have now within you the noblest and truest immortality: you must live as God liveth, in peace and joy, and happiness. But oh, remember, dear hearer, if you have not this you "shall not see life." What then—shall you be annihilated? Ah! no, but "the wrath of the Lord is upon you." You shall exist, though you shall not live. Of life you shall know nothing, for that is the gift of God in Christ Jesus; but of an everlasting death, full of torment and anguish, you shall be the wretched heritor—"the wrath of God abideth on him." You shall be cast into "the lake of fire, which is the second death." You shall be one of those whose "worm dieth not, and whose fire is not quenched." May God, the ever-blessed Spirit, visit you! If he be now striving with you, O quench not his divine flame! Trifle not with any holy thought you have. If this morning you must confess that you are not born again, be humbled by it. Go and seek mercy of the Lord, entreat him to deal graciously with you and save you. Many who have had nothing but moonlight have prized it, and ere long they have had sunlight. Above all, remember what the quickening seed is, and reverence it when you hear it preached, "for this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." Respect it, and receive it. Remember that the quickening seed is all wrapped up in this sentence: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that

believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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## **Witnessing Better Than Knowing The Future**

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. - Acts 1:6-8

THESE ARE AMONG THE LAST WORDS of our Lord. We greatly prize the last words of good men. Let us set high store by these later words of our ascending Lord. It is very curious to my mind that Jesus should make mention of John the Baptist and of John's baptism in these last words. Read the fifth verse: "John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." It is very usual for good men's memories, in their last hours, to go back to their first hours. I trust that some of us will think of our baptism even when we are dying.

"High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,  
That vow renew'd shall daily hear:  
Till in life's latest hour I bow,



And bless in death a bond so dear."

Our Lord began in such a way that he could afford to look back on his beginning. Some do not commence so; their beginning is so undecided, so imperfect, so hesitating, that they may well wish to have it forgotten. But our Lord, at the close of his sojourn on earth, thinks of John the Baptist, and pays him a dying word of respect just before he is taken up into glory. I like to notice that interesting fact.

But, now, to come more to the text, a question was put to our Lord. Many questions were asked of him by his disciples, some of them not very wise ones. We are very glad that they asked them, for they have extracted from the Savior a great amount of instruction; and although this question about restoring the kingdom to Israel may have been a mistaken one, and they may have meant a more material and carnal kingdom than our Savior intended to establish (of that I am not sure), yet the question brought to us a reply which we may well store up in our memories and hearts: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

We have three things to talk about to-night; first, some things which are not for us; secondly, some things for us to receive; and thirdly, something for us to be.

I. First, then, let us consider **SOME THINGS WHICH ARE NOT FOR US.** It is not for us to know the times and the seasons, and to be able to make a map of the future. There are some great events of the future very clearly revealed. The prophecy is not at all indistinct about the facts that will occur; but as to when they will occur, we have no data. Some think that they have; but our Lord here seems to say that we do not know the times and the seasons, and that it is not for us to know them. I pass no censure upon brethren who think that, by elaborate calculations, they find out what is to be in the future; I say that I pass no censure, but time has passed censure of the strongest kind upon all their predecessors. I forget

how many miles of books interpreting prophecy there are in the British Museum; but I believe it amounts to miles, all of which have been disproved by the lapse of time. Some of the writers were wonderfully definite; they knew within half-an-hour when the Lord would come. Some of them were very distinct about all the events; they had mapped them all within a few years. The men who wrote the books, happily for themselves, had mostly died before the time appointed came. It is always wise to pitch on a long period of prophecy, that you may be out of the way if the thing does not come off; and they mostly did so. There were very few of them who lived to suffer the disappointment which would certainly have come to them through having fixed the wrong date. I let time censure their mistake. God forgave it, for they did it with a desire for his glory. The bulk of them were most sincere students of the Word, and herein are a lesson to us, even though they were mistaken in their calculations; but, beloved, it is not for you to know the times and the seasons.

First, it is not proper for you. It is not your work. You are not sent into the world to be prophets; you are sent into the world to be witnesses. You do not come here to be prognosticators of the events of tomorrow about yourself, or about your children, or about your friends, or about the nations of the earth. A veil hangs between you and the future. Your prayer is to be, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." You are told to look for the coming of your Lord, and to stand in perpetual expectation of his return; but to know the time when he will come, is no part of your office. You are servants who are to look for your Lord, who may come at cock-crowing, or at midday, or at midnight. Keep you always on the tiptoe of expectation. It would be wrong for you to profess that you need not watch until such and such a time, for he would not come until such a date arrived.

As it is not proper for you, so it is not profitable for you. What would you be the better if you could make a map of all that is yet to be? Suppose it were revealed to you to-night, by an angel, in what respect would it alter your conduct for to-morrow? In what Way would it help you to perform the duties which your Master has enjoined upon you? I believe that it would be to you a very dangerous gift; you would be tempted to set

yourself up as an interpreter of the future. If men believed in you, you would become eminent and notable, and you would be looked upon with awe. The temptation would be to become a prophet on your own account, to head a new sect, to lead a new company of men to believe in yourself. I say that that would be the temptation. For my part, I would rather not know any more than my Lord pleases to reveal to me; and if he did reveal all the future to me, I should feel like the prophets who spake of "the burden of the Lord." Neither would it ensure your salvation to be able to foretell the future, for Balaam was a great prophet, but he was a great sinner; he was an arch-rebel although he was an arch-divine. Nor do I know that, by foretelling the future, you would convince your fellow-men; for Noah told them that the world would be destroyed by the flood, he could give them a very accurate account of the time when the rain would descend, and yet they were not converted by his preaching, neither did they come into the ark. Those truths which God has revealed, you must accept for yourselves and proclaim to others; they are profitable for all purposes, and sufficient for your work; but the future is known only to God.

And as it is not proper or profitable, so it is not possible for you to know the times and the seasons. You may study as you will, and pray as you please; but the times and the seasons are not committed to you. Our Lord, as man, spoke of one great event of which he did not know the time: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." He does not say that now that he has risen from the dead, but he seems to hint that he did not know so as to tell his disciples; he must keep secret, even from them, that, which the Father hath put in his own power."

Notice, next, dear friends, that it is not good for you to know the times and the seasons. That is what the Savior means when he says, "It is not for you to know." For, first, it would distract your attention from the great things of which you have to think. It is enough for your mind to dwell upon the cross and the coming glory of your Lord. Keep these two things distinctly before you, and you need not puzzle your brains about the future. If you did know that something important was going to happen very speedily, you might be full of consternation, and do your work in a

great hurry. You might be worked up into a frenzy that would spoil all your service. Or, if there was a long time to elapse before the great event, you might feel the indifference of distance. If our Lord were not to come for another hundred years, and he may not, we cannot tell,—then we might say, "My Lord delayeth his coming," and so we might begin to sleep, or to play the wanton. It is for our good to stand ever in this condition, knowing that he is coming, knowing that he will reign, knowing that certain great events will certainly transpire; but not knowing the exact times and seasons when those events are to be expected.

But there is something better than knowing the times or the seasons; it is good for us to know that they are in the Father's power: "which the Father hath put in his own power." The events will come to pass, then, in due time. The future is all in God's hand. No prophecy will lack its mate. No word of God will fall unfulfilled to the ground. Possess your souls in patience: the things that are foretold are sure to happen. "Though the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." I am persuaded that God never is before his time, but he never is too late. He never failed to keep tryst with his people to the tick of the clock. The future is in the Father's power.

And especially let it be remembered that it is in his power as our Father. He must arrange it rightly; he must arrange it in infinite love to us. It cannot be that, in some dark hour yet to come, he will forget us. He is our Father; will he forget his children? If the times could be in my hand, how earnestly would I pray that Christ would take them into his hand, or that the Father would take away from me the dangerous power, and wield it all himself! Did we not sing just now,—

"All my times are in thy hand,  
All events at thy command"?

The time of birth, the time of the new birth, the time of a sore trial, the time of the death of your beloved one, the time of your sickness, and how long it shall last, all these times must come, and last, and end, as shall please your Father. It is for you to know that your Father is at the helm of

the ship, and therefore it cannot be wrecked. It may rock and reel to and fro; but, since he rules the waves, the vessel will not have one more tossing than his infinite love permits. Let us, then, not seek to unroll the map of the future, but calmly say,—

"My God, I would not long to see  
My fate with curious eyes,  
What gloomy lines are writ for me,  
Or what bright scenes arise;"

but just leave it all with God. The Father hath it in his own hands, and there we wish it to be.

So much concerning some things which are not for us.

II. And now, secondly, there are **SOME THINGS FOR US TO RECEIVE**. The Savior said to the eleven that they were to wait at Jerusalem till they had received power by the Holy Ghost coming upon them. This is what we want; we want the Holy Ghost. We often speak about this; but, in truth, it is unspeakable, the power of the Holy Ghost, mysterious, divine. When it comes upon a man, he is bathed in the very essence of the Deity. The atmosphere about him becomes the life and power of God. There is an old proverb that knowledge is power; Christ has taken away the knowledge that is not power. He said, "It is not for you, child; it is not for you." But he gives you the knowledge that is power; or, rather, that power which is better than all knowledge, the power of the Holy Spirit. Gotthold, in his parables, speaks of his little child who wanted to come into his room; but he was doing something there which he did not wish the child to see, and so he went on with his work, when, to his horror and surprise, he found that his child had in some way climbed up outside the window, and was standing on the sill trying to look in to see what his father was doing, hazarding his life in the attempt. You may guess that it was not long before that child was taken down with a pat, and something more, to teach him not to pry into his father's secrets. It is so with some of us; we need just a little pat, and perhaps more than that, to keep us from looking into things that do not belong to us. We may be comforted even if we do not know the times and the seasons, for we may get something vastly

better, namely, the Holy Spirit to give us real power for our life-work.

The Holy Spirit gives to his people power which may be looked at from different points. He gave to some of them in the olden times miraculous power, and they went forth, having received the Spirit of God, to do great signs and wonders in the name of Christ. If you have not that, you may hope to have mental power. The Holy Spirit does not educate us, or give us culture after the common method of men, and yet there is an inner education and a higher culture which is much more to be desired, which comes from him. He leads us into all truth; he makes us feel the force of truth; he gives us a grip of truth; he writes truth upon the heart; he applies it to the understanding. Many a man has become quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord, who was very slow of understanding in other respects. The Holy Spirit takes the fool, and makes him know the wonders of redeeming love. It is amazing how persons, of very scanty gifts, and very small attainments, have, nevertheless, become wise toward God, their mental faculties being quickened with regard to heavenly things in a very remarkable manner.

The power of the Spirit is also, in part, moral power. He gives to men qualities that make them strong and influential over their fellow-men, he imparts dauntless courage, calm confidence, intense affection, burning zeal, deep patience, much-enduring perseverance. Many other hallowed influences besides these are graces of the Spirit of God, which form in men a moral power exceedingly useful and exceedingly forcible. I have known men who have been slow of speech, and who have exhibited very few gifts, who have, nevertheless, been very strong men in our assemblies, true pillars of the church, for piety is power, and grace is power.

Besides that, there is a more secret, subtle power still, spiritual power, wherein, in the spiritual world, a man is made a prince with God, and hath power with God; and learning how to prevail with God for men, he catches the art of prevailing With men for God. He is first a wrestler alone by Jabbok; then he becomes a wrestler in the midst of the host of sinners, conquering them for Christ, taking them captive in the name of the Most High. Power in prayer is the highest form of power; and. communion

with God is power; and holiness, above all things, is a great power among the sons of men.

This spiritual power makes a man influential, in a sense very different from that in which the world uses the word "influential"—a disgraceful use of the word. We want men who have influence in the divinest sense, men who, somehow or other, cast a spell over their fellow-men. In their presence men cannot do what they are accustomed to do elsewhere; when these men are in any company, they check sin without a word, they incite to righteousness almost without a sentence. They carry everything before them, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord who dwells in them. Have I not seen some, decrepit and bedridden, yet ruling a house, and influencing a parish? Have I not seen some tottering old woman who, nevertheless, has been a very queen in the circle in which she moved? Have I not seen some poor, humble rustic from the plough who, nevertheless, has worn a coronet in the midst of his fellow-men by the holiness of his life, and the spiritual power that God the Holy Ghost had imparted to him?

Now, beloved, I have not time fully to describe this endowment; I have only mentioned one or two points in which it is seen, but this endowment is what we need before we can do anything for Christ. Do you always think enough of this? The teacher prepares her lesson; but does she also prepare herself by seeking the power of the Holy Spirit? The minister studies his text; but does he ask for a baptism of the Holy Ghost? I am afraid that this spiritual qualification, the most essential of all, is frequently overlooked. Then, the Lord have mercy upon us! The soldier had better go to battle without sword or rifle, the artilleryman had better wheel up his gun without powder or shot, than that we should attempt to win a soul until first of all the Holy Spirit has given us power. Power must go with the word that is preached or taught if any large result is to follow; and that power must first be in the man who speaks that word.

For this power the disciples were to wait. The world was dying, bell was raging, yet they must tarry at Jerusalem till they had that power. Impetuous Peter must hold his tongue, and loving John must be quiet and must commune in secret with his Master. None of them must go out

into the street or stand in the temple to proclaim the words of this life. They must stop till God should see fit to pour out his Spirit upon them; and I would to God that sometimes we could be quiet, too. It were better to be dumb than to speak only in the power of our own spirit. It were better to lay the finger on the lip than to begin to talk before our message has been burnt into us by the Holy Ghost. Wait for the live coal from off the altar to blister thy lip, for then only canst thou speak with power when thou thyself hast felt the fire of the Spirit.

III. Now we pass on to the third point, which is a very important practical one, SOMETHING FOR US TO BE. If you are a disciple of Christ, you are not to look into the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power; you are to receive the Spirit of God, and then there is something for you to be. Did you expect me to say that then there is something for you to do? Well, there is a great deal for you to do; but the text says, "Ye shall be witnesses"; not "Ye shall act as witnesses" only, but "Ye shall be witnesses." Every true Christian should, in his own proper person, be a witness for his Lord. "Here I stand," says he, "myself a proof of what my Lord can do. I, his servant, saved by him, and renewed by him, washed in his blood, it is I who, while I live, whether I speak or not, am a monument of his love, a trophy of his grace." "Ye shall be Witnesses unto me."

Dear friends, we are to be witnesses of what Christ has done. If we have seen Christ, if we believe in Christ, let us tell it honestly. These apostles had a great deal to tell. They had been with Christ in private; they had seen his miracles; they had heard his choicest and more secret words; they had to go and bear witness to it all. And you, who have been let into the secrets of Christ, you who have communed with him more closely than others, you have much to tell. Tell it all, for whatever he has said to you in the closet you are to proclaim upon the housetop. You are to witness what you have seen, and tasted, and handled, concerning your Lord.

You are to witness to what he has revealed, to make known to others the doctrine that he preached, or taught by his apostles. Mind that you do not tell any other. You are not sent to be "an original thinker", to make up a



gospel as you go along; you are a witness, that is all, a retailer of Christ's truth, and you miss the end of your life unless you perpetually witness, and witness, and witness to what you know of him, and to what you have learnt from him. Let this be your prayer and your resolve,—

"Give me thy strength, O God of power!  
Then let winds blow, or thunders roar,  
Thy faithful witness will I be:  
'Tis fixed: I can do all through thee."

You are to witness to what you have experienced concerning Christ. Now, what is that? I will just run over this witness, feeling that there are many hundreds of dear friends here to-night who could bear the same testimony, and who will do so as they have opportunity.

First, I beg to say to all present here, to-night, that the Lord Jesus Christ can remove despair, and every form of spiritual distress. He did so to me. I was full of darkness, the shadow of death was upon me, and I found no comfort till I heard that blessed text, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." I looked unto him, and was lightened, and my face was not ashamed; and I am here tonight to bear witness that it load was thus taken from me, which I could not get rid of in any other way, and my midnight was, in a single moment, turned into the blaze of midday. Neither have I ever gone back to that darkness, nor have I again had reason to cry, "Woe is me that ever I was born." Nay, there is in the name of Jesus a balm for every mental wound, a relief for all the agony of a tortured spirit. I am sure of it; I am not saying to you what I have merely heard from other people, but what I have myself felt, and there are many here who can endorse my testimony that there is no relief to a sinner's aching heart Like that which Jesus brings. I wish that you would all prove this truth for yourselves; but, at any rate, we are witnesses that it is so.

And, next, our Lord Jesus is a great transformer of character. I do not like to speak of myself, but I will speak of many a man whom I know. He came into this Tabernacle a drunkard, a swearer, a lover of unholy pleasures, and while the Word was preached, the Lord broke him down, and melted his heart. Now he hates what once he loved; and as to those

pursuits which were once distasteful to him, so that he cursed and swore at the very mention of them, or at least poured ridicule upon others who loved them, he now loves them himself, and it is a wonder to himself to find himself where he now is. He never dreamt of being what he is. Ask his wife whether there is a change in him; ask his little children whether there is a change in him; ask his workmates, ask his employer, ask anybody, and they will all say, "He is not the same man." The Lord Jesus Christ has turned everything upside down with him. It was the wrong way up before, and so he has put it all right. He can turn the lion into a lamb, the raven into a dove; and he has done so to many of our friends who are sitting in this house to-night, as they would willingly bear witness. Oh, if there are any here, to-night, who would learn the way of righteousness, and quit the paths of sin, let them believe my testimony, which comes not out of feigned lips! "I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not." The Lord is able to transform character in a very wonderful way; he has done it for many of us, and if thou believest in him, he will do it for thee also.

Next, we should like to bear witness to the sustaining power of Christ under temptation. After being saved, we have been tempted, and we are men of like passions with others. I speak for my sisters as well as for my brothers here. We have all been tempted, and we have been well nigh thrown back to our old condition; but when we have fled to Christ, and trusted in him, our feet have stood firm even upon the brink of the precipice. We have passed through fire and water by way of trial and temptation, and yet we stand, for Christ is able to guard us even from stumbling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with In exceeding joy. We are not talking to you of things that we have dreamt. O sirs, we would not like to tell some of you how we have been tempted, how hard it has gone with us, how we have been saved by the skin of our teeth; but saved we have been, to the praise of God's mighty grace. Let his name be praised for ever and ever. That is our witness. If you would be kept from temptation, come and trust him, too.

We wish also to say that the Spirit of God coming from Christ moves men to high and noble thoughts. Selfishness no longer rules the man who believes in Christ; he loves his fellow-men, he desires their good, he can forgive them if they persecute him, he can lay down his life for them.

Have we not had many who have gone forth among the heathen, and laid down their lives for Christ? I was speaking with a brother from the Congo on Monday, and I spoke of the many deaths there, and he said, "Yes, it looks a sad. thing that so many missionaries should die; but, sir," he added, "that is the first thing that we have done in Africa that is really hopeful. I have often heard the natives say to me, 'These men must believe a true religion, or else they would not come here to die for us poor black men.' Men begin to believe this new kind of evidence. The blood of the missionary becomes the seed of the Church." I do not doubt that it is so and, beloved, if you and I can live wholly and alone for Christ, if we can live nobly, if we can get out of ourselves, if we can rise superior to worldly advantages, and prove that we believe all we say, we shall convince our fellow-men of the truth of our religion. This is what the Holy Spirit would have us to be, and we desire to obey his promptings more and more.

"Holy Spirit, dwell in me;  
I, myself, would holy be."

I will not detain you many minutes more; but I must bear my testimony to the supporting power of Christ in the time of trouble. There are many here, who would have been in the asylum, in their time of trial, if it had not been that they could carry their grief to Christ. There are some of us who are not strangers to very acute pain, and to a long continuance of it, too; and we have found no comfort in the world like going to our Lord when racked with anguish, and torn with pain. There is a power about him to charm us into joy; when everything would drive us to distress, and almost to despair.

And, specially, I want to bear my witness, not of course a personal one, but that of an observer, as to the power of our holy religion in the hour of death. I have been at many death-beds; I have seen many Christians just about to die. There it is that the power of our holy religion comes in. How calm, how resigned, sometimes how triumphant, how ecstatic, is the frame of mind of the departing believer! I never heard one of them regret that he was a Christian. In times when men sift what they have done and believed, and when they tell no lies, for the naked truth comes up before them, I have heard them glory in belonging to Christ, and in resting in

him; but I have never heard them regret that they did so. Our religion is not all of the future; it is not a thing that dreams concerning the world to come. It gives us present joy, present strength, present comfort, and we commend it to you most heartily, for this is our duty, to be witnesses for Christ. There are some who can give their evidence-in-chief, but the pity is that, when they come to be cross-examined, when they get among the ungodly in the world, they make a mess of it. The Lord have mercy upon some who come in among us, and even profess to know Christ, and do not; it is their lie that taints the testimony of the true in the judgment of mankind! Be you the more zealous to overbear their treachery by your consistency. Be you the more full of integrity, and stern truthfulness, and boundless love, to make up for these wounds which your Lord receives so often in the house of his friends.

May the Spirit of God rest upon you, beloved in the Lord, and may you hear your Master say to you, Ye shall be witnesses unto me"! Amen.

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## **A Woman's Memorial**

Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her. - Matthew 26:13

The evangelists are of course the historians of the time of Christ; but what strange historians they are! They leave out just that which worldly ones would write, and they record just that which the worldly would have passed over. What historian would have thought of recording the story of the widow and her two mites? Would a Hume or a Smollett have spared half a page for such an incident? Or think you that even a Macaulay could have found it in his pen to write down a story of an eccentric woman, who broke an alabaster box of precious ointment upon the head of Jesus? But so is it. Jesus values things, not by their glare and glitter, but by their

intrinsic value. He bids his historians store up, not the things which shall dazzle men, but those which shall instruct and teach them in his spirit. Christ valueth a matter, not by its exterior, but by the motive which dictated it, by the love which shines from it. O singular historians! ye have passed by much that Herod did; ye tell us little of the glories of his temple; ye tell us little of Pilate, and that little not to his credit; ye treat with neglect the battles that are passing over the face of the earth; the grandeur of Caesar doth not entice you from your simple story. But ye continue to tell these little things, and wise are ye in so doing for verily these little things, when put into the scales of wisdom, weigh more than those monstrous bubbles of which the world delighteth to read.

And now my prayer is that we may be endued this morning with the same spirit as that which prompted the woman, when she broke her alabaster box upon the head of Christ. There must be something wonderful about this story, or else Christ would not have linked it with his gospel, for so hath he done. So long as this gospel lives shall this story of the woman be told; and when this story of the woman ceaseth to exist, then the gospel must cease to exist also, for they are co-eternal. As long as this gospel is preached, and wherever it is proclaimed, the story of this woman is to go with it. Our Lord's prediction goes on to be verified, while the memorial of this woman fills the church with its fragrance. There must be something, therefore, remarkable in it: let us pause, and look, and learn, and God give us grace to imitate.

I shall want you first attentively to observe the woman; secondly, I shall invite you to look into the face of her loving Lord, and to listen to what he says about her; and then I shall close with an earnest suggestion that each one of us look to himself, for surely this is meant for our profit, and is not of any private interpretation.

I. First, then, my friends, **LET US OBSERVE THE WOMAN HERSELF.**

There is much dispute among commentators as to who she was. Some there are who confound this woman with that other woman who was a sinner, who came behind Christ, and washed his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. There are some too, who think

that the woman in Matthew is the same as the one of whom I read just now in the gospel of John; while there are others who say, "Not so, for that incident occurred in the house of Lazarus, where Lazarus sat at the table, and Martha served, while this, on the other hand, is stated to have taken place in the house of Simon the leper that was at Bethany; You will recollect also that this narrative in Matthew happened two days before the Passover - (see the second verse of this twenty-sixth chapter) - while the transaction recorded by the evangelist John, is said to have taken place six days before the Passover. It will be an interesting study for you some Lord's-day afternoon, if you are at home, to sit down and find out these different women, and see how far they are all alike, or wherein there is a difference. I have no time to spare on that subject this morning, and if I had I should not use it, for it will do you good to search the Scriptures and find it out for yourselves. Whether this, however, was Mary the sister of Martha or not, I will leave undetermined. We shall not err in speaking of her as a certain woman. Christ was sitting, or reclining, at the table of Simon the leper. A sudden thought strikes this woman. She goes to her home, she gets her money, and expends it in an alabaster box of ointment, or perhaps she had it in store, all ready laid up. She brings it; she hastens into the house. Without asking any one's leave, or communicating her intention, she breaks the alabaster vase, which was itself of great value, and forth flows a stream of the most precious ointment, with a very refreshing fragrance. This she poured on his head. So plenteous was the effusion that it streamed right down to his feet, and the whole house was filled with the odour of the ointment. The disciples murmured, but the Saviour commended. Now, what was there in the action of this woman worthy of commendation, and of such high commendation too that her memory must be preserved and transmitted with the gospel itself throughout all ages?

I think, in the first place, this act was done from the impulse of a loving heart, and this it was that made it so remarkable. Ah! my brethren, the heart is better than the head, after all, and the renewed heart is infinitely superior to the head; for, somehow or other, though doubtless grace will renew the understanding, yet it takes longer to sanctify the understanding, than it doth the affections; or, at least, the heart is the first affected; it is that which is first touched, and being swifter in its

goings forth than the head; it is generally more uncontaminated by the atmosphere around, and more clearly perceives that which is right. We in our day fall into the habit of calculating whether a thing is our duty or not; but have we never an impulse of the heart more impressive, and more expressive, than the mere arithmetic of moral obligations? Our heart says to us, "Arise, go and visit such and such an one who is sick:" we stop and say, "Is it my duty? If I do not go, will not somebody else go? Is the service absolutely requisite?" Or thy heart has said perhaps, once upon a time, "Devote of thy substance largely to the cause of Christ." If we obeyed the heart we should do it at once; but instead of that, we stop and shake the head, and we begin to calculate the question whether it is precisely our duty. This woman did no such thing. It was not her duty - I speak broadly - it was not her positive duty to take the alabaster box and break it on the head of Christ. She did not do it from a sense of obedience; she did it from a loftier motive. There was an impulse in her heart, which gushed forth like a pure stream overflowing every quibble and questioning, - "Duty or no duty, go and do it," - and she takes the most precious things she can find, and out of simple love, guided by her renewed heart, she goes at once and breaks the alabaster box, and pours the ointment on his head. If she had stayed a minute to consider, she would not have done it at all; if she had pondered, and reckoned, and reasoned, she never would have accomplished it; but this was the heart acting, the invincible heart, the force of a spontaneous impulse, if not of a very inspiration, while the head with its various organs hath not been allowed time to hold a council. It was the heart's dictate fully and entirely carried out. Now, in these times, we lace ourselves so tight that we do not give our hearts room to act, we just calculate whether we should do it - whether it is precisely our duty. Oh! would to God our hearts could grow bigger! Let our heads be as they are, or let them be improved; but let the heart have full play, and how much more would be done for Christ than ever has been done as yet! But I would have you remark, that this woman, acting from her heart, did not act as a matter of form.

You and I generally look to see whether the thing our new heart tells us to do has ever been done before; and then, if, like Martha, we love Christ, we still think it will be the proper mode of showing our love to prepare him a supper, and go and stand and wait at the table. We look for a precedent.

We recollect that the Pharisee gave Christ a supper; we remember how many others of the disciples have given him a dinner; and then we think that is the proper orthodox way, and we will go and do the same. "Mr. So-and-so gives ten guineas; I shall give ten guineas. Mrs. So-and-so teaches in the Sunday School; I shall teach in the Sunday School. Mr. This or That is in the habit of having prayer with his servants; I shall do likewise." You see, we look to find out whether anybody else has set us an example, and then we get into the habit of doing all these things as a matter of form. But Mary never thought of that; she never asked whether there was anybody else that had ever broken an alabaster box of ointment on that sacred head. No, she goes her way; her heart says, "Do it," and she does it all alone, breaks the box, and out flows the precious ointment. I would that we also obeyed the dictates of the heart; but no, we take second thoughts. Depend on it, in the things of Christ first thoughts are the best. It is that heavenly inspiration of the Spirit which comes into the soul, and says, "Do some great things for thy Master - go out and show thy love to him in some hazardous expedition." Oh! if we did but obey that, what results should we not see? We sit down and say, "Is it reasonable? Is it expected of me? Is it my duty?" No, my friend, it is not expected of you; it is not your duty; but are you going to stop short in bare duty? Will you give to Christ no more than his due as you give to Caesar, when you pay your tax? What! if the custom be but a shekel, is the shekel all he is to have? Is such a Master as this to be served by calculations? Is he to have his every-day penny, just as the common laborer? God forbid we should indulge such a spirit! Alas! for the mass of Christians, they do not even rise so high as that; and if they once get there they fold their arms, and they are quite content. "I do as much as anybody else, in fact a little more. I am sure I do my duty; nobody can find any fault; if people were to expect me to do more, they would be really unreasonable." Ah! then, you have not yet learned this woman's love, in all its heights and depths. You know not how to do an unreasonable thing - a thing that is not expected of you - out of the divine impulse of a heart fully consecrated to Jesus. The first era of the Christian Church was an era of wonders, because then, Christian men obeyed the prompting of their hearts. What wonders they used to do! A voice within the heart said to an apostle, "Go to a heathen country and preach." He never counted the cost - whether his life would be safe, or whether he would be successful; he went and did whatever his



heart told him. To another it spake, "Go thou, and distribute all that thou hast; "and the Christian went and did it, and cast his all into the common store. He never asked whether it was his duty his heart bid him do it, and he obeyed at once. Now, we have become stereotyped, we run in the ancient cart-rut; we all do what other people do; we are just content with performing the routine, and accomplishing the formalism of religious duties. How unlike this woman, who went out of all order, because her heart told her to do so, and she obeyed from her heart. This, I think, is the first part of the woman's act that won a deserved commendation.

The second commendation is - what this woman did was done purely to Christ, and for Christ. Why did she not take this spikenard, and sell it, and give the money to the poor? "No," she might have thought, "I love the poor, I would relieve them at any time; to the utmost of my ability would I clothe the naked, and feed the hungry; but I want to do something for him." Well, why did she not get up, and take the place that Martha did, and begin to wait at the table? Ah! she thought, Martha was at the table, dividing her services, Simon the leper, and Lazarus, and all the rest of the guests, have a share in her attention. I want to do something directly for him, something that he will have all to himself, something that he cannot give away, but which he must have and which must belong to him. Now, I do not think that any other disciple, in all Christ's experience, ever had that thought. I do not find, in all the Evangelists, another instance like this. We had disciples, whom he sent out by two and two to preach, and right valiantly did they do it, for they desired to benefit their fellow-men in the service of their Lord. He had disciples too, I doubt not, who were very, very happy, when they distributed the bread and the fishes to the hungry multitudes, because they felt they were doing an act of humanity, in supplying the needs of the hungry; but I do not think he had one disciple that thought about doing something exactly and directly for him - something, of which no one else could partake, something that should be Christ's, and Christ's alone. This is something, my brethren, which I wish you to remember. How much of what we do in the cause of religion, fails to have any excellence in it because we do not perform it for Christ's sake! We go up to preach, perhaps, and we do not feel that we are preaching for Christ. Perhaps we are preaching with a sincere desire to do good to our fellow-men: so far so good; but even that is not so grand a motive, as the

desire to do it for him who loved us, and gave himself for us. Do you not often catch yourself, when you put a coin into the hand of the poor, thinking there is a virtue in it? And so there is, in one sense; but do you not find yourself forgetting, that you should do that for him, and give that as unto Christ, giving unto the poor, and lending unto the Lord? Sabbath-school teachers! I ask you also: do you not find, in teaching your class, that you often forget that you should be teaching for him? Your act is done rather for the church, for the school, for your fellow-men, for the poor, for the children's sake, than for Christ's sake. But the very beauty of this woman's act lay in this, that she did it all for the Lord Jesus Christ. You could not say she did it for Lazarus, or did it for the disciples; no it was exclusively for him. She felt she owed him all, it was he who had forgiven her sins; it was he who had opened her eyes, and given her to see the light of heavenly day; it was he who was her hope, her joy, her all, her love went out in its common actings to her fellow men - it went out towards the poor, the sick, and the needy. but oh! it went in all its vehemence to him. That man, that blessed man, the God man, she must give something to him. She could not be content to put it in that bag there; she must go and put it right on his head. She could not be content that Peter, or James, or John, should have a part of it; the whole pound must go on his head; and though others might say it was waste, yet she felt it was not, but that whatever she could give unto him was well bestowed, because it went to him to whom she owed her all. Ah! my dear hearers, learn this lesson, I pray you. The scene is a very simple one, but it is extremely captivating. You will do your acts in religion far better, if you can cultivate always the desire to do them all for Christ. Oh! to preach for Christ! What precious work that is! When the mind is fatigued and the body weary, this will make a man strong to labor and to stiffer too, if he hears the whisper, "Go and do it for thy Master's sake." Oh! to visit the sick for Christ, and distribute to the poor for his sake! This will make toil light; self-denial will become a pleasure, it will cease to be self-denial altogether, if we remember that we are doing it for him! But we do not now as this woman did. I fear our love is but faint and cold. If the spark were kindled to a flame, we should never be content with attending to religion from a selfish motive; we should not assay to do holy works with the idea of getting good ourselves, but our one aim and desire would be, to glorify him - to spend and be spent for him who suffered on the cross

for us. These two commendations were surely enough to immortalise this woman - she obeyed the dictates of her heart, and she did it all to him.

There is yet a third thing. I fear, however, I have anticipated myself. This woman did an extraordinary thing for Christ. Not content with doing what other people had done, nor wishful to find a precedent, she ventured to expose her ardent attachment though she might have known that some would call her mad, and all would think her foolish and wasteful, yet she did it - an extraordinary thing - for the love she bear her Lord. Our church-acts at this day - as far as I know the church of Christ, from extensive travelling and considerable experience exhibit a dull, uniform, dead level. There are some few men who strike out every now and then a new endorse, who are not content to ask what the fathers did, what is canonical, what will be permitted and allowed by ecclesiastical polity or by public opinion - men will only ask, "Does my heart bid me do it for Christ, then I will go and do it?" and it is done. But the mass of Christians have not got a new thought, simply because new thoughts generally come from the heart, and they will not let their hearts work, and consequently they never get a new emotion. I believe that the origin of Sabbath schools is to be found in the heart of some one man. His heart prompted him, saying - "Take these little ragged urchins, and teach them the Word of God." If that thought had come into some of you, you would have said, "Well, there is not any Sunday-school connected with the church of Christ all over England; I am sure the minister will throw many obstacles in the way; nobody else has done it, but it would have been a good thing if it had been done many years ago." Robert Raikes never talked like that; he went and did it, and we, poor little creatures, can imitate him afterwards. If we would let our heart work, we should do new things. Within fifty years from this date, unless the Lord come before that era, there will be new operations for the cause of Christ, of which, if we heard them now, we should jump for joy. Perhaps they will never come to pass for years, simply because this is the age for intellectual reasoning, and not the age for heart impulse. If we did but hear our hearts, and heed the promptings of the Spirit within, there might be fifty schemes for the promotion of the cause of Christ started in as many days, and all those fifty, through the Holy Spirit's blessing might be useful to the souls of men.

"But," says one, "you could make us all fanatics." Yes no doubt that is just the name you would very soon earn, and a very respectable name too, for it is a name that has been borne by all men who have been singularly good. All those who have done wonders for Christ have always been called eccentric and fanatical. Why, when Whitfield first went on Bennington Common to preach, because he could not find a building large enough, it was quite an unheard of thing, to preach in the open air. How could you expect God to hear prayer, if there was not a roof over the top of the people's heads? How could souls be blessed, if the people had not seats, and regular high-backed pews to sit in! Whitfield was thought to be doing something outrageous, but he went and did it; he went and broke the alabaster box on the head of his Master, and in the midst of scoffs and jeers, he preached in the open air. And what came of it? A revival of godliness, and a mighty spread of religion. I wish we were all of us ready to do some extraordinary thing for Christ - willing to be laughed at, to be called fanatics, to be hooted and scandallized because we went out of the common way, and were not content with doing what everybody else could do or approve to be done.

And here let me remark, that Jesus Christ certainly deserves to be served after an extraordinary manner. Was there ever a people that had such a leader or such a lover as we have in the person of Christ? And yet, my dear friends, there have been many impostors in the world, who have had disciples more ardently attached to them than some of you are to Christ Jesus. When I read the life of Mohamed, I see men who loved him so, that they would expose their persons to death at any moment for the false prophet, dash into battle almost naked, cut their way through hosts of enemies, and do exploits out of a passionate zeal for him whom they verily believed to be sent of God. And even that modern delusion of Joe Smith lacks not its martyrs. When I read the history of the Mormonite emigrants, and of all the miseries they endured when driven out of the city of Nauvoo; how they had to pass over trackless snows and pathless mountains, and were ready to die under the guns of the United States marauders, and how they suffered for that false prophet, I do stand ashamed of the followers of Christ, that they should permit the followers of an impostor to suffer hardships, and loss of limb and life, and

everything else that men count dear, for an impostor, while they themselves show that they do not love their Master, their true and loving Lord half so well, else would they serve him in an extraordinary manner, as he deserves. When the soldiers of Napoleon performed such unexampled deeds of daring in his day, people ceased to wonder. They said, "No wonder that they do that, see what their leader does." When Napoleon, sword in hand, crossed over the bridge of Lodi and bid them follow, no one wondered that every common soldier was a hero. But it is wonderful when we consider what the Captain of our salvation hath done for us, that we are content to be such every day nothings as the most of us are. Ah! if we did but think of his glory, and of what he deserves - if we did but think of his sufferings, and of what he merits at our hands, surely we should do something out of the common; we should break our alabaster box, and pour the pound of ointment on his head again.

But not only does an extraordinary thing cease to appear extraordinary, when you think of the person to whom it is done, but surely when you think of the person who is bound to do it, an extraordinary thing becomes very ordinary indeed. My friends, if I should leave this place, and go into the midst of the abode of some wild Red Indians, and there be exposed to cold and hunger, and famine, and nakedness; if through long years I should preach the gospel to a people who rejected me, and if afterwards I should be roasted alive at the stake by them, I do acknowledge and confess that I feel it were but a slight thing I should have done for him to whom I owe so much. When I think of what my Master has done for me, surely the stripes and imprisonments, the perils, the shipwrecks, the journeyings, which even a Paul suffered, seem to be less than nothing and vanity compared with the debt of love I owe. Now, I do not expect all of you to love Christ as I think I ought, for perhaps you do not owe him so much as I do; perhaps you have never been such great sinners as I was, perhaps you have never had so much forgiven, and have never tasted so much of his love, and have never had so much fellowship with him, but this I know - if every atom of my body could become a man, and every man so made could suffer and be cut piece meal, all that suffering would not be a worthy recompense for what he has done for me. Methinks there are some of you that might stand up and tell the like tale. I can look round on some of you that were drunkards, that were swearers, but you

have obtained mercy; and, my dear friends, if you do something extraordinary for Christ, while other people wonder with a vacant stare of astonishment, you may say, "Do you wonder at me?"

"Love I much? I've more forgiven;  
I'm a miracle of grace."

You for whom Jesus has done little, if any such there be, love him little; but I do beseech you - those of you whom he has loved with an extraordinary affection, and who feel that you owe much to his grace, that he has done "rest things for you, whereof you are glad, do not be content with doing what other people do. Think of others thus. "I have no doubt that what they do is their best, but I must do more than they, for I owe him more than they do." And oh! if every one of us could feel this, we should account labor light and pain easy, and be disgusted with ourselves that we spend so much of our lives doing nothing for him who has bought us with his most precious blood.

I have but one more reason to add. It seems to me that Jesus praised this woman, and handed down this memorial, because her act was so beautifully expressive. There was more virtue in it than you could see. The manner, as well as the matter of her votive sacrifice, might well excite the rebuke of men, whose practical religion is mercenary and economical. It is not enough that she pours out the ointment with such reckless profusion, but she is so rash and extravagant she must needs break the box. Marvel not, beloved, but admire the rapt enthusiasm of her godly soul. Why! love is a passion. If ye did but know and feel its vehemence, ye would never marvel at an act so expressive. Her love could no more tarry to conform to the rubrics of service, than it could count the cost of her offering. A mighty impulse of devotion carries her soul far above all ordinary routine. Her conduct did but symbol the inspiration of a grateful homage. A sanctified heart, more beautiful than the transparent vase of alabaster, was that hour broken. Only from a broken heart can the sweet spices of grace give forth their rich perfume. "Love and grief, our heart dividing," we sometimes sing - but oh! let me say it - love, grief and gratitude, the spikenard, myrrh, and frankincense of the gospel blend together here; the heart must expand and break, or the odors would never

fill the house. Every muscle of her face every involuntary motion of her frame, frenzied as it might appear to the unsympathising looker-on, was in harmony with her heart's emotion. Her every feature gives evidence of her sincerity. What they could coldly criticize, Jesus delivers to them for a study. Here is one on whom a Saviour's love has produced its appropriate effects. Here is a heart that has brought forth the most precious fruits. Not only admiration for her, but kindness to us, moved our Lord, when he resolved henceforth to illustrate the gospel, wherever it is published, with this portrait of saintly love, in one instant breaking the delicate vase, and bursting the tender heart. Why, that woman meant to say to Christ, "Dear Lord, I give myself away." She went home; she brought out the most precious thing she had; if she had had anything worth ten thousand times as much she would have brought that; in fact, she did really bring him all.

II. Having described this woman as so well worthy to be remembered for ever, I NOW INVITE YOU TO LOOK INTO THE FACE OF THE LOVING LORD. Hark! what is all that muttering about? What are they saying to one another over yonder? Why, there is Judas, he has been taking out a little scrap of paper, and casting up a sum, and he makes out that that box of ointment is worth just three hundred pence. And what are Peter, and Thomas, and the other disciples talking about? "Oh dear," they say, "see what a waste; I am very sorry; if I had known what she was going to do I would have taken that box away from her; indeed I would, I would not have allowed that, what a waste! and all for this little smell - it is soon gone, and a little of it would have done. What multitudes of hungry mouths might have been filled, if it had been sold and given to the poor, "Oh!" says one of them, "I never saw such an insane thing in my life. I wonder the Lord Jesus was not angry with her. Do you hear that talk? Do you hear it? I have heard it many times before, and I hear it now. It is a kind of talk that is sometimes very rife in the church of Christ. If there is a man that does a little more than any one else, people say, "There is no occasion for it at all, there is no need for it." If some one gives more than any one else to the cause of Christ, they say, "Ah! I cannot understand such a motive as would lead him to do that; there is a medium in all things; there is a limit to which people should go, and they ought not to exceed it." And so they begin chatting and talking one with another, and if

there is anything done that seems extraordinary, they will begin to pick a hole in it. Instead of emulating superior devotion themselves, they begin to murmur, and to consider how much might have been done with the same effort, if it had been conducted in an orthodox manner. That young man, instead of preaching at the corner of the street, if he taught in a Sunday School, how much good might he do? If - instead of rambling all over the country, some would have said, "If Whitfield had kept to his own congregation, or to his own parish, he might have done a great deal of good." Yes, I dare say; but you and Judas talk that matter over together; we have no time to trouble ourselves with it this morning; let us look at what Jesus Christ himself says. He says, "Trouble her not, trouble her not. I have three very good excuses for her; only listen to them." And the three interpretations our Lord gave of the woman were these.

She hath wrought a good work upon me." Note these two last words "Upon me!" "Why," say they, "it is not a good work to go and spill all that ointment, and perpetrate so much waste." "No," says Jesus, "it is not a good work in relation to you, but it is a good work upon me." And, after all, that is the beet sort of good work - a good work that is wrought upon Christ - an act of homage such as faith in his name, and love to his person, would dictate. A good work upon the poor is commendable, a good work upon the church is excellent; but a good work upon Christ, surely this is one of the very highest and noblest kinds of good works. But I will be bound to say that neither Judas nor the disciples could comprehend this; and there is a mystic virtue in the acts of some Christian men that common Christians do not and cannot comprehend. That mystic virtue consists in this, that they do it "as unto the Lord, and not unto men," and in their service they serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Moreover, our Lord protects the woman with another apology. "Do not trouble her; do not reflect upon what might have been done for the poor, 'for ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always.' Ye can always do good to them, whenever you please." Why, he seems here to retort upon her accusers. "If there are any poor about, give to them yourselves; empty that bag of mine out, Judas; don't be hiding that away in your girdle. 'Whensoever ye will, ye may do them good.' Don't begin talking about the poor, and about what might have been done; go you,



and do what might have been done yourselves; this poor woman hath done a good thing for me; I shall not be here long; don't trouble her." And so, beloved, if you murmur at men because they do not go in your ordinary ways, because they venture a little out of the regular line, there is plenty for you to do; your errand perhaps is not there exactly, but there is plenty for you to do, go and do it, and do not blame those who do extraordinary things. There are multitudes of ordinary people to attend to ordinary things. If you want subscribers to the guinea list, you can have them; it is those who give all they have, that are the varieties. Do not trouble those men. There are not many of them. They will not trouble you. You will have to travel from here to John o'Groat's house, before you knock against many dozen. They are rare creatures not often discovered. Do not trouble them; they may be fanatical, they may be excessive; but if you should build an asylum to put them all in, it would require but a very small sort of a house. Let them alone, there are not many who do much for their Master - not many who are irrational enough to think that there is nothing worth living for but to glorify Christ and magnify his holy name.

But the third excuse is the most extraordinary that could be given. Saith Christ, "in that she poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial." What! did this woman forestal the Messiah's death? And had she the fond idea that, since no loving hand might embalm him, she would anoint his sacred body by anticipation? Did her faith just then penetrate those deep shades of mystery about to be gradually unravelled? I think not. I think her love was more conspicuous than her faith. It strikes me that in these words we have rather the construction that Christ put upon her act. If so, the virtue of her action was derived from him on whom it was wrought. "Your righteousness is of me," saith the Lord. Sometimes when your heart prompts you to go and do such-and-such a thing for Christ, you cannot tell what you are doing. You may be doing a very simple thing in appearance, but there may be some wonderful, some matchless meaning in it. Christ may be but sending you, as it were, to take hold of one golden link - mayhap there are ten thousand links that are hanging to it, and when you draw out that one, all the ten thousand will come after it. This woman thought she was just anointing Christ. "Nay," says Christ, "she is anointing me for my burial." There was more in

her act than she knew of. And there is more in the spiritual promptings of our heart than we shall ever discover to the day of judgment. When first of all the Lord said to Whitfield, "Go and preach out on Kennington Common," did Whitfield know what was to be the result? No, he thought, doubtless, that he should just stand for once on the top of a table, and address some five thousand people. But there was a greater intent in the womb of Providence. The Lord meant that to set the whole country in a blaze, and to bring forth a glorious renewal of Pentecostal times, the like of which had not been seen before. Only seek to have your heart filled with love, and then obey its first spiritual dictate. Stop not. However extraordinary may be the mandate, go and do it. Have your wings outstretched like the angels before the throne, and the very moment that the echo vibrates in your heart, fly, fly, and you shall be flying you know not whither - you shall be upon an errand higher and nobler than your imagination has ever dreamed.

III. Now I come to the conclusion, which is this, - TO APPEAL PERSONALLY TO YOU, and ask you whether you know anything about the lesson which this woman's history is designed to teach.

Imagine your Saviour, who has bought you with his blood, standing in this pulpit for a moment. He lifts up his hands, once rent with the nails, he exposes to you his side, pierced with a spear. Now picture him. Lose sight of me for a moment, and see him! And he puts to each one of you the question - "I suffered all this for thee, what hast thou ever done for me?" Answer him now! Like honest followers of the Lamb of God, look back and see what you have ever done. You have gone up, you say, to his house. Was not that for your own profit? Did you do it for him? You have contributed to his cause. Ah! you have, and some of you have done well in this thing; but think, how much have you given in proportion to what God has given to you? What have you done for Christ? Well, you have perhaps, some years ago, taught children for him in the Sabbath school, but it is all over; you have not been a Sunday-school teacher these last many years. Jesus asks you, "What have you done for me? In three years," he says, "I wrought out your redemption; in three years of agony, of toil, of suffering, I bought you with my blood; what have you done for me in these ten, twenty, thirty years, since you knew my love, and tasted of my power to

save?" Cover your faces, my friends, cover your faces. Let each man among us do so. Let us blush and weep. Lord Jesus! there was never such a friend as thou art; but never were there such unfriendly ones as we are. Christ has some of the most ungrateful followers that man ever had. We have done little. If we have done much, we have done little. But some of you have done nothing at all for Christ.

That question answered, there comes another. I beseech you, let the vision of that crucified One stand before you. He says to you this morning, "What will you do for me." Putting aside the past - you have wept over that, and blushed, - what will you do now? Wilt thou not now think of something that thou canst give him, something that thou canst do for him, something thou canst consecrate to him? Come, ye Marys, bring out your alabaster box! Come, ye loving Johns, lift your heads for a moment from his bosom, and think of something that you can do for him who lets you lean your head upon his heart. Come, come, ye followers of Christ! Need I press you? Surely, if you needed it, my pressing would be in vain. But no; instinctively inspired by the Holy Spirit, you will each of you say, "Lord Jesus, from this day forth I desire to serve thee better; but, Lord, tell me what thou wouldst have me to do." He does tell you now. I do not know what it is. The Spirit shall tell that to each one among you. But I do entreat you think not about it, but do it.

To the whole church of Christ I have one word to speak. I do feel - and I speak here of myself and of all Christians as in one mass - I do feel that the church of Christ in these days too much forgets her obligations to her Master. Oh! in the early church how did religion spread! It was because no man thought his life his own, or counted anything dear to him, so that he might win Christ, and be found in him at last. Look how the ancient church, which was but a handful, within a century had stormed every known nation, and had carried the gospel throughout the length and breadth of the entire known world. But now we stay at home, penned up in England, or cooped up in America. We go not abroad where heathens dwell. Though we send here and there a man - one drafted as it were out of thousands; we do little or nothing for the evangelization of the world, and the sending forth of the ministers of the truth. Why, the early church, if it were here now, and we were gone, would within another fifty years

sound the trumpet of the heavenly jubilee throughout the entire earth. With our means of travelling, with our appliances, with our books and helps, give such a church as the first Pentecostal one but fifty years, and the whole earth would be covered with the knowledge of the Lord, God the Holy Spirit going forth with them. But no, we cannot spend our lives for Christ, we are not like the soldiers who marched to victory over the dead bodies of their brethren. We shall never sow the world with truth till it is sown with our blood again. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." I would that the church would burst forth from all her bonds, and send out her chosen warriors to do battle against the infidel hosts. And what if they should fall? What if they should die? With the Spirit of Christ inflaming our hearts, we should go forward, our courage nothing damped nor our ardor abated for all that - each one counting it an honor to die for Christ, each one throwing himself into the breach determined to win for Christ, and spread his name through the whole earth, or else to perish in the attempt. God give to his church this zeal and ardor; and then the time to favor Zion, yea her set time, shall have come.

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## **A Word For The Persecuted**

What if thy father answer thee roughly? - 1 Samuel 20:10

It was not an unlikely thing that his father would answer Jonathan roughly. Saul had taken great umbrage against David, while Jonathan his eldest son, on the contrary, loved David as his own soul. Jonathan could hardly think that his father really meant harm to so good a man as David, and he expressed to David that opinion, and then David, to be prepared for the worst, put to him this question, "What if thy father answer thee roughly?" It did so turn out. Saul answered his son with bitter words, and in the desperation of his anger he even hurled a javelin at him to smite him; yet Jonathan did not forsake David, he clung to him with all the faithfulness of love, and until his death, which was much mourned by

David, he remained his fast and faithful friend Now, this question of David to Jonathan is one which I wish to put this morning to all believers in Christ, especially to the younger ones who have lately entered into covenant with the great Son of David, and who, in the ardor of their hearts, feel that they could live and die for him. I want to put before them the supposition that they will meet with opposition from their dearest friends, that perhaps their father, brother, husband, or uncle will answer them roughly, or perhaps their mother, wife, or sister will become a persecutor to them. What then? What will they do under such circumstances? Will they follow the Lord through evil report? "What if thy father answer thee roughly?"

Remember that this supposition is a very likely one. There are a few Christians so favourably circumstanced that all their friends accompany them in the pilgrimage to heaven. What advances they ought to make in the sacred journey! What excellent Christians they ought to be! They are like plants in a conservatory—they ought to grow and bring forth the loveliest Bowers of divine grace. But there are not very many who are altogether in that case. The large proportion of Christians find themselves opposed by those of their own family, or by those with whom they labor or trade. Is it not likely to be so? Was it not so from the beginning? Is there not enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman? Did not Cain slay his brother Abel because he was accepted of the Lord? In the family of Abraham was there not an Ishmael born after the flesh, who persecuted Isaac, who was born after the Spirit? Was not Joseph hated of his brethren? Was not David persecuted by Saul, Daniel by the Persian princes, and Jeremiah by the kings of Israel? Has it not ever been so? Did not the Lord Jesus Christ himself meet with slander, cruelty, and death, and did he not tell us that we must not look for favor where he found rejection? He said plainly, "I came not to send peace upon the earth, but a sword;" and he declared that the immediate result of the preaching of the gospel would be to set the son against the father and the father against the son, so that a man's foes should be they of his own household. Did he not carefully inquire of every recruit who wished to enlist in his army, "Have you counted the cost?" Have you not admired his perfect honesty and admirable caution in dealing with men, when he bids them remember that if they follow him they must deny themselves

and take up their cross daily and be content to be hated of all men for his sake? He warns us not to expect that the disciple will be above his Master, for if men have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, they will assuredly confer no sweet titles upon his household. Since our Lord has forewarned us, it is well for us to stand ready for the trial which he predicts, and to ask ourselves whether we are ready to bear oppression for Christ's sake. I press the question Upon you who think of avowing yourselves believers, for most likely it will come practically home to you, and it is well when you begin to build a house to calculate whether you will be able to finish it.

There are very many of God's servants here, whose life is made bitter by the continual worry they endure from their ungodly relatives and associates. Often do they sigh for the wings of a dove to fly away and be at rest. I feel the deepest sympathy with them, and it is not Only with the intention of forearming the younger ones, but with the hope of cheering and consoling those who have been long in the fiery furnace, that I shall speak this morning upon this text, "What if thy father answer thee roughly?"

I. Our first point is this, WHAT YOU MAY DO, what there is a possibility of your doing, should your friends answer you roughly. In the first confidence of your love to Christ you go and tell father of your conversion; well, what if he should ridicule it all? You run to mother, and communicate your change of heart; what if she should scoff at it? You tell a little of your heart to some friend; what if that friend should turn again and rend you? I will tell you what perhaps you will do, though I earnestly pray that you may do no such thing. You may "by-and-by be offended." I mean that you may leave Christ altogether, because you cannot bear his cross, and though willing enough to go to heaven with him if the way were smooth, it may be that, like Mr. Pliable, finding that there is a slough to be got through, you will turn your back upon the good country and return to the City of Destruction. Many have done so. Our Lord's parable of the seed sown in stony places teaches us that many shoots which promise fair for harvest, perish when the sun arises with burning heat because they have no root. Observation confirms this statement. If yonder fair-weather professors of religion could have been daily hailed

with general acclamation, they would, after a certain fashion, have continued steadfast; but inasmuch as they have met with rebuffs and chills which they never bargained for, they have cast off all religion and joined with the fashionable world. To such the earthly father is dearer than the Father who is in heaven; the brother after the flesh is dearer than that Brother who is born for adversity, and the ungodly husband is more precious than the everlasting bridegroom; and so they desert their Lord.

Or, it may happen to you that, instead of being by-and-by offended, you may continue for awhile, but you may gradually give way, and at last yield altogether. There are many among us who could bear to lose our heads at a stroke for Christ, but to be burned at a slow fire—ah, that would try us! And if that slow fire lasted not for a day or so, but for weeks, and months, and years! How then? If, after much patient endurance, the cruel mockings still continue, if the hard words and bitter speeches never cease—how then? Surely, unless grace sustains us, the flesh will clamor to be rid of this uneasy yoke, and will look out for some by-path by which it may escape the rigor of the rough road and go back again to the world. Grace will hold on and out to the end, but nature at her best, with firmest resolutions, has only to be tried up to a certain point, and it will surely yield. This is what we may do; but may God grant that we may be preserved from such a wretched course of action, for, if we do give way because of opposition from ungodly friends, it involves tremendous guilt. To give up religion because of persecution is to prefer ourselves to florist, to be selfish enough to regard our own ease rather than this glory, to consult our own peace rather than his honor, though we have said that we love him beyond all else for redeeming us by his blood. It will show that we love him not at all, but are ungrateful, false, and hypocritical. With all our true professions, if we flinch from persecution it will prove that we only want our price, and, like the traitor Judas, we too will sell our Master, not for thirty pieces of silver possibly, but to escape ridicule or avoid ill-will.

It will become clear, also, that we prefer the praise of man to the approval of God. A smile from a face which is soon to die we value at a higher price than the love of God, or the Redeemer's approbation. Peter for a moment

was more affected by the question of a silly maid than by his allegiance to his Lord, but how dreadful to fall into that condition deliberately, and think more of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that is but as a worm, than of the Lord our Maker and Judge, who alone is to be feared. Is not this folly, treason, and dire iniquity?

To forsake the Lord through persecution is to set time before eternity, to barter heaven for this world's pleasures, to renounce eternal life for a few hours of ease, and to involve ourselves in endless misery rather than endure a stupid jest or a senseless jibe. It comes to that. Many a man has had life and death set before him, the life has been shaded with the cross, and the death has been gilded over with transient merriment, and he has chosen the everlasting death with its glitter in preference to eternal life with its momentary trial. May God grant we may never be of so insane a mind, for if we are, we shall be numbered with those mentioned in the Revelation, of whom it is said that "the fearful," which is being interpreted the cowardly, "and the unbelieving, the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars"—for that is the class of persons with whom cowards are membered—"shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8), from which death may the infinite mercy of God deliver us. Like true soldiers may we buckle on our harness and resolve that let the battle rage as it may, through divine grace we will not desert our colors. We prefer death itself to the disgrace of forsaking a cause so true, a doctrine so pure, a Savior so gracious, a Prince so noble, and so worthy of our most loyal service.

But if left to ourselves we may fall into what is as bad as open apostasy. When we find the father, or the wife, or the friend answering us roughly, we may make a pitiful compromise between Christ and the world. I warn you solemnly against this above everything else. It has the look of being the prudent and proper thing to do. "Can I not please men and please God? May I not go a little way with Christ and a little way with the world?" O soul, if you attempt this you must fail, and moreover you will have chosen the roughest road of all, for if a man serves God, and serves him thoroughly, he will meet with many comforts to balance his crosses; and if a man serves Satan thoroughly he will enjoy whatever poor comfort



is to be got out of sin; but if he goes betwixt and between he will feel the discomforts of both, and the pleasures of neither. Running the gauntlet on board ship is not worse than attempting to be friends with Christ and Satan at the same time. I believe many a professing woman has given way at first to her ungodly husband, where she should have been decided, and she has embittered all the rest of her life; and many a husband, many a son, many a man of business, has been undecided in a minor matter for peace sake, and from that very moment the other side has never believed in his sincerity, and having given an inch, the world has demanded its ell, and there has been an end to all liberty henceforth. If you yield a single point of honesty or true religion, the unconverted will not believe in you as they would have done if you had been firm throughout; men respect a thoroughbred Christian, but nobody has a good word for a mongrel. Be one thing or the other, either hot or cold, or Christ will reject you, and the world too. If a thing be right, do it; if you resolve to serve the Lord, do it, offend or please; and if, on the other hand, you prefer the service of Satan, do at least be honest enough not to pretend to be on the Lord's side. Remember the challenge of Elijah, "If God be God, serve him; if Baal be God, serve him;" but do not attempt a compromise, which will end in a miserable breakdown. Mark Antony drove two lions yoked together through the streets of Rome, but no Mark Antony could ever drive the lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of the pit in a leash together. They will never agree. Be ye warned, then, against falling into the meanness of compromise, for compromise is nothing better than varnished rebellion against God, a mockery of his claims, and an insult to his judgment. May the grace of God keep us from this, for left to ourselves we shall fall into this snare.

I will tell you what you may do also, and I pray that the Holy Spirit may lead you to do it. You may take up humbly, but firmly, this decided stand:—"If my father answer me roughly he must do so, but I have another Father who is in heaven, and I shall appeal to him. If the world condemn me, I shall accept its condemnation as a confirmation of that gracious verdict of acquittal which comes from the great Judge of all, for I do remember it is written, 'If the world hate you ye know that it hated me before it hated you' and 'If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the

world, therefore the world hateth you." Be it ours to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. May we count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all earth's treasures. Never may a coward blush defile our cheek because we are ashamed of Jesus; far rather may we be willing to be made a gazing-stock than for a moment think of turning aside from our Beloved Lord. False or fearful may we never be; firmly and calmly, with the confidence of a love which cannot falter, let us cleave to our Lord, even though all men should forsake him: -

"Oh, learn to scorn the praise of men!  
Oh, learn to lose with God;  
For Jesus won the world through shame,  
And beckons thee His road."

II. The second head is WHAT THE TRIAL WILL, DO FOR US IF WE ARE HELPED TO BEAR UP UNDER IT. "What if thy father answer thee roughly? "First, it will grieve us. It is by no means pleasant to be opposed in doing right by those who ought to help us in it. It is very painful to flesh and blood to go contrary to those we love. Moreover, those who hate Christians have a way of putting their revilings so that they are sure to make us wince. They watch our weak points, and with very wonderful skill they turn their discoveries to account; trained by the old master of all malice, they are not slow to ply their lash where we are most tender. If one thing is more provoking than another, they will be sure to say it, and say it when we are least able to bear it. It may be they are very polite people, and if so, your refined persecutors have a very dainty way of cutting to the bone, and yet smiling all the while. They can say a malicious thing so delicately that you can neither resent it nor endure it. The art of persecuting has been so long studied by the seed of the serpent that they are perfect masters of it, and know how to make the iron enter into the soul. Do not be astonished, therefore, if you are sorely vexed, neither be amazed, as though some strange thing kind happened unto you. The martyrs did not suffer sham pains; the racks on which they were stretched were not beds of ease, nor were their prisons parlours of comfort. Their pains were agonies, their martyrdoms were torments. If you had sham griefs you might expect counterfeit joys; let the reality of your tribulation assure you of the reality of the coming glory.

The opposition of your friends will try your sincerity. If you are a hypocrite you will soon yield to opposition. "The game is not worth the candle," say you, and you will be off, and for the church's sake very likely it will be a blessing, for the wheat is all the better for being rid of the chaff, and if the wind of persecution can blow you away you are chaff. The rough answers of opponents will try your faith. You say you believe in Jesus: now we shall see if you do, for if you cannot bear a little trial from men and women, surely you will not be able to bear the worse trials from the devil and his angels. "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how easiest thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? "If you cannot bear the trials of life, how will you endure the ordeals of death?

Persecution will try your love to Jesus. If you really love him you will cheerfully stand in the pillory of reproach with him, and when enemies have filth to hurl you will say, "Throw it upon me rather than upon him: if there is a hard thing to be said, say it about me rather than against my Lord."

"If on my face for his dear name  
Shame and reproach shall be,  
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,  
For he'll remember me."

It will try your love, I say, and so it will all your graces in their turn; and this is good for you. These virtues will not increase in strength unless they are brought into action; and if they are not tested, who is to know of what sort they are? Your valiant soldier in quiet barracks at home could fight, no doubt, but how do you know till he has passed through a campaign? He who has charged up to the cannon's mouth, he who is adorned with a sabre cut across his brow, and bears many a wound beside, which he gained in the service of his king, he is brave beyond question. Good gold must expect to be tried in the fire, and these oppositions are sent on purpose that our faith, and our love, and all our graces should be proved genuine by enduring the test.

The rough answers of those who should be our friends will keep us awake. I think it was Erskine who used to say, "Lord, deliver me from a sleepy devil"; and truly it is a prayer well worth praying. When everything goes on smoothly, and nobody ridicules us, we are very apt to be off our guard, but when we are stung by undeserved reproaches and insults, and when for our love we receive only anger or unkindness, we are not very likely to go to sleep. Such afflictions drive you to your knees. Perhaps you have read the story of Mr. Eraser, one of the ministers in Ross-shire, who had a cold, unfeeling woman for a wife; she was very cruel to him, and would never allow light or fire in his study, so that he had actually worn two holes in the plaster at the ends of his room, where his hand had touched as he paced to and fro in the dark. At a meeting of ministers who were not of his mind in divine things, one of them thought to make sport of him by remarking that he would no doubt very heartily agree with the toast of "Health to our wives." To their astonishment he answered, "Mine has been a better wife to me than any of yours has been to you, she has sent me to my knees seven times a day, when I would not otherwise have gone, which is more than any of you can say of yours." Personally I should greatly prefer not to have such a perpetual blister applied to me, but had the good Physician appointed me so severe a trial, I doubt not that he would have had good reason for it. Out of what men call weeds the wise man extracts a medicine, and out of these bitter trials the Lord produces a sacred tonic which braces us for a higher life of communion with himself.

Trials from the enemies of Jesus confirm our faith. Those who are never tried usually possess a poor, tottering faith, but trial, especially persecution, is like the rough March wind which goes howling through the forest, and while the young oaks are almost torn up by the roots at first, it loosens the soil for them, and they send out more rootless, till they get such a firm grip that they defy the hurricane. That which shakes them at first strengthens them afterwards. The tried saint is the bold saint, and the firm saint; therefore take the rough answer joyfully, and look for good results from it. A little persecution for the church in England would be a grand thing for her. We have fallen on very velvety days, when zeal for God is rare and decision for truth scarcely to be met with. The church has made terms with the world, and goes to sleep, Satan rocking her cradle.

Many a man professes to be a Christian, who is nothing better than a baptized worldling, and many a man sets up to be a minister of Christ who is a mere reader of other people's sermons, and a hireling who cares not for the sheep. The fan of persecution, if it purged the threshing floor of the church, would bestow great benefits upon her.

Rough speeches, too, will have this good effect upon genuine Christians, it will lead them to plead for those who utter them. I remember a good man who used to say of a certain swearing fellow who took delight to vex him with his horrid taunts and oaths, "Well, after all, I might forget to pray for him, but he reminds me of it, for he will not let me go by without a curse." If our friends were all very smooth-spoken, and concealed their enmity to Christ, we might entertain a false hope about them, and we might not pray for them; but when we see that the old nature is there, and very rampant, it drives us to intercession for them, and who can tell but what the Lord may give us their souls as our reward?

Certainly opposition has another good effect, that it drives those subject to it into the truly separated path; they are known to be Christians, and proclaimed as such by their revilers. I do not think it is a bad thing, young man, when you go to that warehouse that they should advertise you as a Christian by crying out "Halloa, here comes one of the Methodist sort." It is good for you to be known. If you are what you should be, you will not mind being labelled, nor being tested either. It will help to keep you right when temptations arise; and it will frequently deliver you from trials of a more fascinating kind; for, suppose they forsake your company because you are a Christian, will not that be well? Those who leave you on that account are a very gainful loss. An honorable lady, now with God, when she joined this church told me how after her baptism many of her aristocratic friends had ceased to call upon her, or invite her to their houses. I congratulated her upon it, for it rendered it all the easier for her to select her own company. Her real worth of character and kindness of spirit soon won back all who were worth having, and the rest were happily removed. Such as shun you for following the Lord are persons whom you yourself might shun. We gain nothing by the love of those who love not God.

One good effect of being persecuted at home is this, it makes you gentler abroad. If, my brother Christian, you have those at home who make you unhappy, if you are a wise man you will be the better ably to have patience with outsiders. Men wondered why Socrates was so patient with his pupils, and so good-tempered, but he ascribed it to having been hardened by the opposition of others, by being schooled at home by his shrewish wife, Xanthippe. Perhaps you will have the greater patience with those who scoff, and the greater sympathy with those who are scoffed at, from having had your share in the common lot of the saints. Thus to you as to Samson, out of the eater cometh forth meat, and out of the strong cometh forth sweetness. This lion roars upon you, but the day shall come when you will find honey in it, and bless the name of the Lord.

III. My third point is, HOW SHOULD YOU BEHAVE UNDER THE TRIAL? May the Holy Spirit enable you to act very discreetly as well as decidedly. Never court opposition. God forbid we should do so. Some zealots seem bent on making religion objectionable. The cup we hold to a sinful world is in itself repugnant enough to fallen nature; there can be no wisdom in making it yet more objectionable by presenting it with a scowling face. It is as well when you have medicine to give to a child to show him a piece of sugar too: so let your kindness, and cheerfulness, and gentleness sweeten that which the world is not very likely to receive anyhow, but which it will the less resent if you present it with love, showing a desire to live peaceably with all men, and to consult the comfort of others rather than your own.

And then endure whatever you have to endure with the greatest possible meekness. There was a farmer whose wife was very irritated with him because of his attending a dissenting place of worship, and joining with Christian people. She often declared that she would not bear it much longer, but he was very patient, and made no harsh reply to her. One day she fetched him out of the harvest field, and said, "Now it is come to this; you will give up those people, or give me up"; and she brought out a web of cloth and said, "Now you take half of this and I'll take the other half; for I am going." He said, "No, my dear, you are welcome to it all. You have always been a very good industrious wife, take it all." Then she proposed taking a part of their household goods and settling everything

for a final separation, but again he said, "Take all there is. If you will go away take everything you like, for I should not wish you to be uncomfortable; and come back again whenever you please, I shall always be glad to see you." Seeing that he talked in that way, she said, "Do you mean me to go?" "No," said he, "it is your own wish, not mine. I cannot give up my religion, but anything else I can do to make you stay and be happy, I will do." This was too much for her, she resolved to cease her opposition, and in a short time went with her husband to the place of worship, and became herself a believer. This is the surest way to victory. Yield everything but what it would be wrong to yield. Never grow angry. Keep cool, and let the railing be all on one side. There was a poor godly woman who used to attend the ministry of Mr. Robinson, of Leicester, and her husband, a very coarse brutal man, said to her one day in his wrath, "If you ever go to St. Mary's church again I'll cut both your legs off." He was a dreadful man, and equal to any violence, but on the next occasion of worship his wife went as aforesaid. As she came home, she commended herself to the care of God, expecting to be assailed. Her husband said to her, "Where have you been?" "I have been to St. Mary's church," said she. With that he felled her to the ground with a terrible blow on the face. Rising up, she gently said, "If you strike me on the other side I shall as freely forgive you as I do now." She had been a very passionate woman before conversion, and had been accustomed to give her husband as good as he could send, and therefore he was struck with her gentleness. "Where did you learn this patience?" said he. Her reply was, "By God's grace I learned it at St. Mary's." "Then you may go as often as you like." Presently he went also, and the war was over. There is nothing like meekness. It will conquer the strongest.

After bearing with meekness return good for evil. For cruel words return warmer love and increased kindness. The most renowned weapon for a Christian to fight his antagonists with is that of overcoming evil with good. Evil to evil is beastlike, and no Christian will indulge in it; but good for evil is Christlike, and we must practice it. I think I have before told you the story of the husband who was a very loose, gay, depraved, man of the world, but he had a wife who for many years bore with his ridicule and unkindness, praying for him day and night, though no change came over him, except that he grew even more bold in sin. One night, being at a

drunken feast with a number of his boon companions, he boasted that his wife would do anything he wished, she was as submissive as a lamb. "Now," he said, "she has gone to bed hours ago; but if I take you all to my house at once she will get up and entertain you and make no complaint." "Not she," they said, and the matter ended in a bet, and away they went. It was in the small hours of the night, but in a few minutes she was up, and remarked that she was glad that she had two chickens ready, and if they would wait a little she would soon have a supper spread for them. They waited, and ere long, at that late hour, the table was spread, and she took her place at it as if it was quite an ordinary matter, acting the part of hostess with cheerfulness. One of the company, touched in his better feelings, exclaimed, "Madam, we ought to apologize to you for intruding upon you in this way, and at such an hour, but I am at a loss to understand how it is you receive us so cheerfully, for being a religious person you cannot approve of our conduct." Her reply was, "I and my husband were both formerly unconverted, but, by the grace of God, I am now a believer in the Lord Jesus. I have daily prayed for my husband, and I have done all I can to bring him to a better mind, but as I see no change in him, I fear he will be lost for ever; and I have made up my mind to make him as happy as I can while he is here." They went away, and her husband said, "Do you really think I shall be unhappy for ever?" "I fear so," said she, "I would to God you would repent and seek forgiveness." That night patience accomplished her desire. He was soon found with her on the way to heaven. Yield on no point of principle, but in everything else be willing to bear reproach, and to be despised and mocked at for Christ's sake. *In hoc signo vinces*—by the cross patiently borne thou couquerest. "This is a hard saying," says one. I know it is, but grace can make the heaviest burden light, and transform duty into delight.

Here let one also remark that to this gentle endurance there must be added by the persecuted Christian much exactness of life. We must be very particular when such lynx-eyes are upon us, because if they can find us trespassing they will pounce upon us at once. If it is only a little wrong, a thing which they would not have noticed in anybody else, they will magnify it and raise quite a clamor about it. "Ah, that is your religion," say they, as if we claimed to be absolutely perfect. Be watchful, therefore, walk circumspectly, do not put yourself into their hands; let them have



nothing to say against you save only upon the point of your religion. Nothing bathes opponent) like integrity, truthfulness, and holiness: they long to speak against you, but cannot find a fair opportunity. Take care that you daily pray for grace to keep your temper, for if you fail there they will boast of having conquered you, and will assail you again in the same way. Ask for grace to be patient, and say as little as you can, except to God. Pray much for them, for prayer is still heard, and how knowest thou, O believing woman, but thou mayst save thy unbelieving husband? Only watch on and pray on, and a blessing will come.

IV. In DOING ALL THIS WHAT COMFORT MAY YOU EXPECT? You may have this for your comfort, that the persecutor is in God's hands. He cannot do more than God lets him, and if God permits him to annoy, you may cheerfully bear it. Next, remember, if you keep your conscience clear it is a great joy. Conscience is a little bird that sings more sweetly than any lark or nightingale. Rough answers outside need not trouble you while within there is the answer of a good conscience towards God. Injure your conscience and you lose that consolation; preserve it from evil and you must be happy. Remember that by patiently enduring and persevering you will have fellowship with the grandest spirits that ever lived. You cannot be a martyr and wear the blood-red crown in these days, but you can at least suffer as far as you are called to do: grace enabling you, you may have a share in the martyr's honors. "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Remember, too, that if you have extraordinary troubles Jesus will be doubly near to you. This is the greatest comfort of all, for in all your afflictions he is afflicted. You will find his presence in the ordinances to be very delightful. Those stolen waters which he gives you in secret fellowship are very choice, those morsels which you get by stealth, how sweet they are! The old covenantors said they never worshipped God with so much joy as in the glens and among the hills when Claverhouse's dragoons were after them. The living is very refreshing to the Lord's hunted harts. His bosom is very soft and warm for those who are rejected of all men for his sake. He has a marvellous way of unveiling his face to those whose faces are covered with shame because of their love to him.

Oh, be content, dear friends, to watch with your Lord.

You have the sweet thought also that you are doing more good where you are than if you were placed altogether among the godly. Yonder light, set up in mid ocean on the Eddystone rock, see how the storm sweeps around it, and the waters leap over it, threatening to put out its flame, but shall the light complain? Standing where it is, beaten by the Atlantic rollers, and braving the full fury of the storm, it is doing more good than if it were set up in Hyde Park for my lords and ladies to look at. The persecuted saint occupies a place where he warns and enlightens, and therefore suffers. He is like an advanced guard, to whom the place of danger is the place of honor: only let him ask for strength to bear and forbear, and he shall have glory at the last. Remember the rougher the road the sweeter the rest, and the greater the suffering the brighter the crown at the last. Those who have to bear most for Jesus will be those to whom he will most sweetly say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Ah, brethren, if you have a little rough language to put up with, what is it, compared with what many of the Lord's afflicted ones have to endure? I will tell you a little incident bearing upon that point, and then have done. Yesterday the postman brought me, amongst many others, a letter from Australia, which I prize more than any that have come to hand for a long while; it has touched my heart, and when you hear it you will not wonder. It is written at the desire of a man who is described by the gentleman who writes for him in the following terms: "I have known the writer for near eight years, during which time he has been quite helpless, being paralyzed, he has had one leg cut off, the sight has left his eye, he cannot move hand or feet; as he is placed on his bed so must he lie and endure the annoyance of flies, or anything that may molest him. So that I am sure you will be pleased to be the means of giving comfort to such an one, and yet he is mostly rejoicing; and few are more apt to teach and exhort those who come to see him, and direct them to suitable portions of God's word far their reading." Now this poor man, who has been helpless ever since the year 1858, or sixteen long years, writes me thus: "Being moved by the Holy Spirit I send you these few lines to thank you for the benefit I have received by reading your sermons. In the year 1850 I was brought to

the knowledge of the truth, and found peace through believing in Jesus. In 1858 I met with a serious accident, so that I was not able to earn my bread, but trusting in the Lord he has led me in the right way. In 1866 it pleased him to confine me entirely to my bed. I bless his Holy Name that I can say I am bound by the cords of his love, that he has upheld and comforted me through all my long confinement, and enabled me to rejoice in hope of his glory; and the reading of your excellent sermons, which privilege I have enjoyed for some years, having been a source of great comfort and delight to my soul, causing me to soar on high and enjoy sweet communion, I am constrained by love to send you this acknowledgment, hoping that perhaps you may be cheered a little by it in your arduous labors; and if our heavenly Father see fit, this my testimony to his faithfulness may be blessed by him to the comfort and encouragement of some afflicted ones in your flock, as I know that all these things work together for good to them that love God." Think of this unselfish sufferer having a letter written to comfort me. One would have thought he needed comforting himself, but the Lord so cheers him that, instead of asking for consolation, he does not mention in his letter that he has lost his leg, or that he is paralyzed, or has lost his sight. He only tells me of his joy and peace. Now, if children of God in such extremities can yet bear testimony to his faithfulness, are you going to run away because some foolish person or other sneers at you? Will you in cowardly fashion desert the standard because fools point their fingers at you? If so, are you made of the same stuff as the true saints? Have you the same backbone of divine grace as they? Assuredly not. May the Lord in his infinite mercy give you such a sound conversion that, whatever trial comes, you may still sing, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord and glory in the God of my salvation."

If I am addressing any one who has persecuted God's saints in any way, let me say, "Mind what you are at; there are many things a man will bear, but if you meddle with his children it will stir his soul, that is a tender point with all fathers." Nothing provokes the Lord like interfering with his children. Mind what you are at. And, oh, I pray the Lord, if you have done it ignorantly, really thinking them to be wrong, and only scoffing at them because you thought them hypocrites, may he that spake out of heaven to Saul, and said, "Why persecutest thou me?" let you see that you have really been wounding Jesus himself. May he make you see that those

tears which you have forced from that faithful woman, and those sleepless nights which you have caused to that earnest man, were so much of evil done unto Christ, for which he will reckon with you at the last. Turn you unto the Lord Jesus, and may the Holy Spirit grant you to repent of this your wickedness, for Jesus is willing to receive and bless even you, as he did Paul of old. Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you also shall be saved. God bless you all, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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## **The Wordless Book**

Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. - Psalm 51:7

I DARESAY you have most of you heard of a little book which an old divine used constantly to study, and when his friends wondered what there was in the book, he told them that he hoped they would all know and understand it, but that there was not single word in it. When they looked at it, they found that it consisted of only three leaves; the first was black, the second was red, and the third was pure white. The old minister used to gaze upon the black leaf to remind himself of his sinful state by nature, upon the red leaf to call to his remembrance the precious blood of Christ, and upon the white leaf to picture to him the perfect righteousness which God has given to believers through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ his Son.

I want you, dear friends, to read this book this evening, and I desire to read it myself. May God the Holy Spirit graciously help us to do so to our profit!

**I. First, LET US LOOK AT THE BLACK LEAF.**

There is something about this in the text, for the person who used this

prayer said, "Wash me," so he was black and needed to be washed; and the blackness was of such a peculiar kind that a miracle was needed to cleanse it away, so that the one who had been black would become white, and so white that he would be "whiter than snow."

If we consider David's case when he wrote this Psalm, we shall see that he was very black. He had committed the horrible sin of adultery, which is so shameful a sin that we can only allude to it with bated breath. It is a sin which involves much unhappiness to others besides the persons who commit it; and it is a sin which, although the guilty ones may repent, cannot be undone. It is altogether a most foul and outrageous crime against God and man, and they who have committed it do indeed need to be washed.

But David's sin was all the greater because of the circumstances in which he was placed. He was like the owner of a great flock, who had no need to take his neighbour's one ewe lamb when he had so many of his own. The sin in his case was wholly inexcusable, for he so well knew what a great evil it was. He was a man who had taken delight in God's law, meditating in it day and night. He was, therefore, familiar with the commandment which expressly forbade that sin; so that, when he sinned in this way, he sinned as one does who takes a draught of poison, not by mistake, but well knowing what will be the consequences of drinking it. It was wilful wickedness on David's part for which there cannot be the slightest palliation.

Nay, more; not only did he know the nature of the sin, but he also knew the sweetness of communion with God, and must have had a clear sense of what it must have meant for him to lose it. His fellowship with the Most High had been so close that he was called "the man after God's own heart." How sweetly has he sung of his delight in the Lord. You know that, in your happiest moment, when you want to praise the Lord with your whole heart, you cannot find any better expression than David has left you in his Psalms. How horrible it is that the man who had been in the third heaven of fellowship with God should have sinned in this foul fashion!

Besides, David had received many providential mercies at the Lord's hands. He was but a shepherd lad, and God took him from feeding his father's flock, and made him king over Israel. The Lord also delivered him out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, enabled him to overthrow and slay giant Goliath, and to escape the malice of Saul when he hunted him as a partridge upon the mountains. The Lord preserved him from many perils, and at last firmly established him upon the throne; yet, after all these deliverances and mercies, this man, so highly favoured by God, fell into this gross sin.

Then, also, it was a further aggravation of David's sin that it was committed against Uriah. If you read through the lists of David's mighty men, you will find at the end the name of Uriah the Hittite; he had been with David when he was outlawed by Saul, he had accompanied his leader in his wanderings, he had shared his perils and privations, so it was a shameful return on the part of the king when he stole away the wife of his faithful follower who was at that very time fighting against the king's enemies. Searching through the whole of Scripture, or at least through the Old Testament, I do not know where we have the record of a worse sin committed by one who yet was a true child of God. So David had good reason to pray to the Lord, "Wash me," for he was indeed black with a special and peculiar blackness.

But now, turning from David, let us consider our own blackness in the sight of God. Is there not, my dear friend, a peculiar blackness about your case as a sinner before God? I cannot picture it, but I ask you to call it to your remembrance now that your soul may be humbled on account of it. Perhaps you are the child of Christian parents, or you were the subject of early religious impressions, or it may be that you have been in other ways specially favoured by God, yet you have sinned against him, sinned against light and knowledge, sinned against a mother's tears, a father's prayers, and a pastor's admonitions and warnings. You were very ill once, and thought you were going to die, but the Lord spared your life, and restored you to health and strength, yet you went back to your sin as the dog returns to his vomit, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Possibly a sudden sense of guilt alarmed you, so that you could not enjoy your sin, yet you could not break away from it. You spent your

money for that which was not bread, and your labour for that which did not satisfy you, yet you went on wasting your substance with riotous living until you came to beggary, but even that did not wean you from your sin. In the house of God you had many solemn warnings, and you went home again and again resolving to repent, yet your resolves soon melted away, like the morning cloud and the early dew, leaving you more hardened than ever. I remember John B. Gough, at Exeter Hall, describing himself in his drinking days as seated upon a wild horse which was hurrying him to his destruction until a stronger hand than his own seized the reins, pulled the horse down upon its haunches, and rescued the reckless rider. It was a terrible picture, yet it was a faithful representation of the conversion of some of us. How we drove the spurs into that wild horse, and urged it to yet greater speed in its mad career until it seemed as if we would even ride over that gracious Being who was determined to save us! That was sin indeed, not merely against the dictates of an enlightened conscience, and against the warnings which were being continually given to us, but it was what the apostle calls treading under foot the Son of God, counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace.

Let me, beloved, before I turn away from this black leaf, urge you to study it diligently, and to try to comprehend the blackness of your heart and the depravity of your lives. That false peace which results from light thoughts of sin is the work of Satan; get rid of it at once, if he has wrought it in you. Do not be afraid to look at your sins, do not shut your eyes to them; for you to hide your face from them may be your ruin, but for God to hide his face from them will be your salvation. Look at your sins and meditate upon them until they even drive you to despair. "What!" says one, "until they drive me to despair?" Yes; I do not mean that despair which arises from unbelief, but that self-despair which is so near akin to confidence in Christ. The more God enables you to see your emptiness, the more eager will you be to avail yourself of Christ's fulness. I have always found that, as my trust in self went up, my trust in Christ went down; and as my trust in self went down, my trust in Christ went up, so I urge you to take an honest view of your own blackness of heart and life, for that will cause you to pray with David, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Weigh yourselves in the scales of the sanctuary, for they never err in the

slightest degree. You need not exaggerate a single item of your guilt, for just as you are you will find far too much sin within you if the Holy Spirit will enable you to see yourselves as you really are.

II. But now we must turn to the second leaf, THE BLOOD-RED LEAF OF THE WORDLESS BOOK, which brings to our remembrance the precious blood of Christ.

When the sinner cries, "Wash me," there must be some fount of cleansing where he can be washed "whiter than snow." So there is, but there is nothing but the crimson blood of Jesus that can wash out the crimson stain of sin. What is there about Jesus Christ that makes him able to save all who come unto God by him? This is a matter upon which Christians ought to meditate much and often. Try to understand, dear friends, the greatness of the atonement. Live much under the shadow of the cross. Learn to—

"View the flowing  
Of the Saviour's precious blood,  
By divine assurance knowing  
He has made your peace with God."

Feel that Christ's blood was shed for you, even for you. Never be satisfied till you have learned the mystery of the five wounds; never be content till you are "able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

The Power of Jesus to cleanse from sin must lie, first, in the greatness of his person. It is not conceivable that the sufferings of a mere man, however holy or great he might have been, could have made atonement for the sins of the whole multitude of the Lord's chosen people. It was because Jesus Christ was one of the persons in the Divine Trinity, it was because the Son of Mary was none other than the Son of God, it was because he who lived, and laboured, and suffered, and died and was the great Creator, without whom was not anything made that was made, that his blood has such efficacy that it can wash the blackest sinner so clean



that they are "whiter than snow." The death of the best man who ever lived could not make an atonement even for his own sins, much less could it atone for the guilt of others; but when God himself "took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men," and "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," no limit can be set to the value of the atonement that he made. We hold most firmly the doctrine of particular redemption, that Christ loved his Church, and gave himself for it; but we do not hold the doctrine of the limited value of his precious blood. There can be no limit to Deity, there must be infinite value in the atonement which was offered by him who is divine. The only limit of the atonement is in its design, and that design was that Christ should give eternal life to as many as the Father has given him; but in itself the atonement is sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, and if the entire race of mankind could be brought to believe in Jesus, there is enough efficacy in his precious blood to cleanse everyone born of woman from every sin that all of them have ever committed.

But the power of the cleansing blood of Jesus must also lie in the intense sufferings which he endured in making atonement for his people. Never was there another case like that of our precious Saviour. In his merely physical sufferings there may have been some who have endured as much as he did, for the human body is only capable of a certain amount of pain and agony, and others beside our Lord have reached that limit; but there was an element in his sufferings that was never present in any other case. The fact of his dying in the room, and place, and stead of his people, the one great sacrifice for the whole of his redeemed, makes his death altogether unique, so that not even the noblest of the noble army of martyrs can share the glory with him. His mental sufferings also constituted a very vital part of the atonement, the sufferings of his soul were the very soul of his sufferings. If you can comprehend the bitterness of his betrayal by one who had been his follower and friend, and of his desertion by all his disciples, his arraignment for sedition and blasphemy before creatures whom he had himself made; if you can realize what it was for him, who did no sin, to be made sin for us, and to have laid upon him the iniquity of us all; if you can picture to yourself how he loathed sin and shrank from it, you can form some slight idea of what his pure nature must have suffered for our sakes. We do not shrink from sin as Christ did

because we are accustomed to it, it was once the element in which we lived, and moved, had our being; but his holy nature shrank from evil as a sensitive plant recoils from the touch. But the worst of his sufferings must have been when his Father's wrath was poured out upon him as he bore what his people deserved to bear, but which now they will never have to bear.

"The waves of swelling grief  
Did o'er his bosom roll,  
And mountains of almighty wrath  
Lay heavy on his soul."

For his Father to have to hide his face from him so that he cried in his agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" must have been a veritable hell to him. This was the tremendous draught of wrath which our Saviour drank for us to its last dregs so that our cup might not have one drop of wrath in it for ever. It must have been a great atonement that was purchased at so great price.

We may think of the greatness of Christ's atonement in another way. It must have been a great atonement which has safely landed such multitudes of sinners in heaven, and which has saved so many great sinners, and transformed them into such bright saints. It must be a great atonement which is yet to bring innumerable myriads into the unity of the faith, and into the glory of the church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven. It is so great an atonement, sinner, that if thou wilt trust to it, thou shalt be saved by it however many and great thy sins may have been. Art thou afraid that the blood of Christ is not powerful enough to cleanse thee? Dost thou fear that his atonement cannot bear the weight of such a sinner as thou art? I heard, the other day, of a foolish woman at Plymouth who, for a long while, would not go over the Saltash Bridge because she did not think it was safe. When, at length, after seeing the enormous traffic that passed safely over the bridge, she was induced to trust herself to it, she trembled greatly all the time, and was not easy in her mind until she was off it. Of course, everybody laughed at her for thinking that such a ponderous structure could not bear her little weight. There may be some sinner, in this building, who is afraid that the great

bridge which eternal mercy has constructed, at infinite cost, across the gulf which separates us from God, is not strong enough to bear his weight. If so, let me assure him that across that bridge of Christ's atoning sacrifice millions of sinners, as vile and foul as he is, have safely passed, and the bridge has not even trembled beneath their weight, nor has any single part of it ever strained or displaced. My poor fearful friend, your anxiety lest the great bridge of mercy should not be able to bear your weight reminds me of the fable of the gnat that settled on the bull's ear, and then was concerned lest the powerful beast should be incommoded by his enormous weight. It is well that you should have a vivid realization of the weight of your sins, but at the same time you should also realize that Jesus Christ, by virtue of his great atonement, is not only able to bear the weight of your sins, but he can also carry—indeed, he has already carried upon his shoulders the sins of all who shall believe in him right to the end of time; and he has borne them away into the land of forgetfulness, where they shall not be remembered or recovered for ever. So efficacious is the blood of the everlasting covenant that even you, black as you are, may pray, with David, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

III. This brings me to THE WHITE LEAF OF THE WORDLESS BOOK, which is just as full of instruction as either the black leaf or the red one: "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

What a beautiful sight it was, this morning, when we looked out, and saw the ground all covered with snow! The trees were all robed in silver; yet it is almost an insult to the snow to compare it to silver, for silver at its brightest is not worthy to be compared with the marvelous splendour that was to be seen wherever the trees appeared adorned with beautiful festoons above the earth which was robed in its pure white mantle. If we had taken a piece of what we call white paper, and laid it down upon the surface of newly-fallen snow, it would have seemed quite begrimed in comparison with the spotless snow. This morning's scene at once called the text to my mind: "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." You, O black sinner, if you believe in Jesus, shall not only be washed in his precious blood until you become tolerably clean, but you shall be made white, yea, you shall be "whiter than snow." When we have gazed upon

the pure whiteness of the snow before it has become defiled, it has seemed as though there could be nothing whiter. I know that, when I have been among the Alps, and have for hours looked upon the dazzling whiteness of the snow, I have been almost blinded by it. If the snow were to lie long upon the ground, and if the whole earth were to be covered with it, we should soon all be blind. The eyes of man have suffered with his soul through sin, and just as our soul would be unable to bear a sight of the unveiled purity of a God, our eyes cannot endure to look upon the wondrous purity of the snow. Yet the sinner, black through sin, when brought under the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, becomes "whiter than snow."

Now, how can a sinner be made "whiter than snow"? Well, first of all, there is a permanence about the whiteness of a blood-washed sinner which there is not about the snow. The snow that fell this morning was much of it anything but white this afternoon. Where the thaw had begun to work, it looked yellow even where no foot of man had trodden upon it; and as for the snow in the streets of London, you know how soon its whiteness disappears. But there is no fear that the whiteness which God gives to a sinner will ever depart from him; the robe of Christ's righteousness which is cast around him is permanently white.

"This spotless robe the same appears  
When ruin'd nature sinks in years;  
No age can change its glorious hue,  
The robe of Christ is ever new."

It is always "whiter than snow." Some of you have to live in smoky, grimy London, but the smoke and the grime cannot discolour the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness. In yourselves, you are stained with sin; but when you stand before God, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, the stains of sin are all gone. David in himself was black and foul when he prayed the prayer of our text, but clothed in the righteousness of Christ he was white and clean. The believer in Christ is as pure in God's sight at one time as he is at another. He does not look upon the varying purity of our sanctification as our ground of acceptance with him; but he looks upon the matchless and immutable purity of the person and work of the

Lord Jesus Christ, and he accepts us in Christ, and not because of what we are in ourselves. Hence, when we are once "accepted in the Beloved," we are permanently accepted; and being accepted in him, we are "whiter than snow."

Further, the whiteness of snow is, after all, only created whiteness. It is something which God has made, yet it has not the purity which appertains to God himself; but the righteousness which God gives to the believer is a divine righteousness, as Paul says, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. "And remember that this is true of the very sinner who before was so black that he had to cry to God, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." There may be one who came into this building black as night through sin; but if he is enabled now, by grace, to trust in Jesus, his precious blood shall at once cleanse him so completely that he shall be "whiter than snow." Justification is not a work of degrees; it does a progress from one stage to another, but it is the work of a moment, and it is instantaneously complete. God's great gift of eternal life is bestowed in a moment, and you may not be able to discern the exact moment when it is bestowed. Yet you may know even that; for, as soon as you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are born of God, you have passed from death unto life, you are saved to all eternity. The act of faith is a very simple thing, but it is the most God-glorifying act that a man can perform. Though there is no merit in faith, yet faith is a most ennobling grace, and Christ puts a high honour upon it when he says, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Christ puts the crown of salvation upon the head of faith, yet faith will never wear it herself, but lays it at the feet of Jesus, and gives him all the honour and glory.

There may be one in this place who is afraid to think that Christ will save him. My dear friend, do my Master the honour to believe that there are no depths of sin into which you may have gone which are beyond his reach. Believe that there is no sin that is too black to be washed away by the precious blood of Christ, for he has said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," and "all manner of sin" must include yours. It is the very greatness of God's mercy that sometimes staggers a sinner. Let me use a homely simile to illustrate my meaning.

Suppose you are sitting at your table, carving the joint for dinner, and suppose your dog is under the table, hoping to get a bone or a piece of gristle for his portion. Now, if you were to set the dish with the whole joint on it down on the floor, he would probably be afraid to touch it lest he should get a cut of the whip; he would know that a dog dose not deserve such a dinner as that, and that is just your difficulty, poor sinner, you know that you do not deserve such grace as God delights to give. But the fact that it is of grace shuts out the question of merit altogether. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." God's gifts are like himself, immeasurably great. Perhaps some of you think you would be content with crumbs or bones from God's table. Well, if he were to gives me a few crumbs or a little broken meat, I would be grateful for even that, but it would not satisfy me; but when he says to me, "Thou art my son, I have adopted thee into my family, and thou shalt go no more out for ever;" I do not agree with you that it is too good to be true. It may be too good for you, but it is not too good for God; he gives as only he can give. If I were in great need, and obtained access to the Queen, and after laying my case before her, she said to me, "I feel a very deep interest in your case, here is a penny for you," I should be quite sure that I had not seen the Queen, but that some lady's maid or servant had been making a fool of me. Oh, no! the Queen gives as Queen, and God gives as God; so that the greatness of his gift, instead of staggering us, should only assure us that it is genuine, and that it comes from God. Richard Baxter wisely said, "O Lord, it must be great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy is of no use to me!" So, sinner, go to the great God, with your great sin, and ask for great grace that you may be washed in the great fountain filled with the blood of the great sacrifice, and you shall have the great salvation which Christ has procured, and for it you shall ascribe great praise for ever and ever to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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## **Words To Rest On**

And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah. - 2 Chronicles 32:8

It is very beautiful reading the story of Hezekiah, to see how the people always went with him. God had prepared the nation for a change, and when the hour came the man came with it. Under his father Ahaz, the people had been idolaters, and had forsaken God; but, when Hezekiah became king, he had a zeal for the worship of Jehovah, and on the very threshold of his reign, he began what proved to be a glorious reformation in the land. He seems to have been a man who was attractive to the people, and they took up his line of things at once with enthusiasm. Whether he proposed to break down the idols, to cleanse the temple, or to bring tithes into the house of God, they made no objection; but, on the contrary, they followed his word with much vigor and earnestness. It is a grand thing when God sends a man who can guide others aright; especially when, in times of apostasy and spiritual declension, a leader is given who becomes a guide back to the old paths. We should feel exceedingly grateful whenever, in any place, God raises up a judge to deliver Israel, and when the people serve God all the days of that judge.

When our text comes in, the people of Judah were in great straits. The Assyrians, who were both cruel and barbarous in their treatment of others, had invaded the land, and had captured all the country, with the exception of Jerusalem. The city of the Great King was yet untrodden by the armies of the alien; but it looked as if it could not hold out very long, and Hezekiah encouraged his men of war by exciting their faith in their God. "Be strong and courageous," he said to them; "be not afraid or dismayed for the King of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him." With a ring of triumph in his tone, he told them that with Sennacherib was only an army of flesh; and though it was a powerful one, yet with them was the omnipotence of God, and therefore there was more with them than with the Assyrians. The past glory of his reign, and the evident depth of his own faith, added weight to his words, and the people believed his testimony. In such a time of great difficulty, when people are apt to mutiny, to find fault with their leaders, and to break up into cliques and parties, they still held to their king, and comforted themselves with

the assurance he had given them of help in God. They were not distressed because of invasion, nor did they despair of their cause. They were, of course, conscious of their great danger; but they had found peace, even in their extremity, by quoting to themselves, and to one another, the emboldened language of their king. "The people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah the king of Judah."

It is not always a good thing to rest upon man's words. It may often be a very evil thing; and because some error has been introduced by "such a dear, good man", it has had the deadlier hold upon masses of men. There have been thousands who have found their way to hell resting upon the words of some priest or pretended teacher who taught other than the truth. An yet, with this grain of caution, we cannot but commend these people, who, when they had a God-sent leader, had both the common-sense and the uncommon confidence to banish their fears at his bidding, seeing that his trust was in the name of the Lord. The people were not perfect, nor was their king; but we commend them, in that they did wisely when they "rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah the king of Judah."

I. Our first consideration shall be, **THE KIND OF MAN WHOSE WORDS ARE LIKELY TO BE RESTED ON.** There are some in whose words you never have much confidence, because they are flippant in their utterance. They do not appear to be sincere, and those who hear them, make nothing of what they say, for they are evidently making nothing of it themselves. You cannot rest in the words of a man who contradicts himself, nor rely much upon one who is of one opinion to-day, who will be of another opinion to-morrow, and who before the third day is over, will be seized with some new notion. There are men whom we all know in whose word nobody is tempted to put any kind of trust whatever. But, thanks be to God, there are in the Christian church still some in whose words men do trust, men who are as transparent as the clearest crystal, and as reliable as the best steel. These are the kind of men I want to describe; and this man who won the confidence of the people of Jerusalem shall serve us as a type thereof, and enable us to discover the kind of man whose words are likely to be rested on.



To begin with, he must be a great man. So it was in the case of "Hezekiah king of Judah." If the people cannot trust their king in matters of war, in whom can they trust? But if they see him to be a good sovereign, walking in the fear of God, and doing his utmost for them, how shall they do otherwise than trust their king? Yet in this matter we must take care, for they who trust in the great may find themselves greatly deceived. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." That man is not truly great who leads us away from the greatest of all, even the Lord who ruleth over all. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." There is a kind of greatness that is only a cover for littleness. Sometimes a great title has great selfishness, even great sensuality, lying just underneath it. But Hezekiah was not a little great man; he was truly a king. He was born a monarch; a kingly man. He was a man of royal mind and noble deed; hence the people did not ill, when, having respect to his greatness, they "rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah the king of Judah."

Moreover, the man who will be trusted will be found to be a good man. If he be not really so, he will, at least, be thought to be so. Men will put great trust in the words of one whose life agrees with his teaching. If they can detect something inconsistent in his character, the man's power is ended; but if a man is evidently carried away with the one idea of being and doing good, and consumed with the purpose of glorifying God, then his utterances have power. I know a man who is not an orator; he speaks but very plainly; and yet, if I had my choice I would sooner hear him than almost any man I ever heard, because, when he speaks, I remember the wondrous life of faith in God, which accompanies his words. I will not say who he is, but almost everybody will guess. It is not what he says, but the man who says it, that makes the impression. It is the life behind the words, the holy confidence in God every day exhibited, the calm restful walk with God which everybody can see in his very face, which, to a thoughtful man, makes his feeblest accent more powerful than the most furious declamation of a mere rhetorician. As Dr. Bonar says,—

"Thou must be true thyself,  
If thou the truth wouldst teach.  
Thy soul must overflow, if thou

Another's soul wouldst reach:  
It needs the overflow of heart  
To give the lips full speech."

The man in whose words we are likely to find rest must be a good man. Hezekiah, from all we read of him, was evidently such a man. When greatness and goodness are blended, as in his case, there is sure to be a wide influence exerted. When there is eminence of ability as well as eminence of character found in a man, it often follows that what is described in this verse is true, the people rest themselves upon his words, even as they did upon Hezekiah's.

Again, a man whose words are to be rested upon, must be a courageous man. Hezekiah had this qualification. He had waited upon God in prayer, and knew God would deliver him, so that bidden farewell to fear; he was calm, and therefore bold. When he spoke to the captains of the soldiers, there was no trepidation in his voice or in his manner. He spoke like one who was—

"Calm 'amid the bewildering cry,  
Confident of victory."

Courage in one man breeds courage in another, and once coward has the contagion of cowardice about him; many will turn tail when one runs. But, if a man stands like a rock, unmoved, he will soon have a body of others behind him who will have borrowed courage from his example. Paul in the storm is an example of this. I suppose he has a little insignificant-looking Jew, yet when the sailors and the soldiers were alarmed at the tempest, he calmly and quietly told them not to be afraid, and they borrowed courage from his faith. He told them that no harm would come to them; that though the ship would be lost, their lives have been given to him in answer to his prayer; and since they had fasted long, he bade them to eat, and they did eat. All his orders were carried out as fully as if he had been the centurion in command of the soldiers, or the captain in charge of the ship. Because he was bold he made them brave; he commanded them, because he could command himself. Oh, my brothers and sisters, may you have the courage of your convictions! May

you be brave enough to do right, and to speak right, and to stand up for the gospel, whoever rails at it! If you do, you have only to bide your time; and you will be master over meaner men who cannot be trusted. He that will but "hold the fort" when others are giving up their castles, shall by-and-by, God helping him, behold a race of valiant men, who, like himself, shall believe in their Master's coming, and will not quit the field until he appears. God grant to many here to be bold in the way of holiness, in their own circle, in their own families! They must be assured that there will be found some who will rest upon their words, because they see their courage.

Further, a man who is to have his words much rested in, must also be a hearty man; indeed, he must be an enthusiast. Of such a spirit was Hezekiah, for we read in the last verse of the previous chapter, "and in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart." This is the kind of man whom people will follow. Let them but see that the whole of the man leads them, and not only a bit of him, and they will quickly learn to rely on his word. Put all your heart into what you do, or else put none of it. There are some people who seem as if they have no heart, or at least their heart is only a kind of valve for the expulsion of blood, and not over vigorous in that direction, I fear. Any other kind of heart you cannot discover. Nobody will follow mere head. There must be a heart displayed by the man who would have a hearty following. If you want to lead others aright, lead them by showing that you yourself love the way. Be intense; be emphatic; throw your whole being into it. Be hearty when you are working, when you are praying, when you are singing. In all that you do for God, and for your fellow-Christians, let your heart be manifest; and then it is highly probable that it may happen to you, as it did to Hezekiah, that many will rest upon your words.

In the case of such a man, God will add his sanction by granting success: he will be a prosperous man. I did not finish the last verse of the previous chapter just now. It reads: "He did it with all his heart, and prospered." He prospered because he did everything with all his heart. God set his seal to that which he did so heartily. A man may be devout and holy, and yet not be outwardly prospered. Such a man may do useful work for the

Lord; but the man whom God chooses for a leader, he will also qualify and bless. He will put his mark upon him; and when people see that man is enabled by God to go from strength to strength, that his enterprises do not end in disaster, but that by the grace of God he leads his followers on from victory to victory, they are sure to rest themselves upon his word.

Let me add, that he who could help others must be a man who has respect for God's Word. We may safely rest ourselves upon a man's words when, like Hezekiah, his words are full of God, and when, evidently, he has nothing to say but what God has first said to him. Such a man becomes the medium by which God speaks to your soul. "With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles." Even had this been spoken by another, it was a divine truth, and any man might have rested upon it. If any of us must needs be very original, if we must think out our own theology, and go on speculating from day to day, our people will be very foolish if they ever rest themselves upon our fickle, vapid words. But if the minister of Christ is as God's mouth, if he be dependent upon the Spirit of God for teaching; then God will speak through him, and the people will hear. If his one aim be, not to be original, but to repeat God's thought as far as he knows them, and to speak the truth revealed as far as he can get a grip of it, such a man will often come to know that the people are resting themselves upon his words; for his words will be not so much his, but God's words through him. May our prayer then be—

"Lord, speak to me, that I may speak  
In living echoes of thy tone;  
As thou hast sought, so let me seek  
Thy erring children, lost and lone."

Here a word of caution is necessary. Since men are permitted to say words upon which other people rest, let us be careful how we speak. There may be some here, who have attained, by years of holy living and deep experience, to a position of great influence—one of you in a Bible-class, another in a village station, several of you, perhaps, in your pulpits. Brothers and sisters, what a very responsible position we occupy when young people and others are resting upon your words! I will not say

whether they are altogether right or wrong in doing so; but I know this is their habit; therefore, what manner of people ought we to be, how choicely we should use language, how determines we ought to be to let all our teachings be Scriptural, and not to mingle the precious with the vile; remembering the promise, "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth."! Do not let us even sportively say what may injure others. I have known children take in earnest what others have said in jest. It were often better that some things were not said even in sport; for such flippant utterances have either misled the children, or they have injured the influence of those who have uttered them when they have spoken another time. Since it so happens that many of those around us are of feeble mind, and need a strong mind to guide them, let those who lead be doubly careful of their conversation and conduct. Since those who know their own weakness lean perhaps too much upon their teachers, let their teachers cry to God that they may be helped to teach nothing but what is right. May you and I never lead another even one inch astray! May none of us ever be in communion with that which is not true! May we stand right out from all connection with that which we feel to be contrary to the mind of God! Let us try to live in such a way that, if another were to take us for an example, he might copy us through and through and do himself no harm. I set before you a very high standard, and one which no man will reach except under divine instruction; but since the necessary teaching is freely given to all who seek it, I would urge you to be quick scholars in the school of grace. I fear very few of us have ever reached this excellent standard, but that is no reason why we should not study our lesson with redoubled energy. Remember that Hezekiah must speak aright when the people of Jerusalem rest themselves upon his words. O Hezekiah, be not silent when thou oughtest to speak; speak not when thou oughtest to be silent; and never speak except when the Lord shall open thy lips, that thy mouth may show forth his praise! Since thou hast this responsibility that the people rest upon thy words, be sure to give them words solid enough, and reliable enough to rest upon. As thou hast "wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord", speak also true and right and good words to the people: and then it shall be well both with them and with thee.

II. In the second place, let us turn the other way, and look at THE KIND

OF PEOPLE WHO REST ON SUCH A MAN'S WORDS. I am not going to praise all these people, nor am I going to blame them. I wish to use discrimination, and judge each case upon its merits. Sometimes it is the best possible thing for a man to rest himself on the words of another; but often such a course is a very foolish one.

Children do so with their parents, and if they have gracious and godly parents. They do well to rest themselves on their father's or on their mother's word. When I was a boy, I never doubted what my father believed. And when I was under the influence of my grandfather who taught the Word of God, I was such a little simpleton, that I never set up my judgment against his. I find that very small boys are not now so foolish; I wish they were wise enough to be as foolish as I was! When I grew up, I never suspected a doctrine because my father believed it. No, my leaning went the other way; and if my godly father found peace and comfort in a word, I thought that what was good for him was good for his son. I was foolish enough to lean upon the words of my elders in this way, and somehow, though others often think that such a course is folly, I am glad that it was so. I thank God, too, that my sons were as foolish as their father; and that what their father believed had an attraction for them. I hope that they judged for themselves, as I also tried to do, when I came to riper years; but, at the first, it was the words of my parents that led me to Christ. What I knew of the elements of the gospel I received largely, without a question, from them, and I do not think it was an ill bequest. Now, dear parents, mind that your children are able to believe in you. I like children to have fathers and mothers whom they can trust. A young friend has written me a letter, asking me to preach a sermon on, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger." Well, will you kindly consider that I have preached it? I fear I could not make a long sermon of it; but it is necessary to tell some of you parents that I suspect you are not quite so considerate as you ought to be. I do not know the man for whom the word is intended, but I wish he would take the sermon as if I had preached it to him. Now, fathers and mothers, your children do rest themselves upon your words, if you are fathers and mothers worth having. Be careful, then, of what you say. I like that boy who said, "I know that it is true, for mother said it. Whatever mother says is true, and it is true if it is not true, of mother said it." It is a blessed thing when boys and girls can feel such

confidence in their parents that they are sure that their word is beyond all question. It is so much easier for them to have faith in God in the days to come, if first they have been able to have faith in their father and mother. Faith of any kind is so tender a plant, that it should be carefully nourished wherever it is found; and as children often, and rightly too, rest themselves upon the words of their parents, it behoves the parents to give them words whereon they may rest safely.

Illiterate people, who cannot read, belong to another class, who must needs rest themselves upon the words of others. They are but grown-up children, if they are persons of no education, though I am glad to think the number of those who cannot even read their Bible for themselves is constantly decreasing. Still, there are many persons who are so taken up with daily toil that they have no opportunity of searching for themselves. Although God has given many of them gracious judgments, so that they seem to know truth from error by a kind of inward instinct, yet, for the most part, much of the teaching that they receive must come to them as the utterance of some man in whose life they believe, and whom they believe to be under a divine influence which makes him speak continually with an endeavour for their good. Whether this is right or not, it is so; and every man who is placed in a position where many such hang upon his words, must therefore learn to speak only as God speaks to him, lest he himself should sin, and lest the hundreds who accept what he says as being true, would also be led astray.

This is also the case with regard to unconverted persons who have no spiritual discernment, and who can have none, in their first hearing of the gospel. Very largely, men believe in Christ not only through the Scriptures, but through the testimony of those who already know the Lord. This was implied by our Saviour's words, in that wondrous intercession with his Father. Christ said concerning his disciples, "Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." It is part of the economy of grace that the testimony of the saints shall be used of the Spirit to lead people to Christ. We bear witness to forgiveness which we have received; we bear witness to a change of heart which we have experienced; we bear witness to the power of prayer; and like the men of Sychar, the people who hear us, first

believe our word, and that leads them to Christ. After they have met with him, they may say, with much truth, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Still, it will always be true that, at the beginning, it was because of our saying that they believed. It is a large part of our ministry to bear witness to the truth recorded in the Book of God; and oftentimes the witness himself is believed, and then what he says is believed because of the faith the hearer has in him. Although some are unworthy of such credence, yet so it does happen. Christian men, you are like the Bibles of the people. They do not read the Book, but they read you; and if they see Christ in you truly represented, they will, perchance. Come to the knowledge of him. But, if you caricature him, dreadful evil will come of it. I beseech you, be very careful. If the preacher, when he is addressing a mass of people who never read the Word of God, contorts and distorts the truth, what wonder is it if the people miss the salvation of Christ altogether, seeing that they rest upon his word? If he only gives half of the truth, or only one side of it; if he paints one doctrine out of proportion to another; if he misses the love and tenderness of Christ; and even if he omits the justice and stern truthfulness of God, he may so misrepresent God and Christ, and so misinterpret the whole system of grace to the people, that when they rest upon his words they will be resting upon a broken reed, and fall to their eternal destruction.

Persons who naturally run in a groove form another class who rest upon the words of men. There are some people of considerable capacity who, nevertheless, partly from a want of elasticity of mind, and partly from excess of common-sense, are very apt to keep to beaten tracks. They are not altogether to be censured, for some of them are the salt of the earth; but they are a trifle monotonous in their method of life. Still, with some this is very natural. They are like the tramcars that only get off line by accident. Well, I think that, if I were a tramcar, I should like to run on the trams after I got used to it. If they lead in the right direction, we might do much worse than travel by tram. There are, however, a number of people who always will live like that. Having attended at such a place of worship, and having been brought up in the midst of a certain set of godly people, they scarcely deviate one jot from the teaching that they have received. Almost by necessity of their nature they rest on what they hear.



There is one class more I should like to mention, not because I am fond of them, but for the opposite reason; I mean those who profess always to do their own thinking, who will not have any creed, and who say that they will not follow anybody. If you will trace them home, they are, in nine cases out of ten, the veriest slaves that ever lived. They are the bond-servants of some heretic or other, who has put it into their heads that, in following him, they become free men. Why, there are thousands of people that laugh at us for believing in the old doctrine of the fall of man, who, nevertheless, rest themselves implicitly upon the words of some infidel philosopher, or else they follow some favourite heretic in broadcloth upon whom they rest their confidence through thick and thin. They speak much of their deep thought, but they never think; they make up for want of brains by talking the jargon supposed to be spoken by highly intellectual people, though, in most cases, it requires a very vivid imagination to make the supposition. These, who thus take for granted the heterodox words of their favorite leaders, though they do not acknowledge them, incur great guilt, and their leaders are doing grievous mischief in uttering the words upon which their followers stay themselves.

Before I leave this point, I would urge you earnestly to be careful both as to the man you hear, and the words of his on which you rest. I beseech any of you who are attendants here, who are resting yourselves upon my words, to cease that habit. If I tell you anything that is not consistent with God's Word, away with my word, and away with me, too. If you hear from em anything which Christ would not have taught, I shall grieve to the last degree if you believe it. But if you fling it away, and ascribe it to the infirmity and fallibility of the preacher, it will be better for you. Or if there are some of you here who are resting yourselves upon any other man's words, I exhort you to know thoroughly the man and his communications, and do not, even when you know him, take his words without an appeal "to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Bring all men's words to the test of God's words/ "Beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they are of God." Blindly follow no man. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you

than that which we have preached unto you" from this blessed Book, "let them be accursed." When a man has a message from God, listen to him earnestly, with an open mind ready to be taught; but never think of making him the master of your spirit. "The people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah the king;" and they did well in doing so; for he was a man worthy of their trust. But had he been under another kind of king, or a man of a different character and temperament, they might have ruined themselves by relying upon the words which he spoke to them. Again, therefore, I utter the caution, be careful both as to the man you hear, and the words of his on which you rest.

III. And now I close with my third head, by asking you to consider THE KIND OF WORDS THAT YOU MAY REST ON. We come to speak now, not of the kind of men who speak restful words, nor of the kind of men who find rest in such words when they are spoken; but of the kind of words in which you and I may rest.

You may safely rest in words which urge you to faith in God. Are you exhorted to-night to lay your burden of sin down at Jesus' feet? Obey such a word as that without questioning. You may well rest on words which bid you to believe in Christ, and you may, without fear, believe in him who has all grace and wisdom and power to save and to bless you. Through the hearing of such words, may you soon be able to say—

"I rest my soul on Jesus,  
This weary soul of mine;  
His right hand me embraces,  
I on his breast recline.  
I love the name of Jesus,  
Immanuel, Christ, the Lord;  
Like fragrance on the breezes,  
His name abroad is poured."

Are you, who are believers, encouraged to roll your care on your great Father, according to that word, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you"? You will do no wrong in obeying to the full every admonition to believe your God, and to believe his Christ. If our

preaching tends to create faith, and foster it, it goes the right way; but, whatever clever things may be said, if the tendency is to undermine faith, and if the words you hear increase that tendency, they are mischievous, eternally mischievous, to the souls of men.

You may always rest, in the next place, on words which are the words of God himself. If God has said it, it is sure. If those men could rest themselves upon the words of Hezekiah the king, how is it that some of you, who are God's people, cannot rest yourselves upon the words of God our King? You believe his promises, you say, but still you are very restless. You have some of that terrible fever of unbelief on you. Beloved, try to practise the art of resting yourself upon the Word of God. God has promised me such and such a thing. I believe it, therefore I have got it. "No," you say, "the word is not fulfilled yet." Ah, but I have got it notwithstanding! If a friend gives me a cheque for five pounds, though I have never seen his money, I have the five pounds. I do not want to see his money, for I have his five-pound cheque in my pocket; I have his guarantee for the amount; and though I have not received the coin, I believe that I have the five pounds, and so I have. And if thou believest that thou hast the blessing for which thou hast asked, go thy way, and rejoice that thou hast it, for it is thine in the promise, and God's promise is as valuable as God's fulfillment. Rest yourselves, then beloved, in the words of God. Are you afraid of being too peaceful? Are you afraid of being too happy? Are you afraid of living too blessed a life? Are any of you afraid of having too much heaven here below? Well, do not give way to such idle fears. The more thou can rest, the more will God be pleased with thee. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people:" saith your God; "speak ye comfortably to comfortably to Jerusalem;" and if he bids us comfort you, you may be sure that he wants you to be comforted. Be comforted, therefore. Rest yourselves in his word. I have had to praise with 'bated breath those who rested on Hezekiah's word; I have thrown in little bits of necessary caution and interjection of doubt; but, if you desire to rest on God's Word, I need not caution you against trusting the Lord too much. Though you believe God up to the hilt, though you believe God desperately, though you believe God to the utmost, though you believe him infinitely, he will never fail you. Your confidence in him can never exceed that which he deserves. He will warrant it all. "Whosoever

believeth on him shall not be ashamed;" and again it is written, "Ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." You can never be wrong in resting upon the words of God himself. Even in your greatest weakness you may look to him, and say—

"I am trusting thee for power,  
Thine can never fail,  
Words which thou thyself shalt give me  
Must prevail."

You may always believe, also, in words which are sealed by the Lord Jesus. If the mark of his blood is upon any word, thou needest never doubt it. If he has died, how canst thou perish? If he has bidden thee come, how can he cast thee out? If thou dost rest upon his finished work, how canst thou be condemned? Believe, I pray thee, and rest thee on the blood-sprinkled words of this wondrous Book.

"The clouds may go and come,  
And storms may sweep the sky;  
The blood-sealed friendship changes not,  
Thy cross is ever nigh.

"I change; he changes not,  
The Christ can never die;  
His word, not mine, the resting-place,  
His truth, not mine, the tie."

Believe also, most firmly, and rest yourself most fully on words which have been blessed to other men. If other have been saved by a word, that word will suit thee. If God's promise proved true to my father, it will be true to me. There is no private interpretation of God's "great and precious promises." They are not hedged about with a ring-fence. They are as much mine as they were Abraham's or Jacob's—as much mine as they were Peter's or Paul's; and I will have them, too, by faith, and have what those promises include. Beloved, rest yourselves upon the words of God, upon which others have rested, and you shall find them to be as true in your experiences as in the experience of those who have gone before.

Last of all, you may surely rest upon words which breathe a sense of rest into the soul. I love all the words of God; but there are some that have an aroma of rest around them. Were you ever in such trouble that, when you read the chapter beginning with those sweet words, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me," you read it in vain? I think I never did. With the tears in my heart as well as in my eyes, I have read that blessed verse, again and again, and I have been comforted. That eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a wonderful light when you are in the dark; when I read those glorious doctrines, I find golden stepping stones through the Slough of Despond. And, as for the Psalms, why the man who wrote most of them seemed to be "not one, but all mankind's epitome." He has lived out all our lives, yours, and mine, and millions besides; his psalms breathe peace around us; and, as we accept the truths they reveal, we are enabled to rest upon them.

To all of us the time will come when we shall want rest. Dear young people, however long you may live, unless the Lord descend from heaven in glory, the time will come when you will die. You will want a pillow then; and, oh, may it be said of all of us then, "The people rested themselves upon the words of Jesus"! These promises are the best pillows for dying heads. There is no one who will suit you now, and suit you then. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Go, brother, anywhere on earth, and even up to heaven with that in thy hand: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Or will this other word suit you better, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness"? But I need not go on giving these words to you; you know them well. If you are not familiar with them, I should advise you to get a little book called Clarke's Precious Promises, where you will find them all arranged. General Gordon, who was killed at Khartoum, used to carry a copy in his pocket wherever he went, and he and many others have found it to be a great help to them. Get hold of the promises of God, and when you feel downcast, when the wind is in the east, when the liver does not work, or when you have a real heart-ache, when the dear child is dead, when the beloved wife is sick, or when there is trouble in the house from any cause, then get you the words of the Lord; and may it always be said of you: "The people rested themselves on the words of King Jesus, the

King of kings, and the Lord of lords"!

Oh, that the Holy Spirit might lead some poor soul to rest on these precious words of God even now for the first time; and unto the Lord shall be praise for ever and ever! Amen.

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## **The Work Of The Holy Spirit**

Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? - Galatians 3:3

Yes, we are just so foolish. Folly is bound up not only in the heart of a child, but in the heart of even a child of God; and though the rod may be said to bring folly out of a child, it will take many a repetition of the rod of affliction upon the shoulders of a Christian before that folly is taken out of him. I suppose we are all of us very sound as a matter of theory upon this point. If any should ask us how we hope to have our salvation worked in us, we should without the slightest hesitation aver our belief that salvation is of the Lord alone, and we should declare that, as the Holy Spirit first of all commenced our piety in us, we look alone to his might to continue and to preserve, and at last to perfect the sacred work. I say we are sound enough on that point as a matter of theory, but we are all of us very heretical and unsound as a matter of practice; for alas! you will not find a Christian who does not have to mourn over his self-righteous tendencies; you will not discover a believer who has not at certain periods in his life, to groan because the spirit of self-confidence has risen in his heart, and prevented him from feeling the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit - has led him to put his confidence in the mere strength of nature, the strength of good intentions, the strength of strong resolutions, instead of relying upon the might of God the Holy Spirit alone. This one thing I know, brethren, that whilst as a preacher I can tell you all, that the Holy Spirit must work all our works in us, and that without him we can do nothing, yet as a man I find myself tempted to deny my own preachings, not in my words, but to deny them in fact by endeavoring to do deeds without looking first to the Holy Spirit. Whilst I should never be unsound in the didactic part of it, yet in that part which concerns the working of it out, in common with all that love the Lord Jesus, but who are still subject to the infirmities of flesh and blood, I have to groan that I repeatedly find myself, having begun in the Spirit, seeking to be made

perfect in the flesh. Yes, we are just as foolish as that; and my brethren, it is well for us if we have a consciousness that we are foolish, for when a man is foolish and knows it, there is the hope that he will one day be wise: to know one's-self to be foolish is to stand upon the doorstep of the temple of wisdom; to understand the wrongness of any position is half way towards amending it; to be quite sure that our self-confidence is a heinous sin and folly, and an offense towards God, and to have that thought burned into us by God's Holy Spirit, is going a great length towards the absolute casting our self-confidence away, and the bringing of our souls in practice, as well as in theory, to rely wholly upon the power of God's Holy Spirit.

This evening, however, I shall run away from my text somewhat. Having just in a few words endeavored to explain the meaning of the whole sentence, I intend only this evening to dwell upon *the doctrine which incidentally the apostle teaches us*. He teaches us that we begin in the Spirit - "Having begun in the Spirit" I have already illustrated the whole text sufficiently for our understanding if God the Holy Spirit shall enlighten us; and I shall now, I say, confine myself to the thought that Christians begin in the Spirit; that the early part of Christianity is of God's Spirit, and of God's Spirit only, while it is equally true that all the way through we must lean upon the same power and depend upon the same strength. And I have selected this text for this reason: we have a very large influx of young believers, month after month - week after week I may say, for every week we receive additions to the church to a considerable number, and month after month these hands baptize into a profession of faith of the Lord Jesus many of those who are yet young in the faith of the Gospel. Now I am astonished to find those persons that thus come before me so well instructed in the doctrines of grace and so sound in all the truths of the covenant, insomuch that I may think it my boast and glory, in the name of Jesus, that I know not that we have any members, whom we have received into the church, who do not give their full assent and consent unto all the doctrines of the Christian religion, commonly called Calvinistic doctrines Those which men are wont to laugh at as being high doctrinal points, are those which they most readily receive, believe, and rejoice in. I find, however, that the greatest deficiency lies in this point, forgetfulness of the work of the Holy Spirit. I



find them very easily remembering the work of God the Father; they do not deny the great doctrine of election; they can see clearly the great sentence of justification passed by the Father upon the elect through the vicarious sacrifice and perfect righteousness of Jesus; and they are not backward in understanding the work of Jesus either: they can see how Christ was the substitute for his people and stood in their room, place and stead; nor do they for one moment impugn any doctrine concerning God's Spirit; but they are not clear upon the point: they can talk upon the other points better than they can upon those which more particularly concern the blessed work of that all adorable person of the Godhead, God the Holy Spirit. I thought, therefore, that I would just preach as simply as ever I could upon the work of the Holy Spirit, and begin at the beginning; hoping on succeeding evening, at different times, as God the Holy Spirit shall guide me, to enter more fully into the subject of the work of the Spirit from the beginning even to the end. But let me say, it is no use your expecting me to preach a course of sermons. I know a great deal better than that. I don't believe God the Holy Spirit ever intended men to publish three months before hand, lists of sermons that they were going to preach; because there always will arise changes in Providence, and different states of mind both in the preacher and the hearer, and he will be a very wise man who has got an Old Moore's Almanack correct enough to let him know what would be the best sort of sermon to preach three months ahead. He had better leave it to his God to give him in the same hour what he shall speak, and look for his sermons, as the Israelites looked for the manna, day by day. However, we now commence by endeavoring to narrate the different points of the Spirit's work in the beginning of salvation.

And first, let me start by asserting that **THE COMMENCEMENT OF SALVATION IS THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK**. Salvation is not begun in the soul by *the means of grace* apart from the Holy Spirit. No man in the world is at liberty to neglect the means that God has appointed. If a house be builded for prayer, that man must expect no blessing who neglects to tread its floor. If a pulpit be erected for the ministration of the Word, no man must expect (although we do sometimes get more than we expect) to be saved except by the hearing of the Word. If the Bible be printed in our own native language, and we can read it, he who neglecteth Holy

Scripture. and ceaseth from its study, has lost one great and grand opportunity of being blessed. There are many means of grace, and let us speak as highly of them as ever we can; we would be far from depreciating them; they are of the highest value; blessed are the people who have them; happy is the nation which is blessed with the means of grace. But my brethren, no man was ever saved by the means of grace apart from the Holy Spirit. You may hear the sermons of the man whom God delighteth to honor; ye may select from all your puritanical divines the writings of the man whom God did bless with a double portion of his Holy Spirit; ye may attend every meeting for prayer; ye may turn over the leaves of this blessed book; but in all this, there is no life for the soul apart from the breath of the Divine Spirit. Use these means, we exhort you to use them, and use them diligently: but recollect that in none of these means is there anything that can benefit you unless God the Holy Spirit shall own and crown them. These are like the conduit pipes of the market place; when the fountain-head floweth with water then they are full, and we do derive a blessing from them; but if the stream be stayed, if the fountain head doth cease to give forth its current, then these are wells without water, clouds without rain; and ye may go to ordinances as an Arab turns to his skin bottle when it is dry, and with your parched lips ye may suck the wind and drink the whirlwind, but receive neither comfort, nor blessing, nor instruction, from the means of grace.

Nor is the salvation of any sinner commenced in him by *a minister or by a priest*, God forgive the man that ever called himself a priest, or suffered anyone else to call him so since the days of our Lord Jesus. The other morning at family prayer, I read the case of King Uzziah, who, having the kingly office, must needs thrust himself into the tabernacle of the Lord, and take the place of the priests. You remember how the priests withstood him, and said, "This is not thy portion, O Uzziah;" and you remember how he seized the censer and would burn incense as a priest before the Lord God; and whilst they yet spake, lo! the leprosy did rise in his face and he went out a leper, as white as snow, from the house of God. Ah! my brethren, it is no mean offense against God for any man to call himself a priest; not but that all the saints have a priestly office through Christ Jesus; but when any man putteth to the idea a speciality as applicable to himself above his fellows, and claimeth to be a priest among

men, he committeth a sin before God, which, even though it be a sin of ignorance, is indeed great and grievous, and leadeth unto divers great and deadly errors, the guilt of which must lie partly upon the head of the man who gave foot-hold for those errors by allowing the title to be applied to himself. Well, there is no man - call him priest if you like, by way of ill courtesy - that can begin the work with us - no, not in the use of the ceremony. The Papist may tell us, and the Papist masked, - the devil in white, the Puseyite, - may tell us that grace begins in the heart at the dropping of the water upon the child's brow; but he telleth a lie, a lie before God, that hath not even so much as the shadow of truth to justify the liar. There is no power in man, though he were ordained by one who could most assuredly claim succession from the apostles - though he were endowed with miraculous gifts, though he were the apostle Paul himself - if he did assert that he had in himself power to convert, power to regenerate, let him be accursed, for he hath denied the truth and Paul himself would have declared him anathema, maranatha, for having departed from the everlasting gospel, one cardinal point of which is - regeneration, the work of God the Holy Spirit; the new birth, a thing that is from above.

And, my brethren, it is quite certain that *no man ever begins the new birth himself*. The work of salvation never was commenced by any man. God the Holy Spirit must commence it. Now, the reasons why no man ever commenced the work of grace in his own heart, is very plain and palpable. First, because he cannot; secondly, because he won't. The best reason of all is, because he cannot - he is dead. Well the dead may be made alive, but the dead cannot make themselves alive, for the dead can do nothing. Besides, the new thing to be created as yet hath no being. The uncreated cannot create. "Nay," but you say, "that man can create." Yes, can hell create heaven? Then sin may create grace. What! will you tell me that fallen human nature, that has come almost to a level with the brutes, is competent to rival God; that it can emulate the divinity in working as great marvels, and in imparting as divine a life as even God himself can give? It cannot. Besides, it is a creation; we are *created* anew in Christ Jesus. Let any man create a fly, and afterwards let him create a new heart in himself; until he hath done the less he cannot do the greater. Besides, no man will. If any man could convert himself, there is no man that

would. If any man saith he would, if that be true, he is already converted; for the will to be converted is in great part conversion. The will to love God, the desire to be in unison with Christ, is not to be found in any man who hath not already been brought to be reconciled with God through the death of his Son. There may be a false desire, a desire grounded upon a misrepresentation of the truth; but a true desire after true salvation by the true Spirit, is a certain index that the salvation already is there in the germ and in the bud, and only needs time and grace to develope itself. But certain it is, that man neither can nor will, being on the one hand utterly impotent and dead, and on the other hand utterly depraved and unwilling; hating the change when he sees it in others, and most of all despising it in himself. Be certain, therefore, that God the Holy Spirit must begin, since none else can do so.

And now, my brethren, I must just enter into the subject very briefly, by showing what the Holy Spirit does in the beginning. Permit me to say that in describing the work, the true work of salvation in the soul, you must not expect me to exhibit any critical nicety of judgment. We have heard of an assembly of divines, who once debated whether men did repent first or believe first; and after a long discussion, some one wiser than the rest suggested another question, whether in the new-born child the lungs did first heave, or the blood did first circulate. "Now," said he, "when you shall ascertain the one, you may be able to ascertain the other." You shall not know which cometh first; they are, very likely, begotten in us at the same moment. We are not able, when we mention these things in order, exactly to declare and testify that these do all happen according to the order in which we mention them; but we only, according to the judgment of men, according to our own experience, seek now to set forth what is the usual way of acting with God the Holy Spirit in the work of salvation.

The first thing, then, that God the Holy Spirit doth in the soul is, to *regenerate it*. We must always learn to distinguish between regeneration and conversion. A man may be converted a great many times in his life, but regenerated only once. Conversion is a thing which is caused by regeneration, but regeneration is the very first act of God the Spirit in the soul. "What," say you, "does regeneration come before conviction of sin?" most certainly; there could be no conviction in the dead sinner. Now,

regeneration quickens the sinner, and makes him live. He is not competent to have true spiritual conviction worked in him until, first of all he has received life. It is true that one of the earliest developments of life is conviction of sin; but before any man can see his need of a Saviour he must be a living man; before he can really, I mean, in a spiritual position, in a saving, effectual manner, understand his own deep depravity, he must have eyes with which to see the depravity, he must have ears with which to hear the sentence of the law, he must have been quickened and made alive; otherwise he could not be capable of feeling, or seeing, or discerning at all. I believe, then, the first thing the Spirit does is this - he finds the sinner dead in sin, just where Adam left him; he breathes into him a divine influence. The sinner knows nothing about how it is done, nor do any of us understand it. "Thou understandest not the wind - it bloweth where it listeth;" but we see its effects. Now, none of us can tell how the Holy Spirit works in men. I doubt not there have been some who have sat in these pews, and in the middle of a sermon or in prayer, or singing - they knew not how it was - the Spirit of God was in their hearts; he had entered into their souls; they were no longer dead in sin, no longer without thought, without hope, without spiritual capacity, but they had begun to live. And I believe this work of regeneration, when it is done effectually - and God the Spirit would not do it without doing it effectually - is done mysteriously, often suddenly, and it is done in divers manners; but still it hath always this mark about it - that the man although he may not understand how it is done, feels that something is done. The what, the how, he doth not know; but he knows that something is done; and he now begins to think thoughts he never thought before; he begins to feel as he never felt before; he is brought into a new state, there is a change wrought in him - as if a dead post standing in the street were on a sudden to find itself possessed of a soul, and did hear the sound of the passing carriages, and listen to the words of the foot-passengers; there is something quite new about it. The fact is, the man has got a spirit; he never had one before; he was nothing but a body and a soul; but now, God has breathed into him the third great principle, the new life, the Spirit, and he has become a spiritual man. Now, he is not only capable of mental exercise, but of spiritual exercise; as, having a soul before, he could repent, he could believe, as a mere mental exercise; he could think thoughts of God, and have some desires after him; but he could not have

one spiritual thought, nor one spiritual wish or desire, for he had no powers that could educe these things; but now, in regeneration, he has got something given to him, and being given, you soon see its effects. The man begins to feel that he is a sinner; why did he not feel that before? Ah, my brethren, he could not, he was not in a state to feel; he was a dead sinner; and though he used to tell you, and tell God, by way of compliment, that he was a sinner, he did not know anything about it. He said he was a sinner; yes, but he talked about being a sinner just as the blind man talks about the stars that he has never seen, as he talks about the light, the existence of which he would not know unless he were told of it; but now it is a deep reality. You may laugh at him, ye who have not been regenerated; but now he has got something that really puts him beyond your laughter. He begins to feel the exceeding weight and evil of transgression; his heart trembles, his very flesh quivers - in some cases the whole frame is affected. The man is sick by day and night; his flesh creepeth on his bones for fear; he cannot eat, his appetite fails him. He cannot bear the sound of melody and mirth; all his animal spirits are dried up. He cannot rejoice; he is unhappy, he is miserable. downcast, distressed; in some cases, almost ready to go mad; though in the majority of cases it takes a lighter phase, and there are the gentle whispers of the Spirit; but even then, the pangs and pains caused by regeneration, while the new life discovers the sin and evil of the past condition of the man are things that are not to be well described or mentioned without tears. This is all the work of the Spirit.

And having brought the soul thus far, the next thing the Holy Spirit doth is, *to teach the soul that it is utterly incapable of saving itself*. It knew that before, mayhap, if the man sat under a Gospel ministry; but he only knew it with the ear, and understood it with the mind. Now, it has become part of his very life; he feels it; it has entered into his soul, and he knows it to be true. Once he thought he would be good, and thought that would save him; the Holy Spirit just knocks the brains out of that thought. "Then," he says, "I will try ceremonies. and see whether I cannot gain merit so;" God the Holy Spirit shoots the arrow right through the heart of that thought, and it falls dead before him, and he cannot bear the sight of the carcase, so that, like Abraham said of Sarah, he exclaims, "Bury the dead out of my sight." Though once he loved it dearly, now he

hates the sight thereof. He thought once that he could believe; he had an Arminian notion in his head, that he could believe when he liked, and repent when he liked. Now, God the Spirit has brought him in such a condition, that he says, "I can do nothing." He begins to discover his own death, now that he is made alive; he did not know anything about it before. He now finds that he has no hand of faith to lift, though the minister tells him to do it. He now discovers, when he is bidden to pray, that he would, but cannot pray. He now finds that he is powerless, and he dies in the hand of God like clay in the hand of the potter, and is made to cry out, "O Lord, my God, unless thou save me, I am damned to all eternity; for I cannot lift a finger in this matter until thou first of all givest me strength." And if you urge him to do anything, he longs to be doing, but he is so afraid that it should only be fleshly doings, and not the doings of the Spirit, that he meditates, and stops, and stays, until he groans and cries; and feeling that these groans and cries are the real work of the Spirit, and prove that he has spiritual life, he then begins in right earnest to look to Jesus Christ the Saviour. But mark, all these things are by the Spirit, and none of them can ever be produced in the soul of any man or woman, apart from the divine influence of God the Holy Ghost.

This being done, the soul being now weaned from all confidence, and despairing and brought to its last standing place, yea, laid prostrate on the ground, the rope being about its neck, and the ashes and sackcloth on its head; God the Holy Ghost *next applies the blood of Jesus to the soul*, gives the soul the grace of faith whereby it lays hold of Jesus, and gives it an anointing of holy consolation and unction of assurance, whereby, casting itself wholly on the blood and righteousness of Jesus, it receiveth joy, knoweth itself to be saved, and rejoiceth in pardon. But mark, that is the work of the Spirit. Some preachers will tell their people, "Believe, only believe." Yes, it is right they should tell them so; but they should remember it is also right to tell them that even this must be the work of the Spirit; for though we say, "Only believe," that is the greatest only in the world; and what some men say is so easy is just what those who want to believe find to be the hardest thing in all the world. It is simple enough for a man that hath the Spirit in him to believe, when he hath the written Word before him and the witness of the Spirit in him; that is easy enough. But for the poor, tried sinner, who cannot see anything in the Word of

God but thunder and threatening - for him to believe - ah my brethren, it is not such a little matter as some make it to be. It needs the fullness of the power of God's Spirit to bring any man to such faith as that.

Well, when the sinner hath thus believed, then the Holy Spirit *bringeth all the precious things to him*. There is the blood of Jesus; that can never save my soul, unless God the Spirit takes that blood, and sprinkles it upon my conscience. There is the perfect spotless righteousness of Jesus; it is a robe that will fit me and adorn me from head to foot, but it is no use to me till I have put it on; and I cannot put it on myself; God the Holy Spirit must put the robe of Jesus' righteousness on me. There is the covenant of adoption, whereby God gives me the privileges of a son; but I cannot rejoice in my adoption until I receive the spirit of adoption whereby I may be able to cry, "Abba, Father." So, beloved, you see - I might enlarge, but my time fails me - you see that every point that is brought out in the experience of the new-born Christian, every point in that part of salvation which we may call its beginning in the soul, has to do with God the Holy Spirit. There is no step that can be taken without him, there is nothing which can be accomplished aright without him; yea, though ye had the best of means, the rightest of ceremonies, the most orthodox of truths, and though ye did exercise, your minds upon all these things, and though the blood of Jesus Christ were shed for you, and God himself had ordained you from before the foundations of the world to be saved, yet still there must be that one link always inserted in the golden chain of the plan of salvation; for without that it were all incomplete. You must be quickened by the Spirit; you must be called out of darkness into light; you must be made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Now, I wonder how many of you know anything about this. That is the practical part of it. Now my hearer, dost thou understand this? Perhaps, sir, thou art one exceeding wise, and thou turnest on thy heel with a sneer, and thou sayest "Supernaturalism in one of its phases; these Methodists are always talking about supernatural things." You are very wise, exceeding so, doubtless; but it seemeth to me that Nicodemus of old had gotten as far as you, and you have gotten no farther than he; for he asked "How could a man be born again when he is old?" And though every Sunday-school child has had a smile at the expense of Nicodemus's



ignorance, you are not wiser. And yet you are a Rabbi, sir, and you would teach us, would you? And you would teach us about these things, and yet you sneer about supernaturalism. Well, the day may come - I pray it may come to you before the day of your death and your doom - when the Christ of the supernaturalists will be the only Christ for you; when you shall come into the floods of death, where you shall need something more than nature, then you will be crying for a work that is supernatural within your hearts; and it may be that then, when you first of all awake to know that your wisdom was but one of the methods of madness, you may perhaps have to cry in vain, having for your only answer, "I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded; I also will mock at your calamity, and laugh when your fear cometh."

I hear another of you say, "Well, sir, I know nothing of this work of God the Holy Spirit, in my heart; I am just as good as other people, I never make a profession of religion; it is very rarely that I go into a place of worship at all, but I am as good as the saints, any of them: look at some of them - very fine fellows certainly." Stop, now, religion is a thing between yourself and your Maker, and you have nothing to do with those very fine fellows you have spoken of. Suppose I make a confession that a large number of those who are called saints deserve a great deal more to be called sinners double-dyed, and then white-washed, - suppose I make a confession of that, what has that to do with you? Your religion must be for yourself, and it must be between you and your God. If all the world were hypocrites, that would not exonerate you before your God. When you came before the Master, if you were still at enmity to him, could you venture to plead such an excuse as this - "All the world was full of hypocrites?" "Well," he would say, "what had that to do with you? so much the more reason why you should have been a honest man. If you say the church was thus drifting away upon the quicksands, through the evil conduct and folly of the members thereof, so much the more reason why you should have helped to make it sound, if you thought you could have done so." Another cries, "Well, I do not see that I need it; I am as moral a man as I can be; I never break the Sabbath; I am one of the most punctillious of Christians; I always go to church twice a Sabbath; I hear a thoroughly evangelical minister, and you would not find fault with him." Or perhaps says another, "I go to a Baptist chapel, I am always found

there, I am scrupulously correct in my conduct; I am a good father, a good husband; I do not know that any man can find fault with me in business." Well certainly that is very good, and if you will be so good tomorrow morning as to go into Saint Paul's and wash one of those statues till you make it alive, then you will be saved by your morality; but since you, even you, are dead in trespasses and sins, without the Spirit you may wash yourself never so clean, but you cannot wash life into you any more than those statues, by all your washing, could be made to walk, or think, or breathe. You must be quickened by the Holy Spirit, for you are dead in trespasses and sins.

Yes, my comely maiden, thou that art everything excellent; thou that art not to be blamed in aught; thou that art affectionate, tender, kind, and dutiful; whose very life seems to be so pure, that all who see thee think thou seemest an angel; even thou, except thou be born again, canst not see the kingdom of God; the golden gate of heaven must grind upon its hinges with a doleful sound and shut thee out for ever, unless thou art the subject of a divine change, for this knows no exception. And, O ye vilest of the vile, ye who have wandered farthest from the paths of rectitude, "ye must be born again," ye must be quickened by a divine life; and it is comforting for you to recollect, that the very same power which can awaken the moral man, which can save the man of rectitude and honesty, is able to work in you, is able to change you; to turn the lion to a lamb, the raven to a dove.

O my hearers, ask yourselves, are you the subjects of this change? And if you be, rejoice with joy unspeakable, for happy is that mother's child. and full of glory, that can say, "I am born of God;" blessed is that man: God and the holy angels call him blessed who hath received the quickening of the Spirit, and is born of God. For him there may be many troubles, but there is "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" to counterbalance all his woe; for him there may be wars and fightings; but let him tarry, there are trumpets of victory, there are better wreaths than the laurels of conquerors, there is a crown of immortal glory, there is bliss unfading, there is acceptance in the breast of God for aye, and perpetual fellowship with Jehovah. But oh! if thou be not born again this night I can but tremble for thee, and lift my heart in prayer to God, and pray for thee,

that he may now by his Divine Spirit make thee alive, give thee to know thy need of him, and then direct thee to the cross of Jesus. But if thou knowest thy need of a Saviour tonight, if thou art this night conscious of thy death in sin, hear me preach the gospel and I have done. The Lord Jesus Christ died for you. Dost thou know thyself to be guilty, not as the hypocrite pretendeth to know it, but dost thou know it consciously, sensitively, dost thou weep over it? Dost thou lament it? Dost thou feel that thou canst not save thyself? Art thou sick of all fleshly ways of saving? Canst thou say to-night, "Unless God shall put out the hand of his mercy, I know I deserve to be lost for ever, and I am?" Then, as the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, my Master bought you with his blood, and those whom he bought with blood he will have; from the fangs of the lion and the jaws of the bear will he pluck them. He will save thee, for thou art a part of his bloody purchase; he has taken thy sins upon his heal; he suffered in thy room and place, he has been punished for thee; thou shalt not die; "thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven," and I am the Master's glad herald to tell thee to night what his Word tells thee also, that thou mayest rejoice in the fullness of faith, for "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation"

May the Lord now be pleased to add his blessing for Jesus' sake.

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## **The World Turned Upside Down**

These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also - Acts 17:6

This is just an old version of an oft-repeated story. When disturbances

arise in a state, and rebellions and mutinies cause blood to be shed, it is still the custom to cry, "The Christians have done this." In the days of Jesus we know that it was laid to the charge of our blessed and divine Master, that he was a stirrer of sedition, whereas he himself had refused to be a king, when his followers would have taken him by force to make him one, for he said, "My kingdom is not of this world;" yet was he crucified under the two false charges of sedition and blasphemy. The same thing occurred with the Apostles. Wherever they went to preach the gospel, the Jews who opposed them sought to stir up the refuse of the city to put an end to their ministry; and then, when a great tumult had been made by the Jews themselves, who had taken unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring him out to the people, then the Jews laid the tumult and the uproar at the door of the Apostles, saying, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." This plan was followed all through the Roman empire, until Christianity became the state religion. There was never a calamity befel Rome, never a war arose, never a famine or a plague, but the vulgar multitude cried, "The Christians to the lions! The Christians have done this." Nero himself imputed the burning of Rome, of which he himself doubtless was the incendiary, to the Christians. The believers in Jesus were slandered as if they were the common sewer, into which all the filth of sin was to be poured; whereas, they were like Solomon's great brazen sea, which was full of the purest water, wherein even priests themselves might wash their robes. And you will remark that to this day the world still lays its ills at the door of the Christians. Was it not the foolish cry a few months ago, and are there not some weak-minded individuals who still believe it, that the great massacre and mutiny in India was caused by the missionaries. Forsooth; the men who turned the world upside down had gone there also; and because men broke through all the restraints of nature and of law, and committed deeds for which fiends might blush, this must be laid at the door of Christ's holy gospel, and the men of peace must bear on their shoulders the blame of war! Ah! we need not refute this: the calumny is too idle to need a refutation. Can it be true, that he whose gospel is love should be the fomenter of disturbance? Can it be fair for a moment to lay mutiny and rebellion at the door of the gospel, the very motto of which is, "Peace on earth, good will towards men?" Did not

our Master say, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's?" Did he not himself pay tribute though he sent to the fish of the sea, to get the shekel? And have not his followers at all times been a peaceful generation?—save only and except where the liberty of their conscience was touched, and then they were not the men to bow their knees to tyrants and kings, but with brave old Oliver they did bind their kings in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron, as they will do again, if their liberty ever should be infringed, so that they should not have power to worship God as they ought.

We believe that what these Jews said of the Apostles, was just a downright wilful lie. They knew better. The Apostles were not the disturbers of states. It is true, they preached that which would disturb the sinful constitution of a kingdom and which would disturb the evil practices of false priests, but they never meant to set men in an uproar. They did come to set men at arms with sin; they did draw the sword against iniquity; but against men as men, against kings as kings, they had no battle; it is with iniquity and sin, and wrong everywhere, that they proclaimed an everlasting warfare. But still, brethren, there is many a true word spoken in jest, we say, and surely there is many a true word spoken in malice. They said the Apostles turned the world upside down. They meant by that, that they were disturbers of the peace. But they said a great true thing; for Christ's gospel does turn the world upside down. It was the wrong way upwards before, and now that the gospel is preached, and when it shall prevail, it will just set the world right by turning it upside down.

And now I shall try to show how, in the *world at large*, Christ's gospel turns the world upside down. and then I shall endeavor, as well as God shall help me, to show how the *little world that is within every man* is turned upside down, when he becomes a believer in the gospel of Christ.

I. First, then, the gospel of Christ turns the world upside down, WITH REGARD TO THE POSITION OF DIFFERENT CLASSES OF MEN.

In the esteem of men, the kingdom of heaven is something like this. High there on the summit, there sits the most grand rabbi, the right venerable,

estimable and excellent doctor of divinity, the great philosopher, the highly learned, the deeply instructed, the immensely intellectual man. He sits on the apex: he is the highest, because he is the wisest. And just below him there is a class of men who are deeply studied—not quite so skilled as the former, but still exceeding wise,—who look down at those who stand at the basement of the pyramid, and who say to them, "Ah, they are the ignoble multitude, they know nothing at all." A little lower down, we come to the sober, respectable, thinking men, not those who set up for teachers, but those who seldom will be taught, because they already in their own opinion know all that is to be learned. Then after them there come a still larger number of very estimable folks, who are exceeding wise in worldly wisdom, although not quite so exalted as the philosopher and the rabbi. Lower still come those who have just a respectable amount of wisdom and knowledge, and then at the very basement there come the fool, and the little child, and the babe. When we look at these we say, "This is the wisdom of this world. Behold how great a difference there is between the babe at the bottom, and the learned doctor on the summit! How wide the distinction between the ignorant simpleton who forms the hard, rocky, stubborn basement, and the wise man of polished marble, who there stands resplendent at the apex of the pyramid." Now, just see how Christ turns the world upside down. There it stands. He just reverses it. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty men are chosen; but God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom." It is just turning the whole social fabric upside down; and the wise man finds now that he has to go upstairs towards his simplicity. He has been all his life trying as far as he could, to get away from the simplicity of the credulous child, he has been thinking, and judging, and weighing, and bringing his logic to cut up every truth he heard, and now he has to begin, and go up again: he has to become a little child, and turn back to his former simplicity. This is the world turned upside down, with a vengeance; and therefore the wise seldom love it.

If you wish to see the world turned upside down to perfection, just turn to the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew: here you have a whole summary of the world reversed. Jesus Christ turned the world upside

down the first sermon he preached. Look at the third verse. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" Now, we like a man who has an ambitious spirit—a man who, as we say, knows how to push his way in the world—who looks up—is not contented with the position that he occupies, but is always for climbing higher and higher. And we have a very fair opinion too of a man, who has a very fair opinion of himself—a man who is not going to bow and cringe. He will have his rights, that he will, he will not give way to anybody. He believes himself to be somewhat, and he will stand on his own belief, and will prove it to the world yet. He is not one of your poor, mean-spirited fellows, who are content with poverty, and sit still. *He* will not be contented. Now such a man as this the world admires. But Christ just turns that upside down, and says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven." The men who have no strength of their own, but look for all to Christ—the men who have no spirit to run with a wicked world, but who would rather suffer an injury than resent one—the men who are lowly and of a humble carriage, who seek not to lift their heads above their fellows; who if they be great have greatness thrust upon them, but never seek it—who are content along the cool, sequestered vale of life, to keep the even tenour of their way—who seem to have always ringing in their ears, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not"—"the poor in spirit," happy in their poverty, who are content with the Lord's providence, and think themselves far more rich than they deserve to be. Now, these men Christ says, are blessed. The world says, they are soft, they are fools; but Christ puts those on the top whom the world puts at the bottom. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for their's is the kingdom of heaven."

Then there is another lot of people in the world; they are always *mourning*. They do not let you see it often, for their Master has told them when they fast, to anoint their face, that they appear not unto men to fast, but still secretly before God they have to groan; they hang their harps upon the willows; they mourn for their own sin, and then they mourn for the sin of the times. The world says of these, "They are a moping, melancholy set; I would not care to belong to their number;" and the gay reveller comes in, and he almost spits upon them in his scorn. For what are they? They love the darkness. They are the willows of the stream, but

this man, like the proud poplar, lifts his head, and is swayed to and fro in the wind of his joy, boasting of his greatness, and his freedom. Hear how the gay youth talks to his mourning friend, who is under conviction of sin. "Ah! yours is a morbid disposition; I pity you; you ought to be under the hand of a physician. You go mourning through this world. What a miserable thing, to be plunging through waves of tribulation! What a dismal case is yours! I would not stand in your shoes and be in your position for all the world." No, but Christ turns the world upside down; and so those people whom you think to be mournful and sorrowful, are the very ones who are to rejoice. For read the fourth verse, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." Yes, worldling, your joy is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. It blazeth a little, and maketh a great noise: it is soon done with. But "light is *sown* for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." You cannot see the light now, because it is sown. It lies under the clods of poverty, and shame, and persecution, mayhap. But when the great harvest day shall come, the blades of light, upstarting at the second coming, shall bring forth "the full corn in the ear" of bliss and glory everlasting. O ye mourning souls, be glad; for whereas the world puts you beneath it, Christ puts you above the world's head. When he turns the world upside down, he says you *shall* be comforted.

Then there is another race of people, called "*the meek*." You may have met with them now and then. Let me describe the opposite. I know a man who never feels happy unless he has a law-suit; he would never pay a bill unless he had a writ about it. He is fond of law. The idea of pulling another up before the court is a great delicacy to him. A slight affront he would not easily forget. He has a very large amount of meek dignity; and if he be never so slightly touched, if a harsh word be spoken against him, or one slander uttered he is down upon his enemy at once; for he is a man of a hard temper, and he casts the debtor into prison, and verily I say unto thee, if thou gettest in there by his writ, thou shalt never come out until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. Now the meek are of a very different disposition. You may revile them, but they will not revile again; you may injure them, but they know that their Master has said, "I say unto thee, resist not evil." They do not put themselves into airs and passions on a slight affront, for they know that all men are imperfect, and



therefore they think that perhaps their brother made a mistake, and did not wish to hurt their feelings, and therefore they say, "Well, if he did not wish to do it, then I will not be hurt by it, I dare say he meant well, and therefore I will take the will for the deed, and though he spoke harshly, yet he will be sorry for it to morrow; I will not mention it to him,—I will put up with whatever he chooses to say." There is a slander uttered against him: he says, "Well, let it alone; it will die of itself; where no wood is, the fire goeth out." Another speaketh exceeding ill against him in his hearing; but he just holds his tongue; he is dumb and openeth not his mouth. He is not like the sons of Zeruah, who said to David, "Let us go and take off that dead dog's head, because he cursed the king" He says, "No, if the Lord hath bidden him curse; let him curse." "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." He is quite content to bear and forbear, and put up with a thousand injuries, rather than inflict one; meekly and quietly he goes his way through the world, and people say, "Ah! such a man as that will never get on; he will always be taken in. Why, he will be lending money, and will never get it back again; he will be giving his substance to the poor, and he will never receive it. How stupid he is! He allows people to infringe on his rights; he has no strength of mind; he does not know how to stand up for himself, fool that he is." Ay, but Christ turns it upside down, and he says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Is not that provoking to you graspers, you high spirited people, you lawyers, you that are always trying to bring your neighbor into trouble touching your rights? you do it in order that you may inherit the earth: see how Christ spites you, and treads your wisdom under feet. He says, "*The meek shall inherit the earth.*" After all, very often, the best way to get our rights is to let them alone. I am quite certain that the safest way to defend your character is never to say a word about it. If every person in this place chooses to slander me and utter the most furious libels that he pleases, he may rest quite assured he will never have a law-suit from me. I am not quite fool enough for that. I have always noticed that when a man defends himself in a court of law against any slander, he just does his enemy's business with his own hand. Our enemies cannot hurt us, unless we hurt ourselves. No man's character was ever really injured except by himself. Be you among the meek, and you shall inherit the earth. Bear all things, hope all things, believe all things, and it shall be the best, even on this earth, in the end.

Do you see that very respectable gentleman yonder, who has never omitted to attend his church or his chapel twice every Sunday ever since he became a man. He reads his Bible too, and he has family prayers. It is true that there are certain stories flying about, that he is rather hard upon his laborers, and exacting at times in his payments, but does justice to all men, although no further will he go. This man is on very good terms with himself; when he gets up in the morning he always shakes hands with himself, and compliments himself on being a very excellent person. He generally lives in a front street, in his opinion, and the first number in the street, too. If you speak to him about his state before God, he says, that if *he* does not go to heaven nobody will; for he pays twenty shillings in the pound to everybody; he is strictly upright, and there is no one who can find any fault with his character. Isn't he a good man? Don't you envy him?—a man who has so excellent an opinion of himself that he thinks himself perfect; or if he is not quite perfect, yet he is so good that he believes that with a little help, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Well, now, do you see standing at the back of the church there, a poor woman with tears running down her eyes? Come forward, ma'am; let us hear your history. She is afraid to come forward; she dares not speak in the presence of respectable persons; but we gather thus much from her: She has lately found out that she is full of sin, and she desires to know what she must do to be saved. Ask her. She tells you she has no merits of her own. Her song is, "I the chief of sinners am. Oh! that mercy would save me!" She never compliments herself upon her good works, for she says she has none; all her righteousnesses are as filthy rags; she puts her mouth in the very dust when she prays, and she dares not lift so much as her eyes towards heaven. You pity that poor woman. You would not like to be in her case. The other man whom I have just mentioned, stands at the very top of the ladder, does he not? But this poor woman stands at the bottom. Now just see the gospel process—the world turned upside down. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled;" while the man who is content with himself has this for his portion—"As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse;" publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before you, because you seek not the righteousness which is of faith, but you seek it as it were by the works of the law. So here you see again is the world

turned upside down in the first sermon Christ ever preached.

Now turn to the next beatitude—in the seventh verse—"Blessed are the *merciful*: for they shall obtain mercy." Of this I have already spoken. The merciful are not much respected in this world—at least if they are imprudently merciful, the man who forgives too much, or who is too generous, is not considered to be wise. But Christ declares that he who has been merciful—merciful to supply the wants of the poor, merciful to forgive his enemies and to pass by offenses, shall obtain mercy. Here, again, is the world turned upside down.

"Blessed are the *pure in heart*: for they shall see God." The world says, "Blessed is the man who indulges in a gay life." If you ask the common run of mankind who is the happy man, they will tell you, "The happy man is he who has abundance of money, and spends it freely, and is freed from restraint—who leads a merry dance of life, who drinks deep of the cup of intoxication—who revels riotously—who, like the wild horse of the prairie, is not bitted by order, or restrained by reason, but who dashes across the broad plains of sin, unharnessed, unguided, unrestrained." This is the man whom the world calls happy: the proud man, the mighty man, the Nimrod; the man who can do just as he wishes, and who spurns to keep the narrow way of holiness. Now, the Scripture says, Not so; "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

"Blest is the man who shuns the place  
Where sinners love to meet;  
Who fears to tread their wicked ways,  
And hates the scoffer's seat,"—

the man who cannot touch one thing because that would be lascivious, nor another because that would spoil his communion with his Master; a man who cannot frequent this place of amusement, because he could not pray there, and cannot go to another, because he could not hope to have his Master's sanction upon an hour so spent. That man, pure in heart, is said to be a Puritanical moralist, a strict Sabbatarian, a man who has not any mind of his own; but Jesus Christ puts all straight, for he says, these are the blessed men these are the happy ones. "Blessed are the pure in

heart: for they shall see God."

And now look at the ninth verse. What a turning of the world upside down that is! You walk through London, and who are the men that we put upon our columns and pillars, and upon our park gates, and so on? Read the ninth verse, and see how that turns the world upside down. There upon the very top of the world, high, high up, can be seen the armless sleeve of a Nelson: there he stands, high exalted above his fellows; and there, in another place, with a long file up his back, stands a duke; and in another place, riding upon a war horse, is a mighty man of war. These are the world's blest heroes. Go into the capital of what empire you choose to select, and you shall see that the blessed men, who are put upon pedestals, and who have statues erected to their memory, who are put into our St. Paul's Cathedral, and our Westminster Abbey, are not exactly the men mentioned in the ninth verse. Let us read it. "Blessed are the *peace-makers*; for they shall be called the children of God." Ah! but you do not often bless the peace-makers, do you? The man who comes between two beligerents, and bears the stroke himself—the man who will lie down on the earth, and plead with others that they would cease from warfare—these are the blessed. How rarely are they set on high. They are generally set aside, as people who cannot be blessed, even though it seem that they try to make others so. Here is the world turned upside down. The warrior with his garment stained in blood, is put into the ignoble earth, to die and rot; but the peace-maker is lifted up, and God's crown of blessing is put round about his head, and men one day shall see it, and struck with admiration they shall lament their own folly, that they exalted the blood-red sword of the warrior, but that they did rend the modest mantle of the noon who did make peace among mankind.

And to conclude our Saviour's sermon, notice once more, that we find in this world a race of persons who have always been hated—a class of men who have been hunted like the wild goat; persecuted, afflicted, and tormented. As an old divine says, "The Christian has been looked upon as if he had a wolf's head, for as the wolf was hunted for his head everywhere, so has the Christian been hunted to the uttermost ends of the earth." And in reading history we are apt to say, "These persecuted persons occupy the lowest room of blessedness; these who have been

sawn asunder, who have been burned, who have seen their houses destroyed, and have been driven as houseless exiles into every part of the earth—these men who have wandered about in sheep's skins, and goat's skins,—these are the very least of mankind." Not so. The gospel reverses all this, and it says, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for *righteousness'* sake, for their's is the kingdom of heaven." I repeat it: The whole of these beatitudes are just in conflict with the world's opinion. and we may quote the words of the Jew, and say, "Jesus Christ was 'the man who turned the world upside down.' "

And now I find I must be very brief for I have taken so much time in endeavoring to show how Christ's gospel turned the world upside down, in the position of its characters, that I shall have no space left for anything else. But will you have patience with me, and I will briefly pass through the other points?

I have next to remark, that the Christian religion turns the world upside down *in its maxims*. I will just quote a few texts which show this very clearly. "It was said by them of old time, eye for eye and tooth for tooth; but I say unto you, resist not evil" It has generally been held by each of us, that we are not to allow anyone to infringe upon our rights; but the Saviour says, "Whosoever would sue thee at the law and take thy cloak, let him take thy coat also." "If any man smite thee on the one cheek, turn unto him the other also." If these precepts were kept, would it not turn the world upside down? "It has been said by them of old time, love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy;" but Jesus Christ said, "Let love be unto all men." He commands us to love our enemies, and to pray for them who despitefully use us. He says, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him, and if he thirst give him drink, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." This would indeed be turning the world upside down; for what would become of our war ships and our warriors, if at the port-holes where now we put our cannons, we should have sent out to some burning city of our enemies—for instance, to burning Sebastapol,—if we had sent to the houseless inhabitants, who had been driven from their homes, barrels of beef, and bundles of bread and clothes, to supply their wants. That would have been a reversal of all human policy, but yet it would have been just the carrying out of Christ's law, after all. So shall it be in

the days that are to come, our enemies shall be loved, and our foemen shall be fed. We are told too, in these times, that it is good to a man to heap unto himself abundant wealth, and make himself rich, but Jesus Christ turned the world upside down, for he said, there was a certain rich man who was clothed in scarlet, and fared sumptuously every day, and so on, and his fields brought forth abundantly; and he said, "I will pull down my barns, and build greater;" but the Lord says, "Thou fool!" That is reversing everything in this world. You would have made an Alderman of him, or a Lord Mayor; and fathers would have patted their boys on the head, and said, "That is all through his frugality and taking care; see how he has got on in the world; when he had got a good crop, he did not give it away to the poor, as that extravagant man does who has kept on working all his life, and never be able to retire from business; he saved it all up;— be as good a boy as So-and-so, and get on too." But Christ said "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." A turning of everything upside down. And others of us will have it, that we ought to be very careful every day, and always looking forward to the future, and always fretting about what is to be. Here is a turning of the world upside down, when Jesus Christ says, "Remember the ravens; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them, are ye not better than they?" I do believe that at this day the maxims of business are clean opposed to the maxims of Christ. But I shall be answered by this, "Business is business." Yes, I know business is business, but business has no business to be such business as it is. Oh! that it might be altered, till every man could make his business his religion, and make a religion of his business

I have not detained you long upon that point; and therefore I am free to mention a third. How Christ has turned the world upside down, as to our *religious notions*. Why, the mass of mankind believe, that if any man wills to be saved, that is all which is necessary. Many of our preachers do in effect preach this worldly maxim. They tell men that they must make themselves willing. Now, just hear how the gospel upsets that. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." The world will have an universal religion too; but how Christ overturns that. "I pray for them; I pray not for the world." He hath ordained us *from among men*. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of

God, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." "The Lord knoweth them that are his." How that runs counter to all the world's opinion of religion! The world's religion is this—"Do, and thou shalt live." Christ's religion is—"Believe and live." We will have it, that if a man be righteous, sober upright, he shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but Christ says—This thou oughtest to have done; but still, not this can ever cleanse thee. "As many as are under the works of the law are under the curse." "By the works or the law shall no flesh living be justified." "Believe and live," is just the upsetting of every human notion. Cast thyself on Christ: trust in him. Have good works afterwards; but first of all trust in him that died upon the tree. This is the overturning of every opinion of man. And hence mortals will always fight against it, so long as the human heart is what it is. Oh! that we knew the gospel! Oh! that we felt the gospel! For it would be the upsetting of all self-righteousness, and the casting down of every high look, and of every proud thing.

II. And now, beloved, spare me a little time, while I try to show THAT WHICH IS TRUE IN THE WORLD, IS TRUE IN THE HEART. Instead, however, of enlarging at full length upon the different topics, I shall make my last point the subject of examination.

Man is a little world, and what God does in the outer world, he does in the inner. If any of you would be saved your hearts must be turned upside down. I will now appeal to you, and ask you whether you have ever felt this—whether you know the meaning of it?

In the first place, your *judgment* must be turned upside down. Cannot many of you say, that which you now believe to be the truth of God is very far opposed to your former carnal notions? Why, if anyone had told you, that you should be a believer in the distinguishing doctrines of free and sovereign grace, you would have laughed him in the face. "What! I believe the doctrine of election? What! I ever hold the doctrine of particular redemption, or final perseverance? Pshaw! nonsense! It cannot be!" But now you do hold it, and the thing which you thought unreasonable and unjust, now seems to you to be for God's glory, and for man's eternal benefit. You can kiss the doctrine which once you despised, and you meekly receive it as sweeter than the droppings of honey from the

honeycomb, though once you thought it to be as the very poison of asps, and gall, and wormwood. Yes, when grace enters the heart, there is a turning upside down of all our opinions; and the great truth of Jesus sits reigning on our soul.

Is there not, again, a total change of all your *hopes*? Why, your hopes used to be all for this world. If you could but get rich, if you could but be great and honored, you would be happy! You looked forward to it. All you were expecting was a paradise this side the flood. And now where are your hopes?—not on earth; for where your treasure is, there must your heart be also. You are looking for a city that hands have not piled; your desires are heavenly, whereas they were gross and carnal once. Can ye say that? Oh! all ye members of this congregation, can ye say that your hopes and your desires are changed? Are ye looking upward, instead of downward? Are you looking to serve God on earth, and to enjoy him for ever? Or are you still content with thinking "What ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed?"

Again, it is a complete upsetting of all your *pleasures*. You loved the tavern once, you hate it now. You hated God's house once; it is now your much-loved habitation. The song, the Sunday newspaper, the lewd novel—all these were sweet to your taste; but you have burned the books that once enchanted you, and now the dusty Bible from the back of the shelf is taken down, and there it lies wide open upon the family table, and it is read both morn and night, much loved, much prized and delighted in. The Sabbath was once the dullest day of the week to you. you either loitered outside the door in your shirt-sleeves, if you were poor, or if you were rich you spent the day in your drawing-room, and had company in the evening: now, instead thereof, your company you find in the church of the living God, and you make the Lord's house the drawing-room where you entertain your friends. Your feast is no longer a banquet of wine, but a banquet of communion with Christ. There are some of you who once loved nothing better than the theater, the low concert room, or the casino: over such places you now see a great black mark of the curse, and you never go there. You seek now the prayer meeting, the church meeting, the gathering of the righteous, the habitation of the Lord God of hosts.



It is marvellous how great a change the gospel makes in a man's *house* too. Why, it turns his house upside down. Look over the mantle-piece— There is a vile daub of a picture there, or a wretched print, and the subject is worse than the style of the thing. But when the man follows Jesus he takes that down, and he gets a print of John Bunyan in his prison, or his wife standing before the magistrate, or a print of the apostle Paul preaching at Athens, or some good old subject representing something Biblical. There is a pack of cards and a cribbage board in the cupboard; he turns them out, and instead he puts there perhaps the monthly magazine, or mayhaps few works of old divines, just here and there one of the publications of the Religious Tract Society, or a volume of a Commentary. Every thing is upside down there. The children say, "Father is so altered." They never knew such a thing. He used to come home sometimes drunk of a night, and the children used to run up stairs and be in bed before he came in; and now little John and little Sarah sit at the window and watch till he comes home; and they go toddling down the street to meet him, and he takes one in his arms, and the other by the hand, and brings them home with him. He used to teach them to sing "Begone dull care" or something worse, now he tells them of "Gentle Jesus meek and mild" or puts into their mouth some sweet song of old. A jolly set of companions he used to have come to see him, and a roaring party there used to be of them, on a Sunday afternoon; but that is all done with. The mother smiles upon her husband: she is a happy woman now; she knows that he will no longer disgrace himself by plunging into the vilest of society, and being seduced into the worst of sins. Now, if you could take a man's heart out, and put a new heart right into him, it would not be half so good, if it were another natural heart, as the change that God works, when he takes out the heart of stone, and puts in a heart of flesh -

"A heart resigned, submissive, meek,  
Our dear Redeemer's throne  
Where only Christ is heard to speak,  
Where Jesus reigns alone."

I put, then, the question to you again: Have you been turned upside down? How about your companions? You loved those the best who could

swear the loudest, talk the fastest, and tell the greatest falsehoods: now you love those who can pray the most earnestly, and tell you the most of Jesus. Everything is changed with you. If you were to meet your old self going down the street, you would not know him, except by hearsay; you are no relation to him at all. Sometimes the old gentleman comes to your house, and he begins to tempt you to go back; but you turn him out of doors as soon as you can, and say, "Begone! I never got on so long as I knew you; I had a ragged coat to my back then, and I was always giving the publican all my money; I never went to God's house, but cursed my Maker, and added sin to sin, and tied a mill-stone round my neck. So away from me, I will have nothing to do with you; I have been buried with Christ, and I have risen with him. I am a new man in Christ Jesus, old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new."

I have some here, however, who belong to a different class of society, who could not indulge in any of these things; but ah! ladies and gentlemen, if you are ever converted, you must have as great a sweeping out as the poorest man that ever lived. There must be as true a turning upside down in the salvation of an earl, or a duke, or a lord, as in the salvation of a pauper or a peasant. There is as much sin in the higher ranks as in the lower, and sometimes more, because they have more light, more knowledge, more influence, and when they sin, they not only damn themselves, but others too. O you that are rich, have you had a change too? Have the frivolities of this world become sickening things to you? Do you turn away with loathing from the common cant and conventionalism of high life? Have you forsaken it? and can you now say, "Although I am in the world, yet am I not of it; its pomps and vanities I do eschew; its pride and its glory I trample under feet; these are nothing to me; I would follow my Master bearing his cross, through evil report and through good report?" If such be not the case, if you are not changed, remember, there are no exceptions; one truth is true for all—"Except ye be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of heaven." And that amounts in substance to my test: except ye be thoroughly renewed, turned upside down, ye cannot be saved. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" for he that believeth shall be sanctified and renewed—shall he saved at last—but he that believeth not must be cast away in the great day of God's account.

The Lord bless you; for Jesus' sake!

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## The Wounds Of Jesus

He shewed them his hands and his feet. - Luke 24:40

I HAVE selected this sentence as the text, although I shall not strictly adhere to it. What was to be seen on Christ's hands and feet? We are taught that the prints of the nails were visible, and that in his side there was still the gash of the spear. For did he not say to Thomas? "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." I wish to draw your attention to the ample fact, that our Lord Jesus Christ, when he rose again from the dead had in his body the marks of his passion. If he had pleased he could readily have removed them. He rose again from the dead, and he might have erased from his body everything which could be an indication of what he had suffered and endured before he descended into the tomb. But, no! Instead thereof, there were the pierced hands and feet, and there was the open side. What was the reason for this? There was no absolute necessity for it: it could easily have been dispensed with, What, then, were the reasons? I shall endeavor to enter into this subject, and I hope we may draw some profitable instructions therefrom.

*First, what influence did the exhibition of the hands and feet have upon the disciples? Secondly, why is it that Jesus Christ, now in heaven, bears with him the scars in his flesh? And, then, thirdly, is there any lesson to us in the fact that Jesus Christ still wears his wounds? I think there is.*

I. First, then, OF WHAT USE WAS THE EXHIBITION OF THOSE WOUNDS TO THE DISCIPLES? I reply at once that they were infallible proofs that he was the same person. He said, "Behold my hands and feet,

that it is, I, myself." It was to establish his identity, that he was the very same Jesus whom they had followed, whom at last they had deserted, whom they had beheld afar off crucified and slain, and whom they had carried to the tomb in the gloom of the evening; it was the very same Christ who was now before them, and they might know it, for there was the seal of his sufferings upon him. He was the same person; the hands and feet could testify to that. You know, beloved, had not some such evidence been visible upon our Saviour, it is probable that his disciples would have been unbelieving enough to doubt the identity of his person. Have you never seen men changed, extremely changed in their external appearance. I have known a man, perhaps, five or six years ago; he has passed through a world of suffering and pain, and when I have seen him again, I have declared, "I should not have known you if I had met you in the street." Now, when the disciples parted with Jesus it was at the Lord's Supper. They then walked with him into the garden. There did the Saviour sweat, "as it were great drops of blood." Do you not imagine that such a wrestling, such a bloody sweat as that, must have had some effect upon his visage. It had surely had enough to mar it before. But now the ploughshares of grief were sharpened, and anguish made deep furrows upon him. There must have been lines of grief upon his brow, deeper than they had ever seen before. This would have produced a change great enough to make them forget his countenance. Nor was this all. You know he had to undergo the flagellation at the pillar of the Praetorium, and then to die. Can you imagine that a man could pass through the process of death, through such astonishing agony as that which the Saviour endured, and yet that there should be no change in his visible appearance? I can conceive that in passing through such a furnace as this, the very lineaments of Christ's face would seem to have been melted, and would have need to be restruct ere the disciples could discern that he was the same.

Besides that? when Jesus rose, he rose, you know, as he now sits in heaven. His body was flesh and bone, but, nevertheless, it had miraculous powers; it was capable of entering into a room without the ordinary modes of access. We find our Saviour standing in the midst of his disciples, the doors being shut. I believe that Jesus had a body such as we are to have in the next world. Jesus Christ was not a phantom or spectra.

His body was not a spirit; it was a real body. And so in heaven imagine not that we are to be spirits. We are to be spirits until the great resurrection day; but, *then*, our spirit is afterwards to receive a spiritual body; it is to be clothed upon; it is not for ever to be a naked, bodiless spirit. That body will be to all intents and purposes the same body which shall be laid in the tomb. *It* is sown in dishonor, and the same *it* is raised in glory: *it* is sown in weakness, and the same *it* is raised in power. Mark, Jesus was flesh still! All flesh is not the same flesh: all bodies have not the same qualities. So our Saviour's flesh was flesh that could not suffer, - flesh that had extraordinary powers about it, - flesh however, that could eat, although it was under no necessity to do so. And such may be the body, the glorified body, which shall be given to us when we shall rise at the first resurrection, and shall be made like unto our head. But, now, think! If Christ had to undergo in his countenance those matchless transformations, that must have been, first of all, connected with his bloody sweat, then, with his agony, and after that, with the transforming, or, if I may use such a word, the transmutation of his body into a spiritual body, can you not conceive that his likeness would be changed, that the disciples would scarcely know him if there had not been some deeply graven marks whereby they would be able to discover him? The disciples looked upon the very face, but, even then they doubted. There was a majesty about him which most of them had not seen. Peter, James, and John, had seen him transfigured, when his garments were whiter than any fuller could make them; but the rest of the disciples had only seen him as a man of sorrows; they had not seen him as the glorious Lord, and, therefore, they would be apt to doubt whether he was the same. But these nail-prints, this pierced side, these were marks which they could not dispute, which unbelief itself could not doubt. And they all were convinced and confessed that he was the Lord; and even faithless Thomas, was constrained to cry, " My Lord and my God!"

II. Let us turn to the second question: Why SHOULD CHRIST WEAR THESE WOUNDS IN HEAVEN AND OF WHAT AVAIL ARE THEY? Let me give you some thoughts upon the matter.

I can conceive, first, that the wounds of Christ in heaven will be a theme of eternal wonder to the angels. An old writer represents the angels as

saying, "Oh, Lord of glory, what are these wounds in thy hand?" They had seen him depart from heaven, and they had gone with him as far as they might go, singing, 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth.'" Some of them had watched him through his pilgrimage, for "he was seen of angels." But when he returned, I doubt not that they crowded round him, bowed before him in adoration, and then put the holy question, "What are these wounds in thy hand?" At any rate they were enabled to behold for themselves in heaven the man who suffered, and they could see the wounds which were produced in his body by his sufferings; and I can readily imagine that this would cause them to lift their songs higher, would prolong their shouts of triumph, and would cause them to adore him with a rapture of wonderment, such as they had never felt before. And I doubt not that every time they look upon his hands, and behold the crucified man exalted by his Father's side, they are afresh wrapt in wonder, and again they strike their harps with more joyous lingers at the thought of what he must have suffered who thus bears the scars of his hard-fought battles.

Again, Christ wears these scars in his body in heaven as his ornaments. The wounds of Christ are his glories, they are his jewels and his precious things. To the eye of the believer Christ is never so glorious, never so passing fair, as when we can say of him, "My beloved is white and ruddy," white with innocence, and ruddy with his own blood. He never seems so beautiful as when he can see him as the rose and the lily; as the lily, matchless purity, and as the rose, crimsoned with his own gore. We may talk of Christ in his beauty, in divers places raising the dead and stilling the tempest, but oh! there never was such a matchless Christ as he that did hang upon the cross. There I behold all his beauties, all his attributes developed, all his love drawn out, all his character expressed in letters so legible, that even my poor stammering heart call read those lines and speak them out again, as I see them written in crimson upon the bloody tree. Beloved, these are to Jesus what they are to us; they are his ornaments, his royal jewels, his fair array. He does not care for the splendor and pomp of kings. The thorny crown is his diadem - a diadem such as no monarch ever wore. It is true that he bears not now the scepter of reed, but there is a glory in it that there never flashed from scepter of gold. It is true he is not now buffeted and spit upon: his face is not now

marred more than that of any other man by grief and sorrow, for he is glorified and full of blessedness; but he never seems so lovely as when we see him buffeted of men for our sakes, enduring all manner of grief, bearing our iniquities, and carrying our sorrows. Jesus Christ finds such beauties in his wounds that he will not renounce them, he will wear the court dress in which he wooed our souls, and he will wear the royal purple of his atonement throughout eternity.

Nor are these only the ornaments of Christ: they are his *trophies* - the trophies of his love. Have you never seen a soldier with a gash across his forehead or in his cheek? Why every soldier will tell you the wound in battle is no disfigurement - it is his honor. "If" said he, "I received a wound when I was retreating, a wound in the back, that were to my disgrace, If I have received a wound in a victory, then it is an honorable thing to be wounded." Now, Jesus Christ has scars of honor in his flesh and glory in his eyes He has other trophies He has divided the spoil with the strong: he has taken the captive away from his tyrant master; he has redeemed for himself a host that no man can number, who are all the trophies of his victories: but these scars, these are the memorials of the fight, and these the trophies, too.

For do you not know it was from the side of Jesus that Death sucked its death. Jesus did hang upon the cross, and Death thought to get the victory. Aye, but in its victory it destroyed itself. There are three things in Christ that Death never met with before, all of which are fatal to it. There was in Christ *innocence*. Now; as long as man was innocent, he could not die. Adam lived as long as he was innocent. Now Christ was about to die; but Death sucked in innocent blood; he sucked in his own poison and he died. Again, *blessedness* is that which takes away the sting of death. Now Christ, even when he was dying, was "God over all, blessed for ever." All that Death had ever killed before was under the curse; but this man was never by nature under the curse, because for our sakes he was not born into this world a cursed man. He was the seed of woman it is true, but still not of carnal generation. He did come under the curse when he took upon himself our sins, but not for his own sins. He was in himself blessed. Death sucked in blessed blood: he had never done that before - all others have been under the curse - and that slew Death. It was

innocence combined with blessedness that was the destruction of Death. Yet another thing. Death had never met before with any man who had *life in himself*. But when Death drank Christ's blood it drank life. For his blood is the life of the soul, and is the seed of life eternal. Wheresoever it goeth, doth it not give life to the dead? And Death, finding that it had drunk into its own veins life in the form of Jesus' blood gave up the ghost; and Death itself is dead, for Christ hath destroyed it, by the sacrifice of himself; he hath put it away; he hath said, "Oh death, where is thy sting? oh grave, where is thy victory?" But now, since it was from these very wounds that Death sucked in its own death, and that hell was destroyed; since these were the only weapons of a weaponless Redeemer, he wears and bears them as his trophies in heaven. David laid up Goliath's sword before the Lord for ever. Jesus lays up his wounds before the Lord, for his wounds were his weapons, and this is why he wears them still.

I was thinking while coming here of Jesus Christ in heaven with his wounds, and another thought struck me. Another reason why Jesus wears his wounds is, that when he intercedes he may employ them as powerful advocates. When he rises up to pray for his people, he needs not speak a word; he lifts his hands before his Father's face; he makes bare his side, and points to his feet. These are the orators with which he pleads with God - these wounds. Oh, he must prevail. Do you not see that Christ without his wounds, in heaven might be potent enough. but there would not be that glorious simplicity of intercession which now you see. He has nothing to do but to shew his hands. Him the Father heareth always. His blood crieth and is heard, His wounds plead and prevail.

Let us think again. Jesus Christ appears in heaven as the wounded one, this shews again that he has not laid aside his priesthood. You know how Watts paraphrases the idea He says,  
"Looks like a lamb that has been slain,  
And wears his priesthood still."

If the wounds had been removed we might have forgotten that there was a sacrifice; and, mayhap, next we might have forgotten that there was a priest. But the wounds are there: then there is a sacrifice, and there is a priest also, for he who is wounded is both himself, the sacrifice and the



priest. The priesthood of Melchisedec is a glorious subject. He who reads that with the eye of faith, and is blessed with the Spirit, will find much cause for joy when he contrasts the priesthood of Christ with that of Aaron. The priesthood of Aaron began, and it finished; but the priesthood of Melchisedec had no beginning, and it had no end. He was, we are told, "Without beginning of days, and without end of years;" without father, without mother, without descent. Such is the priesthood of Christ' It shall never end. He himself is without beginning, and his priesthood is without end. When the last ransomed soul is brought in. when there shall be no more prayers to offer, Christ shall still be a priest. Though he has no sacrifice now to slay, for he is the sacrifice himself, "once for all," yet still he is a priest, and when all his people as the result of that sacrifice shall be assembled around his glorious throne, he shall still be the priest. "For thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." I take it that this is a further reason why he still bears his wounds in heaven.

There is another and a terrible reason why Christ wears his wounds still. It is this. Christ is coming to judge the world. Christ has with himself to-day the accusers of his enemies. Every time that Christ lifts his hands to heaven, the men that hate him, or despise him, are accused. The Jewish nation is brought in guilty every day. The cry is remembered, "His blood be on us and on our children;" and the sin of casting Christ away, and rejecting him, is brought before the mind of the Most High. And when Christ shall come a second time to judge the world in righteousness, seated on the great white throne, that hand of his shall be the terror of the universe." They shall look on him whom they have pierced," and they shall mourn for their sins. They would not mourn with hopeful penitence in time, they shall mourn with sorrowful remorse throughout eternity. When the multitude are gathered together, when in the valley of Jehoshaphat Christ shall judge the nations, what need he to summon accusers? His own wounds are his witnesses. Why need he to summon any to convict men of sin? His own side bears their handiwork. Ye murderers, did you not do this? Ye sons of an evil generation did ye not pierce the Saviour? Did ye not nail him to the tree? Behold these holes in my hand, and this stab in my side; these are swift witnesses against you to condemn you I There is a terrible side, then to this question. A crucified Christ with his wounds still open will be a terrible sight for an

assembled universe. "Well," but says one of my congregation "What is that to us? We have not crucified the Saviour." No but let me assure You that his blood shall be on you. If ye die unbelievers his blood shall be required at your hand. The death of Christ was wrought by the hand of manhood, of all and entire manhood. Others did it for you, and though you gave no consent verbally, yet you do assent in your heart every day. As long as you hate Christ you give an assent to his death. As long as you reject his sacrifice, and despise his love, you give evidence in your hearts that you would have crucified the Lord of glory had you been there. Nay, and you do yourself, so fares you can, crucify him afresh and put him to an open shame. When you laugh at his people, when you despise his word, and mock at his ordinances, you are driving nails into his hands, and thrusting the spear into his side; therefore those open hands and that pierced side shall be witnesses against *you*, even against *you*, if ye die rejecting him, and enter into eternity enemies to Christ by wicked works.

I think I have thus supplied severe excellent reasons. But now there is one more which I shall offer to your consideration before I come to the lesson which you shall learn. Christ v, ears those marks in his hands that, as believers, you may never forget that he has died. We shall need, perhaps, nothing to refresh our memories in heaven. but still' even if we should, we have it here. When we shall have been in heaven many a thousand years we shall still have the death of Christ before us, we shall see him reigning. But can you not conceive that the presence of the wounded Christ will often stir up the holy hearts of the celestial beings to a fresh outpouring of their grateful songs? They begin the song thus, "Unto him that liveth." Jesus looks upon them and shows his hand and they add, "and was dead, and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and death." They would not forget that he died; but certainly that part of the song where it said, "and was dead," will have all the more sweetness, because there he sits with the very marks of his passion - with the nail-prints of his crucifixion. If we shall be in heaven at all constituted as we are on earth, we shall need some visible token to keep us continually in remembrance. *Here*, you know, the most spiritual saint needs the bread and wine - sweet emblems of the Saviour's body. *There* we shall have nothing to do with emblems, for we shall have the sight of *him*. And I say, if we be in heaven anything like what we are here, I can imagine that the

presence of Jesus may be highly beneficial, may be gloriously precious to the saints in reviving their love continually, and causing their hearts, which are like fountains of love, to bubble up afresh, and send out again the living water of gratitude and thanksgiving. At any rate, I know this thought is very delightful to me, that I shall see the man that did hang on Calvary's cross, and that I shall see him as he did inane there. I delight to see my Saviour in all the glories of his Father, but I long to go back and see him as he was, as well as he is. I think I should sometimes envy Peter and the rest of them that they should have seen him crucified. Yes, I should say, I see him glorified, but you saw the most marvellous sight. To see a God is an every-day sight with glorified beings, but to see a God covered with his blood, this is an extraordinary thing. To see Christ glorified, that we may see each day, but to have seen him on that special occasion, made obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross, that was an extraordinary sight which even angels themselves could see but once. You and I cannot see that. But those wounds are there still manifest and visible, and we shall be delighted with the rapturous sight of the Lord in glory, with his wounds still fresh upon him. May the Lord grant that we may all be there to see it. May we refresh ourselves with that glorious sight. I can say that I would part with all the joys of sense to view his face. Everything that is good on earth I would give away without a wish, without one single lingering thought, if I might but behold his face, and lie in his bosom, and see the dear pierced hands and the wide-open side. We must wait his pleasure. A few more rolling suns shall do it. The moon shall rise and wane for us a few more times, and then  
"We shall see his face, and never, never sin  
But from the rivers of his grace, drink endless pleasures in."

III. This brings me now to the third point. WHAT DOES CHRIST MEAN BY SHOWING TO US HIS HANDS AND FEET? He means this that suffering is absolutely necessary. Christ is the head, and his people are the members. If suffering could have been avoided, surely our glorious Head ought to have escaped; but inasmuch as he shows us his wounds, it is to tell us, that we shall have wounds too. Innocence ought to escape suffering. Did not Pilate mean as much when he said, "I find no fault in him, therefore let him go?" But innocence did not escape suffering. Even

the captain of our salvation must be made perfect through suffering; therefore, we who are guilty, we who are far from being perfect, must not wonder that we have to be wounded too. Shall the head be crowned with thorns, and do you imagine that the other members of the body are to be rocked upon the dainty lap of ease? Must Jesus Christ swim through seas of his own blood to win the crown, and are you and I to walk to heaven dryshod in silver slippers? No, the wounds of Christ are to teach us that suffering is necessary. In fact, that doctrine was taught upon Mount Calvary. There are only three sorts of men that have ever lived - a good man, a bad man, and the God-man. Now, on Calvary's cross, I see three characters, I see the thief, the representative of the bad. I see the penitent thief, the representative of the righteous, and I see the God-man in the midst. All three must suffer. Do not imagine, for a moment, that wicked men get through this world without suffering. Oh, no. The path to hell is very rough, though it seems smooth. When men will damn themselves, they will not find it a very pleasurable task. The cutting the throat of one's soul is not such a pleasant operation. The drinking the poison of damnation is not, after all, an enviable task. The path of the sinner may seem to be happy, but it is not. It is a gilded deceit. He knows there is bitterness in his bowels, even here on earth. Even the wicked must suffer. But, mark, if any out of the world would have escaped it would be the God-man; but the God-man did not escape. He shows us his wounds; and do you think that you shall remain unwounded? Not if you are his, at any rate. Men sometimes escape on earth; but the true-born child of God must not, and would not, if he might, for if he did, he would then give himself cause to say, "I am no part of the body; if I were a part of the body, my head suffered, and so must I suffer, for I am part of his living body." That is the first lesson he teaches us, the necessity of suffering.

But next he teaches us his sympathy with us in our suffering. "There," says he, "see this hand! I am not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of your infirmities. I have suffered, too. I was tempted in all ways like as you are. Look here! there are the marks - there are the marks. They are not only tokens of my love, they are not only sweet forget-me-nots that bind me to love you for ever. But besides that they are the evidence of my sympathy. I can feel for you. Look - look - *I* have suffered. Have you the heart-ache? Ah, look yon here, what a heartache I

had when this heart was pierced Do you suffer, even unto blood wrestling against sin? So did I. I have sympathy with you." It was this that sustained the early martyrs. One of them declared that while he was suffering he fixed his eyes on Christ; and when they were pinching his flesh dragging it off with the hot harrows, when they were putting him to agonies so extraordinary, that I could not dare to mention them here, lest some of you should faint even under the very narrative, he said, "My soul is not insensible but it loves." What a glorious speech was that! It loves - it loves Christ. It was not insensible, but love gave it power to overcome suffering, a power as potent as insensibility. "For," said he, "my eyes are fixed on him that suffered for me, and I can suffer for him; for my soul is in his body; I have sent my heart up unto him. He is my brother, and there my heart is. Plough my flesh, and break my bones; smash them with veer irons, I can bear it all, for Jesus suffered, and he suffers in me now; but he sympathises with me, and this makes me strong." Yes, beloved, lay hold on this in all times of your agony. When you are sweating, think of his bloody sores. When you are bruised, think of the whips that tore his flesh. And when you are aging, think of his death. And when God hides his face for a little from you, think of "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" This is why he wears his wounds in his hands, that he may show that he sympathises with you.

Another thing. Christ wears these wounds to show that suffering is an honorable thing. To suffer for Christ is glory. Men will say, "It is glorious to make others suffer." When Alexander rides over the necks of princes, and treads nations beneath his feet, that is glorious. The Christian religion teaches us it is glorious to be trodden on, glorious to be crushed, glorious to suffer. This is hard to learn. There we see it in our glorified Master. He makes his wounds his glory, and his sufferings are part of the drapery of his regal attire in Paradise. Now, then, it is an honorable thing to suffer. Oh, Christian, when you are overtaken by strange troubles, be not afraid. God is near you. It was Christ's honor to suffer, and it is yours too. The only degree that God gives to his people is the degree of "Masters in tribulation." If you would be one of God's nobles you must be knighted. Men are knighted with a blow of the sword. The Lord knights us with the sword of affliction; and when we fight hard in many a battle, he makes us barons of the kingdom of heaven, he makes us dukes and lords in the

kingdom of sorrowful honor, not through honor of man, but through dishonor of man, not through joy, but through suffering, and grief, and agony, and death. The highest honor that God can confer upon his children is the blood-red crown of martyrdom. When I read, as I have been reading lately, the story of the catacombs of Rome, and those short but very pithy inscriptions that are written over the graves of the martyrs, I felt sometimes as if I could envy them. I do not envy them their racks, their hot irons, their being dragged at the heels of horses; but I do envy them when I see them arrayed in the blood-red robe of martyrdom. Who are they that stand nearest to the eternal throne, foremost of the saints in light? Why, the noble army of martyrs. And just as God shall give us grace to suffer *for* Christ, to suffer *with* Christ, and to suffer *as* Christ, just so much does he honor us. The jewels of a Christian are his afflictions. The regalia of the kings, that God hath made, are their troubles, their sorrows, and their griefs. Let us not, therefore, shun being honored. Let us not turn aside from being exalted. Griefs exalt us, and troubles lift us.

Lastly, there is one sweet thought connected with the wounds of Christ that has charmed my soul, and made my heart run over with delight. It is this: I have sometimes thought that if I am a part of Christ's body I am a poor wounded part; if I do belong to that all-glorious whole, the church, which is his fullness, the fullness of him that filleth all in all, yet have I said within me, "I am a poor maimed part, wounded, full of putrifying sores." But Christ did not leave even his wounds behind him, even those he took to heaven. "Not a bone of him shall be broken," and the flesh when wounded shall not be discarded, - shall not be left. He shall carry that with him to heaven, and he shall glorify even the wounded member. Is not this sweet, is not this precious to the troubled child of God? This, indeed, is a thought from which one may suck honey. Poor, weak, and wounded though I am, he will not discard me. His wounds are healed wounds, mark! they are not running sores; and so, though we be the wounded parts of Christ, we shall be healed; though we shall seem to ourselves in looking back upon what we were upon earth only as wounds, only parts of a wounded body, still we shall rejoice that he has healed those wounds, and that he has not cast us away. Precious, precious truth! The whole body he will present before his Father's face, and wounded though he be, he shall not cast his own wounds away. Let us take comfort,

then, in this; let us rejoice therein. We shall be presented at last, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Mark, Christ's wounds are no spots to him, no wrinkles, they are ornaments; and even those parts of his church on earth that despair of themselves, thinking themselves to be as wounds shall be no spots, no wrinkles in the complete church above, but even they shall be the ornaments and the glory of Christ. Let us now look up by faith and see Jesus, the Wounded Jesus, sitting on his throne. Will not this help us to gird up our loins to "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

I cannot send you away without this last remark. Poor sinner, thou art troubled on account of sin. There is a sweet thought for thee. Men are afraid to go to Christ, or else they say, "My Sins are so many I cannot go to him; he will be angry with me." Do you see his hands outstretched to you to night? He is in heaven, and he still says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Are you afraid to come? Then, look at his hand - look at his hand, will not that induce you? "Oh," but you say, "I cannot think that Christ can have it in his heart to remember such a worm as I." Look at his side, there is easy access to his heart. His side is open, and even your poor prayers may be thrust into that side, and they shall reach his heart, holy though it be. Only do thou look to his wounds, and thou shalt certainly find peace through the blood of Jesus. There were two monks of late years in different cells in their convent. They were reading the Bible. One of them found Christ while reading the Scriptures, and he believed with a true evangelical faith. The other one was timid, and could scarcely think it true; the scheme of salvation seemed so great to him he could scarcely lay hold upon it. But, at last, he lay upon the point to die, and he sent for the other to come and sit by him, and to shut the door; because if the superior had heard of that of which they were about to speak, he might have condemned them both. When the monk had sat down, the sick man began to tell how his sins lay heavy on him; the other reminded him of Jesus. "If you would be saved, brother, you must look to Jesus who did hang upon the cross. His wounds must save." The poor man heard and he believed. Almost immediately afterwards came in the superior, with the brethren and the priests; and

they began to grease him in extreme unction. This poor man tried to push them away; he could not bear the ceremony, and as well as he could he expressed his dissent. At last his lips were opened, and he said in Latin, "*Tu vulnera Jesu!*" - thy wounds, oh Jesus! thy wounds, oh Jesus! - clasped his hands, lifted them to heaven, fell back and died. Oh, I would that many a Protestant would die with these words on his lips. There was the fullness of the gospel in them. Thy wounds, oh Jesus! thy wounds; these are my refuge in my trouble. Oh sinner, may you be helped to believe in his wounds! They cannot fail; Christ's wounds must heal those that put their trust in him.

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## **Young Man, A Prayer For You**

And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. - 2 Kings 6:17

This young man waited upon a prophet: he could not have had a more instructive occupation; yet his eyes needed to be opened. He was well disposed towards good things, for the tone of his language to his master shows that he was heartily at one with him; but his eyes were not yet half opened. Being in great alarm for his master's safety, he ran to him to warn him: good servants should be their master's best friends. In return, his believing master prays for him. If we desire the good of our servants, our children, and our friends, let us take care that we make supplication for them. All that we can do for them at our best is to give them secondary blessings; but if we pray to God for them, they will receive the best of gifts from him who sends down in his mercy nothing but good gifts and perfect gifts. When we have come to the end of our teaching, and example, and persuasion, let us hand our young friends over to the Lord, who works effectually unto eternal salvation.



Elisha's petition for this young man was, "O Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see!" The young man was at that time in the peculiar condition of seeing, and yet not seeing. He saw the enemy surrounding the city, but not the greater host of the Lord's angels who protected the man of God. Looking over the little walls of Dothan, he observed all the country round about to be occupied by the horses and chariots of the king of Syria; and he cried, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" He could see the danger, but he could not see the deliverance; and therefore the prophet lifted up his heart to heaven, and said, "O Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see!" Elisha reckons his servant's natural sight as not seeing, and regards the vision which detects the invisible as the only true sight. Perhaps I am addressing some, at this time, who are very friendly to the cause of God, and are even connected with it by relationship or occupation; they cheerfully lend a hand at any time in holy service so far as they can, and they wish prosperity to the cause of true religion. Yet their eyes have not been opened to see spiritual things; or, at least, not sufficiently opened to see the gracious and divine side of them. They see enough to perceive that they are in danger from a great enemy. They perceive that it is no easy thing to fight the battle of life: in the prospect of it they cry, "How shall we do?" They perceive that it is a difficult thing for a man to stand up for holiness, for truth, for integrity, for purity, and to maintain a gracious character throughout the whole of life. They seem to themselves to be environed with opposing forces in their business, in their temperament, in their companionships, and perhaps in their families. As for the cause of godliness, it seems hemmed in by adversaries; and they ask—What is to be done? Is not the matter desperate? Might it not be as well to surrender at once? For any such timid one I would present to God the prayer of Elisha: "O Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see!" Oh, that the prayer might be answered at this hour!

Very briefly, I shall speak, first, upon our prayer; secondly, upon our reason for offering such a petition; and thirdly, upon our hope; for we trust that, if our prayer is answered, the person whose eyes are opened will behold a vision which will bless him beyond anything he has ever dreamed of.

I. First, then, OUR PRAYER: "Lord, I pray thee, open the eyes of the young man, that he may see!" This petition bears many senses. I will mention a few only.

For certain of our friends we pray that their eyes may be opened to see the enemy of their souls under the many disguises which he assumes. We fear that many are ignorant of his devices. Young men, especially, are too apt to mistake the great enemy for a friend. They believe his false and flattering words, and are seduced to ruin. He holds forth to them the sparkling cup; but in its beaded bubbles death is lurking. He talks of "pleasure"; but in the lusts of the flesh the pleasure is a shadow, and misery is the substance. He wears the mask of prudence, and admonishes young men to "mind the main chance", and leave religion till they have made their fortunes; but that gain which comes of thrusting God aside will prove to be an everlasting loss. The devil as a serpent does more mischief than as a roaring lion. If we had to meet the devil, and knew him to be what he is, we might far more easily conquer him; but we have to deal with him disguised as an angel of light, and here is the need of a hundred eyes, each one of them opened by God, that we may see. Even worse than this is the fact that, at times, he does not meet us at all, but he undermines our path; he digs pits for our feet; he shoots his arrows from afar, or sends forth a pestilence which walks in darkness. Then have we need of a better sight than nature gives. I would pray for the young man who is just leaving home to go into the world, "O Lord, open the eyes of the young man, that he may see!" May he be able to detect the falsehood which may hide itself beneath the truth, the meanness which may wrap itself about with pride, the folly which may robe itself in learning, the sin which may dress itself in the raiment of pleasure! I would not have you taken, like birds, in a snare. I would not have the youth led, like a bullock to the shambles, by the hand of temptation. Let us breathe such a prayer as that of Elisha for each person in this place who is beginning life. God grant that his eyes may be opened to see sin as sin, and to see that evil never can be good, and a lie never can be true, and rebellion against our God can never be the way to happiness!

We want men's eyes to be opened to see God as everywhere, observing all

things. What an opening of the eyes this would be to many! It is a sad but true saying, that God may be seen everywhere, but that the most of men see him nowhere. He is blind indeed who cannot see HIM to whom the sun owes its light. Until our eyes are opened, we rise in the morning, and we fall asleep at night, and we have not seen God all day, although he has been every moment around us and within us. We live from the first day of January to the last day of December, and while the Lord never ceases to see us, we do not even begin to see him till, by a miracle of grace, he opens our eyes. We dwell in a wonderful world which the great Creator has made, and filled with his own handiwork, and cheered with his own presence, and yet we do not see him: indeed, there are some so blind as to assert that there is no Creator, and that they cannot perceive any evidence that a supremely wise and mighty Creator exists. Oh, that the Lord Jesus would open the eyes of the wilfully blind! Oh, that you, also, who are blinded by forgetfulness rather than by error, may be made to cry with Hagar, "Thou God seest me"; and with Job, "Now mine eye seeth thee"! If God will graciously convince men of his own divine presence, what a benediction it will be to them, especially to the young in commencing life! A clear perception that the Lord observes all that we do will be a very useful protection in the hour of temptation. When we remember the divine eye, we shall cry, like Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" To see yourself is well; but to see God is better. Let us pray, "O Lord, open the young man's eyes, that he may see THEE!"

When a man begins to see his great enemy, and his best Friend, we may next pray, Lord, open his eyes to see the way of salvation through the appointed Savior. There is no seeing the Lord Jesus but by his own light. We look to him with a look which comes from him. I have tried to explain salvation to people many a time, in simple words and figures; but there is a great deal more wanted than an explanation. It is right to be very plain; but more is needed than a clear statement. No matter how bright the candle, a blind man sees none the better. I continually pray, "Lord, open my mouth"; but I perceive that I must also pray, "Lord, open men's eyes!" Until God opens a man's eyes, he will not see what faith means, nor what atonement means, nor what regeneration means. That which is plain as a pikestaff to a seeing man is invisible to the blind. "Believe, and live"; what

can be plainer? Yet no man understands it till God gives grace to perceive his meaning. It is our duty, as preachers, to put the gospel as plainly as possible; but we cannot give a man spiritual understanding. We declare, in baldest and boldest terms, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"; but men ask, like simpletons, "What do you mean?" We cry, "Look unto Jesus, and live"; but when our explainings are over, we learn that they have mistaken our meaning, and are still looking to themselves, and turning their backs on the Lord Jesus. To believe, or trust, is no mystery, but the simplest of all simplicities; and for that very reason men cannot be persuaded to think that we mean what we say, or that God means what he says. We need to pray—Lord, open their eyes, that they may see; for seeing, they do not see; and hearing, they do not perceive!

Blessed be the Lord, how sweetly they do see it the moment their eyes are opened by his own omnipotent touch! Then they wonder that they did not see it before, and call themselves ten thousand fools for not perceiving what is so plain. Faith in the Lord Jesus is the veriest A B C of divine revelation: it belongs to the rudiments and elements of heavenly knowledge, and we are dolts indeed not to take it as we find it in the Word, and leave off mystifying ourselves over so plain a matter. Once let the miracle-working power of God open our eyes, and we see well enough; but till then we grope in the noon-day for that which is right before us. I hope, beloved fellow-Christians, that you are praying while I am speaking; praying, I mean, for those around you, and for all the blind souls that wander among the graves of earth: "Lord, open their eyes, that they may see!" He that made the eye can open it. Sin cannot so darken the mind but that God can pour light into it. If we cannot make men see, we can at least lead them to the Master Oculist, who can rectify their sight.

We should pray that our friends may have their eyes opened to see all manner of spiritual truth. These optics of ours can only see natural objects: that is all they are intended for. We should be very grateful that our eyes can see as much as they do see; but spiritual objects are not discernible by the eyes of the body, which are for material objects only. The things which pertain to the spiritual kingdom must be perceived by eyes of a spiritual sort, eyes opened by the Lord. God must give to us

spiritual senses before we can discern spiritual things: let this never be forgotten. There are those sitting among us who cannot discern spiritual things, for they have not the needed faculties. Carnal men and carnal women see only carnal things. The flesh cannot grasp, perceive, or discern the things of the Spirit. We must become spiritual, and receive spiritual faculties, before we can perceive spiritual things; in a word, we must be "born again." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Hence the need of the prayer, "Lord, open thou the eyes of the young man, that he may see!"

Already the horses and chariots of fire were round about Elisha; but his servant could not see one of them, because they were spiritual chariots and spiritual horses—angelic beings belonging to the purely spiritual domain; and as yet the youth had not entered the spiritual region, and had no eyes with which to see into it. When God had given him spiritual eyes, then there began to break upon his vision that strange sight—ethereal, aerial, nay, spiritual, but yet most real; that sight which revived his soul with the conviction that the prophet was safe, since the ministers of God, as flames of fire, flashed to and fro; and like an army, with horses and chariots, showed themselves strong for the defense of the servant of Jehovah. How surprised he was! How great his amazement! How content his mind! He and his master were mysteriously defended, beyond all fear of danger. O my hearers, as yet strangers to the things of God; if the Lord would open your eyes at once, you would be astonished indeed; for as yet you have no idea, you cannot have any idea, what the spiritual life is, nor what spiritual realities must be: neither can you have any true idea of them till you are quickened of the Lord. You may talk about spiritual subjects, and discuss them, and think yourselves theologians; but you resemble deaf persons criticizing music, and blind men describing pictures. You are not qualified even to express an opinion upon the matter till you are created anew in Christ Jesus, and brought within range of the spiritual and the heavenly. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Let the prayer go up, then, from all enlightened hearts, for those who are not as yet walking in the light: "Lord, open the eyes of the young men, that they may see!"

We may expect a speedy answer. God does hear prayer. Who knows but that many sitting in this house may be surprised by the secret touch of the invisible Spirit, and all of a sudden may find themselves introduced into a new world? Elisha's prayer for this young man was not, and our prayer for others is not, that they may do something which they can do, that they may use some faculty which they already possess; but that a new sight may be granted to them, and that a new nature may be created within them, by a power altogether above and beyond themselves. We call in the hand of God. We ask the Lord to work a marvel. We would have you, dear friends, receive what no education can ever get you, what no graduation at any university can ever bestow upon you; we want you to obtain what no years of experience or of study can achieve; we want you to possess what no imitation of other people will gain for you; we want you to experience a change which only the Lord himself can work in you. We would have you pass from nature's darkness into God's marvellous light, from an awful blindness into a clear vision of things otherwise invisible. Register that prayer before the Lord, ye that are familiars in the courts of heaven! Present the prayer for children, and kinsfolk, and friends. Cry, "Lord, let them receive sight, through the gracious working of thy Holy Spirit!"

II. Secondly, let us set forth OUR REASON for praying such a prayer for those around us. On this occasion, I can truly say that I am praying much more than I am preaching. Whilst I am standing here before you, I am also bowing low before the Lord my God, and I am bearing upon my heart certain of you for whom I long in my heart, and have great heaviness of spirit. I am praying, in the secret of my soul, "Lord, open his eyes, that he may see!"

The first reason for our prayer is, because we ourselves have been made to see. Had this miracle of grace not taken place within us, we should have had no thought of prayer for you; but now our whole heart goes with the plea. Once we were as you are. Our eyes were blinded so that we saw neither our foes in all their terror, nor the glory of the Lord round about us. Like blind Samsons, we went through the weary drudgery of earth surrounded by our foes. At length a glimmering of the light fell upon us, like a lightning-flash, showing us our sin; and after we were thus

illuminated we endured a great fight of afflictions. Without were fightings, within were fears. Our enemies were round about us, and we knew not what to do. But some man of God prayed for us, and one day our eyes were turned toward the hills from whence cometh all aid to terror-stricken men. The Lord was there, though we knew him not; but yet we looked to him and were enlightened, and our faces were not ashamed; for round about him the mountain was full of chariots and horses of fire. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

"Lord, I was blind; I could not see  
In thy marred visage any grace;  
But now the beauty of thy face  
In radiant vision dawns on me."

What else but such a heavenly vision could have scattered all our guilty fear? What else could have given us peace in the midst of tumult? We did not quite understand how it was done, nor did the change come to all of us in the same way; but we can all say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see"; and since the prayers of others availed for us, we ought with double earnestness and hope to continue to plead for those who still have missed the glorious revelation. "Lord, open the eyes of the young man, that he may see!"

We call upon the Lord for this second reason, because only by his power can men be made to see. This we found in our own experience. In vain we struggled to behold the salvation of God; in vain we sought the help of godly people; no sight came to our souls, nor were the eyes of our understanding enlightened, until the Lord himself laved our eyes in the waters that go softly. Then we came seeing. And this we also discover when we try to lead others to the light. We speak to them of the glories we ourselves behold, and set before them the truth of God; but we cannot make them see. To bestow spiritual vision is as great a wonder as to make a world, and requires the same fiat of omnipotence. Only he who created the eye can give this second sight. "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." What folly,

then, to attempt the greater task of bestowing the sight of the heart! How vain the boast of those who attempt to invade God's prerogative, and imagine that human ordinances or observances can open blind eyes! Beloved, let us, after we have done our best to make the people see the glory of the gospel, ever fall back on the God of the gospel, and entreat him to do his own blessed work.

He comes, from thickest film of vice,  
To clear the mental ray;  
And on the eye-belle of the blind,  
To pour celestial day."

Do not try to hold up your tallow candles to reveal the chariots of fire nor parade your vain philosophy, as if that could clear away the darkness of the soul. Leave room for God to work; and, in a moment, at the touch of his finger, in response to the prayers of his people, the wondrous work shall be accomplished.

Most importunately do we pray when we see the people enquiring. The cry, "What shall we do?" sends us to our knees; for we know that what is necessary is, not something to be done, but something to be seen. And we feel persuaded that the Lord who awoke the desire in the hearts of the seekers, will surely, also, open their eyes to behold his glory. The very fact that we feel drawn to pray for them, is already a token to us that, ere long, the scales shall fall from their eyes; and through their vision of the splendor and sufficiency of the provision that God hath made for those who trust in him, the name of the Lord will be greatly glorified. Therefore, with much expectancy, we again utter our prayer, "Lord, open their eyes, that they may see!"

Another reason for this prayer is—you are not aware of your own blindness. You are trusting in yourselves that you can see well enough all you need to see. That young man, of whom I am thinking now, has no idea whatever that his eyes are stone blind to eternal things. He thinks himself a sharp and clever fellow; and I do not deny that he is so, in his own line of things. I am glad that he has such quick faculties for this life. God bless him; and may he prosper in his business, and in the enterprise



upon which he is just entering! May the good Lord be with him concerning the matter on which his heart is set! But still, dear friend, I am rather afraid of your cleverness; I am somewhat frightened at that keenness of yours, because I have seen sharp men cut themselves, and I have seen the self-reliant make miserable failures. Something is to be said for confidence in its proper place; but self-congratulation is a proof of inward weakness, and forebodes a breakdown. If you are depending on an arm of flesh, at the very best you are resting on a broken reed; you require a strength beyond your own to fight the moral and spiritual battle of life. Your self-reliance, in this case, is a piece of groundless self-conceit. Do you not remember one, of whom we read in this very Book of Kings, that, when he was forewarned of what he would yet do, he exclaimed, in astonishment, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Hazael could not think himself capable of such crimes; and yet he no sooner had the opportunity than he fell into the evil up to the very neck. He was dog enough to be cruel, for he was dog enough to fawn upon himself. You do not believe, young man, that you will ever be dishonest; and yet that little gambling speculation of yours will lead to it. You cannot think that you will ever be godless; and yet you are even now departing from the good old ways of your home, and making a jest of sacred things when in certain company. They that trust in themselves are storing up the fuel for a great fire of sin. The pride which lifts itself up will throw itself down. Because the fine young fellow does not know how blind he is, we therefore lament his blindness, and are the more earnest in bringing him to Jesus, that he may receive his sight. "Lord, open his eyes, that he may see!"

Next, we pray this prayer, because we have reason to fear that you are surrounded by those who will mislead you. We know the young man well. He has newly come to London from that sober, orderly, country home, and he has no notion of the snares which will be laid for him by fowlers, male and female. Oh, you who have no experience, and little discretion, hear the voice of warning! Satan has cunning servants about him, that hunt for the precious life with double diligence. Our Lord Jesus has about him servants who too often slumber; but the devil's servants are not slothful in their dreadful business. You will find them waylay you in the streets without, and press around you in the haunts of pleasure within.

They are everywhere, and they leave no stone upturned that they may entrap the unwary. And what if this blind young man is put down in the midst of all these blood-suckers? They will devour him if they can: what if he is left to be their victim? It is like turning out a sheep among a pack of wolves. "Lord, open the eyes of the young man, that he may see!"

We pray this prayer for some of you, because you are going away from those who have hitherto watched over you, and this is a dangerous change for you. Your mother—ah! we can never tell what a blessing a godly mother is to a young man—your mother parts from you with great anxiety. Will you ever forget her tender words? Our fathers are all very well—God bless them!—and a father's godly influence and earnest prayers are of untold value to his children; but the mothers are worth two of them, mostly, as to the moral training and religious bent of their sons and daughters. Well, I say, you are going right away from your mother's holy influence, and from your father's restraining admonitions. You will now have nobody to encourage you in the right way. You will miss your sister's holy kiss, and your grandmother's loving persuasions. You are going out of the hothouse into a night's frost: well may we pray concerning you, that you may carry with you well-opened eyes, to see your way, and look before you leap. The young man is now to walk alone: "Lord, open his eyes, that he may see!" If he does not look before he leaps, he will soon be in the ditch; and who shall pull him out?

Again, we pray this prayer with the more pleasure, because you will do so much good if your eyes are opened. A blind man in the midst of such a world as this, what can he do? He cannot help other travelers, for he has to seek aid for himself. You wish to give rather than to take, do you not? Some here have great abilities, and I want them to use them aright. I am persuaded that I am speaking to young people whom God has ordained to be of great service to their age. That youth yonder does not as yet know what is in him. He is playing with himself; he is making a fool of himself; he is throwing his pearls before swine: he is wasting his strength. If the Lord should open his eyes, he would see what he is doing. What a man he would make if he were but right with God! Think of Saul of Tarsus, how he harassed the church of Christ; but when the scales fell from his eyes, the Lord had no better servant under heaven than that once-furious

persecutor. With both hands diligently he built up the church which once he labored to cast down. "The thing which has been is the thing which shall be." Pray, therefore, O my brethren, for our young men, who have sinned, that they may be restored; and for those who are as yet ignorant, that they may be enlightened; for the cause of God has need of these, and in these the church shall find her champions! Little know we the wealth of comfort for the faithful which may lie in one young life. Surely, we ought to pile on our prayers, and make our intercession flame like some great beacon-light for the rising youth of our time.

There is yet another reason, fetched from the other side of the case. We should pray for the blinded one, since he may terribly sin if not soon made to see. How capable of doing mischief is a man blinded by ignorance, by passion, by ambition, or by any other form of sin! Who knows the capacities for evil that lie within a single soul? That once bright spirit, Satan, when he first thought of raising revolt against the God of heaven; it was, perhaps, a single momentary flash of rebellious thought; but before long he had become proudly antagonistic to his Maker, and the dragon had drawn down with his tail a third part of the stars of heaven to quench them in the eternal night of endless wickedness. Then he came to this earth, and polluted Paradise, and seduced our first parents from their happy innocence, so that they became the progenitors of an unhappy race, steeped up to their lips in sin. That one first thought of ill, oh, how pregnant was it with innumerable evils! So, too, among ourselves. A boy, his mother's pride, to whom she looks forward as the honor of the family, may for a while appear to be everything that love can hope; but he falls into the hands of one of those tempters to unbelief who are so abundant in this great city. He is taught to pour ridicule upon his mother's piety, and soon he casts off the bands of his father's God. He forgets the sanctity of God's holy day, and forsakes the house of prayer; and then he learns the way to the houses of strange women, and to the palace of strong drink; and he plunges into one sin after another, till he is himself the leader of others down to the abyss. That boy, who used to kneel at his mother's knee, and say his childish prayer, and then stand up, and sing of Jesus and his love, was fondly regarded as one who would honor Jesus in his life; but see him now: he staggers home after midnight, vomiting oaths! He is foul both in soul and in body, and those who love him best

are saddest at the sight of him. Dear friends, if we would not see our children or our friends running to this excess of riot, and sinking in this superfluity of naughtiness, let us in agony of spirit plead with God at once on their behalf. Oh, for an immediate entrance of the light into their souls! Lord, open their eyes, that they may see! Lord, cause them to start back from the beginnings of sin, which are as the breaking out of the water-floods! O Savior, quench in them the spark of evil ere it grows into a fire, and rages to a conflagration!

III. I must now close by mentioning what OUR HOPE is about men when we pray this prayer for them, as I have been doing all along—"Lord, open the young man's eyes, that he may see!" What is our hope in reference to this? What will they see if the heavenly eye-salve be applied?

Elisha, no doubt, felt that the answer to his prayer would be precisely what it really was. "The Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." We want men's eyes to be opened, that they may know, first, that spiritual forces really exist. The things which we see are not the only real things, nor even the most real things. The things that are seen are temporal; they are, in truth, but shadows of the unseen. The substantial realities are not seen by these poor eyes: the substance is only perceived by our true selves. All that is visible is the mere shadow: the very image of the things is out of sight. Faith teaches us to believe in the existence of that most glorious of all spirits, the great God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Faith reveals to the heart the existence of that divine and ever-adorable Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is at this hour with his church, and will abide with her to the end of the world. Faith also makes us know the existence, and power, and presence of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth with believers, and is in them, working out the eternal purpose of God in their sanctification. No knowledge is more sublime than to know the Trinity in Unity; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one Jehovah. When we come to realize that the Lord God is the source of all things; that Lord hath made us, and not we ourselves, and that all things come into being by his sovereign will and power; then we come to recognize his presence, to consult his will, and to lean upon his might. God becomes real in our thought and apprehension.

Since he whom we cannot see nevertheless supporteth all things that are, we feel that the invisible is the basis of all things. Oh, that we could get men's minds out of these time-worn ruts of things seen, these narrow bounds of space, and time, and seeing, and handling! Oh, that they could rise into the region where the dim faculties, which are bounded by so small a circle, would give place to perceptions which know the infinite, the eternal, the true the divine! Oh, that the human mind, which was made in the image of God, could find itself at home with God, whose child it may become, by a second birth, of the living and incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever!

Verily, if we get our eyes open, we shall begin to recognize that God is greater than this world, and all worlds; and then the mighty truths, which concern his way of mercy in Christ Jesus, will ennoble the soul. Then shall we become true comrades of those bright messengers of God that fly to and fro, fulfilling the behests of the Most High. That there are devils, I think no Christian man will ever doubt; for at certain seasons we have been sadly conscious of a singularly terrible presence, with which our souls have been in agonizing conflict. In that tearful battle it has gone hard with us; our armor has been battered, our comfort has been grievously wounded, and our courage badly mauled. We have been saved as by the skin of our teeth. We hardly knew how to hold on at all, we were so sore beset by unnatural temptations, and suggestions nothing less than infernal. Then, at the Lord's rebuke, this great adversary has taken sudden flight, and angels have come, and ministered to us new joys, and fruits of consolation, fresh from the tree of life. Then have we enjoyed communion with unseen messengers of God, who have seemed to bind up our wounds, and bring us on our way, and whisper peace. Did not an angel come to strengthen our Lord in Gethsemane? Have we not, in our measure enjoyed a similar visitation? It is a grand thing to see the hosts of God attending us, and to know that bright convoys of these shining ones will come to salute us at the last. It is a great gain to have the eyes opened, to see the Lord's goodness and mercy following us all the days of our life, and ourselves, even here, dwelling in the house of the Lord for evermore. Open your eyes to spiritual things, and at once you are encouraged. The present is grievous, while you know only the visible; but the wilderness blossoms as the rose when you see the invisible. Project

yourself beyond this narrow region, and behold the infinite, and sources of joy spring up around you everywhere. Poverty is forgotten in the midst of such riches; and even pain and disease have lost their sting.

Elisha's young attendant, when his eyes were opened, saw, next, that God's people are safe. He perceived that there were more with Elisha, after all, than could possibly be against him, and he felt that he himself was safe as the servant of the servant of God. Thus he believed in his master's God, and found a shelter from his own fears. The invaders were flesh and blood, but the defenders were of fire, and thus were able to consume the adversaries at once. He saw, and saw it so joyfully, that God's horses of fire, and chariots of fire, were more than a match for all the forces of evil. I pray that the eyes of every Christian person here may be so opened that they shall never doubt that the powers on the side of truth and righteousness and God are, after all, mightier than the hosts of evil. It maybe that you live among those who scoff at your faith, and despise all that you hold dear; indeed, it seems that, wherever you turn, everybody is against you in this day of doubt. I think I hear you cry, with David, "My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." Courage, my comrade, God is near thee! His angels are keeping watch and ward about thee! We are not alone, for the Father is with us. Oh, that our eyes may be so opened as to see that more are they that are with us than all that are against us! Indeed, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" Let us be strangers to fear. In holy confidence, let us be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Never allow a doubt as to the ultimate issue. Is God himself your shield, and your exceeding great reward? Then, what can man do unto you? Perhaps, within a month, some of you, to whom I now speak, may be in so severe a fight that you will be almost driven to throw down your weapons in utter despair, saying, "How can I stand against so many?—I that am so feeble?" I beseech you, remember this warning. Have not I told you of it? I would plead with you to play the man. Gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end; for if the Lord has opened your eyes, you will perceive that you are on the winning side, and that HE is coming soon who will smite his enemies upon the cheekbone. If you are on the side of God, and of his truth; if you do the right; if you

believe in the Lord Jesus; if you commit yourself to the keeping of the hand which was pierced with the nails; heaven and earth may pass away, but the Lord can never desert you. The skies may be rolled up like a shrivelled parchment scroll, and all the things that are seen may melt away; like baseless fabrics of a vision, earth and sea may vanish; but a believing soul must live, and triumph, and be exalted to a throne with Christ; for he hath said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Hold fast your integrity. Believe the truth of God even to the end, for the Lord Jesus will not fail, nor be discouraged, till all his foes are beneath his feet.

If your eyes are opened, you will know that saints are honored by their Lord. See! he despatches his squadrons to be a body-guard to one of them; would not you wish for such honors? See here the secret of the peace which abides with the man of God: as he has meat to eat that men know not of, so has he company that men cannot see. He lives like a prince in the center of a camp, and sleeps securely. Faith makes the difference between the tranquil prophet and his frightened boy. Oh, that you would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and so enter into his peace! May this be the red-letter day in which your eyes shall be opened to see spiritual things, and you shall begin to live a spiritual life! For this I have prayed. For this let us all breathe for a moment a silent prayer. (Here followed an interval of silence, and then the preacher spoke in prayer.) "Lord, I pray thee, open the young man's eyes, that he may see: yea, Lord, open the eyes of all the blind among us, for Jesus' sake! Amen."

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## **Your Own Salvation**

## Your own salvation. - Philippians 2:12

We select the words, "your own salvation," as our text this morning, not out of any singularity, or from the slightest wish that the brevity of the text should surprise you; but because our subject will be the more clearly before you if only these three words are announced. If I had nominally taken the whole verse I could not have attempted to expound it without distracting your attention from the topic which now weighs upon my heart. O that the divine Spirit may bring home to each one of your minds the unspeakable importance of "your own salvation"!

We have heard it said by hearers that they come to listen to us, and we talk to them upon subjects in which they have no interest. You will not be able to make this complaint to-day, for we shall speak only of "your own salvation;" and nothing can more concern you. It has sometimes been said that preachers frequently select very unpractical themes. No such objection can be raised to-day, for nothing can be more practical than this; nothing more needful than to urge you to see to "your own salvation." We have even heard it said that ministers delight in abstruse subjects, paradoxical dogmas, and mysterious surpassing comprehension; but, assuredly, we will keep to plain sailing this morning. No sublime doctrines, no profound questions shall perplex you; you shall only be called on to consider "your own salvation:" a very homely theme, and a very simple one, but for all that, the most weighty that can be brought before you. I shall seek after simple words also, and plain sentences, to suit the simplicity and plainness of the subject, that there may be no thought whatever about the speaker's language, but only concerning this one, sole, only topic, "your own salvation." I ask you all, as reasonable men who would not injure or neglect yourselves, to lend me your most serious attention. Chase away the swarming vanities which buzz around you, and let each man think for himself upon his "own salvation." O may the Spirit of God set each one of you apart in a mental solitude, and constrain you each one, singly, to face the truth concerning his own state! Each man apart, each woman apart; the father apart, and the child apart: may you now come before the Lord in solemn thought, and may nothing occupy your attention but this: "your own salvation."



I. We will begin this morning's meditation by noting THE MATTER UNDER CONSIDERATION - Salvation!

Salvation! a great word, not always understood, often narrowed down, and its very marrow overlooked. Salvation! This concerns every one here present. We all fell in our first parent; we have all sinned personally; we shall all perish unless we find salvation. The word salvation contains within it deliverance from the guilt of our past sins. We have broken God's law each one of us, more or less flagrantly; we have all wandered the downward road, though each has chosen a different way. Salvation brings to us the blotting out of the transgressions of the past, acquittal from criminality, purging from all guiltiness, that we may stand accepted before the great Judge. What man in his sober senses will deny that forgiveness is an unspeakably desirable blessing!

But salvation means more than that: it includes deliverance from the power of sin. Naturally we are all fond of evil, and we run after it greedily; we are the bondslaves of iniquity, and we love the bondage. This last is the worst feature of the case. But when salvation comes it delivers the man from the power of sin. He learns that it is evil, and he regards it as such, loathes it, repents that he has ever been in love with it, turns his back upon it, becomes, through God's Spirit, the master of his lusts, puts the flesh beneath his feet, and rises into the liberty of the children of God. Alas! there are many who do not care for this: if this be salvation they would not give a farthing for it. They love their sins; they rejoice to follow the devices and imaginations of their own corrupt hearts. Yet be assured, this emancipation from bad habits, unclean desires, and carnal passions is the main point in salvation, and if it be not ours, salvation in its other branches is not and cannot be enjoyed by us. Dear hearer, dost thou possess salvation from sin? hast thou escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust? If not, what hast thou to do with salvation? To any right-minded man deliverance from unholy principles is regarded as the greatest of all blessings. What thinkest thou of it?

Salvation includes deliverance from the present wrath of God which abides upon the unsaved man every moment of his life. Every person who is unforgiven is the object of divine wrath. "God is angry with the wicked

every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword." "Be that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." I frequently hear the statement that this is a state of probation. This is a great mistake, for our probation has long since passed. Sinners have been proved, and found to be unworthy; they have been "weighed in the balances," and "found wanting." If you have not believed in Jesus, condemnation already rests upon you: you are reprieved awhile, but your condemnation is recorded. Salvation takes a man from under the cloud of divine wrath, and reveals to him the divine love. He can then say, "O God, I will praise thee, though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." Oh, it is not hell hereafter which is the only thing a sinner has to fear, it is the wrath of God which rests upon him now. To be unreconciled to God now is an awful thing: to have God's arrow pointed at you as it is at this moment, even though it fly not from the string as yet, is a terrible thing. It is enough to make you tremble from head to foot when you learn that you are the target of Jehovah's wrath: "he hath bent his bow, and made it ready." Every soul that is unreconciled to God by the blood of his Son is in the gall of bitterness. Salvation at once sets us free from this state of danger and alienation. We are no longer the "children of wrath, even as others," but are made children of God and joint heirs with a Christ Jesus. What can be conceived more precious than this?

And then, we lastly receive that part of salvation which ignorant persons put first, and make to be the whole of salvation. In consequence of our being delivered from the guilt of sin, and from the power of sin, and from the present wrath of God, we are delivered from the future wrath of God. Unto the uttermost will that wrath descend upon the souls of men when they leave the body and stand before their Maker's bar, if they depart this life unsaved. To die without salvation is to enter into damnation. Where death leaves us there judgment finds us; and where judgment finds us eternity will hold us forever and ever. "He which is filthy, let him be filthy still," and he that is wretched as a punishment for being filthy, shall be hopelessly wretched still. Salvation delivers the soul from going down into the pit of hell. We, being justified, are no longer liable to punishment, because we are no longer chargeable with guilt. Christ Jesus bore the wrath of God that we might never bear it. He has made a full

atonement to the justice of God for the sins of all believers. Against him that believeth there remaineth no record of guilt; his transgressions are blotted out, for a Christ Jesus hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. What a comprehensive word then is this—"salvation"! It is a triumphant deliverance from the guilt of sin, from the dominion of it, from the curse of it, from the punishment of it, and ultimately from the very existence of it. Salvation is the death of sin, its burial, its annihilation, yea, and the very obliteration of its memory; for thus saith the Lord: "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Beloved hearers, I am sure that this is the weightiest theme I can bring before you and therefore I cannot be content unless I see that it grasps you and holds you fast. I pray you give earnest heed to this most pressing of all subjects. If my voice and words cannot command your fullest attention, I could wish to be dumb, that some other pleader might with wiser speech draw you to a close consideration of this matter. Salvation appears to me to be of the first importance, when I think of what it is in itself, and for this reason I have at the outset set it forth before your eyes; but you may be helped to remember its value if you consider that God the Father thinks highly of salvation. It was on his mind or ever the earth was. He thinks salvation a lofty business, for he gave his Son that he might save rebellious sinners. Jesus Christ, the only Begotten, thinks salvation most important, for he bled, he died to accomplish it. Shall I bide with that which cost him his life? If he came from heaven to earth, shall I be slow to look from earth to heaven? Shall that which cost the Savior a life of zeal, and a death of agony, be of small account with me? By the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, by the wounds of Calvary, I beseech you, be assured that salvation must be worthy of your highest and most anxious thoughts. It could not be that God the Father, and God the Son, should thus make a common sacrifice: the one giving his Son and the other giving himself for salvation, and yet salvation should be a light and trivial thing. The Holy Ghost thinks it no trifle, for he condescends to work continually in the new creation that he may bring about salvation. He is often vexed and grieved, yet he continues still his abiding labors that he may bring many sons unto glory. Despise not what the Holy Ghost esteems, lest thou despise the Holy Ghost himself. The sacred Trinity

think much of salvation; let us not neglect it. I beseech you who have gone on trifling with salvation, to remember that we who have to preach to you dare not trifle with it. The longer I live the more I feel that if God do not make me faithful as a minister, it had been better for me never to have been born. What a thought that I am set as a watchman to warn your souls, and if I warn you not aright, your blood will be laid at my door! My own damnation will be terrible enough, but to have your blood upon my skirts as well—! God save any one of his ministers from being found guilty of the souls of men. Every preacher of the gospel may cry with David, "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation."

Bethink you, O careless hearers, that God's church does not consider salvation to be a little matter? Earnest men and women, by thousands, are praying day and night for the salvation of others, and are laboring too, and making great sacrifices, and are willing to make many more, if they may by any means bring some to Jesus and his salvation. Surely, if gracious men, and wise men, think salvation to be so important, you who have hitherto neglected it ought to change your minds upon the matter, and act with greater care for your own interests.

The angels think it a weighty business. Bowing from their thrones, they watch for repenting sinners; and when they hear that a sinner has returned to his God, they waken anew their golden harps and pour forth fresh music before the throne, for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." It is certain also that devils think salvation to be a great matter, for their arch-leader goeth about seeking whom he may devour. They never tire in seeking men's destruction. They know how much salvation glorifies God, and how terrible the ruin of souls is; and therefore they compass sea and land, if they may destroy the sons of men. Oh, I pray you, careless hearer, be wise enough to dread that fate which your cruel enemy, the devil, would fain secure for you! Remember, too, that lost souls think salvation important. The rich man, when he was in this world, thought highly of nothing but his barns, and the housing of his produce; but when he came into the place of torment, then he said: "Father Abraham, send Lazarus to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also they come into this place of torment." Lost souls see things in

another light than that which dazzled them here below; they value things at a different rate from what we do here, where sinful pleasures and earthly treasures dim the mental eye. I pray you then, by the blessed Trinity, by the tears and prayers of holy men, by the joy of angels and glorified spirits, by the malice of devils and the despair of the lost, arouse yourselves from slumber, and neglect not this great salvation!

I shall not depreciate anything that concerns your welfare, but I shall steadfastly assert that nothing so much concerns any one of you as salvation. Your health by all means. Let the physician be fetched if you be sick; care well for diet and exercise, and all sanitary laws. Look wisely to your constitution and its peculiarities; but what matters it, after all, to have possessed a healthy body, if you have a perishing soul? Wealth, yes, if you must have it, though you shall find it an empty thing if you set your heart upon it. Prosperity in this world, earn it if you can do so fairly, but "what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" A golden coffin will be a poor compensation for a damned soul. To be cast away from God's presence, can that misery be assuaged by mountains of treasure? Can the bitterness of the second death be sweetened by the thought that the wretch was once a millionaire, and that his wealth could affect the politics of nations? No, there is nothing in health or wealth comparable to salvation. Nor can honor and reputation bear a comparison therewith. Truly they are but baubles, and yet for all that they have a strange fascination for the soul of men. Oh, sirs, if every harpstring in the world should resound your glories, and every trumpet should proclaim your fame, what would it matter if a louder voice should say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"? Salvation! salvation! SALVATION! Nothing on earth can match it, for the merchandise of it is better than silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. The possession of the whole universe would be no equivalent to a lost soul for the awful damage it has sustained and must sustain for ever. Pile up the worlds, and let them fill the balance: ay, bring as many worlds as there are stars, and heap up the scale on the one side; then in this other scale place a single soul endowed with immortality, and it outweighs the whole. Salvation! nothing can be likened unto it. May we feel its unutterable value, and therefore seek it till we possess it in its fullness!

II. But now we must advance to a second point of consideration, and I pray God the Holy Spirit to press it upon us, and that is, WHOSE MATTER IS IT? We have seen what the matter is—salvation; now, consider whose is it. "Your own salvation." At this hour nothing else is to occupy your thoughts but this intensely personal matter, and I beseech the Holy Spirit to hold your minds fast to this one point.

If you are saved it will be "your own salvation," and you yourself will enjoy it. If you are not saved, the sin you now commit is your own sin, the guilt your own guilt. The condemnation under which you live, with all its disquietude and fear, or with all its callousness and neglect is your own—all your own you may share in other men's sins, and other men may become participators in yours, but a burden lies on your own back which no one besides can touch with one of his fingers. There is a page in God's Book where your sins are recorded unmingled with the transgressions of your fellows. Now, beloved, you must obtain for all this sin a personal pardon, or you are undone for ever. No other can be washed in Christ's blood for you; no one can believe and let his faith stand instead of your faith. The very supposition of human sponsorship in religion is monstrous. You must yourself repent, yourself believe, yourself be washed in the blood, or else for you there is no forgiveness, no acceptance, no adoption, no regeneration. It is all a personal matter through and through: "your own salvation" it must be, or it will be your own eternal ruin.

Reflect anxiously that you must personally die. No one imagines that another can die for him. No man can redeem his brother or give to God a ransom. Through that iron gate I must pass alone, and so must you. Dying will have to be our own personal business; and in that dying we shall have either personal comfort or personal dismay. When death is past, salvation is still our "own salvation;" for if I am saved, mine "eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." Mine eyes shall see him, and not another on my behalf. No brother's head is to wear your crown; no stranger's hand to wave your palm; no sister's eye to gaze for you upon the beatific vision, and no sponsor's heart to be filled as your proxy with the ecstatic bliss. There is a personal

heaven for the personal believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. It must be if you possess it, "your own salvation." But if you have it not, reflect again, that it will be your own damnation. No one will be condemned for you; no other can bear the hot thunder bolts of Jehovah's wrath on your behalf. When you shall say, "Hide me, ye rocks! Conceal me, O mountains!" No one will spring forward, and say, "You can cease to be accursed, and I will become a curse for you." A substitute there is to-day for every one that believeth—God's appointed substitute, the Christ of God; but if that substitution be not accepted by you, there can never be another; but there remains only for you a personal casting away to suffer personal pangs in your own soul and in your own body for ever. This, then, makes it a most solemn business. O be wise, and look well to "your own salvation."

You may be tempted to-day, and very likely you are to forget your own salvation by thoughts of other people. We are all so apt to look abroad in this matter, and not to look at home. Let me pray you to reverse the process, and let everything which has made you neglect your own vineyard be turned to the opposite account, and lead you to begin at home, and see to "your own salvation." Perhaps you dwell among the saints of God, and you have been rather apt to find fault with them, though for my part, I can say these are the people I desire to live with and desire to die with: "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." But, O if you live among the saints ought it not to be your business to see to "Your own salvation"? See that you are truly one of them, not written in their church-book merely, but really graven upon the palms of Christ's hands; not a false professor, but a real possessor; not a mere wearer of the name of Christ, but a bearer of the nature of Christ. If you live in a gracious family be afraid lest thou should be divided from them for ever. How could you endure to go from a Christian household to the place of torment! Let the anxieties of saints lead you to be anxious. Let their prayers drive you to prayer. Let their example rebuke your sin, and their joys entice you to their Savior. O see to this! But perhaps you live most among ungodly men, and the tendency of your converse with the ungodly is to make you think as they do of the trifles and vanities, and wickednesses of this life. Do not let it be so; but, on the contrary, say, "O God, though I am placed among these people, yet gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men. Let me avoid the sins into which

they fall, and the impenitence of which they are guilty. Save me, I pray thee, O my God, save me from the transgressions which they commit."

Perhaps to-day some of your minds are occupied with thoughts of the dead who have lately fallen asleep. There is a little one unburied at home, or there is a father not yet laid in the grave. Oh, when you weep for those who have gone to heaven, think of "your own salvation," and weep for yourselves, for you have parted with them for ever unless you are saved. You have said, "Farewell" to those beloved ones, eternally farewell, unless you yourselves believe in Jesus. And if any of you have heard of persons who have lived in sin and died in blasphemy, and are lost, I pray you think not of them carelessly lest you also suffer the same doom: for what saith the Savior: "Suppose ye that these were sinners above all the sinners?" "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." It seems to me as if everything on earth and everything in heaven, and everything in hell, yea, and God himself, calls upon you to seek "your own salvation," first, and foremost, and above all other things.

It may be profitable to mention some persons upon whom this theme needs much pressing. I will begin at home. There is great need to urge this matter upon official Christians, such as I am, such as my brethren, the deacons and elders, are. If there are any persons who are likely to be deceived, it is those who are called by their office to act as shepherds to the souls of others. Oh, my brethren I it is so easy for me to imagine because I am a minister, and have to deal with holy things, that therefore I am safe. I pray I may never fall into that delusion, but may always cling to the cross, as a poor, needy sinner resting in the blood of Jesus. Brother ministers, co-workers, and officials of the church, do not imagine that office can save you. The son of perdition was an apostle, greater than we are in office, and yet at this hour he is greater in destruction. See to it, ye that are numbered amongst the leaders of Israel, that you yourselves be saved.

Unpractical doctrinalists are another class of persons who need to be warned to see to their own salvation. When they hear a sermon, they sit with their mouths open, ready to snap at half a mistake. They make a man an offender for a word, for they conclude themselves to be the



standards of orthodoxy, and they weigh up the preacher as he speaks, with as much coolness as if they had been appointed deputy judges for the Great King himself. Oh, sir, weigh yourself! It may be a great thing to be sound in the head, in the faith, but it is a greater thing to be sound in the heart. I may be able to split a hair between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and yet may have no part nor lot in the matter. You may be a very sound Calvinist, or you may happen to think soundness lies in another direction; but, oh, it is nought, it is less than nought, except your souls feel the power of the truth, and ye yourselves are born again. See to "your own salvation," O ye wise men in the letter, who have not the Spirit.

So, too, certain persons who are always given to curious speculations need warning. When they read the Bible it is not to find whether they are saved or no, but to know whether we are under the third or fourth vial, when the millenium is going to be, or what is the battle of Armageddon. Ah, sir, search out all these things if thou hast time and skill, but look to thine own salvation first. The book of Revelation, blessed is he that understands it, but not unless, first of all, he understands this, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." The greatest doctor in the symbols and mysteries of the Apocalypse shall be as certainly cast away as the most ignorant, unless he has come to Christ, and rested his soul in the atoning work of our great substitute.

I know some who greatly need to look to their own salvation. I refer to those who are always criticising others. They can hardly go to a place of worship but what they are observing their neighbour's dress or conduct. Nobody is safe from their remarks, they are such keen judges, and make such shrewd observations. Ye faultfinders and talebearers, look to "your own salvation." You condemned a minister the other day for a supposed fault, and yet he is a dear servant of God, who lives near his Master; who are you, sir, to use your tongue against such a one as he? The other day a poor humble Christian was the object of your gossip and your slander, to the wounding of her heart. Oh, see to yourself, see to yourself. If those eyes which look outward so piercingly would sometimes look inward they might see a sight which would blind them with horror. Blessed horror if it led them to turn to the Savior who would open those eyes afresh, and grant them to see his salvation.

I might also say that in this matter of looking to personal salvation, it is necessary to speak to some who have espoused certain great public designs. I trust I am as ardent a Protestant as any man living, but I know too many red-hot Protestants who are but little better than Romanists, for though the Romanists of old might have burnt them, they would certainly withhold toleration from Romanists to-day, if they could; and therein I see not a pin to choose between the two bigots. Zealous Protestants, I agree with you, but yet I warn you that your zeal in this matter will not save you, or stand in the stead of personal godliness. Many an orthodox Protestant will be found at the left hand of the Great Judge. And you, too, who are for ever agitating this and that public question, I would say to you, "Let politics alone till your own inward politics are settled on a good foundation." You are a Radical Reformer, you could show us a system of political economy which would right all our wrongs and give to every man his due; then I pray you right you own wrongs, reform yourself, yield yourself to the love of Jesus Christ, or what will it signify to you, though you knew how to balance the affairs of nations, and to regulate the arrangement of all classes of society, if you yourself shall be blown away like chaff before the winnowing fan of the Lord. God grant us grace, then, whatever else we take up with, to keep it in its proper place, and make our calling and election sure.

III. And now, thirdly, and O for grace to speak aright, I shall try to ANSWER CERTAIN OBJECTIONS. I think I hear somebody say, "Well, but don't you believe in predestination? What have we to do with looking to our own salvation? Is it not all fixed?" Thou fool, for I can scarce answer thee till I have given thee thy right title; was it not fixed whether thou shouldst get wet or not in coming to this place? Why then did you bring your umbrella? Is it not fixed whether you shall be nourished with food to-day or shall go hungry? Why then will you go home and eat your dinner? Is it not fixed whether you shall live or not to-morrow; will you therefore, cut your throat? No, you do not reason so wickedly, so foolishly from destiny in reference to anything but "your own salvation," and you know it is not reasoning, it just mere talk. Here is all the answer I will give you, and all you deserve.

Another says, "I have a difficulty about this looking to our own salvation. Do you not believe in full assurance? Are there not some who know that they are saved beyond all doubt? Yes, blessed be God, I hope there are many such now present. But let me tell you who these are not. These are not persons who are afraid to examine themselves. If I meet with any man who says, "I have no need to examine my self any more, I know I am saved, and therefore have no need to take any further care," I would venture to say to him, "Sir, you are lost already. This strong delusion of yours has led you to believe a lie." There are none so cautious as those who possess full assurance, and there are none who have so much holy fear of sinning against God, nor who walk so tenderly and carefully as those who possess the full assurance of faith. Presumption is not assurance, though, alas! many think so. No fully assured believer will ever object to being reminded of the importance of his own salvation.

But a third objection arises. "This is very selfish," says one. "You have been exhorting us to look to ourselves, and that is sheer selfishness." Yes, so you say; but let me tell you it is a kind of selfishness that is absolutely needful before you can be unselfish. A part of salvation is to be delivered from selfishness, and I am selfish enough to desire to be delivered from selfishness. How can you be of any service to others if you are not saved yourself? A man is drowning. I am on London Bridge. If I spring from the parapet and can swim, I can save him; but suppose I cannot swim, can I render any service by leaping into sudden and certain death with the sinking man? I am disqualified from helping him till I have the ability to do so. There is a school over yonder. Well, the first enquiry of him who is to be the master must be, "Do I know myself that which I profess to teach?" Do you call that enquiry selfish? Surely it is a most unselfish selfishness, grounded upon common sense. Indeed, the man who is not so selfish as to ask himself, "Am I qualified to act as a teacher?" would be guilty of gross selfishness in putting himself into an office which he was not qualified to fill. I will suppose an illiterate person going into the school, and saying, "I will be master here, and take the pay," and yet he cannot teach the children to read or write. Would he not be very selfish in not seeing to his own fitness? But surely it is not selfishness that would make a man stand back and say, "No, I must first go to school myself, otherwise it is but a mockery of the children for me to attempt to teach

them anything." This is no selfishness, then, when looked at aright, which makes us see to our own salvation, for it is the basis from which we operate for the good of others.

IV. Having answered these objections, I shall for a minute attempt to RENDER SOME ASSISTANCE to those who would fain be right in the best things.

Has the Holy Spirit been pleased to make any one here earnest about his own salvation? Friend, I will help you to answer two questions. Ask yourself, first, "Am I saved?" I would help thee to reply to that very quickly. If you are saved this morning, you are the subject of a work within you, as saith the text, "Work out your own salvation; for it is God which worketh in you." you cannot work it in, but when God works it in you work it out. Have you a work of the Holy Ghost in your soul? Do you feel something more than unaided human nature can attain unto? Have you a change wrought in you from above? If so, you are saved. Again, does your salvation rest wholly upon Christ? He who hangs anywhere but upon the cross, hangs upon that which will deceive him. If thou standest upon Christ, thou art on a rock; but if thou trustest in the merits of Christ in part, and thy own merits in part, then thou hast one foot on a rock but another on the quicksand; and thou mightest as well have both feet on the quicksand, for the result will be the same.

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good."

Thou art not saved unless Christ be all in all in thy soul, Alpha and Omega, beginning and ending, first and last. Judge by this, again: if you are saved, you have turned your back on sin. You have not left off sinning—would to God we could do so—but you have left off loving sin; you sin not wilfully, but from infirmity; and you are earnestly seeking after God and holiness. You have respect to God, you desire to be like him, you are longing to be with him. Your face is towards heaven. You are as a man who journeys to the Equator. You are feeling more and more the warm influence of the heavenly heat and light. Now, if such be your course of life, that you walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and bring forth

the fruits of holiness, then you are saved. May your answer to that question be given in great honesty and candour to your own soul. Be not too partial a Judge. Conclude not that all is right because outward appearances are fair. Deliberate before you return a favorable verdict. Judge yourselves that ye be not judged. It were better to condemn yourself and be accepted of God, than to acquit yourself and find your mistake at the last.

But suppose that question should have to be answered by any here in the negative (and I am afraid it must be), then let those who confess that they are not saved, hear the answer to another enquiry: "How can I be saved?" Ah, dear hearer, I have not to bring a huge volume nor a whole armful of folios to you, and to say, "It will take you months and Years to understand the plan of salvation." No, the way is plain, the method simple. Thou shalt be saved within the next moment if thou believest. God's work of salvation is, as far as its commencement and essence is concerned, instantaneous. If thou believest "that Jesus is the Christ, thou art born of God now. If thou dost now stand in spirit at the foot of the cross, and view the incarnate God suffering, bleeding, and dying there, and if as thou dost look at him, thy soul consents to have him for her Savior, and casts herself wholly on him, thou art saved. How vividly there comes before my memory this morning the moment when I first believed in Jesus! It was the simplest act my mind ever performed, and yet the most wonderful, for the Holy Spirit wrought it in me. Simply to have done with reliance upon myself, and have done with confidence in all but Jesus, and to rest alone, my undivided confidence in him, and in what he had done. My sin was in that moment forgiven me, and I was saved, and may it all be so with you, my friend, even with you if you also, trust the Lord Jesus. "Your own salvation" shall be secured by that one simple act of faith; and henceforward, kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, you shall tread the way of holiness, till you come to be where Jesus is in everlasting bliss. God grant that not a soul may go out of this place unsaved. Even you, little children, who are here, you youngsters, you young boys and girls, I pray that you may in early life attend to "your own salvation." Faith is not a grace for old people only, nor for your fathers and mothers only; if your little hearts shall look to him who was the holy child Jesus, if you know but little yet, if you trust him salvation shall be

yours. I pray that to you who are young, "your own salvation" may become, while you are yet in your youth, a matter of joy, because you have trusted it in the hands of your Redeemer.

Now I must close: but one or two thoughts press me. I must utter them ere I sit down. I would anxiously urge each person here to see to this matter of his own salvation. Do it, I pray you, and in earnest, for no one can do it for you. I have asked God for your soul, my hearer, and I pray I may have an answer of peace concerning you. But unless you also pray, vain are my prayers. You remember your mother's tears. Ah! you have crossed the ocean since those days, and you have gone into the deeps of sin, but you recollect when you used to say your prayers at her knee, and when she would lovingly say "Amen," and kiss her boy and bless him, and pray that he might know his mother's God. Those prayers are ringing in the ears of God for you, but it is impossible that you can ever be saved unless it is said of you, "Behold, he prayeth." Your mother's holiness can only rise up in judgment to condemn your wilful wickedness unless you imitate it. Your father's earnest exhortations shall but confirm the just sentence of the Judge unless you hearken to them, and yourselves consider and put your trust in Jesus. Oh I bethink you each one of you, there is but one hope, and that one hope lost, it is gone for ever. Defeated in one battle, a commander attempts another, and hopes that he may yet win the campaign. Your life is your one fight, and if it be lost it is lost for aye. The man who was bankrupt yesterday commences again in business with good heart, and hopes that he may yet succeed; but in the business of this mortal life, if you are found bankrupt, you are bankrupt for ever and ever. I do therefore charge you by the living God, before whom I stand, and before whom I may have to give an account of this day's preaching ere another day's sun shall shine, I charge you see to your own salvation. God help you, that you may never cease to seek unto God till you know by the witness of the Spirit that you have indeed passed from death unto life. See to it now, now, NOW, NOW. This very day the voice of warning comes to certain of you from God, with special emphasis, because you greatly need it, for your time is short. How many have passed into eternity during this week! You may yourself be gone from the land of the living before next Sabbath-day. I suppose, according to the calculation of probabilities, out of this audience there are several who will

die within a month. I am not conjecturing now, but according to all probabilities these thousands cannot all meet again, it all have a mind to do so. Who then among us will be summoned to the unknown land? Will it be you, young woman, who have been laughing at the things of God? Shall it be yonder merchant, who has not time enough for religion? Shall it be you, my foreign friend, who have crossed the ocean to take a holiday? Will you be carried back a corpse? I do conjure you bethink yourselves, all of you. You who dwell in London will remember years ago when the cholera swept through our streets, some of us were in the midst of it, and saw many drop around us, as though smitten with an invisible but deadly arrow. That disease is said to be on its way hither again; it is said to be rapidly sweeping from Poland across the Continent, and if it come and seize some of you, are you ready to depart? Even if that form of death do not afflict our city, as I pray it may not, yet is death ever within our gates, and the pestilence walketh in darkness every night, therefore consider your ways. Thus saith the Lord, and with his word I conclude this discourse: "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

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